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Resettlement in Tsintsabis, Namibia: historical background and contemporary social complexities in Haiǁom and !Xun development planning

After Namibian Independence in 1990, group resettlement farms became crucial in development planning to address historically built-up inequalities that were largely based on land evictions for nature conservation and large-scale livestock ranching. Resettlement aims to provide marginalised groups with opportunities to start self-sufficient small-scale agriculture. This article addresses the history of the Tsintsabis resettlement farm, where at first predominantly Haiǁom 'Bushmen' (and to a lesser degree !Xun) were 'resettled' on their ancestral land. The history of Tsintsabis is analysed in relation to two pressing, and related, contemporary social complexities, namely: 1) ethnic tension and in-migration; and 2) leadership. We argue that the case of Tsintsabis shows the importance of acknowledging historically built-up injustices in development planning. The importance of doing long-term ethno-historical research about resettlement is thereby emphasised to better understand the contextual processes within which resettlement and development are embedded.

Keywords: resettlement, land reform, Namibia, development, planning, Bushmen, history, social complexities, agriculture, indigenous peoples

Introduction

Resettlement has been an important pillar of the Namibian land reform programme since prior to Independence in 1990. One important aim of resettlement was to develop marginalised rural populations (Ahmed, 1985). This emphasis arises because 'Namibia has one of the most unequal distributions of land […] in the world', which is 'a major cause of rural poverty, socio-economic inequalities, and social dissatisfaction' (Hitchcock, 2012, 75). Resettlement, therefore, functions as a crucial development planning instrument. Addressing land inequalities was documented in the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, 6 of 1995 (ACLRA) (Dieckmann, 2011;

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Harring and Odendaal, 2007). In the National Land Policy (NLP) from 1996, the primary objectives were 'to provide adequate access to land for landless people' and 'to promote, facilitate and coordinate access to, and control over, land […] to support long-term sustainable development for all Namibians' (Karuuombe, 1997, 6). Specified in the National Resettlement Policy of 2001, Namibia identified the following target groups for resettlement: the 'San' or 'Bushmen' population,[1] displaced people, returnees, ex-combatants, ex-farm workers, destitute and landless people, disabled people and those living in overcrowded communal areas (Harring and Odendaal, 2007; RoN, 2010). The objectives of resettlement are to redress past imbalances in the distribution of land; to make people self-sufficient through agriculture; to integrate resettled populations into the national economy; to create income-generating activities; to reduce livestock and human pressure on communal lands; and to provide resettled peoples an opportunity to reintegrate into society (Dieckmann, 2011).

Based on their marginalised status and a history of discrimination and exploitation, the government thus made the San of Namibia one of the main target groups of its resettlement policy (Harring and Odendaal, 2002; 2007; Melber, 2019). However, only a few of them were able to secure access to resettlement land or resources to be able to carry out development activities on this land (Melber, 2019; Dieckmann et al., 2014a). By 2010, over 55 group resettlement projects had been established by the then Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR), of which at least 23 contained significant numbers of San (Dieckmann and Dirkx, 2014; RoN, 2010). Most of them were directed to group resettlement farms that contained many deficiencies, including a lack of (proper) infrastructure, low farming capacities of the beneficiaries, and poor suitability of the land. Furthermore, environmental assessments tended to be poorly done, coordinators of the MLR were often not properly qualified, and beneficiaries did not have official certificates for leasing a piece of land, leading to most resettlement projects failing national production objectives (Dieckmann et al., 2014b; Gargallo, 2010; Melber, 2019). Although the post-Independent government attempted to promote San development by making 'their development a priority', this focused predominantly on integrating them into mainstream society (Suzman, 2001, 71). In addition to an increasing number of NGOs focusing on San issues, it took until 2005 before the San Development Programme (SDP) was launched by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), which focused on education (including vocational and literacy training), food aid, agriculture and resettlement schemes (Dieckmann et al., 2014a).

Much literature has addressed resettlement policies and practices and related legal frameworks in Namibia (Dieckmann, 2011; Dieckmann et al., 2014a; Harring and

1 'San' or 'Bushmen' both refer to indigenous hunter-gatherers of southern Africa and have a derogatory and patronising character (Gordon and Douglas, 2000). Nonetheless, both terms also 'signify important identity markers of belonging to the larger regional group that shares cultural similarities and experiences of marginalization' (Koot et al., 2023). When applicable we use the two relevant ethnonyms Hailom and !Xun here.

Odendaal, 2002; 2006; 2007; Odendaal and Werner, 2020; Suzman, 2001). In this article we divert from a legal focus and contribute an analysis of the historical development of social complexities and how these affect development planning at one specific resettlement farm, namely Tsintsabis. Our aim is to better understand why resettlement often continues to show limited and disappointing results more than 30 years after implementation (Dieckmann and Dirkx, 2014; Harring and Odendaal, 2006; 2007; Odendaal and Werner, 2020). In our analysis, we focus on San inhabitants of the area, namely, Hai||om and to a lesser degree !Xun.

Social complexities 'will always influence the ways that local people understand, respond to, and are impacted by […] projects', and therefore 'social complexity should be taken into account when the planning, implementation, and outcomes of […] projects are considered' (Fabinyi et al., 2010, 619). Our specific focus here is on human interactions, relations and activities. Since social complexities 'demonstrate how the planning, implementation, and impacts' of policies and/or projects can 'have different effects for different groups of people' (Fabinyi et al., 2010, 617), this focus allows us to concentrate on issues that concern the Hai||om and !Xun of Tsintsabis. We analyse two specific social complexities. First, ethnic tension and in-migration, and second, how leadership issues have developed historically at the Tsintsabis resettlement farm and how they have impacted – and continue to impact – Hai||om and !Xun living there. Both social complexities have been important obstacles to development in Tsintsabis since its establishment as a resettlement farm, and beyond in Namibia for San groups, as we know from personal experience and from the literature (Castelijns, 2019; Dieckman et al., 2014b; Koot and Hitchcock, 2019; Van der Wulp and Koot, 2019).

In the remainder of this article we describe our methodology, following this with a more detailed history of land dispossession among the Hai||om of northern Namibia. Next, we zoom in on the Tsintsabis resettlement farm, its history and two contemporary social complexities, as mentioned above. Lastly, in our conclusion we reflect back on the process of resettlement for Hai||om more generally and in Tsintsabis specifically. We argue that the case of Tsintsabis shows the importance of acknowledging historically built-up injustices in development planning when addressing current social complexities, and we emphasise the importance of doing long-term ethno-historical and ethnographic research to better understand contextual processes of resettlement and development. Such knowledge is crucial to inform planning, policy and practice.

Methodology

The historical and theoretical components of the article are largely based on academic and grey literature, but recent and contemporary social complexities in Tsintsabis are largely based on autoethnography and semi-structured interviews.

First author Koot has lived, worked and conducted research in Tsintsabis since 1999. Initially conducting fieldwork there as an MSc anthropology student in 1999, he would later become a development fieldworker between 2002 and 2007, working together with the inhabitants of Tsintsabis – in particular members of the Tsintsabis Trust – on founding Treesleeper Camp (Koot, 2012). This experience included a close collaboration with second author ǁKhumûb and a large variety of people in or connected to Tsintsabis. Since then, he returned for shorter visits to conduct and disseminate research, including for his PhD in 2010 (Koot, 2013, 2016). Currently he functions as an adviser for the Tsintsabis Trust, including regular contact via e-mail and WhatsApp with some inhabitants. Through these activities and visits, over the years he has engaged in longitudinal research through 'ethnographic returning' (O'Reilly, 2012). He has also conducted research among other San groups in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa.

ǁKhumûb has lived in Tsintsabis since 1991. He was born at farm Plaaszak around 15 kilometres west of Tsintsabis and is a native Haiǁom speaker. He moved to Tsintsabis when he was around nine years old. Since 2003 ǁKhumûb has been the camp manager of Treesleeper Camp. In 2009 he went to the !Khwa ttu Centre,[2] South Africa, for a year-long work and training experience. Furthermore, he followed advanced training courses about indigenous peoples' rights at the University of Namibia and the University of Pretoria, and has collaborated with a variety of institutions with a focus on indigenous peoples and the San. He also cooperated with the Windhoek-based NGO Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in research about indigenous peoples and climate change, focusing on Haiǁom relationships with climate change (LAC, 2013).

Because we share a long history in Tsintsabis in different positions that changed over the years, an important method this article builds on is autoethnography, in which self-observation and reflexivity by researchers is central, while cultural and personal issues are interconnected and become blurred. Our subjective personal experiences connect and inform the empirics and broader sociocultural analysis of the article (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Koot, 2016). Additionally, semi-structured interviews by Koot about resettlement in Tsintsabis from 1999 play an important role, as do more recent interviews by Koot and by researchers both authors collaborated with.

History of land dispossession among Haiǁom

Haiǁom speak Khoekhoegowab (also spoken by Nama and Damara) rather than a San language, but nonetheless are considered the largest 'subgroup' of San in Namibia (Gordon and Douglas, 2000), numbering between 11,000 to 15,000 (Hitchcock, 2015).[3]

2 !Khwa ttu Centre, https://www.khwattu.org/ (accessed 16 April 2024).

3 Dieckmann et al. (2014a) estimate between 7,000 and 18,000.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle based on seasonal mobility in an area ranging from present-day Grootfontein, Tsumeb, Etosha National Park (ENP), Otavi, Otjiwarongo and Outjo and the area formerly named Owamboland (Dieckmann, 2007), where they also overlapped with other groupings of people. Before colonial settlement, they were in contact with a variety of both Bantu-language speakers and other Khoekhoegowab-language speakers such as Damara/ǂNūkhoen. They traded with these groups (especially with Owambo) and shared some cultural similarities (especially with Damara/ǂNūkhoen) (Barnard, 2019). Whilst this diversified their livelihoods and changed their hunting and gathering patterns, they never fully became cultivators or herders (Widlok, 1999).[4]

North-central Namibia was affected by the gazetting of Game Reserve No. 2 in 1907, and the later establishment of ENP in 1967 (Dieckmann, 2007; Ramutsindela, 2004). Around 1910–1915 'Bushmen patrols' in the farming area around the game reserve often resulted in death, and in 1928 San were forbidden to possess bows and arrows there, although not in the game reserve where they were initially tolerated and used to enchant tourists as an image of 'wild' Africa (Gordon, 1997). In addition, some Haiǁom were employed as road workers, police assistants, *veld* fire fighters, waterhole cleaners, and cheap labour more generally (Dieckmann, 2007; Gordon, 1997; Gordon and Douglas, 2000). From the late 1940s onwards, however, they were ever more restricted, especially regarding their livestock and hunting (Dieckmann, 2007; Suzman, 2004). Plans in the 1940s for a Haiǁom Reserve were dismissed on the grounds that they were not considered 'pure Bushmen', and to provide a labour pool for white settler farmers in the area – ultimately leading to their eviction from ENP in 1954 (Dieckmann, 2007; Gordon and Douglas, 2000). From then on, most of them had to work on commercial farms, while some stayed to work in Etosha. The eviction was a gradual process and to this day there are Haiǁom living and working in the park (Dieckmann, 2007; Koot and Hitchcock, 2019). As a result of this history, many Haiǁom in Tsintsabis continue to feel strong ties to the ENP area. As one woman who was born in Namutoni, ENP, explains:

> [i]n 1944 we were happy, because we were living on our own. But then we were chased away from Namutoni after a while, in 1956[5] that was, yes, because the South African government wanted to make it a game park. But Etosha belonged to the Haiǁom. […] Now we had to go and look for a job. […] And in Namutoni we were on the truck when they chased us away. Some of our people had then already died. (Interview 20 June 1999)

4 Barnard (2019) explains that it is unknown if Haiǁom were at a certain point herders like many of their Damara/ǂNūkhoe neighbours; although it should be noted that the latter also relied heavily on hunting and gathering (Sullivan, 1999).

5 This year differs from the starting year of the evictions (1954) as mentioned above but can of course still be correct because the eviction was a gradual process.

Even after 1954 many Haillom were still moving in and out of ENP, but, in the end, Haillom became a group without land of their own (Gordon, 1997).

This process additionally and rapidly reduced Haillom access to resources, as they were living in these newly claimed farming areas. Incoming livestock ate bushfoods, and the new settlers hunted game and erected fences, strongly affecting the Haillom's hunting and gathering livelihood. Increasingly, others were now telling Haillom that they could not remain on 'their' land and Haillom families started working on these new farms (Dieckmann, 2007). Many felt mistreated there, because payments were only in kind (food, milk or porridge, sometimes including alcohol and/or tobacco). As missionary Reverend C. H. Hahn observed in these times:

> [t]he Heikom have perhaps suffered more than any other Bushman tribe. […] Their various family clans or groups have become disintegrated and have been pushed further and further north […] latterly by our own settlement schemes. Their hunting grounds and veld kos [field food] areas have either been completely taken from them or have shrunk to such an extent that in very many cases the wild or semi-wild Heikom today finds it almost impossible to eke out an existence. […] It is surprising that these people do not indulge in more cattle and stock thieving. (cited in Gordon and Douglas, 2000, 125, drawing on archives of the South West Africa Administration, 1927–1948)

Haillom working at these farms also resisted mistreatment (Dieckmann, 2007). At these settler farms under freehold tenure, Haillom would do cleaning, herding, milking cows and goats, fencing or transporting materials on ox-carts. Figure 1 shows the Haillom population in 1982.

Later, many farms initiated tourism just outside the gates of ENP, often with little involvement by Haillom (Suzman, 2004). Since Independence, the number of people employed on farms decreased by 36 per cent, mainly as a result of new labour and social security regulations, the uncertainty that land reform posed to landowners, a minimum wage, and changing farm practices (e.g. the increase in safaris and guest farms). This situation resulted in the fast growth of resettlement camps and urban townships, with more people seeking casual labour. This development hit (ex-)farm workers such as the Haillom hardest because they lacked access to communal areas, and most had no residence outside their workplace. Consequently, they moved to settlements (e.g. Oshivelo) where they lived from informal labour, prostitution, welfare and begging (Harring and Odendaal, 2006; Suzman, 2004). Some also moved to newly established resettlement farms in the area, including Tsintsabis.

Ironically, when the government purchased farms in traditional Haillom territory after Independence, these were mostly allocated to others, i.e. non-Haillom with better connections and education (Suzman, 2004). Regardless of national policy

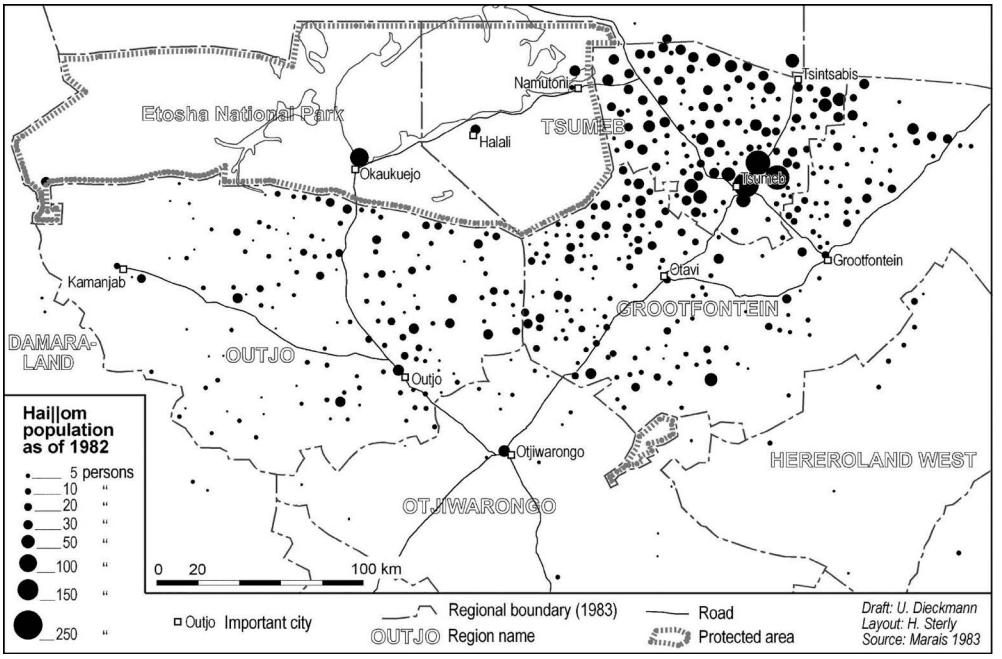

Figure 1 Hai||om population in and around Etosha, 1982: Tsintsabis is in the top right corner
Source: Dieckmann (2007, 205), drawing on Marais (1984)

priorities in post-Independence resettlement, the new government initially purchased 22 farms in areas where many landless San dwelled, but only one (Skoonheid) was set aside for their resettlement. At first, no farms were made available to landless Hai||om apart from the then-MLRR (Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation) taking over the administration of Tsintsabis (Suzman, 2004). Despite the government making promises to acquire farms to the east of Etosha for Hai||om as resettlement farms, this did not materialise for a long time, to the frustration of many. Furthermore, in some areas such as Mangetti West (50 kilometres north-west of Tsintsabis), there is ongoing pressure on land: Hai||om living there are concerned they will be displaced again because they lack serious political influence. From 2007 onwards, however, more farms were acquired for Hai||om under the SDP (Dieckmann et al., 2014a; Koot and Hitchcock, 2019), including nine farms (seven used for resettlement and two for tourism purposes) in an area south and east of Etosha. This process cannot be seen apart from the government's wish to resettle Hai||om still living in the park to areas outside of it, in connection with a collective action lawsuit by a group of Hai||om seeking to reclaim parts of ENP (Dieckmann and Dirkx, 2014; Koot and Hitchcock, 2019).

Ten years ago, Dieckmann and Dirkx (2014) identified only a few positive signs for San at group resettlement farms, and four big challenges. First, a relatively dense population, overstocking of livestock, and issues regarding common property resource management. Second, resettled San have not received individual title deeds.[6] Third, despite initiatives to make beneficiaries self-sufficient there is still a high level of dependency. Fourth, the MLR engaged with a large number of NGOs (for instance Namibia Nature Foundation, Komeho Namibia and the Desert Research Foundation Namibia (DRFN), co-financed with large international donors) with the aim to improve the sustainable use of farm resources and strengthen resettlement beneficiaries' livelihoods: this large number of stakeholders, however, led to problems of coordination (Koot and Hitchcock, 2019). Thus far, San beneficiaries on these group resettlement farms are hardly self-sufficient. At the root of the latter concerns are also illiteracy, a low level of education and technical expertise, and difficulties in terms of capacities to further strengthen leadership among the San (Dieckmann and Dirkx, 2014).

Tsintsabis histories

Tsintsabis is situated almost 120 kilometres east of Etosha, and 60 kilometres north of Tsumeb. Already in 1903 the place was mentioned by German colonist Paul Rohrbach (1909) as a waterhole without permanent human habitation, although he mentions San people living in the area. Later, Tsintsabis turned into a commercial farm, and became a regional police station shortly after 1915 when more farmers started settling in the area. When South Africa acquired a League of Nations mandate to run the then South West Africa in 1919, another 15 policemen arrived in Tsintsabis. As several respondents explained about these days, the policemen built the first houses and employed some Haiǁom in this process. Haiǁom also worked as cooks, translators, cleaners or camel herders. Steadily the South African police placed more restrictions on the San (Gordon, 1997). As one inhabitant later explained, 'if the police would see us hunting you could be taken into jail' (interview 11 April 1999). In 1936 the station commander at Tsintsabis rural police station reported that

> [f]armers find the Bushmen the cheapest kind to engage as it is a known fact that most of these Bushmen are only working for their food and tobacco, and now and then they get a blanket or a shovel. (LGR Magistrate Grootfontein 3/1/7, Annual Report, 1936, cited in Gordon, 1992)

In and around Tsintsabis, many Haiǁom and some !Xun thus became farm workers. Furthermore, the South African police in Tsintsabis also needed San trackers

6 In addition to title deeds for individually allocated plots, there are often also common tracts of land, where for instance livestock can graze. For such areas, collective title deeds could be developed to prevent such lands from being grabbed and to put less pressure on the carrying capacity of a group resettlement farm.

to prevent San attacks on contract workers from the North who passed through the area. As explained in a telegram by the Native Affairs Tsumeb on 24 September 1934, such attacks made them 'consider Tsintsabis police be temporarily increased by five to six Bushman trackers' (cited in Gordon and Douglas, 2000, 114). In the years that followed, supervision of the South African police became stricter, including serious physical and mental abuses (Gordon and Douglas, 2000).

From about 1982 until 1990, the Namibian war for Independence was strongly felt in Tsintsabis: the police station was turned into an army base for the South African Defence Force (SADF) for which many Hai||om became trackers. These days were increasingly characterised by fear and insecurity: the main access road into Tsintsabis from Tsumeb was called the 'Road of Death' (Van Rooyen, 1995, 1) and the SADF ruled strictly but also provided work and food, similarly to the farmers' paternalistic relations with the San (Koot, 2023). However, the war also created more insecurity. One interviewee stated:

> [t]he South Africans did not beat the children, but they beat the men and women. Always when they were coming, sometimes the people they were running away, because they were afraid. We did not fight back to them because the people were afraid and the white men had the guns. Also sometimes we were running away and sleeping in the bush because the people were telling us the SWAPO's [South West African Peoples Organization] are coming. (Interview 16 April 1999)

So, on the one hand the South Africans seemed to treat San better because they were dependent on them for their tracking skills and labour. On the other hand, punishment was continuing as before. A 39-year-old man explained that 'they forced some people to join them. I was also forced. If I did not go I had to go five years in prison' (interview 15 April 1999). Under this paternalistic system, however, San were mostly treated as inferior: their traditional egalitarian approach and social systems were strongly disrupted (Biesele and Hitchcock, 2011; Koot, 2023; Suzman, 2001; Widlok, 1999).

Hai||om have thus historically had, and continue to have,

> long-standing contacts with other groups and have adopted many cultural elements from their neighbours. As a consequence they have also suffered academic and political neglect, owing to their allegedly 'mixed' or 'impoverished' culture. (Widlok, 1999, 260)

This situation has led to diversity in the social practices of Hai||om as

> part of a process in which a certain mode of social relatedness has developed and is cultivated in many different fields of everyday social practise as 'Bushmen' interact with neighbouring groups in a changing natural and historical environment. (Widlok, 1999, 261)

Their history of inferiority in relation to others has undoubtedly affected Haiǁom relations with other groups and leadership structures, also after Independence.

In 1993, Tsintsabis was transferred into a group resettlement farm of 3,000 hectares (LAC, 2013; RoN, 2010). This means that in Tsintsabis many Haiǁom and some !Xun were, strictly speaking, not 'resettled' but continued to stay where they already lived under a different administration, and had to find new post-SADF livelihoods. In 1993, the government counted 841 people living at the farm, a number that increased to more than 1,500 in 2010 because 'the influx of people has not been controlled' (RoN, 2010, 30). In 2012 this number had grown to between 3,000 and 4,000 (LAC, 2013), mostly due to in-migration. There were two main groups of in-migrants: the first group is predominantly of Haiǁom farm workers who came to live with their relatives in Tsintsabis after losing jobs at surrounding commercial farms sold under the national land reform programme. Second, the relatively new tar road that runs through Tsintsabis attracted people, especially non-San, who could easily settle due to the uncontrolled situation of land allocation (see below). Today, some households live in government-supported brick houses while others live in huts or shanties. Tsintsabis also accommodates a school, the Tsintsabis Combined School (up to Grade 10), a medical clinic, a craft centre, a community tourism camp and a police station.

As explained by several interviewees, the initial plan by the government for Tsintsabis was that 'resettled' Haiǁom and !Xun would use the land collectively. Later the government provided individual 10 hectare plots to beneficiaries, with the intention for them to become self-sufficient small-scale farmers. Until today, however, the provision of food through agriculture is very limited. Some of the plots in Tsintsabis are too sandy for subsistence agriculture, and they 'are not fenced off and do not provide any infrastructure for sustainable gardening or animal husbandry projects' (LAC, 2013, 88). Most people depend to a large extent on food aid, provided by the MLRR since 1993 and changed in 1998 to only emergency drought food relief. These food distributions were later complemented by the San Feeding Programme of the OPM, provided by the then Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD). Food aid was combined with other livelihood sources including monthly pensions, farm work at commercial farms, some (illegal) hunting (and meat selling), gathering, tourism, livestock herding (cattle and goats especially), traditional healing, and small businesses such as *shebeens* (where groceries, alcohol and soft drinks are sold). The government's focus on agriculture was criticised by the informal Haiǁom leader Willem |Aib when he visited Tsintsabis in 1999. He explained that Haiǁom were

> traditionally unknown to gardening. All they ever had to do with farming was looking after the cattle and the goats. […] And now the government expects them to go farming but they never did it. (Interview 27 January 1999)

In addition to limited acquaintance with agriculture,[7] water provision, tools and equipment to work the land are difficult to acquire. Furthermore, most people only grow maize or *mahangu* (pearl millet), which lacks the variety needed for a healthy diet. The agricultural carrying capacity of Tsintsabis appears to have passed its potential long ago, whilst government assistance in agriculture was insufficient and community members lacked business skills (Harring and Odendaal, 2002; RoN, 2010). Additionally, young people are often bored and experience a lack of opportunities. Harring and Odendaal of the LAC in Windhoek concluded already in 2006 (18) that 'Tsintsabis represents a failed model of rural settlement that is all too common in Namibia'.

Contemporary social complexities

Against this historical background of Haillom land dispossession and the development of Tsintsabis into a resettlement farm, we now try to better understand the two contemporary social complexities that stand out in Tsintsabis, namely ethnic tensions as a result of in-migration and issues regarding leadership.

Ethnic tension and in-migration

The above-mentioned shortcomings of the resettlement programme, including the lack of land tenure security (Harring and Odendaal, 2007), combined with an enormous influx of people in Tsintsabis, has led to a dire situation for the beneficiaries. Today, there continues to be dissatisfaction among the Haillom and !Xun of Tsintsabis about many things, one of the main ones being the social complexities related to in-migration of other ethnic groups (i.e. non-San) and resulting exclusion and discrimination of Haillom and !Xun residents. Since Independence there has been much in-migration, which often instigates fear of suppression, land loss and further exclusion (e.g. from jobs) among the Haillom and !Xun (see also Nawatiseb, 2013). This is a broader phenomenon in more areas in Namibia where San (and others) live (see, for instance, Dieckmann et al., 2014b; Hays, 2009; Hitchcock, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Van der Wulp and Koot, 2019), but pressure in Tsintsabis seems relatively high due to the continuous influx of people since Independence onto a limited amount of land. As a result of in-migration, ethnic tensions have intensified.

Notable in this regard is the drastic rise in the number of *shebeens* (where the sale of alcoholic beverages is a core business), most of them owned by non-San (Castelijns, 2019; Hüncke, 2010; Koot and Hitchcock, 2019). *Shebeens* have been in Tsintsabis since the start of the resettlement programme, but with the increasing number of non-San

7 Note that nuance is needed here. Some Haillom had acquired agricultural knowledge through service to others, as described above. We do not intend to convey an essentialised representation of Hailom as knowing about hunting and gathering only.

in-migrants their number has skyrocketed. They have led to some Haillom and !Xun doing small jobs in service of the *shebeen* owners (e.g. fetching water) in return for alcohol, resembling pre-colonial patron–client relations between San and Bantu groups (Castelijns, 2019; Dieckmann, 2007; Gordon, 2021; Koot, 2023; LAC, 2013). As one interviewee stated in 2016:

> [o]nce the other tribes moved in, they came here and then they put up their *shebeens*, lot of *shebeens* drinking places. Now these lot of San people Haillom people which are already poor have now been addicted to drinking. So those who are now drinking alcohol early in the morning, stand up, go to the drinking place and then now they are fetching water for those people every day. (Interview, 2016–2017, cited in Castelijns, 2019, 24)

Moreover, the alcohol abuse associated with *shebeens* increases physical and domestic violence, even deaths, while children also start to drink (Asino, 2014; Castelijns, 2019). Due to the informal character of *shebeens*, and their tendency to appear and disappear again, it is impossible to give an exact number. Important in this regard, however, is that there have been protests against them in 2014 after two Haillom brothers were stabbed to death, while the MLR administrator's personal *shebeen* is still open in 2023 – despite an earlier public request in 2010 by the deputy prime minister to close down all *shebeens* for the problems they cause (Koot and Hitchcock, 2019).

Additionally, just as among other San groups in Namibia, in-migration has led to exclusion and discrimination (Dieckmann et al., 2014b). In particular, government jobs in Tsintsabis were mostly given to non-San, due to job requirements and the Haillom and !Xun not being able to fulfil these based on their backlog in formal education. But it also goes beyond formalities. Over the years, many Haillom and !Xun have complained about ethnic favouritism and discrimination when jobs were available, for instance at the police force. As the only Haillom policeman explained in 1999:

> [w]e have only one Haillom [police officer] in Tsintsabis […] I don't say I don't want these people [non-Haillom], but if they don't know the language and the area […] if they go to the people, the people are maybe afraid of them, they cannot talk of anything. […] They don't take us because we don't have the education and the school. That is why they think they mean nothing, they know nothing, but they have got the skills. You can educate people, but it does not mean that they know. (Interview 18 April 1999)

In 2023 there is still only one Haillom police officer (a different one now), despite the police force's growth over the years.

Such exclusion from the limited pool of jobs was also felt in 2009 during road construction work on the D3600, when many external labourers stayed in Tsintsabis

(Hüncke, 2010). Despite most of them being Namibian (around 90 per cent of 350 workers), only a few came from the surrounding areas. This again instigated fear among Haillom that Tsintsabis would be further taken over by others. Because the farm is already too small to provide all households with a reasonable plot, in-migration further increases land pressure. Moreover, people complained that some of the road workers seduce young girls (as young as 13 or 14) with alcohol and treat them as prostitutes (Berndalen, 2010). Haillom complained about racism and paternalism by road construction managers, and there have been accusations that the few employed Haillom were paid below the minimum wage. To speak out, however, would mean they risk losing their jobs (Hüncke, 2010).

An important general conception among San in Namibia is that San groups are looked down upon and treated as inferior (Dieckmann, 2007; Koot, 2023), as explained by a young woman when talking about her childhood experiences in school:

> [w]e are not the higher classes because the other people are working in the special place, like that, maybe in the big city. They think that's why they are better […] When they saw us, and our jewels, then they were making the jokes of us. And also because we have the small feet, and we have the small fingers. That is still happening, also after Independence […] with all Bushmens, also !Xun, and also Haillom. But me I always say that I'm proud to be Haillom! (Interview 16 April 1999)

A feeling of powerlessness, distrust and inferiority in relation to in-migrants continues until today (Castelijns, 2019). However, there are also some sentiments about reverse discrimination, albeit much less. One shop owner explained:

> [n]ewcomers who are of any other tribe than Bushmen do not have any power in this place. They have to listen to the Bushmen. Here in Tsintsabis it often happens that I am insulted. People then say, 'It's not your place, it's ours' or 'We are poor and you take all our money'. (Interview 22 November, 2009, cited in Hüncke, 2010, 26)

Hüncke (2010, 42) writes that the biggest fear of Haillom and !Xun in Tsintsabis was 'losing access to land to economically strong outsiders'. As a young Haillom woman stated:

> [r]ich people from outside will take over our places. The newcomers will go to the headman and ask for a plot without informing those to whom the plot used to belong. […] there will be quarrels between the first people, the Haillom, and the new people, for example Kavango, Herero. (Interview 29 September, 2009, cited in Hüncke, 2010, 43)

Over the years Haillom and !Xun have also complained about in-migrants erecting fences to demarcate their plots, restraining them from collecting firewood or gathering *veldkos* on these lands. As a result, they fear their children will not be able to

continue living there (Castelijns, 2019; Hüncke, 2010). An elderly woman explained how

> [t]oday all the lands from there has been sold. To the police officers, to the nurses, people who work in the government, officials, they are the ones who bought the lands from there. (Interview, 2016–2017, cited in Castelijns, 2019, 27)

Despite several visits from government officials over the years promising to improve the situation for the Haiǁom and !Xun in Tsintsabis, most of them have now lost faith in the government (Castelijns, 2019). Similarly, many have lost faith in their official and unofficial leaders.

Leadership

As explained above, throughout history, San groups have often been positioned in society as inferior to other ethnic groups before colonialism and later under colonialism and apartheid (Morton, 1994; Koot, 2023). Today, many Haiǁom and !Xun in Tsintsabis (as well as other San groups) express themselves still as inferior to others (i.e. other ethnic groups, white farmers, expatriates or government officials) (Koot, 2023). Nonetheless, some San groups have been allowed to establish government-recognised Traditional Authorities (TAs) after Independence. Each TA consists of a 'chief' and a traditional council serviced by traditional district 'headmen' and 'headwomen' (Dieckmann and Begbie-Clench, 2014; RoN, 2000). Traditionally, however, San groups favoured leadership structures that were relatively egalitarian, focused on consensus, and that pushed against a strong hierarchy (Dieckmann and Begbie-Clench, 2014; Suzman, 2001). The new TA system requires a more formal and hierarchical institutionalisation of their leadership that does not take into account their traditional social structure (Biesele and Hitchcock, 2011; Dieckmann and Begbie-Clench, 2014; Widlok, 1999).

Among Haiǁom the establishment of a TA that represents all Haiǁom has led to much tension: they appointed a chief in 1996 (Willem |Aib) who was not recognised by the government (Dieckmann, 2007), but in 2004 the government designated a Haiǁom TA under the Traditional Authorities Act (RoN, 2000). David ǁKhamuxab, a staunch SWAPO supporter making no claims to ENP, became the chief, but it remains unclear how this appointment was organised and how much it was supported by the larger group of Haiǁom:

> In 2004, the government of Namibia appointed a Haiǁom TA, David ǁKhamuxab. There were differences of opinion among the Haiǁom about how Mr. ǁKhamuxab was selected. Some people said that the government of Namibia appointed the TA without reference to local opinions. A number of Haiǁom raised questions about the

> electoral process that led to the appointment of the TA. […] There were Hai||om in some areas of Namibia who said that they had held elections but that none of the individuals who they voted for was considered by the government for the Hai||om TA. (Hitchcock, 2015, 271)

Support among the broader Hai||om community appears to have been limited, including in Tsintsabis, where ||Khamuxab's appointment was received with suspicion and where people had not joined any voting process (Koot and Hitchcock, 2019). Today, Hai||om in Tsintsabis expect from leaders under the new TA system that they would prevent in-migration (as described above) or instigate and support development processes for the group at large. Most have no confidence in Chief ||Khamuxab or his headman in Tsintsabis, and they prefer a chief in their own area and not from Outjo (almost 300 km away) where ||Khamuxab is based (Koot and Hitchcock, 2019). Since 2004, there have been two headmen (regional councillors) appointed by and serving/representing ||Khamuxab in Tsintsabis.

For a long time now, there have been tensions between the first headman representing Chief ||Khamuxab in Tsintsabis and the 'development committee' appointed by the MLRR already in the early 1990s when Tsintsabis became a resettlement farm. This committee initially consisted of 20 to 25 (mostly older) Hai||om and !Xun inhabitants (Hüncke, 2010; RoN, 2010). It is supposed to oversee

> the implementation of the [resettlement] programme and sub committees are supposed to work in the different income generating projects. Some of these sub committees are still operating while others no longer exist as their project members have moved out of the village for paid jobs in Tsumeb or nearby farms. (RoN, 2010, 130)

During the road construction work in 2009 (see above), suspicion towards ||Khamuxab's first headman – who was also employed by the Road Construction Company (RCC) as a mediator to divide jobs – increased, with people organising a demonstration against his alleged nepotism: apparently his family members received the better and permanent jobs (seven out of 15 permanent jobs) and people felt there was no fair job distribution (Hüncke, 2010). He was blamed for not supporting but exploiting his own people, for instance by not assisting them to get the right working equipment or holding back part of their salaries. In the end, the new road hardly increased the number of jobs for Hai||om and !Xun in Tsintsabis, but 'the traffic on the road, mainly large trucks, has brought drug trade, prostitution and other criminal activity to Tsintsabis, something which mainly affects the youth and creates a feeling of insecurity' (Castelijns, 2019, 30). Furthermore, he also faced criticism for assumed support in allocating land to outsiders. Due to these reasons, most Hai||om and !Xun in Tsintsabis lost faith in this first headman (LAC, 2013).

Due to all the pressure, the first headman stepped down in 2012 and another one replaced him to become Chief ||Khamuxab's second headman in Tsintsabis.

Despite this change, many still regard the first headman as an informally important person and as of 2023 both he and the second headman continue to be accused of giving away land to receive personal benefits, including from government officials. If these accusations are correct, local authorities representing Haiǁom evidently play an important role in ongoing processes of land dispossession. Without specifying any persons in particular, the government warned inhabitants of Tsintsabis in September 2023 in a public notice that:

> certain persons, including some members of the Tsintsabis community, are involved in illegal land dealings on the said farms [Chudib-Nuut, Urwald and Tsintsabis]. As a result, a number of individuals have grabbed or have been allocated land illegally on these farms.[8]

A new tactic is applied by some officials and powerful outsiders who gained land illegally for themselves with the support of the first headman representing ǁKhamuxab, as observed by co-author ǁKhumûb over the years: in the area from Grootfontein to Mangetti West to Oshivelo (which is at the heart of 'traditional' Haiǁom land), they meet with Haiǁom who are then being told to disclose themselves as non-Haiǁom in return for small benefits (e.g. cash or food). The first headman, still functioning as an important informal leader in Tsintsabis these days, is currently trying to set up a TA body separate from the Haiǁom TA to be able to allocate land in these areas or to legitimate previous illegal allocations to officials and powerful outsiders. For this potential new non-Haiǁom TA, these allocations will be easier if people indeed identify as non-Haiǁom, because that would mean they do not fall under the Haiǁom TA.

At national level, the tendency in the government to regard Haiǁom not as San often remained, as was also done in the past under the South African administration. For instance, in a census on the Namibian population and housing, Haiǁom were repeatedly referred to as Nama/Damara, based on them sharing the Khoekhoegowab language (RoN, 2003). New plans by different groups of Haiǁom aim to appoint different TAs for various geographical areas that would then split up the group that is currently regarded as 'the' Haiǁom. This would support initiatives as described above, in which Haiǁom are pressured not to disclose themselves as Haiǁom. In response, Haiǁom (including some headmen/headwomen and informal leaders) from Ondera, Grootfontein, Oshivelo and other places that carry strong historical value for them discussed the challenges and how their rights are violated. As ǁKhumûb observed, they are in the process of formulating a plan based on these challenges to inform civil society organisations and law firms and explain the violations of their human rights. The LAC and the Namibian San Council (NSC) are supportive, but currently lack the means to enact this plan. Together these leaders wrote a letter to the president in 2020, but never received a response.

8 Public notice by the executive director Ms Ndiyakupi Nghituwamata of the MAWLR.

Conclusion

Although the social complexities addressed in this article are not completely new and can be considered important issues for Namibian San at large, this does not mean they should not be subject to further investigation. It is precisely because of their structural character and their tendency to remain unresolved that they continually need to be addressed, including in resettlement and development planning. Other important social complexities worth further investigation are, for instance, health care, cultural appropriation, broader community involvement, and gender dynamics, and at the time of writing we are preparing a research plan for years to come in which we centralise community priorities (based on interviews with community members).

Both in-migration and related ethnic tensions, as well as issues surrounding leadership, are related social complexities that continue to explain why resettlement among the San of Namibia has repeatedly run into problems since Independence. Questions remain concerning why these structural social complexities have not been addressed more seriously in policies, planning and practice, and how to handle this in the future. Exploring historical circumstances and focusing more on ethnographic research is an important step in the analysis of social complexities (Fabinyi et al., 2010); it assists with clarifying the social dynamics that strongly affect resettlement on the ground. As a crucial pillar in the larger national land reform programme, social complexities are pivotal for understanding why resettlement works or not. We argue that the case of Tsintsabis shows the importance of acknowledging historically built-up injustices in development planning when addressing current social complexities, and we emphasise the importance of doing long-term ethno-historical and ethnographic research to be able to better understand contextual processes of resettlement and development. Such knowledge is crucial to inform planning, policy and practice.

Sustained research over the last few decades has shown how in Tsintsabis and surroundings, land has kept being grabbed by more powerful groups, and that development through the group resettlement programme has been highly problematic (Castelijns, 2019; Hüncke, 2010; Koot and Hitchcock, 2019; LAC, 2013; Widlok, 1999). Agricultural support from the government has been limited while the few income-generating activities at the farm (a bakery, a tourism project, construction jobs, etc.) revealed ethnic tensions and discrimination (especially of Hai||om and !Xun) and problems surrounding leadership. Such shortcomings were addressed at the Second National Land Conference in Windhoek in 2018 (Melber, 2019; RoN, 2018), but land-grabbing dynamics remain and are reinforced in recent developments. As we have seen, land in and around Tsintsabis is abducted by more powerful groups. 'High officials' hold private meetings to request Hai||om to deny their ethnic status as Hai||om to make small-scale land grabbing easier. These findings are important for the future of resettlement and warrant further ethnographic investigation. Indeed, generally speaking, resettlement projects in southern Africa have often 'failed

to restore the livelihoods of people affected' (Hitchcock and Vinding, 2004, 15). This is also applicable in Tsintsabis, where many Haiǁom and !Xun feel 'deprived of their rights because they cannot own the resettlement land but only the buildings on the land' (Hüncke, 2010, 27). In fact,

> people explain that they still feel colonised, or like slaves. [This] fits into the long history of many San groups in Namibia and southern Africa of being some of the most marginalised people in the region. (Castelijns, 2019, 26)

An important recent development regarding the future planning of Tsintsabis is that in 2020 it was formally announced that Tsintsabis would become a formal 'settlement',[9] with around two-thirds remaining a resettlement farm and a third becoming a settlement falling under the Guinas Constituency. This change means that Tsintsabis will cease fully to be a resettlement farm, and different rules and regulations will apply for a central part where most services and provisions are located. The regional officer of the constituency 'assured the public that the area is receiving undivided developmental attention' (cited in Simasiku, 2020). It is doubtful, however, how much development this will truly bring, since the Guinas constituency is without an office in Tsintsabis: the regional officer also explained that the council's hands were tied by a government moratorium on the construction of offices (Simasiku, 2020). An additional potential consequence is that most Haiǁom and !Xun will be excluded from new services at the settlement because they will need to pay for them and many lack the means to do so. At this stage, it remains to be seen what this will mean for in-migration and leadership.

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9 This differs from a municipality: a settlement is a smaller formal governmental body that will be managed by an employed chief administrator with a settlement committee. They will be responsible for service deliveries within the proclaimed settlement area.

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