Namibian narratives: postcolonial identities in craft and design.

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List of abbreviations

CBD	Central business district
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
COSDEC	Community Skills Development Centres
COSDEF	Community Skills Development Foundation
EDTMD	Economic Development, Tourism and Marketing Division
LCFN	Living Culture Foundation Namibia
MAN	Museums Association of Namibia
MEDS	Micro Entrepreneurial Development Section
MGECW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
NAD	Namibian Dollar
NPO	Non-profit organisation
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SMEIC	SME Business Incubation Centre
TACC	Tsumeb Arts and Craft Centre

Abstract

This study presents the first holistic mapping of Namibian craft and design through narrative and commerce. At the centre of this study are the people of the Namibian craft and design world. With a focus on an independent and postcolonial Namibia, this study considers the impact of social and environmental forces on artefact makers and their artefacts. Thus, the cultural and social influences on rural and urban artefact makers, the roles narratives play in artefact making and marketing practices in different settings, and the presence of Namibian artefacts in craft and tourist markets of the southern African region are mapped. An ethnographic approach is followed in mapping the world(s) of Namibian craft and design. This approach is underpinned by scholarly work on narratives, craft and design theory and the practical application of postcolonial theory in fieldwork, analysis and representation of data.

This holistic mapping addresses the lack of coordinated strategies in, and theoretical knowledge about, Namibian craft and design. The thesis explores how Namibian artefact makers negotiate and sustain their identities and existences through their practices, and why they continue their practices in spite of the challenges they face. Their narratives reveal how their quality of life and work environments impact on their craft practices. Just as artefact making offers ways to 'work through' their particular life challenges, storytelling offers ways to make sense of difficult circumstances. This thesis demonstrates how stories and artefacts function in social realms and suggests that stories play a crucial role in socially sustaining Namibian artefact makers and their making practices. The potential contribution of stories to sustainable marketing is also demonstrated. Most importantly, this holistic mapping identifies the challenges of maintaining sustainable craft and design practices in Namibia and presents some opportunities for their development.

I declare that:

- this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university;

- to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.

Melanie A. C. Sarantou

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Introduction

Namibian indigenous[1] craft producers primarily employ traditional methods of production and are drawing on indigenous knowledge when producing crafts. In the contemporary world Namibian artefact-producing communities, whether they practice traditional or western craft and design, are vulnerable and their sustainability is possibly at risk. Many practitioners continue their practices despite the absence of a secure income and the consequential impact on their quality of life. Global markets and industrial methods of production pose challenges to these communities, as exemplified by competitive pricing and on-time delivery of orders.[2] From my knowledge of and experience[3] in this 'world',[4] the sustainability of Namibian artefact production needs to be further explored to shed light on issues such as whether the unavoidable exposure to foreign cultures and lifestyles have an alienating effect on Namibians and their local cultures.

This ethnographic study addresses the problem of gaining an overview of Namibian craft and design worlds to guide their sustainable development. The environments and life situations in which individuals and groups produce and market their artefacts in order to sustain their worlds will be illuminated in my study. How and why Namibian craftspeople and designers work will be considered in order to gain an understanding of their production practices and the outcomes, their artefacts. The aim of this study is to gain a holistic overview of Namibian craft and design worlds. A central assumption of this study is that improvisation stimulates socially sustainable Namibian craft and

[1] In Australia the term 'Indigenous' (with a capital 'I') is used when referring to Australian Aboriginal people. In southern Africa this term is used with a lower case 'i', which is suitable for this study on Namibian and southern African craft and design.

[2] The foreign domination of African markets is as a result of the colonial legacy of European countries extending their imperial ambitions via trade, diplomacy and administration. Today imported artefacts are flooding the Namibian market due to extremely competitive product prices offered by foreign traders.

[3] For fifteen years I worked in Namibian craft and design as a self-employed fashion designer, managing a studio and clientele base. I was also a lecturer in the subject Fashion at the University of Namibia and a director and project manager of a non-profit organisation. I have gained extensive experience in both rural and urban Namibian craft and design communities as a product developer, trainer and mentor.

[4] Howard S. Becker, "Art Worlds and Social Types," *American Behavioral Scientist* 19, no. 6 (1976): 703; R. Keith Sawyer, *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123. Howard Becker uses the term 'art world' to explain the interconnectedness of the individuals, groups and 'things' that are included in and contribute to an 'art world' as 'collective action'. An 'art world' exists because of those people and 'things' that make art work possible and sustain an art form. An 'art world' is a holistic concept that includes (a) the individuals, or artists, who produce various art works or outcomes, for example artefacts; (b) all the people who assist and work to sustain the ongoing practices within such world, including the presence of audiences or consumers of the outcomes provided by such a world; and (c) all the 'things' needed to make outcomes possible, such as equipment, tools, raw materials, environments and spaces. I use the term 'world' instead of 'domain' or 'field', because these terms are used in specific creative contexts by R. Keith Sawyer. Therefore, when referring to Namibian craft and design as a 'whole', I use the term 'craft and design world'. There are particular 'worlds' within the overall Namibian craft and design world, as Chapters 3-8 will show.

design. While craft and design theory will overlap with postcolonial theory[5] to provide a framework for this study, the resulting theorisations attempt to contribute to Namibian craft and design theory.

In this introduction I stated the aim and assumptions of this study to acquaint the reader with the research problem. The following paragraphs will provide a brief overview of the research context, as well as discuss my motivation for embarking on this study. Finally, a summary of the eight chapters it contains will provide an overview of this thesis.

Identifying the problem

In Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, a shop located within the Old Brewery Craft Complex displays interesting Namibian fashion and jewellery designs. Large images of fashionable (and, I assume,) Namibian models hang high on the wall space above clothing rails carrying colour-coordinated fashion collections. There are 'modern' garments made from natural fibres, *shwe-shwe*[6] and *ondelela*.[7] On one side of the shop, an impressive glass counter carries Ovambo[8] baskets and professional shop brochures, and next to it are some display cabinets containing high quality jewellery made of silver and semi-precious stones, a typical addition to the jewellery many Namibian goldsmiths, working in European traditions, use in their work. Namibia is recognised for the abundance of semi-precious crystals and gemstones (such as quartz, pietersite and tourmaline) it contains. In the centre of the shop I find an arrangement of high quality leather bags and colourful children's clothing. Next to that is a metal cone carrying ostrich eggshell jewellery. The display is attractive, coordinated according to artefact groups, giving an ordered impression. The shop manager(s) clearly invested thought in

[5] Pal Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation: The Post-Colonial Economy of Giving," *Social Identities* 6, no. 1, (2000): 40; Robert Thornton, "The Potentials of Boundaries in South Africa: Steps Towards a Theory of the Social Edge," in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, ed. Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (London: Zed Books, 1996), 136; Susan Petrilli, "Sensibility in the Era of Global Communication: A Semioethic Perspective," *Social Semiotics* 18, no. 4 (2008): 505. A cautious approach is necessary when I reflect on how to apply postcolonial theory since this phenomenon is not universal and cannot be generalised into a homogenous broad-spectrum theory. Instead, it needs careful understanding of a specific locality and context. Postcolonial theory responds to more than a temporal or chronological structure of a post-independence and post-Apartheid condition as, for example, in the case of Namibia; instead it engages with and contests the power structures and social hierarchies of colonialism *and* postcolonialism. Adopting this approach, postcolonialism indicates a situation in time, allowing clear spaces for a different awareness of an 'other', 'otherness', and, as Susan Petrilli states, 'the other within ourselves'.

[6] *Shwe-shwe* is a cotton printed textile associated with the clothing of many southern African groups. The name 'shwe-shwe' derives from the sound made by the moving textile when women wear it.

[7] *Ondelela* is a cotton material printed with characteristic red, white and dark blue vertical stripes and strongly associated with Ovambo traditional clothing. The modern version derives from a striped textile that was bartered with Portuguese traders in northern Namibia. An original sample is of this textile can be viewed in the Mission Museum in Helsinki, Finland.

[8] Johan S. Malan, *Die Voelker Namibias*, trans. Kuno F. R. Budack (Goettingen and Windhoek: Klaus Hess, 1998), 21-22. The Ovambo are the largest ethnic group in Namibia, making up 44 per cent of the population at Independence in 1990. This group of people are related to central African agriculturalists and emigrated around the mid-sixteenth century from the central-eastern lake areas of Africa to settle in northern Namibia, north of Etosha National Park and south of Angola. The Ovambo sub-groups are the Kwanyama and Ndonga, the two largest groups, and also the Kwambi, Ngandjera, Mbalantu, Kwaluudhi, Eunda and Nklonkadhi.

creating the successful display of these artefacts. The display and the neutral colours of the artefacts elicit my interest.



Figure 1.1 Ostrich eggshell, pearl-opaque glass beads and nylon yarn necklace (dimensions: 42 cm), 2011. Artefact producer unknown. Available from Hui-a khoe Foundation, Namibia. Photograph by Attila Giersch.

Here I come to a halt. Drawn by the neutral colours, I think: 'Earthy.' I want to feel the cool eggshell on my skin since I instinctively know it will be pleasant to wear this piece, a necklace with coin-size round discs strung on almost invisibly fine synthetic twine (shown in Figure 1.1), on my skin on a hot summer's day. When I touch it, the necklace feels as I intuitively knew it would when I first saw it: cool and light. It also smells just as I thought it would: light, fairly neutral, yet faintly earthy and fragrant at the same time. There are two colours to choose from: ivory and the beige-brown model. These necklaces are delicately made, each bead shaped to perfection. As I know from experience, a significant amount of time and considerable skill has been invested in these pieces by their maker(s).

This artefact is marketed by the Hui-a khoe Foundation, which is an organisation that promotes the manufacturing and marketing of jewellery produced by San, or Ju/'hoansi, communities living in the

Nyae-Nyae constituency around the town Tsumkwe in the Otjozondjupa region of Namibia.[9] Indigenous to southern Africa,[10] the San are scattered all over southern Africa, but mainly live in smaller communities or groups in the Kalahari desert areas that span into southern Angola, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.[11] San hand-crafted jewellery is manufactured using very old and traditional techniques. In this artefact, the disc bead necklace, each bead is shaped from a broken ostrich eggshell piece and carefully filed into a disc.

For San people, ostrich eggs are valuable commodities in themselves, signifying survival as both a food source and vessels for carrying water. Traditionally, no ostrich eggshell would be broken on purpose since eggs were sought after for their nutritional value and usability as containers and vessels.[12] Therefore, beads were produced from broken eggshells collected from nesting sites.[13] Ostrich shell may contain old narratives that refer back to the nomadic existence of the San in Southern Africa and their relationship with ostriches as sources of food, with a range of 'products' made by the San from various parts of the ostrich, including the shell. Ostrich eggshell beads were and are used for body adornment, woven into jewellery or embroidered onto leather and cloth. The necklace relates to narratives that illustrate the centrality and significance of animals, like ostriches, in San culture. These narratives are mimicked in hunting rituals and cultural ceremonies. This necklace illustrates the importance of animals to San people.

The larger, round disc-shaped beads used in this necklace carry additional 'internal narratives'[14] because they were traditionally fabricated with two holes in the centre to serve as buttons. Old copper buttons from military coats worn by British soldiers in Botswana and the *Schutztruppe*[15] in Namibia, were valuable collectables for many Namibian groups and often used as body adornment in hairstyles. Due to their scarcity, buttons were replicated from other materials such as plastic or ostrich eggshell.[16]

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[9] Malan, *Die Voelker*, 109. The San groups residing in Namibia are the !Kung, Naró, Hai-||om and |Auni. The !Kung are made up of several kinships or groups living in various areas of Namibia such as the !Xu, ||Kxáu||'en and the Zû-|hoasi, or, as referred to in other literature, the Ju/'hoansi. The San are traditionally hunter-gatherers but nowadays depend on farming, mostly as part of government-mandated modernisation programmes.

[10] Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), 416; Marie Ann Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage* (Saskatoon: Purich Press, 2000), 65. Questions about 'who is indigenous' are significant for the inhabitants of all the Earth's continents. The San, however, are one of the groups that are widely considered to be indigenous to Africa. Ferraro and Andreatta argue that an 'indigenous population' consists of 'small-scale' cultures characteristic of the 'original inhabitants of a region', who 'identify with a specific small-scale cultural heritage' and 'have no significant role in the government'. Battiste and Henderson write that most Africans, especially those who 'achieved decolonisation and self-determination' consider themselves indigenous.

[11] Malan, *Die Voelker*, 108.

[12] Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: the Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (Cambridge and Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 11.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Marcus Banks, *Using Visual Data in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2007), 52, doi: 10.4135/9780857020260. 'Internal narratives' refer to the internal significations that are invested and embedded in an artefact. These significations transfer, and often also transport, messages via their specific significations.

[15] German soldiers who were sent to Namibia in the early 1900s were referred to as the *Schutztruppe*, literally the 'protection troops', or the troops who protected Germany's interests in Namibia.

[16] Anneliese Scherz, Ernst R. Scherz, Gabriel B. Taapopi and Antje Otto, *Hair-styles, Head-dresses and Ornaments in Namibia and Southern Angola* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 1981), 21-22.

The smaller white glass beads seen in this artefact also carry narratives that relate to their value as commodities. White plastic beads bartered from Portuguese traders were especially scarce and valuable possessions amongst Namibian groups and were sewn or woven into various artefacts that served as body adornments.[17] White and coloured beads were valuable wedding gifts from a !Kung man to his bride.[18]

My thoughts drift to a bridal gown worn with this delicate, light artefact. I imagine the setting, the hairstyle... and then I knew I had to purchase it, but not the ivory one I imagined with a bridal dress. No, the brown-beige artefact will be a perfect gift for someone I have in mind, because I know there will be personal meanings invested in this artefact, both mine and the receiver's, that will last a lifetime.

Strikingly, not much information is provided in the shop about the artefact. A friendly sales lady tells me the artefacts are made by a group named Hui-a khoe, but the individual maker is unknown. Why? Does the group prefer to be known as a group instead of as individual makers? At least I am relieved to pay a more than fair price for this piece: 35.00 Euro. The previous week, while conducting field research in villages around Tsumkwe, many women attempted to sell me similar artefacts for a fraction of what they are worth. One woman offered me a delicate bracelet for less than 2.00 Euro.

While refusing to pay such a price I wondered how such an artefact could be sold at this price when ostrich eggshells are almost unavailable in the area where the artefacts are produced. Ostrich populations have dwindled significantly in recent years and, therefore, scarce ostrich eggshell should be considered very valuable. As a result, Hui-a khoe artisans have to import ostrich eggshell from ostrich farms in South Africa to the Tsumkwe area to sustain the production of jewellery in the Ju/'hoansi communities supported by them.

The conflicting narratives of the craftswomen from Tsumkwe who were undervaluing and underpricing their work, (including the raw materials they used) on the one hand, and raw materials that had to be imported to this area on the other, illustrate the existing tensions in Namibian craft production. Artefacts such as the bracelets offered to me in Tsumkwe should not be traded in such a manner. These are challenges that should be addressed within Namibian craft and design. Why are artefacts sold at a price that does not reflect the value of the skill, time and raw materials invested in them? What are the issues that drive Namibian craftspeople to such unsustainable practices? What should change and what could be done? Is sufficient knowledge available to address the problems indicated here?

[17] Ibid., 24.
[18] Shostak, *Nisa*, 127.

Craft practices are often romanticised. Ideally, craft ventures should contribute to the quality of life of their practitioners. In reality, craft practitioners often find themselves in 'dismal financial situations'.[19] Worldwide, most craftspeople work under strenuous conditions since they work to time-consuming schedules that conflict with other responsibilities they have, for example, towards their families. Craftspeople usually earn insignificant income from sales of their work[20] and the lack of the 'voice of the artisan'[21] contributes to these problems, as exemplified by the Namibian situation. Additionally, craftspeople are at the mercy of consumer-driven mass-markets while public recognition is often absent or fickle. An American survey of 1980 showed that most craftspeople regard an 'opportunity for creative expression' as more important than financial gain.[22] In Namibia the same situation prevails, many practitioners continue their practices despite the limitations placed on their quality of life and the absence of a secure income. These contradictory circumstances provide the impetus for my investigation.

These findings result from many years of work in Namibian craft and design communities and amongst individuals who sustained their creative practices in spite of many limitations and challenges. Additional findings resulting from my experiences are that many uncoordinated 'development' activities were conducted amongst Namibian craft and design communities. The lack of coordinated strategies is a common problem with many project-based community development activities and in Namibia, judged from my experiences in its craft and design world, a lack of follow-through often limits projects' potential. Short term engagements do not usually allow sufficient time for sustainable implementation and thus cannot generate substantial change. The lack of coordinated strategies also often resulted from an absence of theoretical information that would supply and support a coherent oversight of Namibian craft and design. I therefore seek to present the first holistic mapping of Namibian craft and design worlds.

Namibian craft and design worlds have to be considered in context. How Namibian artefact makers negotiate and sustain their existences in these craft and design worlds needs to be explored in relation to postcoloniality. These worlds should be viewed in all their specificities as they vary between locations and people in the Namibian geographic area. What are the issues Namibian craft and design practitioners grapple with? How does their quality of life and the settings in which they work impact on their craft practices? What frustrates them? What motivates them to continue their practices? What are their stories? Namibian individuals and groups working to make a living in and sustain Namibian craft and design worlds need consideration. The outcomes, the artefacts produced by these Namibian craft and design worlds, also need to be considered, explored and understood.

[19] Elliot G. Mishler, *Storylines: Craftartists' Narratives of Identity* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 7.
[20] Ibid., 6-7.
[21] Kevin Murray, "Outsourcing the Hand: An Analysis of Craft-Design Collaborations Across the Global Divide," *Craft and Design Enquiry* 2, no. 4 (2011): 4.
[22] Mishler, *Storylines*, 7.

The goal of the study will be to reveal issues that influence the sustainability of the practices related to craft and design artefacts in a postcolonial setting. My goal is to understand why Namibian craft and design worlds create and sustain the meanings invested in their artefacts. I seek to discover why they produce these artefacts and, above all, why artefact production continues and whether it is sustainable.

My personal conviction that the problems indicated above need to be addressed and my drive to conduct this study has motivated me to 'give an account' and translate my lived experience of the Namibian craft and design world into this thesis.[23]

> I am working hard in this field, and the field of my labours is my own self. I have become a problem to myself, like the land which a farmer works only with difficulty and at the cost of much sweat. For I am not now investigating the tracts of heaven, or measuring the distance of the stars, or trying to discover how the earth hangs in space. I am investigating myself, my memory, my mind. (*Ego sum qui memini, ego animus*).[24]

I was born and raised in Namibia by German-Namibian and Dutch parents. Being part of Africa, and aware from an early age of multiple ethnicities, I was always aware of being 'inevitably caught in the two worlds' in which I existed.[25] This awareness was fuelled by the reality of living in a hybrid household divided along historical and cultural lines. On a national level, the divisions I experienced revolved around African and European cultures; on a domestic level, the division was between German and Dutch cultures, which have a history of hostility, exacerbated by World War II.

In 1990, at the end of high school, I experienced Namibia's independence. At the end of my four years of tertiary education in South Africa, I experienced the birth of the 'new' South Africa when Apartheid was officially abolished in 1994. Due to my primary and secondary schooling, I experienced privileged white African circumstances. From an early age, I realised the value of education and, although in a school that privileged white people, I studied hard to achieve good results. Since the age of thirteen I have followed an unfamiliar educational route, one that was not approved of by my Apartheid-era, Afrikaans-medium school. My decision to become a fashion designer was much criticized by my school community since the dominant perception was that art cannot sustain a living and that only leftist, anti-Apartheid regime whites practice the 'arts', which were considered subversive.

My career choice was emotionally and financially challenging. In 1993 I had the opportunity to showcase my debut fashion collection at the Nederburg Fashion Show in Paarl, South Africa. In the showcase catalogue I stated that I was committed to 'the development of Namibian fashion'. After

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[23] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 449.
[24] Jean Guitton, cited in Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 98.
[25] Pal Ahluwalia, "Negotiating Identity: Post-Colonial Ethics and Transnational Adoption," *Journal of Global Ethics* 3, no. 1 (2007): 58, doi: 10.1080/17449620701219881.

completing my studies in South Africa, I decided to return to an independent Namibia at the end of 1993. Four months later, I started a fashion business in Windhoek and soon after this became involved in local fashion education. I mentored interested students part-time and three years later the Visual Arts Department at the University of Namibia approached me to develop a curriculum for the subject Fashion as part of an undergraduate degree in Visual Arts. This subject was implemented in 1998 and I taught it for ten years, while managing a design studio part-time.

During my work and study experiences, I came to realise that lack of education is undoubtedly a prominent factor in constraining Namibia's growth in a global world while also contributing to substantial income inequalities and social stratification along class divides. My commitment to develop Namibian fashion coincided with the education and training of a new generation of designers in postcolonial Namibia. Scholarships in the arts were limited at the time (and continue to be) and many Namibian parents cannot afford to send their children abroad for education. Therefore there was a need for a broad range of courses to be developed and implemented within Namibian educational institutions. From 2002 I became interested in social design issues, craft education and craft community development and in 2008 I initiated and co-directed a not-for-profit craft and design organisation. This association, or NPO,[26] promoted emerging Namibian fashion and jewellery designers. In addition, it assisted many rural and urban craft communities with artefact design, development and marketing.

During this time I realised that, on the one hand, Namibian craft producing communities suffer from a serious lack of training, principally in the areas of global market demands associated with artefact quality, combined with a lack of understanding of market access and distribution channels. On the other hand, I realised that Namibian artefacts and local fabrication processes are misunderstood in global markets – by both their agents and global consumers – and that colonial perceptions about Namibian artefacts prevail. Moreover, a strategic approach and scholarly research are needed, including the application of systematic and suitable methodological approaches, to fix these problems. Namibian artefacts deserve a broader understanding by the Namibian public, tourism sector, Namibian government, academics, artefact collectors, development organisations, policy makers and the global community. Bereft of scholarly research and theorisation, the growth of this creative domain has been hindered and can only benefit from scholarship relating to arts, crafts and design and the role they play in postcolonial Namibia. My own experience and personal perspective, therefore, have been influential in instigating the current research and have been a driving force in the formulation of this research project.

While I was working in northern Namibia between 2007 and 2009, and a year later during the field studies I conducted for this research, various Namibian women repeatedly asked me two questions: (a)

[26] In Namibia 'not-for-profit organisations' are referred to as 'non-profit organisations' and therefore the acronym NPO is often used and will be used in this thesis.

'Will you train us?' and (b) 'When are you coming back?'. These are the questions that inspired this study. Scholarly work related to Namibian artefacts and their making will contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and communities working in this domain, who are currently creating and labouring with little recognition or appreciation for their role in the postcolonial development of the nation.

As researchers we have to be aware of limitations caused by our personal views, however. Namibian scholar Memory Biwa questions whether researchers are 'moving beyond ... colonial practices to conduct research that is respectable and dignified to the communities'.[27] All researchers, including myself, should acknowledge voices from social peripheries 'which ... have been ignored', and should find and listen to these unheard 'voices' and their stories.[28] Frantz Fanon suggested that being able to 'feel ... touch ... discover each other' is possible through discretion, reticence and giving up the self.[29] This study and my ethical approach in regarding an 'other' were only possible due to a position in which I adopted continuous self-reflection and self-renunciation. This study was an attempt to 'discover each other' and thus this study reflects both the participants' and my own experiences as we 'touched' each other during our encounters.

Melissa Steyn argues that white people 'need to find new narratives to explain who they are, what they are doing in Africa, and what their relationship is to the indigenous people and to the continent'.[30] My experience has convinced me that not only white, but all individuals and communities in Africa, have to find these new narratives to which Steyn refers. While some Namibians live in wealth and comfort, others are trapped in a 'socio-economic downward spiral' and 'networks that provide them with poor chances'.[31] Such social divisions are, of course, common in all nations. In the history of Namibia, however, they remain unexplored, allowing inequities to persist without explanation, protest or remediation.

Survey results show that better educated Namibian migrant workers 'have higher incomes and send better remittances' to their extended families.[32] This is my motivation to continue to work for an improvement in the quality of life for Namibians working in the artefact craft and design domain who wish to be included in a growing, postcolonial economy and democratic society. All Namibians have to find a new ethical ontological focus and rely on a life well lived within a 'humanity of alterity' and tolerate 'diversity' as stipulated in the vision of the Namibian government's cultural policy.[33] It is in the interest of the 40 per cent of Namibians who live under the poverty line that all Namibians ask

[27] Memory Biwa, "Stories of the Patchwork Quilt," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*, ed. Andre du Pisani, Reinhardt Koessler and William A. Lindecke (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut, 2010), 336 and 342.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 206.
[30] Melissa Steyn, *White talk: White South Africans and the Strategic Management of Diasporic Whiteness* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2003), 122.
[31] Clemens Greiner, "Migration, Translocal Networks and Socio-Economic Stratification in Namibia," *Africa* 81, no. 4 (2011): 614 and 615.
[32] Ibid., 606.
[33] Petrilli, "Sensibility," 503.

what their relationship is to this country's poor and that 'unity' is upheld as an ethical space instead of a nationalistic idea for a romanticised 'imagined community'.[34]

Ahluwalia asserts that for the 'postcolonial white ... there is a dual burden – not only do they have to recover their own narratives but they must also recognise that they have blocked the narratives of the indigenous populations which they rendered invisible'.[35] This study aims to 'hear' and record the narratives of Namibian crafts that were silenced by colonialism, and are at risk of being silenced by global consumer capitalism, in order to reveal them. During this study I not only discovered the role of narratives in the lives of fellow Namibians, but also realised that my journey and search for knowledge shaped a personal narrative in itself. While I consider myself a Namibian African, I am also a 'white', non-indigenous Namibian-born woman of German-Dutch descent. I approach this study by acknowledging my subject position, which includes my experience in the Namibian craft and design world. Therefore, as a researcher holding a hybrid Namibian identity, I use this position mindfully and constructively. In addition, my own designer background affords me the ability to analyse and critique artefacts by drawing on my practical experience.

Themes of the study

The threads that form the central themes of this study will shape the synoptic mapping of Namibian craft and design. One of the main threads of this thesis is narratives and their wider function in meaning making, sustainable artefact creation and marketing. In addition, identities and their relation to craft and design artefacts, materials and practices will be explored in the Namibian and wider southern African context. The study will be informed by postcolonial theories and will consider the sustainability of Namibian craft and design worlds.

This study focuses on the role of narratives in processes of meaning making rather than establishing verifiable 'truths'. The study will include various narrative dimensions that form part of meaning making processes, such as social, ethical, emotional, ritual, mythical, improvisational, pedagogical, philosophical and material (including artefacts).[36]

[34] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.
[35] Pal Ahluwalia, "When Does a Settler Become a Native? Citizenship and Identity in a Settler Society," *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001): 69.
[36] Ninian Smart, "Extract from Ninian Smart, University of California Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. 9 – 21", accessed September 29, 2014, http://www.mmiweb.org.uk/hull/site/site/pot_sessions/smart_dimensions.html.

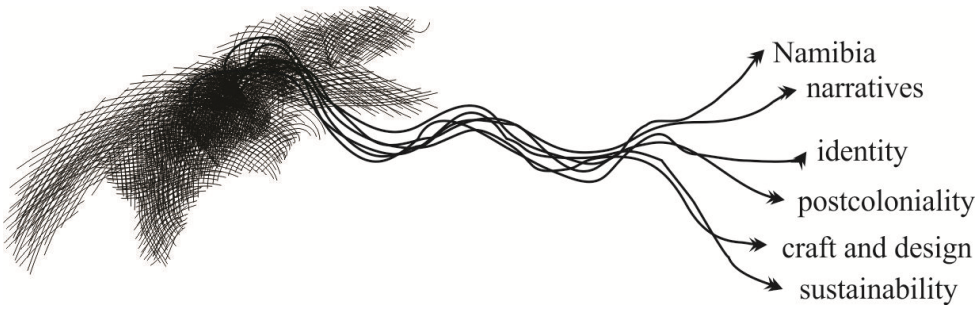

Figure 1.2 A thematic representation of the study. The threads: 'Namibia', 'narratives', 'identity', 'postcoloniality', 'craft and design' and 'sustainability' form the main fabric of the study.

Narratives are frequently part of a methodological approach in research; however in this study they are not limited to method. A more open and fluid approach to narrative is followed to discover what additional value they have in the context of identity. In narratives, the role of memories take on 'intellectual and the affective dimensions' since these dimensions intersect. Narratives therefore are 'intellectual effort' says Ricoeur.[37] Yet, narratives and narrativity do not offer substitute resolutions for understanding and thus at best stories facilitate learning since they give meaning to existence and how lives are lived.[38]

Narratives speak of histories, fictions and identities; they are 'life stories'.[39] Indeed, narratives are such an integral part of human life, that people 'equate life to the story or stories [they] tell about it'.[40] Stories not only speak of lives, but they are interwoven within lives. Therefore, narratives intersect with human life at certain moments, spaces and places and thus play a significant role in identity formation processes. Narratives, as identity performances, have a significant role in this study as they are able to communicate ontological aspects associated with identity formation, including the tensions that are associated with notions of 'otherness' and selfhood.[41]

The use of narrative as a medium to 'share ... understanding of life' is employed. Thus the narrative function offers ways to work through and cope with the tensions related to postcoloniality and related notions of postcolonial identities such as displacement, power and authenticity. Improvisatory approaches related to Namibian craft and design will be investigated, because narratives can potentially strengthen socially sustainable Namibian craft and design. In general, sustainability is an important factor relating to the work of craftspeople and designers. Sustainability refers not only to the economic and environmental, but to a wider maintenance of the social, as well as identities and cultural representations.

[37] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 30.
[38] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 238.
[39] Elliot Mishler, *Storylines*, 18.
[40] Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative identity', *Philosophy Today*, 35, 1, Spring 1991, 77.
[41] Mishler, *Storylines*, 18.

Summary of thesis chapters

In Chapter 1 I review, or 'map', the literature related to this study. Since Namibia's independence, only a few scholarly studies of its craft and design world have been written, and thus knowledge remains partial and sporadic. In the literature review, theory related to the concept of 'mapping' will be introduced, followed by scholarly accounts of Namibian craft and design, accounts of Namibia from 1990 to the present and theories that relate to southern African craft and design.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the methodological approaches I followed in this study. Extensive ethnographic fieldwork was conducted to map Namibian craft and design worlds. My ethnographic approach seeks to understand the Namibian craft and design world in a holistic way, by including all aspects related to craftspeople and designers' usual daily practices such as artefact selling, marketing and making. The aim is to analyse, explore and understand the broader contexts in which practitioners function, which includes their different life experiences and their social, economic and environmental situations.

The roles of people who assist in sustaining the Namibian craft and design worlds are one of the main topics that I discuss in Chapter 3. One of these supportive functions is the marketing of Namibian artefacts so that they are brought into contact with audiences who will eventually consume, use and enjoy them. I discuss the roles of craft vendors in craft selling spaces where identities and narratives are shaped and transmitted and where craft practices that sustain the culture of the craft makers are performed.

In Chapter 4 I provide an overview of artefacts that are produced in Namibia. I aim to illustrate the various categories of crafts found on the route travelled and the distribution of various artefact categories at various sites on the travelled route (at a specific time). I also compare the distribution of artefacts in Namibia and South Africa according to the artefact groups found at the 52 craft sites I visited. This information attempts to provide the specificities of Namibian craft distribution in the southern African region.

The narratives relating to Namibian artefacts, the life stories of their producers (who work and live in rural and postcolonial Namibian settings) and their activities in relation to creating artefacts are considered in Chapter 5. The quality of life, craft practices and ways of work, use of raw materials and the tools used by remote Ju/'hoan craftspeople from craft communities located in the far north eastern parts of Namibia, in the Otjozondjupa region, will be discussed with the aim to illustrate the specificities and issues that influence craft production and sustainability in different Ju/'hoan communities.

Chapter 6 offers a discussion of sustainable craft practices and communities in various contexts: a mixed Namibian embroidery group from Orwetoveni, a neighbourhood on a peripheral communal

farm area in Otjiwarongo, and three Ovambo basket weaving groups from the Ondangwa area in mid-northern Namibia. Craft practices within these communities (such as their use of raw materials and tools) are discussed and how these communities are socially sustained is considered.

Individual portraits of Namibian designer-makers are sketched in Chapter 7. I reflect on the lives and careers of Namibian designer-makers in the Namibian craft and design world. I also investigate how they deal with the realities of this world on emotional and social levels. This chapter specifically investigates how craft and design practices in urban Namibia relate to social processes and sustainability and how colonialism and race influence Namibian designer-makers' existences and their processes in the Namibian craft and design world.

In Chapter 8 I expand the portraits of Namibian designer-makers and consider how social processes affect the design styles and material identities of the artefacts these designer-makers produce. I also consider the meanings related to raw materials used by Namibian artefact producers and how specific social, cultural and economic contexts related to these producers are expressed in their design styles, which are also identities reflected and established in recognisable ways as mediums of communication to a wider public. How Namibian designer-makers work and the role of improvisation in Namibian artefact making practices will also be considered in this chapter, which is followed by the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 1

Mapping Namibian craft and design

> *People ... find themselves in environments built as assemblies of connected elements. Yet in practice they continue to thread their own ways through these environments, tracing their own paths as they go.*[42]

This study maps the worlds that make up the Namibian craft and design world. Although the post-independence Namibian craft and design world offers considerable scope for research and theorisation, there are only a few scholarly studies of it. This is not particular to Namibia, scholarly knowledge of southern African craft and design remains partial and sporadic.[43] The aim of this chapter is to 'map' the existing literature related to Namibian craft and design worlds. To do so the concept of 'mapping' will be introduced, followed by an introduction of the concepts of 'craft' and 'design', and an account of the role of tourism in southern African craft and design. Existing literature about crafts from southern Africa and Namibia will be reviewed to establish what has been done and what needs further investigation.

This study investigates Namibian craft and design in the context of its individual makers and their social context, because individual and social elements are equally important in forming an artefact's identity. In order to understand an artefact, its maker(s) and their communities have to be observed. Craft and design artefacts considered for this study are produced in specific contexts by individual designers, craftspeople and by artefact producing communities. Therefore, a brief overview of Namibia's political, economic, social and environmental issues since independence in 1990 will be given, with the objective to sketch the contexts in which Namibian craft and design practitioners function. I will also discuss the role of the Namibian government in Namibian arts and culture.

[42] Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 75.
[43] Anitra Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu Village: Craft and the Art of Modernity in South Africa," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 3, no. 1 (2010): 56.

Maps and postcoloniality

A map is a graphic representation – in some material form or another – of an area, showing the placement of physical features within that area.[44] Maps are used to represent and record collected data in sequences, and to display the spatial arrangement of data or 'land marks' over an area to orient people and guide them from where they are to their next destination.[45] During my field study I used maps to orient my movements in the field. In this study I aim to create maps to represent and record the data I collected to familiarise readers with the Namibian craft and design world.

Maps are 'things'. They are tactile, 'textilic'[46], and they are about environments, the relationships between material 'things', actions and social webs. Mapmaking is also a 'textilic' process, because it involves people, artefacts and networks that are represented in a material way.[47] However, maps also exclude information due to their synoptic nature. Maps are, in essence, outlines of an area or a world. Due to the limiting nature of studies and maps, including my own, many aspects of the Namibian craft and design world will be excluded from this depiction, for example, I did not investigate commercial marketing and business perspectives of this world.

Despite its limitations, and aware that 'mapping is not mapmaking', I will also use mapping as a theoretical framework and method for this study.[48] Ingold explains that mapmaking is like writing, an idea that is expressed in material form and intrinsically connected to history.[49] Mapping is like speaking; it is enacted and a 'performative genre'.[50] In this study I will engage in both of these activities: mapping and mapmaking. Mapping is an enacted activity performed with the aim to systematically plan an approach, or a way forward. This activity derives its meanings from contexts in which embodied capacities such as 'mental imagery' and 'performative gestures' are brought into play.[51]

I use mapping to make readers aware of the physical and theoretical 'land marks' that exist in Namibian craft and design worlds. I aim to guide readers through the existing theoretical knowledge and indicate theoretical shortcomings in the literature about the Namibian craft and design world. However, this study acknowledges that researchers, including myself, leave certain questions

[44] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 224-26. Ingold notes that the aim of contemporary cartography is to convert a specific area into a distanced and encoded representation of that area, as if it is 'issued from a point of view above and beyond the world'.[44] He also draws on C. M. Turnbull's theories (1989) when he explains that perceptions about maps being 'independent of any point of view', and what they encode and communicate are valid in any place or space in the world, is 'myth'. Maps are indexical through representations of signs; areas that embody the global and not necessarily the local, and thus they are usually embedded in 'foreign' thinking and 'forms of life'.
[45] *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th Edition, s.v. "map".
[46] Mike Anusas and Tim Ingold, "Designing Environmental Relations: From Opacity to Textility," *Design Issues* 29, no. 4 (2013): 58, doi:10.1162/DESI_a_00230.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ingold, *Perception*, 219, 228 and 231.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

unanswered by creating clusters of knowledge with gaps existing in between them. Some information is inevitably excluded due to researchers' biases, subject positions, chosen topics and/or methodologies.[52] My maps, therefore, illustrate my experiences and this is why research has to continue, to build and expand the existing knowledge in all fields, including the world of Namibian craft and design.

During my field studies I depended on two kinds of maps: 'commercial' maps printed on paper and my past experiences from working in the Namibian craft and design world. Paper maps assisted me in orientating myself so that I could travel from one place to another, but at other times I was able to draw on maps I 'held' in my 'head' and 'heart'. These intangible maps were mental memories, tacit knowledge and instinct derived from past experiences in specific places and spaces in southern Africa that allowed me to draw on my awareness of spaces, situate myself and 'feel' my way in my field sites.[53] The fact that my field research was informed by my previous journeys in these spaces distinguished me as a local inhabitant and not an outsider or tourist.

Although one of the initial functions of maps is to orientate their users, maps have also become representations of (attempts at) dominion over territory.[54] Thinking about maps and their making, particularly in an African context, inevitably raises the fact of colonisation, its impact and its legacies.[55] Here, maps are among the expressions of hegemonic thinking; they are both signs and representations of efforts to achieve control over people, their cultures and the spaces they occupied. The map of Africa that was drafted during the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, illustrates this point. During this gathering, the African continent was sliced up by its colonisers as it suited them, without sufficient regard to the actual inhabitants and their indigenous and cultural boundaries.[56] Despite Western statesmen creating a map of Africa that was an expression of European imperial power, African people still had their own (intangible) maps, recording spaces where they connected to the land and their culture.

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[52] Memory Biwa, "Stories of the Patchwork Quilt," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*, ed. Andre du Pisani, Reinhardt Koessler and William A. Lindecke (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut, 2010), 336 and 342.

[53] Ingold, *Perception*, 219-20; Eskom Due-South Craft Route Project, *Travel Guide to South African Craft Sites* (Erasmuskloof: Eskom Due South Craft Route Project, 2004); "Due South Travel Guide," accessed 4 January 2014, http://www.duesouthcraftroute.co.za/. During my field studies, a sales lady at one of the crafts sites I visited handed me a version of the ESKOM Due South *Travel Guide to South African Craft Sites,* a comprehensive 'map' of the South African craft world that introduces craft production sites and communities in South Africa. This issue had been printed in 2004 and was in need of review, for example, I wanted to visit a specific craft site and, after driving for many hours, I arrived to find the site abandoned. This map was one of the few commercial maps I occasionally used during my field research. In most situations I relied on my intangible maps and past experiences. Since January 2012, the *Due South Travel Guide* has been available and is regularly updated on the internet.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ingold, *Perception*, 224-26.

[56] Ronald Robinson, "The Conference in Berlin and the Future in Africa 1884–1885" in *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: the Berlin Africa Conference 1884–1885 and the onset of partition*, ed. Stig Förster, Wolfgang Justin Mommsen and Ronald Edward Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

Given the event of colonisation, when does postcoloniality begin? Ahluwalia suggests that postcolonial discourse seeks to analyse the cultural interactions that came about when the colonisers met the colonised – 'from the moment of colonisation onward'.[57] Most postcolonial scholars accept that postcoloniality cannot be separated from pre-colonial and colonial phases, because it does not mark 'the end of an epoch falsely by placing a break where none exists'.[58] This is especially true of Africa, where postcoloniality relates to the position of African countries after independence when their legal and political status had changed (from being an imperial possession to that of a nation-state) but the fact of their past colonisation did not.[59]

Postcolonial critique illustrates the interrelations between colonial and postcolonial constructs, but this discourse has no simple suggestions about how to undo colonial and postcolonial constructs. As a result, tensions exist within postcolonial critique with regard to 'spatial and temporal dichotomies' such as cultural romanticism vs. modernisation and democracy, and universalism vs. particularism.[60] Postcolonial situations can also be recognised by binaries, which, alongside the dichotomies just mentioned, are caused by grand narratives – so prevalent in Western thought of the colonial era – which create meanings through contrasts and hierarchies.[61] Those meanings rely upon hegemonic values and are entrenched in (for example) racial and gender binaries such as black vs. white, woman vs. man or East vs. West.[62] In short, postcolonial discourse seeks to deconstruct the binaries of colonialism by questioning the Western world's awareness of the suppliant power relations shaped by imperialism; this discourse also investigates the effects of European colonialism on the social and cultural constitutions of the colonised as well as the colonisers.[63]

Ahluwalia illustrates the complexities of postcolonial critique by showing the interconnections between postcolonialism, postmodernism and post-structuralism. He maintains that postcolonialism is a 'counter-discourse' that seeks to disrupt Western hegemony, while postmodernism and post-structuralism are 'counter discourses against modernism' that branched off from modernism itself.[64] In all three of these terms, the 'post' indicates what comes after. With their various uses of the prefix 'post', scholars attempt to

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[57] Pal Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation: The Post-Colonial Economy of Giving," *Social Identities* 6, no. 1, (2000): 40; Ashcroft, 1997 cited in Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation," 40.
[58] Terence Ranger, "Postscript: Colonial and Postcolonial Identities", in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, ed. Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (London: Zed Books, 1996), 271.
[59] Patrick Chabal, "The African Crisis: Context and Interpretation," in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, ed. Werbner and Ranger, 371.
[60] Couze Venn, *The Postcolonial Challenge – Towards Alternative Worlds*, (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE, 2006), 2-3.
[61] Pal Ahluwalia, *Out of Africa – Post-structuralism's Colonial Roots*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.
[62] Roger Jones, *Philosophy since the Enlightenment, 'Post Structuralism'*, accessed May 21, 2012, http://www.philosopher.org.uk/.
[63] Ahluwalia, *Out of Africa*, 2-3; Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation," 41; Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1 and 41; Robert Thornton, "The Potentials of Boundaries in South Africa: Steps Towards a Theory of the Social Edge, " in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, ed. Werbner and Ranger,136 and 138; "Postkoloniale Kritiek", *Benaderingen Letterkunde*, accessed September 20, 2012, http://cf.hum.uva.nl/benaderingenlk/lw/postcol/lw-postcol-midden-1.htm.
[64] Ahluwalia, *Out of Africa*, 3.

indicate that these terms are located in uneasy spaces.[65] Postcolonialism's uneasy space highlights a temporal space where the 'past' cannot be separated from the 'future'. In an African context, postcolonialism's uneasy space also recalls the disruption of geographical spaces as a result of the imperial map making of 1884-85. Although the maps of postcolonial spaces are representations of uneasy spaces, that does not mean that they have lost one of their initial purposes – to guide map users. The mapping function, when applied with care and mindfulness to the harms caused by colonialism, has the potential to become a valuable tool in (grasping) meaning making processes within postcolonial worlds.

This study, including its mapping processes, recognises that the colonial project has shaped notions of 'otherness' as 'the stranger or the different, ... as fundamentally and ontologically inferior beings' and that 'otherness', as a phenomenon, is situated within the self.[66] In this research I will focus on how multiple and fluid identities are shaped over time in 'a plurality of contested arenas', as Werbner writes, in the Namibian region, a postcolonial space.[67] In doing so, I am aware that postcolonialism does not follow a linear history where clear separations in time or space can be drawn to remove past colonial relationships from the present or future.

In seeking to understand the multiple and fluid identities in postcolonial spaces, the Dutch philosopher Ger Groot's 'two souls' concept is helpful. Groot refers to the 'two souls' that are present in individuals, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the temporal and spatial realities they face.[68] In his book, *Twee Zielen*, he explains that these 'two souls' are divided between romanticism, which is based on emotions and irrational factors such as race, *Blut und Boden* (place of birth) and more variations of collective identities.[69] The second 'soul' is liberalism, which is based on rationality, individuality and humanitarianism. Many individuals experience tensions between these two souls, fuelled by another binary known in postcolonial theory – which supports Venn's notion of 'otherness' within the self – namely 'we' and 'they' or 'us' and 'them'. Groot's 'two souls' are human-centred aspects of individuals' emotional fabric, because they shape the 'who' and 'what' individuals are.[70]

As a result of the overlapping spaces, temporalities and tensions described above, postcoloniality can be recognised by the complex identity formations, those 'uneasy' formulations and 'nervous conditions' such as hybridity, in-between-ness and plurality, that emerge from it.[71] These uneasy

[65] Bhabha, *Location of Culture,* 1 and 41; Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation," 41; Richard Werbner, "Introduction: Multiple Identities, Plural Arenas," in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa,* ed. Werbner and Ranger (London: Zed Books, 1996), 3.
[66] Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, 11.
[67] Werbner, "Introduction," 1.
[68] Ger Groot, *Twee Zielen* (SUN publishers: Amsterdam, 1998), 101.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid. During my field work I was often moving between these 'two souls' and they frequently caused me tension and internal debate. I experienced contradictory emotions and thoughts, often torn between my ethical responsibilities as a researcher (who had to be 'objective') and my role of working in the Namibian craft and design world where I was often facing unsustainable 'development' issues. I often had to refrain from falling into the trap of viewing the southern African craft field through a romantic lens (due to my collective African identities) and similarly, at times I had to overcome my internal notions of 'otherness' through my broad cross-cultural understanding that replaced my feelings of romanticism.
[71] Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, 82 and 84; Ahluwalia, *Out of Africa*, 4.

conditions result from the interconnections of spaces, geographies and time, the 'centrality of overlapping territories and intertwined histories' that influence the shaping and reshaping of postcolonial identities.[72] In this thesis, my processes of mapping in postcolonial spaces seek to investigate complex postcolonial craft and design identities.

In order to 'hear' the nuances in the narratives of this study's participants (who live and function in postcolonial spaces) I read widely in the area of postcolonial theory.[73] Postcolonialism provides a theoretically-informed critical perspective and is a process of addressing the malfunctions and disappointments of the colonial period. It is particularly helpful if, as Venn implores, we abandon spatial and temporal binaries 'and the political divisions they support' in order to use postcolonial critique to redesign what he terms 'possible worlds'.[74] Ahluwalia notes that postcolonialism is instructive and that it recognises the possibility of a reconciled present and future.[75] It is not a prescriptive approach, and the flexibility it offers makes it a suitable approach to analysing narratives and identities so that Venn's 'possible worlds' can be realised.

Craft, design and the narrative potential of artefacts

'Craft'[76] and 'design'[77] are both noun and verb, object and action. Both terms are also linked to 'fine art'.[78] Craft is about matter and materialities, but it is also about embodied performances that are intertwined with tacit knowledge and technical skills, because the concept of craft includes 'bodily

[72] Ahluwalia, *Out of Africa*, 7 and 161.
[73] While my reading has informed the approaches I take to mapping craft and design worlds in postcolonial spaces, I will not discuss postcolonial theory in detail. This thesis is a contribution to the scholarship on contemporary southern African craft and design; it is not an intellectual history of developments in postcolonial theory. During the course of this study I made a conscious decision to adhere to a careful approach that is informed and has been shaped by postcolonial theory, as the discussion of its key points in this review demonstrates.
[74] Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, 1.
[75] Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation," 42.
[76] Rafael Cardoso, "Craft Versus Design," in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Glenn Adamson (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 323 and 327. Cardoso asserts that the current ideal of craft is 'the making of useable artefacts in a given material medium done individually and by hand, preferably displaying great mastery'. Craft might not be able to compete with the improved contemporary standards of industrial machine production it is, according to Cardoso, 'grounded in the uniqueness of individual production'.
[77] Ken Friedman, "Theory Construction in Design Research: Criteria, Approaches and Methods," *Design Studies* 24, (2003): 507-8, doi:10.1016/S0142-694X(03)00039-5. I refer here to design as a function that sets out to plan and create an artefact, plan and create a scheme or a drawing for the making of an artefact, or plan and create a scheme or a drawing for the decoration on/of an artefact. Ken Friedman defines design as follows: 'First design refers to a process. Second design is goal-oriented. Third, the goal of design is solving problems, meeting needs, improving situations, or creating something new or useful'. McNeil and Hawker mentions that ''design' indicates a higher level of consideration, conceptual and strategic thinking'.
[78] Howard Risatti, *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* (Harvard: Cambridge, 1999), 32. A further aspect to consider is the distinction between 'craft' and 'fine art'. Yet for practical purposes I will not explore this distinction further, but would like to reflect on Risatti's argument that fine art aesthetic theory indicates that function of an artefact denies the artefact its status of being art. Crafts did not undergo a similar historic process of intellectualisation, resulting in the 'bastardisation' of the crafts field and the alienation of crafts' true characteristics such as 'multiplicity, dispersion, interaction, and temporalness' which all defined the craft conventions of the past. This indicates a very clear lack of craft theorisation.

presence, physical exertion and hand skill'.[79] These bodily performances are executed within specific environments that are underpinned by particular social and cultural contexts.

In some societies, craft is a 'personal and solitary' activity, but this is not the case in Namibia, where craft is widely practiced as a collaborative activity. In southern Africa, craft originally emerged as an interactive cultural activity and craft as communal making resonates strongly with pre-industrial ideals of production.[80] Given the current problems faced by consumerist societies due to over production and excessive consumption of goods and the consequent negative impact on social and natural environments, the term 'craft' needs to be rethought and expanded to encompass something more than handmade artefacts. Craft's potential as 'a quality of things of the future' should be excavated so that quantities 'of things made and owned' can make space for the 'quality of what is manufactured and acquired'.[81]

When considering design, Adrian Forty's insight about the role of design in planning is important in considerations of social sustainability.[82] Design by its very nature incorporates planning and thus design narrates ideas and meanings that have social value. By extension, the function of design also incorporates mapping to orient and guide users of 'things' or services. Design's potential as a conceptual tool that can be used to narrate, map and plan is important to this study's aim to map the Namibian craft and design world.

Richard Buchanan presents another view of design as an 'integrative' and 'supple discipline' that draws together various fields of study and practice with a common theme: 'the conception and planning of the artificial'.[83] Design, illustrating this 'suppleness', has progressed to areas such as the social sciences and thus design includes the conception and planning of the social and even the 'natural'. The role of design in promoting sustainability is possible due to its integrative qualities, which strengthen conceptualisation and planning.

Another narrative frequently coupled with craft, design and art is an argument in support of the divisions between these worlds. Such arbitrary divisions are illogical, because creative practices and behaviours were originally collaborative and communally interactive.[84] The relationship between craft and design was always closer than that between craft and art, but a historic 'status/material struggle of craft and art' allows narratives of division to continue, undermining the actual interconnections

[79] Cardoso, "Craft Versus Design," 327.
[80] Ibid., 331.
[81] Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2011), 140.
[82] Adrian Forty, "Design, Designers and the Literature of Design," in *Design Studies: A Reader*, ed. Hazel Clark and David Eric Brody (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2009), 19.
[83] Richard Buchanan, "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking," in *Design Studies: A Reader*, ed. Clark and Brody, 96 and 99.
[84] Ingold, *Perception*, 349-50; Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), accessed May 3, 2013, http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai/PoMoSeminar/Readings/BenjRepro.pdf.

between the craft, design and art worlds.[85] In social and cultural creative processes, art, craft and design are often not separate; hence they tend to become fluid and interactive during processes of making by individuals and collectives. Lees-Maffei and Sandino call for a more profound understanding of the interconnections between craft, design and art. However, they admit that a more synergised relationship exists between craft and design.[86] They also argue that the historical 'status/material struggle of craft and art' should be abandoned.[87]

Another division, or opposition, that has existed for more than a century, is found between 'art' and 'technology'.[88] Skill is associated with craftsmanship and traditionally there was no opposition between 'art' and 'technique'. This changed after the mechanical reproduction of most artefacts became commonplace (around 1900).[89] As a result, artefacts were no longer accepted as unique outcomes of a marriage between 'sensuous engagements' with skills, raw materials and the craftsperson, but were now mechanically, mass produced copies.[90] The rationalisation of production processes caused and maintains a division between the creative and the physical aspects of 'making'[91] and the material, because it emphasises the separation and segmentation of 'making' and 'thinking'.[92] Ingold argues that the creative side of making processes was changed into 'an intellectual process of design' and hence caused an artificial divide between the design of artefacts and their making.[93] Traditional Namibian craft may not be able to compete with improved contemporary standards of industrial machine production, but it is grounded in the individuality of unique making processes.

Another established narrative relevant to design derives from 'dominant ideologies of the industrialised world' in which 'technology' is believed to offer answers to global dilemmas.[94] Daniel Miller writes that technology is 'the deliberate imposition of rational will upon the world'.[95] Craft, on the other hand, is closely associated with a 'product of hand labour' narrative. Thus crafts become obvious examples of non-industrial production.[96] Artefacts are also able to narrate an apparent origin

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[85] Grace Lees-Maffei and Linda Sandino, "Dangerous Liaisons: Relationships Between Design, Craft and Art," *Journal of Design History* 17, no. 3 (2004): 207.
[86] Lees-Maffei and Sandino, "Dangerous," 207.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ingold, *Perception*, 349-50. 'Art' and 'technology' derive from the Roman term *ars* or *artem* and the Greek term *techné*, but both these terms mean the same thing: skill. Skill is associated with craftsmanship, 'involving the manufacture of durable objects by people who depend on such work for a living'.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Tim Ingold, "The Textility of Making," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (2010): 91, doi:10.1093/cje/bep042; Anusas and Ingold, "Designing Environmental Relations", 58. I use the term 'making' in this thesis because it is a holistic, forward-moving process during which a maker is aware of her encapsulating, yet constantly changing environment that allows connectedness to people, places and materialities. 'Making' is a process in which the maker is not alienated from her environment and fully aware of the depth and the 'textilic' nature of materials and the forms shaped from them. Ingold argues 'making' is ongoing, generative, 'textilic' and most importantly, underpinned by improvisation.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Daniel Miller, "Material Culture and Social Interactions," in *Design Studies: A Reader*, ed. Clark and Brody, 232.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

in either an industrialised or a hand-made world, when they actually derive from the opposite.[97] Explicating this contradictory relationship, Miller argues that mass-made artefact production practices often intend to mask the artefact's origins so that they *appear* to be hand-made and vice versa, and in this way artefacts have the ability to narrate a specific and even an opposing origin.[98] Miller cautions that artefacts' narrativity may cause ambiguity in different settings. Artefacts also narrate across social boundaries and divisions in the contemporary worlds of commodities. In other words, artefacts may disclose narratives about their functionality in one social setting while they disclose narratives about symbolisms and cultural values in another.[99]

In her discussion of Persian tribal rugs, Patricia Baker refers to the narrative potential of artefacts. She states that artefacts' places of origin enhance their aesthetic values by transferring regional, local and social identities to artefacts.[100] Therefore, human value systems attribute artefacts with unique meanings and identities that are temporally and spatially determined. These meanings should be extracted and exposed to understand artefacts' narrative potential and how this relates to their situatedness. However, there are instabilities to be taken into account regarding the relationship between artefact and maker; once the artefact is placed in a public domain its 'context' cannot be determined or controlled by its maker.[101] Nor do artefact makers have control over the significations given to it by an 'other'. In a globalised market, local context is lost due to the constant movement of people, ideas, influences and artefacts across regions. Whatever the intentions with reference to the making, distribution or application of artefacts, they remain significant whether or not we know the artefact maker's name.[102]

The effect of tourism on artefacts and their narratives

The importance of artefacts' narratives is illustrated by their relationship to tourism in southern African craft and design worlds. Exotic and romantic values are connected to crafts from 'developing' countries because these same values and meanings are connected to tourism and the places and environments people seek as escapes from their everyday lives.[103] Many tourists want to experience 'difference' because they want to have a 'break' from their usual routines and so they travel to

[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 232-233.
[99] Ibid., 233.
[100] Patricia, L. Baker, "20th Century Myth-Making: Persian Tribal Rugs," *Journal of Design History* 10, no. 4 (1997): 366, doi: 10.1093/jdh/10.4.363.
[101] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 156.
[102] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 181.
[103] Janet Chang, Geoffrey Wall and Chao-Ling Chang, "Perception of the Authenticity of Atayal Woven Handicrafts in Wulai, Taiwan," *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing* 16, no. 4 (2008): 385, doi:10.1080/10507050801951700.

encounter 'exotic' people and their places.[104] 'Difference', in this sense, has the function of 'exoticising' an 'other', whether it is a place or a person.[105] Crafts and photographs are typical memorabilia that tourists accumulate during their tourist experiences and these objects hold romantic memories of exotic people and places.[106] This connection between tourism and crafts continues to fuel exotic and romantic ideas about crafts.

Tourists also travel to experience aspects of past traditions that they cannot personally experience, but (want to) imagine, and so tourists have and uphold ideas of an immutable 'past', which are often socially constructed.[107] However, 'tradition is an invention of the present' and interpretations of 'the past' are frequently made according to representations originating from individuals' ideas about social, political, environmental and economic interests that are rooted in 'the present', or their present circumstances.[108] Many tourists also travel to get to know themselves better through 'soul searching'.[109] Tourism creates the opportunity for people to reflect and to develop their 'personal cultural capital' during encounters with 'others' and their cultures and material cultures when travelling.[110] In these processes and related activities, such as craft purchases, there are benefits for both the tourist and the craftsperson. Tourists gain and construct personal symbolic meanings during their encounters with 'other' cultures and indigenous craftspeople benefit economically through craft sales; while their cultural identities and traditions are maintained through craft practices that also serve to raise awareness of their significance.[111] Tourism has significant potential for ensuring indigenous craft people's cultural, social and economic sustainability.

Historically, the 'authenticity' of African visual arts, artefacts and tourist crafts' was based on production processes of redundancy and repetition.[112] In 1955 Ladislas Segy explained that: 'Virtual sweatshops have been set up in Africa to produce wood sculptures for the tourist trade ... Contemporary artists feel no pleasure in the act of creation ... They copy old models over and over again'.[113] In other words, tourist crafts were considered to be more 'authentic' if their appearance conformed to repeated styles and patterns. In 1997, 40 years after Segy's warning, Kerry Hannon noted that African craftspeople 'simply churn out copies of authentic items'.[114] This repetitive work

[104] Chiara Cipollari, "Can Tourists Purchase 'the Past'? The Past as a Commodity in Tourist Site," *Anthropological Notebooks* 16, no. 1 (2010): 32.
[105] Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 59.
[106] Satu Miettinen, *Designing the Creative Tourist Experience: a Service Design Process with Namibian Craftspeople* (Helsinki: University of Arts and Design, 2007), 134; Chang, Wall and Chang, "Perception," 386.
[107] Cipollari, "Can Tourists," 25.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Chang, Wall and Chang, "Perception," 386.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 57; Christopher Steiner, "Authenticity, Repetition, and the Aesthetics of Seriality: The Work of Tourist Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (California: University of California, 1999), 89.
[113] Ladislas Segy, cited in Steiner, "Authenticity," 87.
[114] Kerry Hannon, cited in Steiner, Ibid.

distances producers from their crafts and is another way of 'silencing the voice of the artisan'.[115] Producers are also removed from narratives about the histories, traditions and procedures of craft production due to marketing narratives that promote anonymous artefacts as the most 'authentic'. The persistence of the anonymously-produced-and-therefore-authentic narrative in postcolonial tourist art is one that ignores crafts' specificity in favour of a generic and superficial 'African identity'.[116]

'Cultural superficiality' occurs when a variety of artefacts from different African countries and cultural groups are for sale in one space, such as craft stalls or curio shops focused on the tourist market.[117] Exotic and romantic views about crafts result from simultaneously cramming various 'African' artefacts into displays where the specificities of their style, materials, making processes and meanings remain unexplained and the historical development of 'unique' craft and design is not shown.[118] This causes the artefacts to compete against one another in confined spaces in which only their differences are highlighted, in a quest to appear more 'exotic' than another artefact. Another kind of cultural superficiality occurs when African artefacts are displayed in glass cases, which distances them from the significant role that bodies play in their making, wearing and use, and ruptures the intimate and sensuous connections between artefacts and bodies.[119] Artefacts carefully displayed this way in art museums and galleries may gain what Anitra Nettleton refers to as 'art status' (that hinges on this kind of disembodiment), but although 'the body is suppressed' in such displays, it is never wholly absent.[120]

While the financial gains craftspeople get from tourism are obvious, its negative impacts on their worlds also need to be considered. In her study of tourism and craft communities Satu Miettinen shows that crafts sold to tourists were one of the main sources of income for many of her participants.[121] She also confirms that many of her research participants were reluctant to speak about tourism's negative effects, because these women felt they were 'dependent on income they generate from tourism'.[122] Suich and Murphy's study shows that craft sales are one of the top three income generators in the Zambezi[123] (previously known as the Caprivi[124]) region, next to selling maize and

[115] Kevin Murray, "Outsourcing the Hand: An Analysis of Craft-Design Collaborations Across the Global Divide," *Craft and Design Enquiry* 10, no. 1 (2010): 4.
[116] Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 69.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Anitra Nettleton, "Jubilee Dandies: Collecting Beadwork in Tsolo, Eastern Cape, 1897-1932," *African Arts* 46, no. 1 (2013): 43.
[120] Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 59.
[121] Miettinen, *Designing the Creative Tourist Experience*, 113.
[122] Ibid., 132.
[123] The Zambezi region is also referred to as the 'Caprivi strip' and forms the long 'arm' of the Namibian map that reaches towards Zimbabwe, Zambia and northern Botswana. This region's name was changed from the Caprivi region to the Zambezi region in August 2013.
[124] Werner Menges, "Treason Accused Dispute Namibia's Territory," *The Namibian*, accessed September 17, 2013, http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?id=3650&page_type=story_detail.

grass for thatching.[125] Terry and Cunningham's study of basket weaving communities in southern Africa illustrates how basket sales have multiplied tenfold, mainly due to tourists' appreciation of these baskets.[126]

Additional negatives of tourism in southern African communities that host tourists is that they may feel resentment towards visitors who are the descendants of those who once raided their cultures and removed tangible and intangible assets and now seem to expect indigenous people from these regions to superficially 'perform' their cultures as if essentially 'divorced from historical process' to 'justify their colonial policies'.[127] In effect, tourism itself is essentially an intervention and performed activity. It is incumbent upon tourists to adopt an ethical approach when they visit what are still vulnerable communities due to the unequal power relations that exist between the visitors and the visited. It is evident that tourism influences the viability of craft practitioners in Namibia and other parts of southern Africa. In the light of postcolonial theory, postcolonial tourism requires host communities be accorded respect and dealt with sensitively and responsibly.

Notable narratives of southern African craft and design worlds

South African theorist Sandra Klopper writes that, during Apartheid, white southern African artists were perceived to be producing 'real' art and artefacts while black artists were perceived as producing unworthy – and even 'primitive' – 'black art' objects.[128] Likewise, indigenous southern Africans were also discouraged from developing a sense of pride in their own cultural heritage, because the cultures of the then-politically dominant settlers were considered to be the region's 'real' culture.[129] As a result, there is a widespread lack of recognition for 'traditionalist artists' and younger generations are removed from their cultural pasts and their indigenous art forms, which are often still practiced in rural areas of southern Africa.[130] Indigenous southern African artefacts were usually found in grim and dusty spaces in museums and rich collections of these artefacts were seldom displayed in public

[125] Helen Suich and Carol Murphy, "Crafty Women: the Livelihood Impact of Craft Income in Caprivi," Directorate of Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Research Discussion Paper no. 48 (2002): 25.
[126] M. Elizabeth Terry and Anthony B. Cunningham, "The Impact of Commercial Marketing on the Basketry of Southern Africa," *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, no. 4 (1993): 38.
[127] Napandulwe Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*, ed. Andre du Pisanie, Reinhart Kössler, William A. Lindeke, (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstrasser Institut, 2010), 265.
[128] Sandra Klopper and Michael Godby, "Art and Freedom: South Africa after Apartheid," *African Arts* 37, no. 4 (2004): 17; Sandra Klopper, "South Africa's Culture of Collecting: The Unofficial History," *African Arts* 37, no. 4 (2004): 19 and 24.
[129] Klopper, "South Africa's Culture," 24.
[130] Ibid., 24.

galleries.[131] Interest in African artefacts grew steadily, especially from the 1980s, due to shifting attitudes that resulted from a growing pool of African art collectors.[132]

Colonial perceptions of African craft and design artefacts were distorted due to Western obsessions with what is 'figurative, decorative and unique' and, as a result, research focused on aesthetic questions regarding southern African artefacts was slow to develop.[133] Colonial perceptions also entailed the promotion of homogeneity, which supposedly demonstrates the 'authenticity' of African craft and design artefacts, and anonymity, which is still widespread in African tourist craft production.[134] These narratives are often found in artefacts of inferior quality that are sold at markets across Africa.

Although artefacts retain their relevancy with or without the names of their makers and although their narrativity is independent of the makers' intention and shaped by the routes artefacts travel, Nettleton indicates that, when artefacts are being marketed and sold, their value is raised once they are attached to their makers' names.[135] Artefacts' narrative potential is also raised when the names of their makers are revealed to consumers. Since the protagonist of action, in this case the artefact maker, is revealed to the consumer, the artefact is immediately more closely associated with the human activity of making. Thus, artefacts represented in markets alongside their makers' names contribute overtly to sustaining authenticity and preventing cultural superficiality.[136]

The marketing of artefacts in Africa is often underpinned by narratives of 'development' and 'progress'.[137] These narratives amplify the problem of shaping romanticised views of craft production in Africa, because of established romantic views related to 'poverty' and 'empowerment'. These narratives aim to establish ideas that crafts provide much needed income to craftspeople and thus 'sustain' them. However, artefacts sold and marketed in southern Africa often contradict these narratives of 'progress' and 'development', resulting in 'conflicting systems of value' for viewers and prospective purchasers.[138] Unfortunately the adherence to 'tradition' and 'pure pasts' inhibits new ideas and processes from taking shape, once these narratives are abandoned, then southern African artefacts can be viewed as 'the creative forms which allow retention and transmission of traditions, but within a framework of modernity', says Nettleton.[139]

Explicit identity narratives are essential in the marketing of crafted and designed artefacts in Sub-Saharan Africa because these narratives provide insight into the use of traditional and introduced materials and techniques, which are signs of African identities. Craft-making contexts should receive

[131] Ibid., 21.
[132] Ibid., 20.
[133] Ibid., 20 and 24.
[134] Steiner, "Authenticity, Repetition," 89.
[135] Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 71.
[136] Ibid., 59.
[137] Ibid., 69.
[138] Ibid., 71.
[139] Ibid.

more attention in the development of craft theories in the southern African region because place of origin connects to locality. The removal of an artefact from its place of origin changes its context and therefore the meanings associated with such an artefact are influenced and often changed. The role of artefact marketing in the African region profoundly impacts on artefacts' narratives. Connecting artefact marketing narratives to the realities of objects' production (making histories, techniques, materials, origin, processes) potentially prevents romanticised views of artefacts and inhibits the 'anonymity narrative'. Nettleton suggests that care should be taken that traditional crafts and techniques should not be automatically associated with the 'rural' or with 'the natural world'.[140] Similarly, the idea that 'modern' artefacts (such as plastic-coated wire baskets) are produced in urban townships draws on romantic views of townships as spaces of the 'other' or 'other' spaces that embody 'danger and resistance'.[141]

Elizabeth Terry and Anthony Cunningham not only provide an in-depth account of basket weaving in southern Africa, including Namibia,[142] but they also add to the craft marketing discourse by commenting on the role of 'marketing officers' in the southern African craft sector.[143] They point out that some ideas, like terms and labels for designs and techniques, have evolved since the 1970s due to the roles and relationships these individuals share with craft producers.[144] Many of these labels are used in craft marketing catalogues, yet they evolved 'from discussions between marketing officers and basket makers' and are not necessarily based on 'ethnographic customs' or cultural practices.[145] While this should be kept in mind, care should be given not to adhere to notions of 'pure' cultural pasts, because tradition is also an invention of the present and thus interpretations of tradition constantly change.[146]

Overview of literature related to the Namibian craft and design world

The Namibian craft and design world offers ample scope for research. After independence, new craft markets emerged to meet the growth of tourism. Traditional artefact production techniques include basketry, weaving, pottery and woodcarving (mostly from the northern regions of Namibia), and sewing and *laslappie* (patchwork) from the central and southern regions of the country. Traditional leatherwork, jewellery making, beadwork and weaving are practiced in all regions.[147] Contemporary artefacts, usually produced within mixed traditional and modern craft traditions and contexts, are

[140] Ibid., 67.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Nettelton, "Life in a Zulu Village,"; Anthony B. Cunningham and M. Elizabeth Terry, *African Basketry: Grassroot Art from Southern Africa* (Simons Town: Fernwood Press, 2006).
[143] Terry and Cunningham, "The Impact of Commercial Marketing," 38.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Nettelton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 71; Cipollari, "Can Tourists," 25.
[147] *Namibia Holiday and Travel* – The Official Namibian Tourism Directory, 2011, 46-57.

produced all over the country. These crafts include jewellery, fashion, pottery, leatherwork, interior and decor items, and weaving.[148]

European craft traditions (including jewellery and furrier crafts) were imported during colonial times.[149] After independence, some Namibian designers and crafts people moved outside their traditional and European craft traditions to experiment with unusual materials, techniques and practices in order to adapt to new identities, while others continued to uphold their previous (traditional or Western) manufacturing traditions. This shift is evident from the mix of sophisticated artefacts sold in mainly urban Namibian sites such as boutique shops.[150] Industrial design and building, engineering and architecture are active domains in Namibia, but they fall outside the scope of this study.

Namibian craft theory has not received sufficient consideration in the past. My research specifically aims to contribute to this field of knowledge. Craft practices in Namibia are generally gendered activities. Women do basket weaving, pottery, sewing and embroidery while men mostly do woodcarving.[151] Basket weaving and pottery produced in the northern regions of Namibia are mainly based on indigenous knowledge while woodcarving is a recent activity in the Zambezi region; it was introduced via contact with Zambian crafts people.[152] Both men and women make traditional and 'modern' artefacts from leather, such as clothing, accessories and functional objects, and both genders are involved in the making of jewellery and personal adornments.[153]

In their study of crafts in the Zambezi region, Helen Suich and Carol Murphy investigate how income generated from craft-making impacts on the sustainability of Namibian craft people's livelihoods.[154] They also address the importance of practices connected to craft production being sustainable and their impact on Namibia's natural environment.[155] Suich and Murphy reflect on traditional craft practices in Namibia's north-eastern regions, which have become increasingly commercialised since the early 1980s when the Caprivi Arts and Crafts Association opened in Katima Mulilo.[156] According to their study, the number of active basket producers has increased tenfold and basket weaving activities have been revived in the northern regions of Namibia, which resulted in the diversification of local communities' livelihoods.[157] Basket production, marketing and selling remain marginal activities in Namibia's northern regions because it is time consuming work, returns are low and involves

[148] Ibid.
[149] The *Namibian Holiday and Travel* directory is a useful guide to traditional Namibian crafts, but excludes contemporary artefacts produced in European traditions.
[150] *Namibia Holiday and Travel*, 51-52.
[151] Suich and Murphy, "Crafty Women," 3.
[152] Ibid., 6.
[153] Field notes, Tsumeb, Namibia, 19 January 2011.
[154] Suich and Murphy, "Crafty Women," 3 and 7.
[155] Ibid., 8.
[156] Ibid., 5.
[157] Ibid., 3, 18 and 25.

physically strenuous processes that require travelling large distances.[158] Suich and Murphy's study shows that craft activities allow socially and economically marginalised Namibian women to sustain themselves financially as basket weavers are able to increase their income by up to 50 per cent.[159]

Murphy and Suich's discussion paper also addresses various specificities of craft practices, such as the use of raw materials to colour and weave baskets and the value of an implemented basket weaving grading system.[160] It also assesses the impact of the Rössing Foundation's development program on craft production in the Zambezi and Kavango regions and indicates that Namibian women need to be integrated into development programs.[161] They argue that the Rössing Foundation's programmes of training craft producers while also buying and marketing crafts from these regions had a positive impact on people's livelihoods, especially women's. On the other hand, this program 'created a dependency of the weavers on income earned from craft sales' in the years between 1994 and 2000.[162]

Satu Miettinen's PhD thesis and associated articles specifically address the role of tourism in Namibian craft communities.[163] In her work she focuses on craftswomen's attitudes and the meanings they make from their involvement with tourism, particularly how they are connected to tourism and how it impacts on their income generation, identity processes and means for self-expression.[164] Miettinen discusses craftswomen's narratives of economic, social and psychological empowerment, information she collected during research in various Namibian craft worlds.[165] In a related article, she investigates various independent women's groups working in the Namibian crafts field, including the Penduka women's group, as well as groups that work for intermediaries who manage the marketing of their artefacts.[166] In this way she establishes a clear idea about the various distribution channels that operate within Namibian craft producing organisations or groups. In one of her case studies about the Penduka women's group, Miettinen illustrates the importance of craft production as a meaning making process when she describes Penduka women's embroidery as 'picture books of their lives'.[167] However, Miettinen does not elaborate on making processes used in Namibian craft and design worlds because it falls outside the scope of her investigation.

Noteworthy master's dissertations that focus on the working processes of particular Namibian craft groups and design students were written by Sanna Latva-Ranta and Laura Pokela, respectively. Latva-Ranta's research was conducted in Namibia and her dissertation (written in Finnish) focuses on the

[158] Ibid., 9 and 18.
[159] Ibid., 21.
[160] Ibid., 14.
[161] Ibid., 3-4.
[162] Ibid., 4.
[163] Miettinen, *Designing the Creative Tourist Experience*; Satu Miettinen, "Tourism and Narratives of Empowerment," in *Helsinki-Opuwo-Helsinki: Encounter with Crafts, Tourists and Women in the Local Communities of Namibia*, ed. Satu Miettinen (Helsinki: Like Kustannus, 2003), 70-97.
[164] Miettinen, *Designing the Creative Tourist Experience*, 116-123.
[165] Ibid., 109-123.
[166] Miettinen, "Tourism and Narratives," 80-84.
[167] Ibid., 97.

implementation and lessons learnt from a jewellery design workshop, Precious Ideas, that she offered in Namibia in 2004. She also discusses Himba blacksmith jewellery-making traditions as well as Western jewellery traditions that are practiced in Namibia.[168]

Latva-Ranta sketches the social sustainability of crafts in an article that discusses a workshop for indigenous (San) patients at Mangetti Dune hospital. As with her dissertation, her approach is pragmatic: she explains and discusses the work processes followed and the workshop's outcomes. The purpose of the workshop was skills development in crafts for tubercular patients. Latva-Ranta shares her experiences about how craft practices can socially sustain patients who have to remain in hospital over long periods of time and find it challenging to overcome boredom during their extended hospitalisation.[169]

Laura Pokela's master dissertation focuses on her design collaborations with Namibian artisan communities in the Khomas, Zambezi and Oshana regions of Namibia.[170] Pokela discusses the practices of Namibian craft people in their design processes and the lessons she learnt from her collaborative experiences with Namibian craft people and groups. She worked with several basket weavers and wood carvers in the Zambezi region, where she assisted with the development of specific artefacts with a focus on collaborative production and mixed applications of raw materials.[171] She also worked in collaboration with the Penduka group, where she assisted with the development of ceramic production.

Another article focusing on the Penduka group and the Kunene Craft Centre was written by Malin Rigneus. This article illustrates the roles played by organised Namibian craft centres and the impact they have on female craftspeople employed by them.[172] While the Penduka group features in Rigneus's study she focuses on tourism and income generation activities. The Penduka group is included in many studies of Namibian crafts, including this one, but I seek to understand the connections between how Penduka women work in Orwetoveni[173] and the ways their narratives emerge and are included in their embroidery.

Working in the field of cultural studies and anthropology, Memory Biwa writes about the meanings of quilting, or *laslappiewerk*, an Afrikaans term that is still used by some Namibian communities.[174]

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[168] Sanna Latva-Ranta, "Precious Ideas: Jewellery Design Workshop" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 2006). Although Latva-Ranta's dissertation has not been translated into English, her dissertation is discussed by Laura Pokela.
[169] Sanna Latva-Ranta, "The Fuwa !o Project," in *Design Your Action: Social Design in Practise*, ed. Satu Miettinen (Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 2007), 24-25.
[170] Laura Pokela, "Handmade in Namibia: Design Collaborations In Artisan Communities" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 2008).
[171] Ibid., 80-81.
[172] Malin Rigneus, "A Community Tourism Enterprise's Economic Impact on Women in the Katutura Township of Namibia," in *Helsinki-Opuwo-Helsinki*, ed. Miettinen, 61-62.
[173] Orwetoveni is a neighbourhood on the north-eastern outskirts of Otjiwarongo, a town in central-northern Namibia.
[174] Biwa, "Stories of the Patchwork Quilt," 331-370.

Biwa describes the quilts Nama women construct using a patchwork technique and she shows how the identities of Nama women are expressed and woven or, literally, sewn together in the material features of their quilts through their use of pieces of fabric from traditional apparel that would be worn at community commemorations and celebrations.[175] The quilts Biwa discusses were made from both old and new materials and reflected their maker's personal and creative choices of colours, patterns and forms, which make them works that draw on cultural ideas about dress.

Quilting is a settler craft, but patch-like and quilting techniques were and are also widely used by African communities for making raffia cloth. Kente cloth also has a unique patchwork appearance. For Nama women their quilts are embodied works that have been reinterpreted. Quilting is a craft form that shapes the material conditions of their artefacts and community life, because it is also used on a larger scale when the Nama use their handmade reed mats to create their patchwork-like traditional houses.[176] Following Ricoeur's ideas about the 'refiguration' of life through the use of narratives as a practice, we can see a parallel between quilting and storytelling. Just as stories are made from words and sentences to express life experiences so quilts are made from smaller bits of fabric.[177] The participants in this study reinterpreted, retold and reshaped their own life stories in the same way that quilts are a reshaping of their constituent materials, and so quilts are, like stories, invented and discovered.[178] Biwa draws attention to the quilts as forms of cultural representation when she explains that they 'are created in spaces where women reflect and share ideas about the designs of their quilts and lives (presumably of culture and womanhood) ... These cloths are thus the entangled writings of the imaginings, dreams and stories of these women'.[179]

Anthropological studies of Namibian crafts have also been done by Polly Wiessner, who writes about the social and economic roles crafts play in Namibian Ju/'hoansi communities.[180] Marjorie Shostak's extended ethnography of a !Kung woman, Nisa, refers to some craft practices as both leisure and income generation activities.[181] Shostak argues that !Kung people are able to purchase cattle to support their livelihoods from the money they save from craft sales.[182] However, Shostak's study does not consider the cultural significance of !Kung crafts in the way Biwa does.

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[175] Ibid., 332-33.
[176] George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 7, 93, 169 and 236. The Nama people are a group of nineteen century Namibian Khoikhoi who migrated from the southern Cape Province and Namaqualand to areas north of the Orange river. The traditional houses of the Nama are referred to as *pontok* and are assembled from reed mats to resemble patchwork that is laid over bent struts.
[177] Paul Ricoeur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life-Stories," *Philosophy Today* 47, no. 3, 2003, 324.
[178] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 156.
[179] Biwa, "Stories of the Patchwork Quilt," 332-333.
[180] Polly Wiessner, "Owners of the Future? Calories, Cash, Casualties and Self-Sufficiency in the Nyae-Nyae Area Between 1996 and 2003," *Journal of the Society of Visual Anthropology* 19, no. 1 & 2 (2003): 150.
[181] Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: the Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 124 and 325.
[182] Ibid., 310.

Little has been written about cultural Namibian artefacts' manufacture, cultural use or meanings. Johan Malan's study of various Namibian cultures does not focus on material culture and therefore he only briefly mentions traditional artefacts used by Kavango, Herero, Himba and San groups.[183] A. Schertz and colleagues produced a photographic collection of the hairstyles and personal ornaments of Namibian and southern Angolan groups, although, due to the nature of the publication, the making processes and meanings of these artefacts are not dealt with in any depth.[184] Inkeri Huhtamaa's PhD thesis investigates themes such as meaning making and affect connected to handmade objects by the interviewed Namibian craft people.[185]

Studies by Napandulwe Shiweda and Hildi Hendrickson explore Namibian cultural artefacts' meanings.[186] Shiweda considers the opinions of indigenous Namibians about photographic representations of Ovambo people from Omhedi that were made during Namibia's colonial era.[187] In her article she also discusses the meanings of some artefacts that were worn as part of cultural clothing, such as jewellery and accessories.[188] Hendrikson illustrates the material objects (such as traditional costumes and flags) that are used to represent identity by Namibian Herero people.[189] Colours, textiles, and stylised symbols (including crosses, stripes, numbers, acronyms and crowns) are produced as embodied representations of identity, which enable people to be literally 'in touch' (by wearing them on their bodies) with their imagined Herero communities.[190] Hendrickson illustrates how individual variations in topstitching, selection of materials and sewing or fabrication techniques exist in spite of the standardisations expected from the groups related to these representations.[191] Her account of these individual approaches to the fabrication of group symbols illustrates the improvised qualities in these representations.

While I will not review the field of Namibian visual art as such, a study conducted by Meredith Palumbo for her PhD thesis is noteworthy because it shows how black and white visual artists of painting, printmaking, sculpture and digital arts assert their respective identities while being caught up in the 'turbulent events' of nation building. Palumbo's study focuses on black and white visual artists and illustrates how 'culturally driven imagery' evolved throughout Namibia's 'nation building

[183] Johan S. Malan, *Die Voelker Namibias*, trans. Kuno F. R. Budack, (Goettingen and Windhoek: Klaus Hess Verlag, 1998), 51, 80, 82, 102-04 and 117.
[184] A Scherz et al, *Hair Styles, Head Dresses and Ornaments in Namibia and Southern Angola* (Windhoek, Gamsberg: Macmillan, 1981), 16-21.
[185] Inkeri Huhtamaa, *Namibian Bodily Appearance and Handmade Objects: The Meanings of Appearance Culture and Handmade Objects from the Perspective of the Craft Persons*, (Helsinki: University of Arts and Design, 2010), xiv.
[186] Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," 245-279; Hildi Hendrickson, "Bodies and Flags: the Representation of Herero Identity in Colonial Namibia," in *Clothing and Difference: Embodied Identities in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Hildi Hendrickson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 213-244.
[187] Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," 256-264.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Hendrickson, "Bodies and Flags," 213-244.
[190] Ibid., 219-22 and 241.
[191] Ibid., 221-24.

period'.[192] Although Palumbo's work does not address functional art, craft or design,[193] her findings can be applied to the area of Namibian craft and design, because similar divides – between traditional crafts produced by indigenous Namibians and those produced by settlers living and working in Namibia – existed before independence. Traditional and Western craft and design cultures became more integrated in Namibia since independence.

An overview of issues that impact on the Namibian craft and design world

Craft and design artefacts give people a connection to humanity's 'shared heritage' and they are also a way for people to connect to each other as individuals.[194] As well as being a means of human connection, artefacts represent human identities. Human identities, whether individual or collective, reflect what has happened in the past and what is happening in the present. Therefore, a brief overview of Namibia's social, political and economic fabric is essential to understand the Namibian craft and design world and the artefacts created in it.

Namibia's social, political and economic situations

Namibia has always been a transitional space. The country has endured many migrations of cultures, wars, the first gruesome genocide of the twentieth century, and other turbulent changes since pre-colonial times.[195] Namibians endured more than twenty-five years of military tensions, the violence of subjugation and resistance leading up to independence.[196] Before independence from South Africa, Apartheid had the effect of creating vast cultural gulfs between the various ethnicities within Namibia. The 'divide and rule' policy of the controlling regime hindered the integration of different 'Namibian' ethnic groups.[197] Apartheid was particularly evident in educational and social spheres, although there was necessarily a less rigid Apartheid in the workplace, especially in urban spaces. Postcolonial efforts towards national reconciliation, where new social realities and identities were forged and eventually recreated due to changing power relations, was a response to the separation of the Apartheid era.[198]

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[192] Meredith Palumbo, *Alienation, Consciousness and Reclaiming: The Trajectory of the Visual Arts in Namibian Nation Building*, (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2005), 4.
[193] Ibid., 4.
[194] Risatti, *Theory of Craft*, xv and 9.
[195] Jan-Bart Gewald, "German Governance in Namibia," *Journal of African History* 46, no. 1 (2005): 173; Reinhart Kössler, "Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 377. The 1904 Herero genocide came about when the German *Schutztruppe*, or 'protective forces', under General von Trotha, drove 80,000 Herero people into the waterless Omaheke desert where most succumbed to thirst and hunger.
[196] Volker Winterfeldt, "Postcolonial Dynamics of Social Structure in Namibia," in *The Long Aftermath of War* ed. du Pisanie, Kössler and Lindeke, 140.
[197] Minette Mans, "State, Politics and Culture: The Case of Music," *Re-examining Liberation in Namibia – Political Culture Since Independence*, ed. Henning Melber (Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), 114.
[198] Ibid., 114-115. This is not to suggest that Namibian identities are 'a clear and defined unity.'

The challenge after Namibian independence was to amalgamate the disparate ethnic groups within the region into a nation-state. Unfortunately, '[s]ocial closure ... and exclusion seem to have become the sad trademark of postcolonial Namibian society' with social stratification the result of class rather than race-based segregation.[199] Namibian society comprises many different cultural and linguistic groups, resulting in a heterogeneous society. Indigenous ethnic groups include Ovambo, Nama, Damara, Herero, Khoisan, San, Baster, Tswana, Kavango, Caprivi and Himba, while settler ethnic groups include Chinese, Korean, German, Afrikaans and Portuguese. Immigration to Namibia is not as common as in South Africa, nor is xenophobia.

In Namibian politics, Swapo 'operated as a de facto single-party government' after it won a two-thirds majority in the 1994 elections.[200] At the time of writing this thesis, the position of Swapo remains unchanged.[201] During the elections of 2009, 20 years after independence, the party was described as a 'political hegemony', a situation that leaves Namibian democracy as 'a rather unilateral affair'.[202] These elections, however, saw a distinct increase in political competition with numerous smaller parties gaining a foothold in the Namibian political arena.[203] The risk Namibia faces is a threat to its democracy since Swapo, as the former liberation movement, has progressively changed into a party that wields hegemonic control over Namibia's political processes.

The geographic area of 825,000 square kilometres is home to only 2.2 million inhabitants, thus making Namibia the second least densely populated country in the world, after Mongolia.[204] In spite of a 51.2 per cent unemployment figure, Namibia is considered to be an upper-middle income country with a per capita gross domestic product of USD 4, 276.[205] In reality there are substantial income inequalities, with 40 per cent of Namibian households living below the poverty line.[206] These figures do not account for the many households engaged in subsistence farming, which does partially employ and feed many

[199] Winterfeldt, "Postcolonial Dynamics of Social Structure in Namibia," 140.
[200] Melber, "Namibia's National Assembly," 203.
[201] Ibid, 205 and 207. SWAPO, or the Swapo Party, received 74.29% of the votes during these elections. With just over 800,000 votes counted, this illustrates a rather small outcome.
[202] Ibid., 203.
[203] Ibid. Minor parties that became political players in the 2009 elections, although with little impact on the position of SWAPO, are the Rally for Democracy and Progress (11% votes); DTA of Namibia (3.13); National Unity Democratic Organisation (3.01%), United Democratic Front of Namibia (2.4%), The All People's Party (1.33%), The Republican Party of Namibia (0.81%), The Congress of Democrats (0.66%) and the South West African National Union (0.62%). These parties mentioned received seats in parliament. However, five smaller parties, not mentioned here, participated in the elections without receiving any seats. SWAPO Party of Namibia received 54 seats, followed by the Rally for Democracy and Progress, receiving 8. The rest of the parties received two seats or less.
[204] Namibian Planning Commission, *Namibia 2011 Population And Housing Census: Preliminary Results*, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.gov.na/documents/10180/34849/2011_Preliminary_Result.pdf/0ea026d4-9687-4851-a693-1b97a1317c60; Stuart Yikona, Brigitte Slot, Michael Geller, Bjarne Hansen, Fatima el Kadiri, *Ill-gotten Money and the Economy: Experiences from Malawi and Namibia*, A World Bank Study (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011), 53.
[205] Ibid., 54. Namibia has a Gini-coefficient of 0.70, which refers to the income disparity between a country's lowest and highest income groups. Namibia has the highest Gini-coefficient value in the southern African region.
[206] Ibid.

families.[207] Tourism is the third largest source of foreign exchange and has a positive impact on resource conservation, with 59 communal conservancies in existence by 2011.[208]

Compared to other nations in the southern African region, Namibia experienced (and is experiencing) postcolonial processes of transition, transformation and development that are unique. However, these countries also share striking similarities in that most lack 'a commitment to democratic principles or practices', and previously 'declared policy aims and goals ... and initiatives towards socioeconomic transformation of their societies' are conspicuously absent.[209] This may, in part, be due to the fact that many of the southern African liberation movements did not uphold and cultivate human rights and democratic processes 'in their own ranks' and, therefore, their fight against oppression and colonial rule did not prevent the emergence of authoritarian patterns of rule, usually to the detriment of democratic practices, after their struggle for independence was won.[210]

Consequently, imbalances in wealth distribution, unemployment and other forms of human exploitation are ills that befall some southern African states. The 'pressures of economic decline and gaping inequalities' are a result of 'shifts towards authoritarianism' causing further disadvantage to Africa's 'poor'.[211] In Namibia, for instance, 78.8 per cent of the country's income is distributed to only one fifth of the population while another fifth of the population survives on 1.4 per cent of Namibia's annual income.[212] This leaves almost a third of the population classified as 'severely poor', living on less than one (US) dollar per day.[213] These figures sketch a fairly grave picture considering the Namibian per capita income. They also raise concerns about Namibia's future, and whether democracy, justice and notions of a life well lived will be redundant.

The Namibian environment

On a positive note, one of Namibia's successes is that it was one of the first countries ever to include protection of the environment in its constitution.[214] While 18 per cent of Namibia's surface area is government reserves and game parks, several conservation initiatives are run on privately owned land and, in 2009, 161 of these private game reserves were registered in Namibia.[215] In the early 1990s,

[207] Clemens Greiner, "Migration, Translocal Networks and Socio-Economic Stratification in Namibia," *Africa* 81, no. 4 (2011): 610.
[208] Ibid.; *Namibia's Communal Conservancies: A Review of Progress and Challenges in 2011* (NACSO: Namibian Association of CBNRM Support organisations).
[209] Henning Melber, "Limits to Liberation: An Introduction to Namibia's Postcolonial Political Culture," in *Re-examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture since Independence*, ed. Henning Melber (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2003), 9; Sandra Klopper and Michael Godby, "Art and Freedom: South Africa after Apartheid," *African Arts* 37, no. 4 (2004): 16.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Joann Mcgregor And Lynn Schumaker, "Heritage In Southern Africa: Imagining and Marketing Public Culture and History," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32, no. 4 (2006): 655.
[212] Henning Melber, "Namibia: A Trust Betrayed – Again?," 2010, accessed April 27, 2012, http://www.angolaresistente.net/2010/09/02/namibia-a-trust-betrayed-%E2%80%93-again-by-henning-melber/.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Alexandra Fuller, "Africa's Super Park," *National Geographic*, June 2011, 66.
[215] *Namibia Holiday and Travel* – The Official Namibian Tourism Directory (2011), 61 and 71.

many farmers became increasingly concerned about free-roaming game resources that were being over-exploited.[216] As a result, the first commercial conservancy on privately-owned farmland was registered in 1992; by 2011, 23 were established – with several others showing an interest in following suit.[217] These conservancies are legally protected areas belonging to a group of legitimate land occupiers who collectively manage and protect the natural resources of that area.

Conservation has not only been driven by government and private landowners, there was also an interest in the establishment of communal conservancies when local authorities and communities cooperated with the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) to decentralise natural resource management. The first communal conservancy, Nyae-Nyae, is in the Otjozondjupa region around the town Tsumkwe and was registered with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) on 16 February 1998.[218] By 2011, 59 of these communal conservancies had been registered, leaving 16 per cent of Namibia's surface area in the hands of rural Namibians. This allows rural Namibians to survive in spite of a high level of unemployment. The joint ventures related to tourism within these communal conservancies generated close to NAD17 million in 2008.[219]

While these figures narrate a brief history of impressive conservation initiatives in one African state, the relevance of these conservation programmes to Namibian artefact producers is also important. One of the biggest development programmes in Namibia is the Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme. This programme supports various communal conservancy initiatives while the Namibian government returns natural resource ownership rights to communities. The management of the land's resources are therefore returned to its occupants. Many Namibian traditional craft producers, such as basket weavers and wood carvers, participate in these programmes because they understand the need to protect resources that are the source of materials for their craft practices.[220]

The main focus of the CBNRM programme is on the preservation of thatching grass that is used for crafting, especially for Namibian and Angolan tourist lodges' thatch roofs. Raw material harvested for woodcarving and the harvesting of reeds for thatching also have an impact on the Namibian environment. The CBNRM programme has been working in close cooperation with the communal conservancies. This programme supports additional activities, such as craft production and sales, while including awareness campaigns related to the harvesting of raw natural materials or resources by crafts people and artists. Many conservancies sell crafts at their office or shop premises.[221] The only information about income from craft sales at communal conservancies that is publically available is

[216] Ibid., 69.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., 70.
[220] Suich and Murphy, "Crafty Women," 25.
[221] *Namibia's Communal Conservancies*, 46 and 51.

from 2007. This figure, NAD229,861, represents a meagre 0.8 per cent of all income generated by all conservancies in Namibia that year.[222]

Ongoing human and ecological threats to trees in indigenous forests, such as makalani palms (*Hyphaene petersiana*), resulted in the promotion of sustainable environmental practices in northern Namibian craft communities by craft and environmental support organisations.[223] Suich and Murphy's study addresses the need for environmental care in this region due to basket making practices in which the tender young leaves from the centre of the palm are harvested and dried.[224] If an environmental awareness program had not been initiated in these basket-producing areas, the indigenous makalani palm would be threatened,[225] based on the evidence of central and eastern southern African regions where many more basket-weaving communities harvest palm leaves. Basket weaving has significantly increased since Namibia's independence due to their increasing commercial value, thus contributing to livelihoods in northern Namibia.[226]

The Namibian government and the arts

An art and cultural policy development process was initiated in Namibia between 1998 and 2000. This process was driven by UNESCO as part of the Revised Draft Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development in Namibia.[227] The Namibian government's art and cultural policy's first goal is to 'uphold unity in diversity'.[228] The combination of the words 'unity' and 'diversity' in a single aspiration reflects part of the Namibian postcolonial condition, because it illustrates the tensions caused by contradictions. The Namibian government anticipates forging a way forward for their postcolonial society by overcoming diversity through 'unity'. In this policy context 'unity' becomes an ethical space in which diversity is tolerated as long as 'unity is maintained by mutual understanding, respect and tolerance'.[229] Despite ongoing tensions due to historical social, economic and geographic divisions, the reasonably smooth transition to political independence resulted in two 'peaceful decades of societal development' in postcolonial Namibia, characterised by social transitions and identity reformulations by the various ethnic and cultural groups.[230]

Contemporary Namibian social realities that influence identity formation processes are important to this study. The mission of the Namibian government, as stated in its policy on arts and culture, is to

[222] Ibid., 48.
[223] Ibid., 17.
[224] Suich and Murphy, "Crafty Women," 5.
[225] Cunningham and Terry, *African Basketry*, 11; Ben-Erik van Wyk and Nigel Gericke, *People's Plants – a Guide to Useful Plants of Southern Africa* (Pretoria: Briza Publications, 2007), 52. In other southern African regions, this tree is known as the mokola or ilala palm.
[226] Suich and Murphy, "Crafty Women," 25.
[227] Minette Mans, "Creating a cultural policy," 13.
[228] "*Unity, Identity and Creativity for Prosperity: Policy on Arts and Culture of the Republic of Namibia,*" accepted in 2001 by the cabinet of the Republic of Namibia and published by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture.
[229] "*Unity, Identity and Creativity for Prosperity*".
[230] Winterfeldt, "Postcolonial Dynamics of Social Structure in Namibia," 140.

'give all Namibians a sense of identity', to 'improve quality of life', and to 'safeguard, extend and promote ... physical, linguistic and spiritual heritage'.[231] This study, through a critical approach, will support this Namibian government policy by contributing to knowledge that is able to guide the implementation of socially sustainable actions with the potential to 'improve quality of life'. This research investigates Namibian postcolonial craft and design identities in order to contribute to knowledge in this area.

Namibian theorist Minette Mans is critical of having 'culture' and 'arts' as 'equal' terms in the title of the Namibian arts and cultural policy, she argues that this creates a division between the two terms.[232] Such a dichotomy potentially conveys a message that there is an innate distinction between 'the common people's culture' on the one side, and the arts in a 'higher' position on the other, which may indicate that what 'ordinary Namibian people practice does not qualify as art'.[233] While this may be problematic wording in a national government's policy, Mans states:

> Given that a broader conception of the arts includes architecture, photography, cinema, television, ceramics, and textile, fashion, and jewellery design, I would consider indigenous basket weaving, textile design and printing, pottery and woodcarving art. Yet the Namibian policy appears to relegate the latter to the status of crafts, irrespective of quality.[234]

In the African context, no division existed between arts, craft or design, since these essentially fluid processes traditionally overlap.[235] From Mans' comment it is clear that art and craft are misunderstood and misconstrued in the Namibian context by some of its own practitioners and scholars and it is likely that the same is true for 'design'.

Many craftspeople and designers who are involved in commercial and indigenous processes of artefact production find themselves employing both craft and design (as actions) while creating artefacts. The contemporary Namibian art world, supported by the Namibian arts and cultural policy, embraces various creative activities while being represented by many cultural bodies and professional organisations in the areas of visual and performing arts, film making, literature, music, theatre and cultural heritage.[236] Various cultural events and festivals are hosted annually, while the National Arts Council of Namibia and the Bank Windhoek Arts Festival encourage widespread participation in arts.

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[231] "*Unity, Identity and Creativity for Prosperity*".
[232] Mans, "Creating a Cultural Policy," 14.
[233] Ibid., 15.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Susan Sellschop, Wendy Goldblatt and Doreen Hemp, *Craft South Africa* (Hyde Park, South Africa: Pan Macmillan SA, 2002), 12.
[236] Mans, "Creating a Cultural Policy," 15.

Conclusion: conflicting narratives and missing scholarship

This thesis, guided by postcolonial theory and an ethnographic approach, focuses on mapping the Namibian craft and design world. To that end, this chapter began by reviewing scholarly literature that explains the meanings and functions of craft and design and the narrative potential of artefacts. Artefacts are able to communicate specific social and environmental information, for example the aesthetic value of artefacts is gauged by the environments in which they are produced and thus they carry specific messages about the materials and processes used to make them. However, the messages communicated by artefacts depend on the social settings artefacts are placed and used in. The artefacts under investigation in this study have been produced in a postcolonial society, thus this thesis uses postcolonial theory to help interpret their production contexts and messages.

This chapter then mapped the existing literature on specific narratives that have an impact on the southern African craft and design world, noting that artefacts are often exposed and marketed in tourist spaces unconnected to the original historical, material, social and environmental contexts of their creation. As a result, artefacts' meanings remain unexplained in such spaces. The names of craftspeople should be attached to their artefacts to contest the widespread anonymity that prevails in artefact marketing spaces. Additionally, artefact marketing is underpinned by narratives of 'progress' and 'development' and, as a result, the potential of artefacts to tell any other stories is fundamentally undermined. This review showed that some Western art historians and collectors also fell into the 'anonymity' narrative trap. While some of these shortcomings may be attributed to the negative results of tourism, tourist markets remain an important source of income for southern African craftspeople. Ideally, tourists should have a respectful attitude towards the cultural sensitivity of their host communities and individuals and groups responsible for marketing and selling crafts should also act with greater care and diligence.

This chapter outlined the social, economic, environmental, and political history of Namibia since the country's independence, illustrating the realities in which Namibian craftspeople and designers live and work. The vulnerability of the Namibian environment calls for a national integrated approach between creative practitioners, their support organisations, environmental support organisations and the Namibian government in order to sustain it. This literature review notes the significant successes Namibia has achieved in natural resource management, but also demonstrates that a stronger focus is needed to maintain the sustainability of Namibian craft production. In addition, the support of the Namibian government for arts and culture should be increased to implement, grow and sustain meaningful networks of artefact making and marketing.

While some useful research about a few craft communities and their craft practices (such as basket weaving, embroidery and woodcarving) has been produced, individual Namibian designers who practice independently and manage their own businesses have mostly been overlooked. Some scholarly work has been done on craftswomen who work in collaboration with craft centres and also

on some rurally-based indigenous craft groups and Namibian craft communities; but little information has been produced about independent Namibian designer-makers who work in urban areas. Most existing research primarily focuses on tourist crafts, but that there are other groups of artefacts made in Namibia, which speak to a variety of different audiences, is another area that demands attention.

The literature reviewed in this chapter illustrates the lack of an overall picture of Namibian artefacts. A deeper understanding of the techniques, equipment, materials and processes used for making a variety of artefacts is needed, so is a wider and deeper understanding of who the makers of specific artefacts are, and the issues they grapple with in their everyday lives. The next chapter will discuss the methodological approach and methods that I used in order to provide this important information.

Chapter 2

Stepping into the field

I undertook extensive ethnographic fieldwork to meet the aim of this study and map Namibian craft and design worlds. The problem I encountered is how to understand Namibian craft and design artefacts and practices, and encounters with their makers, in the field. I adopted an ethnographic methodology angle, because ethnography, says Geertz, is 'mapping fields', through maintaining diaries, understanding relationships, and recording texts among other activities.[237] This means that the behaviour of individuals practicing within the Namibian craft and design world was observed within their own environments instead of inviting them to artificially created spaces to be observed.[238] I took this approach to try to understand their situations in a holistic sense, including all aspects that relate to their usual daily practices such as artefact selling, marketing, making and so on. It allowed me to analyse, explore and understand the broader contexts in which they function, which include their different life experiences, and their social, economic and environmental situations.[239]

Maps are designed artefacts, because they are planned and drawn with the assistance of reflections upon journeys. During their journeys in specific worlds, however, travellers improvise their routes, because they embark on forward-moving actions and they 'know as they go', or discover as they proceed.[240] While mapping the Namibian craft and design world, I was 'making' an intangible map that was based on forward-moving, improvisatory actions.[241] The tactile tools I used were field diaries, notebooks, photographs, my physical body and my actions; and the intangible tools were my memories, intuition and knowledge. However, my knowledge about this map was shaped due to my past experiences in the Namibian craft and design world, the extensive planning and designing invested in my field research during 2010 and my actual, improvisatory actions during my field studies.

The backward-looking actions of analysis of and reflection upon data, the thinking through and 'working through' my experiences, memories, anticipations and frustrations, furthered my knowledge about this map and allowed my story to emerge.[242] However, and most importantly, what emerged

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[237] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description – Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 5.
[238] Marcus Banks, *Using Visual Data in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2007), 58, doi: 10.4135/9780857020260.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment – Essays on Livelihood and Dwelling* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 228.
[241] Mike Anusas and Tim Ingold, "Designing Environmental Relations: From Opacity to Textility," *Design Issues* 29, no. 4 (2013): 58, doi:10.1162/DESI_a_00230.
[242] Paul Ricoeur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life Stories," *Philosophy Today*, 47, no. 3 (2003): 324.

from this study are the stories of the people who shape the Namibian craft and design world.[243] Their stories were out there, waiting to be discovered, heard, understood, documented, and retold in the future. Stories are about the creation of meaning, because stories offer people a way to make sense of troubling events and difficult existences on the one hand, and to share joyous moments and life's ironies and humour, on the other.[244]

The field study comprised three phases of data collection: (1) exploring the artefacts found on a specific southern African tourist route, including Namibia and a part of South Africa; (2) observing craft production in rural Namibian communities; and (3) viewing artefact making in an urban Namibian setting, Windhoek. The primary data collected includes ethnographic observations and open-ended face-to-face interviews. In the research plan I explain the methods of data collection and analysis used for each of the three phases of the field study.

Research in southern Africa

The field study was conducted from 29 November 2010 until 3 March 2011. This time line includes the six weeks for conducting phase one of the field study during which I travelled a southern African tourist route spanning the Garden Route in South Africa and included a large section of Namibia. There were then eight weeks during which I observed rural craft groups, interviewed and observed urban Namibian craftspeople and designers in their studios.

In order to conduct the rural craft group observations, extensive logistical planning was required with regards to my travelling and taking care of the daily needs of the individuals who represented the craft groups as guides and translators. Nine days were spent amongst members of each craft group while the total time spent for travel to and from the venues was five days. Most of the remaining time was used to interview and observe the urban artefact designer-makers in their studios or normal places of work.

[243] Barbara B. Kawulich, "Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, no. 2 (2005) accessed February 2, 2014, http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996. Although my story shaped this research, the study's methodology is not based on auto-ethnography (which would primarily draw on my own perspectives, affect and experiences), but ethnography with a focus on Namibian craft and design practitioners.
[244] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 237; Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis: Qualitative Research Methods Series*, 30, (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 1993), 2.

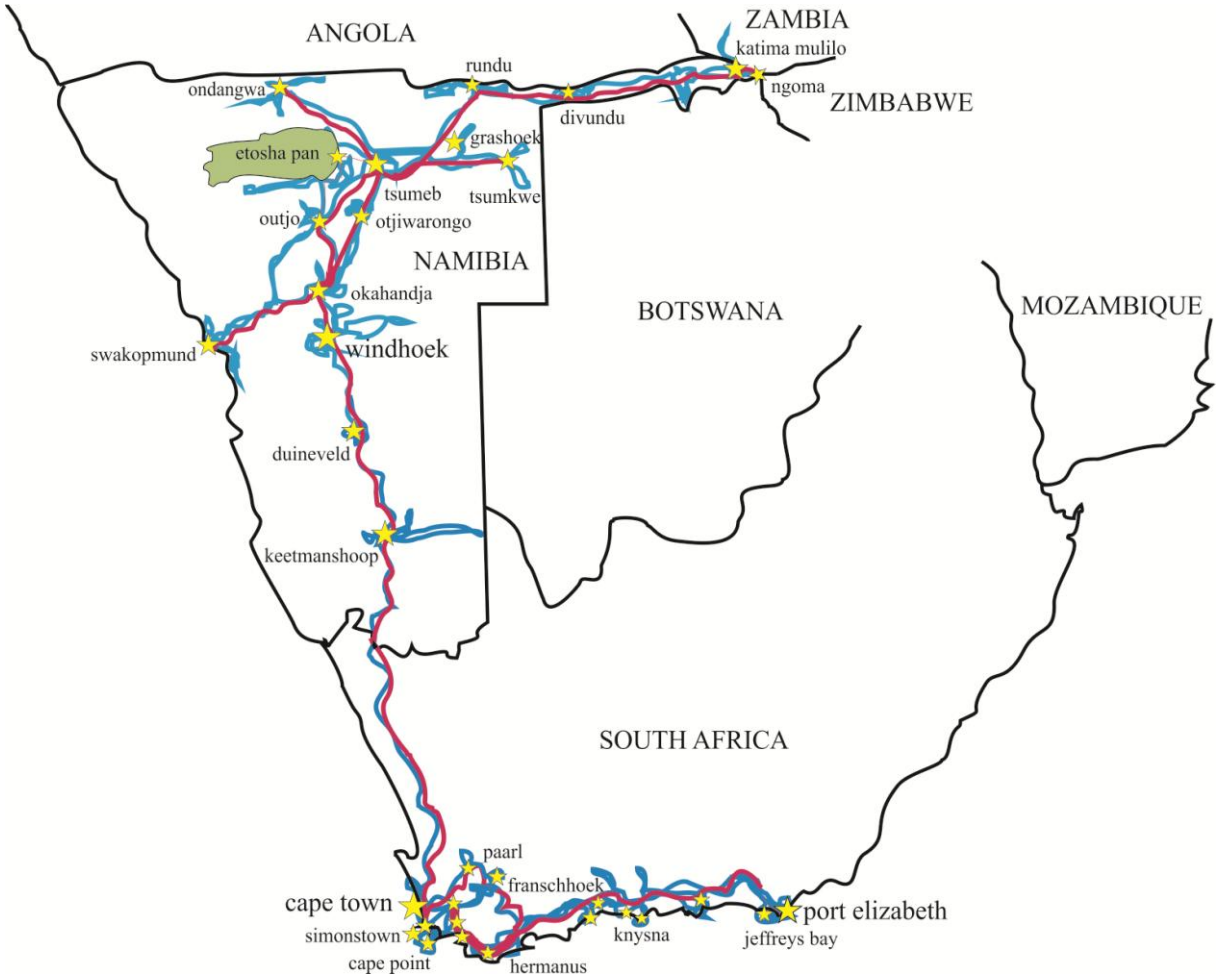

Figure 2.1 The 'formal' route of the field study is illustrated by the red lines, which indicate the mapped national roads I planned to follow in this southern African region. The blue lines indicate the 'mapping' of my route in the moment of travelling as my actions unfolded in the field. The purpose of these blue lines is to illustrate my route and travelling history. They are only an approximate indication of where I travelled. Their intention is not mapmaking, but to illustrate my 'mapping', or my capacity to move in this terrain due to my tacit and 'local' knowledge of the southern African craft and design world.[245]

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate the southern African tourist route I travelled, covering 10,700 km, mostly by car. The route began at Cape Town, went from there to Port Elizabeth along the Garden Route and back, and then from Cape Town to Windhoek and Katima Mulilo, the last Namibian town before reaching the Victoria Falls. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show various craft selling sites I encountered that sold southern African and Namibian crafted and designed artefacts.

[245] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 219, 228 and 231.

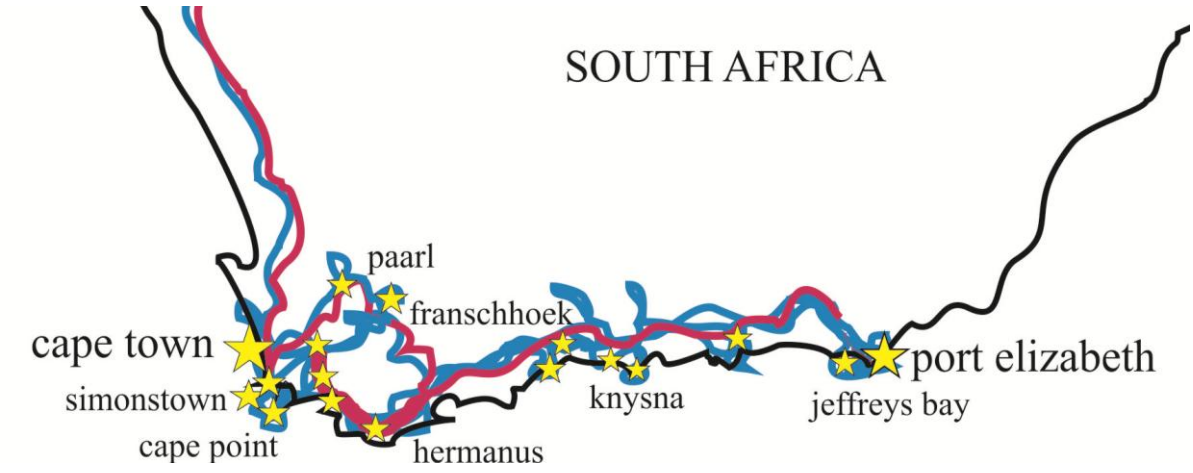

Figure 2.2 Close up of the route through the south and south-western part of South Africa.

Research plan

The field work was conducted predominantly in Namibia with supporting information obtained in neighbouring South Africa. The primary data collection included observations and open-ended face-to-face interviews. Observations of the working processes of craftspeople and designers were recorded and later analysed in order to ascertain how the narratives I collected related to their lives, identities and work and how these are reflected in their artefacts. The semi-structured interviews focussed on the stories that craftspeople and designers had to tell about their lives, careers and the artefacts which they produce. My data collection methods included field notes, photographs and video recordings and their transcriptions, and was conducted in three phases, described below and summarised in Table 2.1.

1. I surveyed the southern African craft and design world by studying the artefacts marketed and sold at craft marketing sites, such as craft and street markets, shops, artists' studios and galleries situated on a specific southern African tourist route with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the representation and distribution of Namibian-produced artefacts in the southern African artefact craft and design world.
2. I observed three rural Namibian craft producing communities with the aim of gaining greater insight into rural artefact production and the social, economic and environmental contexts in which these groups fabricate their artefacts.
3. I interviewed and observed people working in their studios in the capital of Namibia, Windhoek, aiming to capture the life stories of urban artefact producers and gain greater insight into the social realities, design styles and working processes of urban artefact producers, and the identities and materialities of their artefacts.

Table 2.1 Research plan summary

Field Study: 29 November 2010 until 3 March 2011							
		Data Collection					Data Analysis
			Documentary methods				
	RESEARCH PLAN	Setting	Field diary	Travel log	Documentary photography	Documentary video recordings	Selected methods of analysis
Phase 1	Surveying the location to find artefacts on specific tourist routes	South African and Namibian tourist route	no	yes	yes	no	Collation of data Grouping Coding/decoding Interpretation
Phase 2	Observe rural craft producing communities	Namibia: Otjozondjupa, Oshikoto, Ohangwena and Oshana regions	yes	no	yes	no	Collation of data Grouping Coding/decoding Interpretation
Phase 3	Interviews with urban designer-makers	Namibia: Windhoek	yes	no	no	yes	Collation of data Grouping Coding/decoding Discourse analysis Interpretation
	Observe urban designer-makers	Namibia: Windhoek	yes	no	yes	yes	Collation of data Grouping Coding/decoding Interpretation

Participant recruitment

The participants selected are Namibian designers, craftspeople and craft groups who were actively producing artefacts. Rural and urban participants were all practising designers and craftspeople who work as independent artefact makers. Interviews with urban designers and crafts people were conducted in English. In rural locations, the translators who guided and escorted me during observations were nominated and made available to this study by the craft organisations they represented.

The John Muafangejo Arts Centre in Windhoek assisted with the selection of my cluster of participants. The participant sample is not meant to be taken as representative. Instead, I aim to explore craft practices in a localised setting and thus interviewees were selected from a pool of urban Namibian craftspeople and designers with whom I was familiar from past experiences in the Namibian craft and design world. This allowed me to avoid difficulties for the participants and proceed efficiently and effectively with interviews and observations at their usual places of work, shops or design studios.

Previous and positive working and professional relationships with Namibian craft producing communities, craftspeople and designers existed due to my NPO-related work and past involvement in the Namibian craft and design domain. A research assistant was selected and employed with the assistance of the Visual and Performing Arts Department of the University of Namibia. She established initial contact via telephone with the potential interviewees and groups to be observed in the urban settings in order to avoid any feelings of obligation. The study aims were explained during these telephone introductions.

Namibian craft community representatives/managers were contacted by e-mail and letters and information sheets were provided to introduce the research. Since these groups are self-managed, permission was sought from group management to conduct observations, and participation depended on the group's decision, their opinion, advice and recommendations for action. The research aims and the participants' rights were explained to them; written consent was sought from management of the rural craft producing groups, designers and craftspeople before I commenced any observations or interviews.[246]

Data collection

First phase: surveying the field

The goal of the first phase of the field study was to gain an understanding of the wider southern African region surrounding Namibia. I wanted to know how Namibian crafts and artefacts are represented in the region so I selected an area close to Namibia that is popular with tourists and followed the tourist route from South Africa's Cape Province to the northern Caprivi region of Namibia, which leads to Victoria Falls. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the southern African craft and designed artefacts market, and I expected to find a number of craft marketing ventures on this route. The route included: (1) Cape Town to Port Elizabeth in South Africa (also known as the Garden Route); (2) Cape Town to Windhoek, the capital of Namibia; (3) Windhoek to

[246] Data, transcriptions and field notes will be stored for a period of five years in the research archive storage facilities in the School of Art, Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia in Adelaide in accordance with this university's guidelines on conducting responsible research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. This study has also been granted ethics approval and meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Swakopmund; and (4) Windhoek via Etosha National Park to Katima Mulilo, the last Namibian town in the Caprivi region, en route to Victoria Falls on the border of Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Data was collected with the assumption that there was a correlation between supply of and demand for artefacts found at these selling sites. No interviews were conducted during this phase of the field study, which focussed solely on observations. Photographs, a travel log and field notes were used to capture data and the information I recorded included:

- at which sites artefacts were sold and the kind of artefacts that were sold,
- the origins of the artefacts,
- how various African artefacts were represented and distributed on this tourist route in South Africa and Namibia, and
- what kind of craft selling sites were encountered on this route.

Important anecdotal information was also acquired from craft sales people, gallery managers and people employed in the tourism industry such as tour guides and staff responsible for craft selling. I also collected and used maps, pamphlets, brochures and business cards found on the route as sources of information. An internet search was conducted to find additional information on specific projects, groups and venues related to the southern African craft and design world.

Second phase: observations in Namibian rural craft communities

The second phase of the field study was conducted in Namibia. Observation of the rural Namibian craft producing groups assisted me in gaining an informed understanding of the wider Namibian-designed craft production sphere. Observations were conducted after I obtained written permission to do so from the rural Namibian craft communities visited. The craft groups who participated in the observations were from three rural areas in Namibia – the Oshikoto, Oshana and Otjozondjupa regions. The groups observed mainly consisted of women. All participants were members of Namibian craft production organisations and cultural bodies that are independent and self-governing.

The first group I observed were members of an indigenous Namibian craft foundation from villages east of Tsumkwe situated in the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy in the Otjozondjupa region of Namibia. The members of this organisation were mainly women and men from the San cultural group in Namibia. I observed five participants, one of whom was a man. Secondly, I observed participants living at Grashoek, an indigenous tourist village west of Tsumkwe situated in the Otjozondjupa region of Namibia. The members of this organisation were mainly women and men from the San cultural group in Namibia. No craft practices were observed, but I observed cultural products and services sold to the general public by visiting the craft selling site and viewing cultural performances such as dance and games.

The third group I observed were members of an embroidery craft group from an Otjiwarongo communal farm area in the Otjozondjupa region of Namibia. The members of this organisation were women from various Namibian cultural groups including Damara, Ovambo, San, Tswana, Herero and others. Between 14 and 21 participants, all women, took part in the activities I observed in a township Orwetoveni in Otjiwarongo. An artist cooperative from Ondangwa was the fourth group observed. This organisation supplied services to its members who worked and lived in the four mid-north regions in Namibia: Omusati, Oshikoto, Ohangwena and Oshana. The members of the group were mostly women from the Ovambo cultural group. Following the recommendations of this organisation, three villages were visited in the Oshana and Oshikoto regions and 25 participants were observed, all of whom were women.

No interviews were carried out with the groups, which were observed without interrupting any work processes or interfering with group interactions. Nor were interviews conducted with the guides who accompanied me to the craft production sites, due to the limited time I had to observe the communities' usual craft practices and related social interactions, which were the main foci of my observations. However, the guides who accompanied me in the craft communities translated and willingly shared information with me. The guides' stories, along with those overheard among the participants and translated for me by the guides, were recorded in my field diary. The observational studies were documented with field notes and photographs. Appropriate ethical permissions were obtained from these organisations and the individual participants were asked for their consent before photographs were taken.

Third phase: interviews and studio observations

Ten independent urban Namibian designers and craftspeople from Windhoek participated in the phase three interviews. These participants work independently and established or were in the process of establishing themselves as small business owners in the production of artefacts in Namibia. The observations in the studio considered Namibian designer-makers' life narratives and reconstructed their experiences related to craft and design practices. How they understood the use of narratives in their artefacts was also investigated, along with their sense of identity, their understanding of their work, how they understood craft, design and the working of signs in their artefacts and practices. Their ways of work and attitudes towards improvisation was also reconstructed in their narratives. All recordings were de-identified to secure the confidentiality and protect the identities of the participants and I made use of my research diary to document field notes.

Interviewing and transcribing

Due to the different elements that form human thinking, it is essential to understand how questions can be constructed and also the effect differing cultural backgrounds will have on the answers that questions receive from research participants.[247] The questions in this study focussed on the participants' life stories, their work and related identities, and the use of signs in their artefact making and working processes. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on cultural themes[248] during the interviews and questions included:

> Could you tell me what you do in your creative practice?
> How did it all start for you?
> How, in your opinion, do you think product stories can be useful?
> How do you create?

I conducted ten qualitative interviews during which I used semi-structured questions to guide the interviews and so they were loosely constructed conversations between the interviewee and myself. This allowed for richer data since the participant was able to sketch detailed stories that included personal aspects of their life and experiences; information that would otherwise have been lost in structured collection. Interviews lasted between 30 and 110 minutes and were conducted at a venue determined by the interviewee, usually at their places of work. This allowed the participants to feel comfortable while preventing a waste of work time. I recorded interviews by video camera, but the names of the participants are protected in the presentation of this research. All participants and rural craft production community organisations received a report summarising the research and a transcript of their interview via e-mail in electronic file format.

Language

This field study was conducted in a complex social setting – one that Minette Mans refers to as a 'cultural mosaic' – in which a minimum of 11 languages are spoken.[249] Therefore, I had to be mindful of cultural and language differences between the participants and between them and me. My 'translation competence', which relates to an 'ability to translate the meanings of one culture into a form which is appropriate to another culture' had to be carefully considered since this study was conducted in a sensitive postcolonial space.[250]

The use of a dominant, non-African language, English, had the potential to affect my relationship with the participants. Although English is the official Namibian language, it received this status only after independence. Before English was introduced as the official language, most Namibians, especially

[247] James Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Belmont, USA: Wadsworth, 1979), 83.
[248] Ibid., 85.
[249] Minette Mans, "State, Politics and Culture: The Case of Music," in *Re-examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture Since Independence*, ed. Henning Melber (Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), 115.
[250] Ibid., 19.

those living and working in the central, southern and commercial farmland areas of the country, used the dominant language of Apartheid, Afrikaans.

Namibian youth are now exposed to English through the school curriculum and English is gradually becoming the dominant language in spite of the fact that many Namibians acquire English as a second language. Although I am fluent in English, German and Afrikaans, all research participants preferred to use English during the interviews. From my past experiences in Namibia, I knew that urban groups were more comfortable with English, the official language of Namibia, whereas this is not necessarily the case in all rural areas.

During the rural craft group observations in the Oshikoto and Odzondjupa regions, indigenous Namibian languages such as Oshivambo, San, Nama/Damara, Oshiherero, as well as some English and Afrikaans, were used by the participants. The craft group representatives (and translators) assisted my communication with the rural craftspeople. Group representatives led the meetings, and shared knowledge with the translator and me. However, it was clear that the information the participants shared was selectively translated by the craft group representatives, because the limited time I spent in these communities did not allow all information to be shared with me; I noticed that the craft group representatives did not translate all conversations for me. In a group setting where many conversations are going on at the same time, the translation of all conversations is not practical and often not possible. Namibian craft communities have not been over-researched and I did not feel any animosity towards my research activities.

My observations amongst the Namibian rural craft communities allowed participants to 'speak' to me through the 'common language' of craft and making processes. Rural participants from the Namibian craft production groups would have been disadvantaged if they had not been able to participate in interviews in their native languages. Disadvantageous interview practices would not allow the participants to draw on meaningful narratives (which are deeply embedded in language and culture) about their own experiences and consequently, the essential purpose of ethnographic interviewing – to hear participants' own words – would be missed.

Culture

The interaction between cultural groups was important, as was the interaction between myself and the groups under observation or with those participating in interviews.[251] The Namibian cultural 'mosaic' consists of a minimum of 11 different cultural groups, some indigenous and some not. The Oshiwambo speaking community constitute more than 50 per cent and the largest part of the Namibian population, while all other groups, such as the Nama-Damara, Herero, Kavango, Caprivi, Tswana,

[251] Ibid., 45.

San, German, Afrikaans and English speaking groups, to name a few, each constitute between 0.5 per cent and 9 per cent of the Namibian population.[252]

Tourists from all over Africa and the world visit Namibia. While many Namibians are used to cultural intermingling, some of those working in creative fields, such as art, craft and design, are isolated in far-off regions with limited transport, as I directly experienced. On the other hand, many Namibians working in this field are exposed to other Namibian cultures and to international tourists (who constitute a big part of the market they depend on for their livelihoods). These cultural situations were taken into consideration during the course of my study as they inform questions around identities and sustainability.

In this research I attempted to include Namibians from all cultural backgrounds and while rural craft group observations were not conducted in some of the major craft producing areas, such as the Kavango and Zambezi, I included these cultural areas when I considered the overall picture of the Namibian craft and design world. I viewed and describe cultures on and in their own terms and every recording, field note, interaction or photograph was managed ethically. However, as is typical of ethnography, I brought my personal cultural background and life experiences to all research activities.[253]

Management of field notes and photographs

The fieldwork journal and file I created consisted of a travel log, fieldwork diary and photographs. The travel log contained a 'condensed account',[254] brief notes of the field study and information such as where and when I travelled, places visited, artefacts found and observed in markets, shops, galleries and other outlets, craft techniques used, my collection of brochures, business cards, craft guides, maps and other printed information, and subjective annotations of thoughts and impressions. My fieldwork diary's 'expanded accounts',[255] include descriptive and subjective annotations on the field notes taken in the rural craft-producing communities in Namibia as well as the studio observations of urban Namibian craftspeople and designers' working processes.

Photographs were very useful data accumulation tools during the field study, because they allowed me to collect a vast and lasting record of the artefacts I encountered, and the processes of their making in particular environments or settings at a particular time. Because the photographs were intentionally

[252] "Namibia Demographics Profile," accessed July 18, 2012, http://www.indexmundi.com/namibia/demographics_profile.html.
[253] Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview*, 18.
[254] Ibid., 75.
[255] Ibid.

created as tools for collecting data they display my particular point of view and agency.[256] The images assisted with my analysis and interpretation of data, because they helped me to draw on memories and particular experiences that connected me with my participants, their lived situations and narratives. While photographs and other methods of collecting data are interpretations of events in themselves, they are still useful tools that facilitate analysis.

More than 4000 photographs were taken, a small sample considering the geographically vast area that was covered in this study. I did not solely depend on photography to accumulate data on artefacts because it was not possible (for ethical reasons) to use a camera at all locations. Therefore, my travel log served as a complementary tool for data collection at all sites. My log was useful not only for this reason, but also because it could record specific, tangible and intangible observations I was not able to capture with my cameras. Both photographs and videos allowed the capture of essential visual data, such as artefacts and the related processes of designing and making, but all visual records were created so that my research participants cannot be identified from the images.

Data analysis and interpretation

The ethnographic focus of this study informs my analytical approach, which is interpretive and 'in search of meaning'.[257] Theme-oriented readings of the data generate more complementary responses from participants.[258] In other words, data is treated simultaneously as a resource and a topic for exploration.[259] This approach allows the appreciation of 'common sense knowledge'[260] by detailed

[256] Wolfram Hartman, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes, *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian history* (Cape Town and Windhoek: Cape Town University Press and Out of Africa Publishers, 1998); Lorena Rizzo, "A Glance into the Camera: Gendered Visions of Historical Photographs in Kaoko (North-Western Namibia)," *Gender & History* 17, no. 3 (2005): 682–713; Napandulwe Shiweda, "Towards a visual Construction of Omhedi," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia,* eds. Andre du Pisanie, Reinhart Kössler, William A. Lindeke (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstrasser Institut, 2010), 245-279; Anitra Nettleton, "Jubilee Dandies: Collecting Beadwork in Tsolo, Eastern Cape, 1897-1932," *African Arts* 36, no. 49 (2013): 41 and 43. The influence of the camera on power relations in colonial southern Africa needs mentioning here. The role of photography, as Hartman, Silvester, Hayes, Rizzo, Shiweda and Nettleton have argued, has been problematic and complex. Nettleton also illustrated that that the 'idea of photography as a form of imperialist control' was widely applied in southern Africa during the colonial era. From behind the lens, the camera captures the significations of specific visions, points of view and subjective perspectives that are represented in tactile photographs. The presence of the lens also, conversely, inaugurates and opens up performative spaces, platforms of becoming in front of the lens. These complex relationships are explored by the writers mentioned above.

[257] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description – Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture", *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 5.

[258] Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice,* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 99.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid., 97.

description, or 'thick description',[261] instead of discounting it. Importantly, this approach also amplifies the voices of individuals living in social peripheries.[262]

Narrative analysis is thus a suitable method for this study, because it 'opens up the forms of telling about experience' instead of merely focusing on the content of the information gathered.[263] Narrative analysis is interested in 'why was the story told in that way' and seeks to understand how narratives are used to construct subjects' lives and identities through stories.[264] Narrative analysis aims to 'go about systematically interpreting [...] interpretations [...] of human agency and imagination' and thus this approach is suited to studies with a focus on identities and subjectivities.[265]

Individuals (re)interpret their life experiences when they tell each other stories; similarly, data collection and analysis is a process of creating interpretations. The telling of stories is influenced by agency and the audience to whom storytellers transfer their stories. When participants tell stories in interviews, they have already interpreted life experiences. Their narratives are based on remembering, forgetting and fiction.[266] During our conversations participants were 'emplotting'[267] their life paths and enacting their narrative identities.[268] The life stories of the participants were 'de-plotted' by transcribing our conversations which aided my interpretations of their stories. Thereafter, my processes of data analysis and writing up my findings resulted in even more interpretations of a participant's original life experiences. Finally, whoever reads these findings will interpret them yet again, according to their own understanding, derived from their specific cultural meaning systems.[269]

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[261] Geertz, after Gilbert Ryle, "Thick Description," 6.
[262] Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 97.
[263] Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, 2.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid, 5.
[266] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 243.
[267] Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World: An International Philosophical Review* XII, no. 2 (1979): 123, 125& 135; Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 307 & 310; Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 1 (1991): 74-75; Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 114-116. Life stories often appear messy due to internal and fluctuating dialectic processes. A relationship exists between an individual and the ongoing action of her life story. This ongoing action, or 'emplotment', is a process of individuals making sense of their lives while they tell their life stories. Emplotment is possible because of an individual's memories: her remembering and forgetting at the same time, the role of previous experience, the interplay of fiction and imagination, and the ability to be reflective. It is narrative identity that permits reflection or 'enacted narratives'. Narrative identity is constituted by complex intersections of an individual's *ipse* (self) and *idem* (same) identities to establish a sense of self. Both ipse and idem-identities manifest in tangible and intangible ways. In other words an individual's sense of self is established in a continuous process that involves justification and acknowledgement of a subject's self as 'actor' in conjunction with a self as 'sameness' over a long period of time. Simply put, while a subject acts out various identities in various moments and environments, an underlying sense of 'sameness' or stability work in conjunction with a 'self', allowing an individual to recognise him or herself in a given situation. This does not mean that either idem or ipse identity is stagnant. Both fluctuate and shape in narrative identity over a period of time. These intersections of identities Ricoeur refers to as 'identity events'. In my study, participants were tangled in complex narrative moments during our conversations and they negotiated their narrative identities in ways that they were able to understand their own situations while, at the same time, they told me their life stories.
[268] Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," 74-75.
[269] Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*, 8-14.

Using content analysis, data was coded to systematically condense it into smaller units, groupings or concepts.[270] Recurring patterns of information were identified; and I sought common themes in the transcribed interview data, in artefacts, as well as in the behaviour, interaction and actions of the interviewees as captured during my observational studies. Edward Said argues that, when applying postcolonial theory, nothing can be a 'real interpretation' since everything is imbedded in the cultural symbols (customs, rules, conceptions, traditions and institutions) of the 'representer' as well as the interpreter.[271] He concludes that 'truth' is also a representation, one that is 'intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things'.[272]

Data collected in photographs and my travel log were grouped according to reoccurring patterns including (1) distribution of artefacts (sites where artefacts were observed), (2) raw materials used in making processes, and (3) origin of artefacts observed at craft selling sites. Data collected in the research diary was documented in digital format and used to support photographic data taken in the three Namibian rural craft communities and studio observations with the designers and craftspeople in Windhoek.

Data collected during the research interviews were decoded to identify recurring patterns of information and common themes. This involved the grouping of terms according to their semantic relationships, looking for patterned regularities and irregularities in transcribed texts, and making conclusions on the basis of these patterns. The data was tidied as far as possible to allow for undemanding reading without compromising its significance. The term 'narrative commentaries' is used to refer to 'data extracts' because of the narrative focus of this study. Interpretations were guided by postcolonial theory and the methods discussed in this chapter.

Artefact review in the literature: interpretation and representations

Reviewing the literature on interpretations and representations by Ricoeur, Hall and Geertz allowed the sharpening of suitable research methods for this study, especially in areas of artefact critique. Artefacts and their making processes are interpreted by scholars of material culture as simultaneously individual and social outcomes; physical manifestations that communicate individual and social identities. Noting the way that artefacts are analysed in the material culture studies literature helped me to contextualise craft and design theories, and two features come to the fore when artefacts and their related identities are analysed:

[270] Sharon Lockyer, "Coding Qualitative Data," in *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, 1, eds. Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman and Timothy Futing Liao (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2004),137-38.
[271] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 272-73.
[272] Ibid.

- Craft and design artefacts are social and cultural products or 'outcomes'. They are representations of community 'outcomes' that are guided by collective identities; however, these artefacts are individually created, and therefore their creation is guided by individual subjectivities.[273]
- Artefacts are made, used and understood with the assistance of signs, sign networks, symbols and cultural codes which transfer meanings consigned to community and individual identities as well as individual subjectivities.

However, poststructuralist semiotics shifted away from structuralist sign systems towards exploratory processes of understanding meanings derived from coding systems, and the ways they are employed, translated and transformed into social practices.[274] According to Stuart Hall, representation is an integral aspect in cultural meaning-making processes.[275] Representation is what signs do when they call up thought images in individuals' minds; they are occurrences in which an image or any kind of depiction of something is called up in the mind and then identified or described.[276] 'Representation' is a noun whose definitions include

- 'to stand for'; it is the action of the representamen;[277] and
- 'things' that stand for something, for example, a depiction, replica or an image (of something).

While interpretations are translations or processes of understanding particular meanings, representations are material 'things' that signify something else. The analytical processes of this study depend on both these elements because they are essential for processes of meaning making, especially within cultural contexts. While representation means 'standing for', it also offers opportunities for dialogues between referrals to some 'things' absent and visible at the same time. These dialogues are present and perceivable in a represented object simultaneously with the role of how it is 'read' and made sense of in terms of the functioning of representation.[278] Since the current study deals with artefacts, or 'objects', this feature of representation not only guides the artefact analysis in this study,

[273] Howard Risatti, *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), xiv; Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-historical Domain," in *Identity the Real Me: Post-modernism and the Question of Identity*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi, (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), 39.
[274] Geertz, "Thick Description," 9.
[275] Stuart Hall, *Representation – Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, eds. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (London: SAGE, 1997), 32.
[276] Ibid., 16.
[277] Charles S. Peirce, "The Sign: Icon, Index and Symbol," in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, eds. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1932), vol. 2, 135, 107; Charles K. Ogden and Ivor A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* [1923] (London: Ark edition, 1985), 12. 'Representamen' are signs, which means they stand for or represent something or someone in a specific relation. Ogden and Richards argue that different relations hold between 'standing for' and 'representing'. These meanings are in very close proximity of each other and can cause confusion. Since these two terms both relate to representamen, I use the term representation, because this term means to portray in a certain way, act as a substitute, be present to a specific degree, or amount to.
[278] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 235-37.

but it also offers a constant reminder of the ethical implications attached to operations and processes involved in representation.

Representation offers opportunities for explanation and understanding, but they are linked to their social spheres and related identity configurations.[279] Meanings produced by representation are linked to identity configurations, but are not fixed, clear-cut or predictable and are produced through various social practices which potentially shape identities.[280] Due to fluid meanings identities are thus also shifting shaping and re-shaping.

In relation to the 'representation' of people, or 'others', postcolonial ethnographic researchers do not explicitly claim to represent (or 'speak for or on behalf of') these 'others', although political and ethical responsibilities are involved in research due to the involvement of some or other form of advocacy, whether explicit or not.[281] It should be remembered that research and its related advocacy is not 'straightforward', because

> the context in which any advocacy is to take place is a complex one: It is not composed simply of an oppressed and an oppressor group but of a diversity of individuals and groups motivated by various ideals and interests, and pursuing various political strategies. Furthermore, the group to be 'represented' is not always internally homogenous and is rarely democratically organised.[282]

The analytical processes of this study relies on 'representing', 're-presenting', and 'presenting'. These terms all imply semiotic values and their relations to cultural codes.

- *Represent* is an action as a substitute for something, the action of being a sample or a typification of something or an action to portray, embody, symbolise or signify in a particular way. Analysed data 'represent' or typify Namibian identities, artefacts and their makers and their respective social groups. My analysis portrays the making of these artefacts and reveals codes and symbolisms, embodied identities of groups, individuals and artefacts. Due to the research limitations and parameters, the interviewees chosen for this study, ten urban Namibian artefact designer-makers, 'represent' and thus typify (or are a sample of) a wider and larger social group. Artefacts selected for discussion and analysis similarly 'represent' a larger group of regional artefacts.
- *Present* is to exhibit or to show. This verb has temporal dimensions similar to *re-present*. This study's data collection, analysis and interpretation methods 'presents' (i.e. exhibits or shows) Namibian-designed craft artefacts and their makers to an audience while certain 'facts',

[279] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 238.
[280] Hall, *Representation*, 32.
[281] Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley, "Ethnography and Participant Observation," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1994), 253.
[282] Ibid.

knowledge, realities, challenges, ideals and interests are addressed and disclosed through searching, accumulation, coding, decoding and interpretation of data. 'Present' can also imply an ethical 'bend'. It is either to offer something for consideration or acceptance, but it also implies 'to be the cause of' something, for example, a scenario, problem or difficulty. This study 'presents' advocacy on the questions relating to the study, for example, the issue of the sustainability of Namibian craft and design artefact making communities.

- *Re-present* is to 'present again'. This term indicates that the data accumulated, analysed and interpreted will be 'presented again'. It also implies the operation of remembering and forgetting in processes of recollection and documentation. Knowledge presented in this thesis has been collected, interpreted and then written about by the researcher. It must, of necessity, reflect the researcher's subjective understanding and explanation of the data.

Methods of interpretation: Bal, Miller, Bank and Nettleton's approaches

Bal and Banks's approaches to 'reading' and understanding artefacts, underpinned by Ricoeur's philosophical approach to 'reading', will be used in this study to interpret artefacts. When individuals read, they attempt to bridge the 'distanciation' between a specific text and their own understanding during complex dialogical processes. In these processes the 'otherness' (the unknown) of a text, which is often 'culturally estranged' from the reader, is transformed into understanding.[283] This process, Ricoeur explains, is often a 'dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement'.[284] During these dialogical processes of bridging 'distanciation' the suppression of 'cultural estrangement' and the negation of personal understanding often also occurs.[285] Therefore, when 'reading' artefacts, they are in a vulnerable space where the meanings attached to them by others remain precarious and unfixed.

Immediate questions that come to mind when attempting to 'read' artefacts are how, with what and where they are made. Nowadays, this kind of information is available to consumers due to information accompanying the artefact in a market setting such as provided on its packaging. Then there are questions about 'why' an artefact was made. Such questions often have obvious answers; such as, the producer wanting to earn an income, for reasons of self-expression, to fulfil specific needs or for a specific use. Producers sometimes provide brief stories connected to their artefacts in some text format or via a sales person to tell the consumer 'more' about an artefact.

There is, however, more to understanding artefacts than 'reading' them superficially according to the limited information provided in a sales context. Artefacts have meanings. Meanings are connected to

[283] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 43-44.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.

artefacts by people; either those who make them, those who use them, or both. So how are these meanings revealed? How do they assist an understanding of artefacts? Are artefacts to be understood only via those meanings their consumers invest in them, or are the meanings invested by artefact makers their 'essential' meanings? All these meanings overlap and shape the perceptions individuals have about artefacts: whether making, using, selling or marketing them.

An interesting question posed by Daniel Miller is 'do artefacts talk?'[286] Artefacts are usually considered, based on semiotic theories,[287] to be able to be 'read' in order to reveal signs or symbols about the individuals they are associated with. In general terms it is often said that an artefact 'represents' someone or a group, whether that is its maker or user. It is also often said that an artefact is an 'outward expression' of someone or a group.[288] Miller shows that the problem with semiotic readings is that they enslave artefacts; making them merely representations of the people they are associated with.[289] But, he argues, artefacts are more than this because they make people what and who they think they are.[290] Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton commented in the early 1980s that concentrating on the way things signify 'tends to ignore the active contribution of the thing itself to the meaning process'.[291] In other words, artefacts should be read and understood for what they are. The contribution of artefacts to meaning-making should be considered instead of falling into traps of simply looking at 'how they signify'. When discussing artefacts, this study will consider how artefacts contribute to meaning-making processes.

When meanings related to artefacts are explored, it is essential to understand that artefacts' form and content are not fixed in relation to the environments they are found in. This influences their meanings. Banks advises that the social layers and textures related to the 'internal and external narratives'[292] of artefacts should be illuminated to prevent superficial 'readings'. In line with this I will not read artefacts merely as cultural texts, but will also explore what they mean in specific contexts of utilization, fabrication and consumption.[293] My goal is to understand why Namibian craft and design worlds create and sustain the meanings invested in their artefacts. I seek to discover why they produce these artefacts and, above all, why artefact production continues and whether it is sustainable?

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[286] Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things*, Kindle Edition (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 118-119.
[287] Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 11. The semiotic approach was long the dominant way to understand the role of 'things' or objects in material cultural studies. This approach was based on the concept that 'things' contain signs and symbols as significations that represent the people they are associated with. Although this approach is useful, Miller attempts to illuminate the shortcomings thereof.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Miller, *Stuff*, 12-13.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meanings of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981), 43. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's views specifically refer to Freud, Durkheim and, to a lesser extent, Jung.
[292] Marcus Banks, *Using Visual Data in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2007), 52, doi: 10.4135/9780857020260.
[293] Ibid., 40.

Another important aspect highlighted by Banks is that artefacts should not only be read, but experienced using all the senses because 'seeing and knowing are mutually constitutive'[294] and actively work together to create immediate sensory experiences and affect, results that cannot be replicated by complex semiotic readings or by privileging the visual.[295] Therefore, drawing on immediate emotions, feelings and associations when experiencing artefacts, shape their meanings. This allows artefacts to 'get close by' and prevents their distanced reading, which would turn them into an 'other' (cultural text).

When artefacts are only 'read' and not experienced, the artefact reader usually only analyses the artefact via its visual appearance, thus ignoring its narrative. This exposition by the reader (or 'viewer') silences the artefact, a process described by Bal as 'objectification'.[296] To restore the artefact's 'position' and avoid its objectification, the reader should exchange and engage in interactive narrative, a view that is consistent with Ricoeur's theories on reading and negotiating understanding as a way to overcome 'cultural estrangement'.[297]

Banks' point that artefacts are often merely read as cultural texts complements Bal's view that artefacts are often read as synecdoches, that is, they are made to 'stand for the whole' (culture). In other words, an artefact is often not read as metaphor, but from the point of view that it stands as 'part of a particular culture' instead of the reader contemplating the possibility that an artefact is able to 'stand on its own'.[298] Reading an artefact as synecdoche results in 'objectification',[299] an approach that is avoided in this study by carefully considering the contexts of the artefacts – paying attention to their culture and place of origin, location, temporal and spatial dimensions.

The original traditional and cultural meanings of decorative codes used in artefacts have been forgotten by many of the people who use them and thus, new meanings are being made by contemporary artisans and this is particularly pertinent to the Namibian artefacts explored in this study.[300] In order to avoid imperialist-colonial approaches my review of the artefacts contextualised Namibian artefacts by using postcolonial theory to guide my interpretations. Bal explains that the 'act of exposition reveals the deepest held views and beliefs of a subject' and brings them out into the

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[294] Ibid., 41.
[295] Banks, *Using Visual Data*, 40; Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 5.
[296] Bal, *Double Exposures*, 5. According to Bal, objectification of the artefact often results in it being assigned a submissive role by 'silencing' it and giving preference to its visuality.
[297] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 43-44.
[298] Bal, *Double Exposures*, 6 and 8. Bal explains that 'synecdoche is the figure of rhetoric where an element, a small part, stands for the whole simply by virtue of its being a part of that whole ... Through synecdochical reading, the artefact is only readable as part of a particular culture, no matter what aesthetic qualities it may also have. It is a modest representative, a token of cultural difference, and as such it does not stand on its own.' Bal also cautions that '[m]eaning is slippery and variable, both smaller and endlessly larger than what the speaking subject would like to convey'.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Patricia L. Baker, "20th Century Myth-Making: Persian Tribal Rugs," *Journal of Design History* 10, no. 4 (1997): 371, doi: 10.1093/jdh/10.4.363.

open.[301] Although Bal refers specifically to museum exposition, her arguments are applicable to the artefacts reviewed in this study, because exposition may reveal the ethical perspectives of both the makers of artefacts and the individuals and institutions that display artefacts in various ways.[302]

Nettleton summarises my chosen approach with the questions: 'which are the ways we make sense of objects, or make objects make sense?'[303] She values 'sensing', which she defines as 'thinking into, feeling around, imagining objects, images and bodies'; and states that making sense of artefacts means 'making sense of their contexts'.[304] As representations of 'aesthetic expressions', artefact contexts involve: (a) the ethnic groups artefact makers originate from; (b) the purposes of artefacts; (c) their 'cosmologic entanglements'; and (d) the bodily engagements makers, users and artefacts enter into.[305]

Conclusion

In this chapter I explained my rationale for using ethnography as the overarching methodological approach in this study. I illustrated and summarised my research plan in Table 2.1. Thereafter I discussed how I went about selecting my research participants while considering their particular lived social, cultural and environmental contexts, especially their sensitive postcolonial situations. My data collection processes and selected methods for the field studies in Namibia were discussed, as were the approaches I took to generate data and the theories I used to analyse it. Interview data was assessed according to content analysis while artefacts were analysed using methods outlined in relevant literature. My evaluation of artefacts, using Bal, Miller, Banks and Nettleton's approaches as methods, is mindful of their postcolonial situation in order to allow sensitive readings of them.

The following chapter will focus on the first phase of the field study in southern Africa. It will explain the relation of artefacts to tourism and heritage. It will also investigate the roles of craft vendors and recount some of their stories. Finally, various craft-selling sites found on my field study routes will be discussed.

[301] Bal, *Double Exposures*, 2. Here Bal implies that the subject exposing an object in an 'open domain' reveals her deepest held beliefs. In this study that means me (as the researcher); thereby being faithful to Bal's attempt to revive the previous situation of exposition (she refers to museology specifically) and to make the 'first person' (myself) visible in this review.
[302] Bal, *Double Exposures*, 8.
[303] Anitra Nettleton, "Sensing and Making Sense: Art-things in a Small Part of the World," *World Art* 1, no. 1 (2011): 59.
[304] Ibid., 60-61.
[305] Ibid., 61.

Chapter 3

Southern African craft markets: people, spaces and stories

> *Rather than resisting globalisation, these [African] market-places are constantly appropriating and transforming globalisation* [306]

This chapter investigates the roles of people who help to sustain Namibian craft and design worlds. One of these supportive functions is the selling and marketing of Namibian craft and design artefacts. Whether artefact producers sell their own artefacts or whether individuals or vendors sell the artefacts produced by artefact makers and groups, the function of marketing and selling is to bring the efforts of artefact makers into contact with the audiences who will eventually consume, use and enjoy those artefacts. I therefore consider vendors' narratives and roles in the southern African craft field in an attempt to gain an overview of their experiences and how they work. In this study narratives are not assumed to establish verifiable 'truths', but they support meaning making processes. Stories from Toivo, Dumisani, Kojo, Nyambe and Swaniso allow me to conclude that their activities are based on experiences gained from working in craft and design worlds with their own particularities, but that their actions, including their narrating actions, are continuously improvised in attempts to negotiate and sustain their existence.

This chapter examines craft selling sites in southern Africa as spaces where craft identities and narratives are shaped and transmitted. Craft selling sites are also spaces that enhance craft practices that can sustain artefact producers socially and financially. I also assess the sustainability of the Namibian craft and design world based on the artefacts sold (and sometimes produced) at craft sites, according to the meanings connected to artefacts in those spaces, and investigate whether those spaces are conducive to artefact marketing. Different craft selling spaces are explored to gain an understanding of Namibian craft selling sites and their qualities as craft environments.

The sustainability of the southern African craft sector depends on cross-cultural understanding replacing romanticisation. On the one hand, the viability of cultural markets can be enhanced through an understanding and support (social and financial) of well-crafted quality artefacts, while narrative can make a significant contribution to the marketing of artefacts. On the other hand, power relationships between seller and buyer are a background to market activity. In this chapter I draw on

[306] Pal Ahluwalia, "The Wonder of the African Market: Postcolonial Inflections," *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*12, no. 2 (2003): 137.

Pal Ahluwalia, Couze Venn and Sue Millar's interpretations to guide an understanding of African markets as fluid spaces where exchange shapes and affirms identities, power relations influence performances and heritage is 'lived'.

Ahluwalia argues that identities are continuously shaping and reshaping as a result of personal interpretations that are inspired by meanings derived from cultural interchanges and performances that are vital for the ways people live their lives.[307] In the African market an 'alternative modernity' is shaped by 'processes of contemporary globalisation', but unfortunately, due to colonialism, African markets are misunderstood as complex spaces of 'backwardness' and the 'repository of primitiveness' where trading practices are performed that are removed from Western standards of 'cleanliness' and orderly, fair and honest conduct.[308] However, these spaces are 'sites of great activity, hubs of trade' where dynamic flows of 'goods, people and information' continue to exist in meeting places and spaces of exchange that are central to people's lives.[309] Their role as dynamic spaces of exchange means that African craft markets are exposed to globalization and tourism, to both of which they respond and add value. Southern African states need to understand the complexities of African market spaces, and appreciate the importance of their role in appropriating, transforming and translating global modernity.

How postcolonial identities relate to 'spaces' and 'sites' informs another interpretation of the craft market. Following Couze Venn's theories, southern African and Namibian craft markets can be understood as 'spaces' or 'site[s] where meaning is performatively constructed in inter-subjective exchanges'.[310] This means that markets are also 'space[s] where the play of power shapes outcomes'.[311] Southern African and Namibian craft vendors are subjected to power positions, particularly as a result of economic needs, yet stories allow them to construct meaning so that an exchange can occur between vendor and buyer. Stories offer possibilities, of sharing and hospitality amongst cultures, which makes vendors' narratives gifts, presented from their various cultural points of view, that demonstrate the inherent ability of stories to transcend cultural boundaries by being shared.[312]

My personal history allowed me to observe that the tone at many craft markets had changed over time. Some tourists have stated that the aggressive sales strategies of vendors made them anxious, and some had the feeling that prices requested were too high and not based on actual market values.[313] These

[307] Ahluwalia, "African Market," 143.
[308] Ibid., 135.
[309] Ibid., 133, 135 and 137.
[310] Couze Venn, *The Postcolonial Challenge – Towards Alternative Worlds* (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE, 2006), 98.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Susan Petrilli, "Telling Stories in the Era of Global Communication: Black Writing: Oraliture," *Research in African Literatures*, 32, no. 1 (2001): 98-99.
[313] Satu Miettinen, *Designing the Creative Tourist Experience: A Service Design Process with Namibian Craftspeople*, (Helsinki: University of Arts and Design, 2007), 136.

interactions call to mind Venn's phrase, a 'play of power'.[314] And I was struck once more by the double meaning of words. In the case of bargaining, for example, what seems to be a 'power play' has the potential to be playful, a game, entertaining to both parties. Or it may also be disagreeable when one party exercises 'power', for example, the power of the seller over a tourist, who is, after all, a stranger in a strange land.

It is not only the relationship between vendor and customer that is strained at times. In the southern African craft world there are many ruthless agents (in both Namibia and South Africa) who cheat both producers and customers. Crowley pointed out in 1981 that ruthless craft traders were operating in north and west Africa, trafficking women instead of crafts.[315] From my experience in these worlds I know that many of these agents have international business connections and offsets in Europe and the USA, and international consumers of all kinds of crafts are usually unaware that African craft producers are exploited. There are also craft traders in Namibia who ship container after container of carved wooden artefacts to international destinations. There is little control over their activities or the resources (such as indigenous Namibian forests) that they deplete, robbing Namibian communities of essential resources. These are the kinds of sustainability issues this study aims to illuminate.

In metropolitan areas, such as Windhoek and Cape Town, where competition is fierce, many vendors aggressively market their artefacts to tourists, as I experienced myself. The vendors that are selling artefacts at the Green Market Square in Cape Town are mostly from neighbouring countries to the north of South Africa. These individuals work under immense pressure and are motivated by a need to provide for their families who live in African regions where opportunities to make a living are limited. I came across situations and venues I thought were in dire need of improvement and development, because the craft selling and production sites were in poor physical condition or located in places where craftspeople were unable to sustain their practices. These observations and my feelings stemmed from my past working experiences in the Namibian craft development field. I also had to contain my emotions of antipathy and irritation when I was confronted by hostile and aggressive attitudes on the part of some craft vendors or observed their poor manner with customers.

Sue Millar shows that craft sites are places where heritage is 'lived'. Millar's term, 'living heritage'[316] is about people, the spaces they occupy and the activities they perform in the spaces. At craft sites, living heritage is about people and the artefacts made and used within the spaces; living heritage sites are, therefore, specific environments, in which individual and group identities are continuously performed and shaped. Within these environments, social and material meanings, including those related to artefacts, are continuously changing. The living heritage sites chosen for examination in this study are a Living Museum, craft and community markets with their hustle and bustle of everyday

[314] Venn, *Postcolonial Challenge*, 98.
[315] Daniel Crowley, "African Arts as Communication," *African Arts* 14, no. 2 (1981): 66-67.
[316] Sue Millar, "An Overview of the Sector," in *Heritage Visitor Attractions: An Operations Management Perspective*, eds. Anna Leaske and Ian Yeoman (London: Thomson, 1999), 9. Millar refers to markets, craft centres, festivals, traditional food and people as 'living heritage'.

activities, craft centres, craft producing sites and some craft shops. The City of Windhoek's craft markets, a craft selling site at Duinevled, next to the B1 Main Road in Southern Namibia, the craft selling space at the Living Museum of the Ju/'hoansi San at Grashoek in Namibia, the Tsumeb Arts and Crafts Centre and adjacent SME Support Centre, the Tsumkwe Craft Centre and the Katima Craft Centre are described after the vendors' narratives are recounted.

My experiences on the southern African tourist route, only a very few of which are recounted here, include an investigation of the roles of craft vendors within the southern African craft sphere. Many negative aspects related to craft marketing are illuminated, but despite the numerous negative aspects or failures of craft marketing, I show in this chapter that if the stories related to craft selling and making are given life then the positive aspects of African markets can be embraced more easily. My study therefore suggests that craft marketing in southern Africa should draw on the inherent strengths of narratives and the roles of stories in African hospitality as media that fabricate connections between people and their material culture. My experiences in the African craft world demonstrate that artefacts come complete with stories in their particular market spaces. In recalling the narratives constructed around artefacts and their journeys within southern Africa, I have interpreted and analysed them in order to shape and explain my understanding of how the southern African craft marketing situation relates to people and spaces.

Vendors' narratives and roles in the southern African craft field

During the field study I became more conscious of the roles that were acted out in my presence when it was assumed that I was a tourist. In certain craft selling sites vendors had fine-tuned the art of selling crafts and had learned from experience how their stories and acts affected their customers. This illustrates how the selling of crafts to tourists, is a practice that could be considered an 'art form', to use Bourriaud's term.[317]

Vendors observe, learn and collect experiences from encounters with many local and international tourists and they are able to recognise languages, accents and how certain cultural groups conduct themselves and dress. This allows them to communicate with their potential clients and I met many vendors who entered into conversation in sophisticated ways. From experience they know many tourists are interested in meeting people from the countries they travel to and a craft market is one of the places where tourists can meet and converse with locals. Both the roles of vendors and of tourists

[317] Nicolas Bourriaud, "Relational Aesthetics: Art of the 1990s," in *Right About Now: Art & Theory Since the 1990s*, eds. Margriet Schavemaker and Mischa Rakier (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2007), 48.

are learned and performed and past experiences enable them to improvise their roles while 'knowing as they go'.[318]

One of the roles played by artefact vendors is 'the conveyor of stories'. At craft markets the artefacts offered people opportunities for discussion and performing roles, such as the storyteller. Storytelling is all about sharing, 'hospitality and the interest for the other' are central to it.[319] Furthermore, 'storytelling has acted as a sort of connective tissue' that brings different people and their values together.[320] This is evident in a 'common patrimony of legends, tales, stories, myths, parables, sayings, proverbs, etc.' as narrative examples that have the ability to cross cultural boundaries, because these narrative forms facilitate 'encounter and mutual understanding among different people'.[321] In this way, stories become gifts that are willingly offered to an 'other' as a token of hospitality. Stories play an important role in African hospitality, as in cultures on other continents, because stories enable individuals, including craft and design makers, vendors, consumers and tourists, to cross cultural boundaries. This is why craft vendors' narratives are vital for sustaining craft and design worlds, because their narratives are gifts that add value to crafts and design while at the same time sharing and making the meanings of these objects accessible to outsiders.

Craft vendors narrated stories about artefacts that included their origin, the cultures and practices of their makers, and the techniques and materials used by craftspeople. These narratives were performed 'gifts' and I sometimes spent several hours listening to stories related to artefacts. When interest was shown in certain artefacts, extraordinary stories were offered in a gracious manner. This behaviour, and that of all the vendors I encountered during my field studies, supports the theory that 'narrative is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with fundamental elements of our experience, such as time, process, and change'.[322]

Stories allow vendors to make sense of the temporal and spatial contexts related to artefacts and they are then able to convey these contexts to buyers. The contexts, explained in undemanding ways to buyers, allow the buyers to understand and experience these artefacts in subjective ways. In other words, translations are made at various levels and through interaction. Vendors' narratives can contribute to the viability of crafted and designed artefacts if the sellers are able to learn suitable behaviours related to the 'art form' of selling. Craft vendors' roles should be appropriately acknowledged in the southern African craft sector as an important human resource and their storytelling abilities should be valued. This could be one way to contribute to the viability of culturally-based crafts.

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[318] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 228.
[319] Petrilli, "Telling Stories," 98-99.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Project Narrative research group, Ohio State University, "What is Narrative Theory?," *Project Narrative*, accessed February 10, 2013, http://projectnarrative.osu.edu/about/what-is-narrative-theory.

During the first phase of my field study, sales people working in craft shops or centres, business managers, support workers and employees from craft-supporting organisations initially approached me as if I were an ordinary customer and shared information about various artefacts when they saw that I was interested in items displayed at their craft selling sites. These individuals were passionate about their work and in their support of either their own craft communities or southern African crafts in general. Their stories related to craftspeople, craft projects, production processes, craft techniques and materials. The vendors could be quite forthcoming even before I revealed the reason for my journey, and many were even more talkative after they understood my interest in southern African crafts. These spontaneous conversations reinforced my curiosity about narrative as a means by which artefacts gain value and meaning.

In recounting my experiences on the tourist route, I am attempting to illuminate various issues related to Namibian craft and design artefacts, such as perceptions about marketing, selling and distribution of craft and design artefacts in southern Africa and specifically Namibia. The goal of the study was to reveal issues that influence the sustainability of the practices related to craft and design artefacts in a postcolonial setting. When reflecting on the stories of vendors I met in craft selling spaces, the stories of the Namibian vendors come to the fore. Stories from the wider southern African region are included to gain a perspective on craft marketing realities in this part of the world. Of the many extraordinary stories I heard, five are recalled here. Pseudonyms are used in all narrations. Most of the craft vendors I met on my southern African route were men between the ages of 25 and 35 years old. These young men, all dressed in western and African-influenced attire and accessories, usually made themselves understood in English fairly well.

Kojo: a Congolese 'teacher'

The first narration comes from Kojo, a Congolese male vendor at the Arts and Craft Market in Knysna, South Africa. Upon visiting this market, I wondered immediately about the reasons for choosing the location, and Kojo told me the story about how he and most of the others had been moved from an older and more successful location on the pavement of the N2 main road. Kojo also told me his business had deteriorated to such an extent that he did not find it feasible any more. Two other vendors joined the conversation and stated that they were experiencing the same problem. From having a 'very good business' at the N2 location where 'many tourists stop[ped] and [came] to buy',[323] now they were in a situation where 'business [is] bad and not many people [come]'.[324]

After glimpsing this market and having entered the venue by car, I immediately realised why it was fenced-off with a high reed wall. The terrain is unkempt. Craft stands are permanent wooden, concrete and canvas structures. In places, the canvas has been replaced by plastic and all sorts of materials are used to keep artefacts water and dust free. It could be argued that the reed wall was an attempt to

[323] Field notes, Knysna, South Africa, 8 December 2010.
[324] Ibid.

neaten the appearance of the market, because the terrain is so filled with potholes, weeds, boulders and even rubbish, all factors that marginalise the vendors and prevent the market from being successful.

Under these circumstances, Kojo was happy to see some craft shoppers on the site and he invited me to have a closer look at the crafts he sold. It was hot and his selling site was small. He used plastic sheeting at the back of his site to prevent rain water leaking into the space. His selling site had iron grids below a corrugated ceiling on which he hung an array of African masks. The masks that he had hung on one of the iron grid walls intrigued me. I was looking at the animals carved into the masks and when Kojo recognised my interest, he offered me a wealth of stories about several artefacts he was selling that day. The vibrant narratives he offered surprised me and I realised Kojo was very proud of his culture and the cultural meanings the objects contained.

I regarded Kojo as a teacher. He told me that Congolese and Cameroonian masks often depict animals such as elephants, eagles and lions, as well as others. Significant and symbolic qualities are associated with these animals. For example, an elephant is seen as a symbol of strength, while an eagle has good eyesight and therefore symbolises the ability to foresee the future. A lion is the king of the savannah, and he symbolises wisdom and courage. Animals are carved on masks because their 'presence' on the masks worn into battle is believed to confer a specific strength or quality represented by the symbols in the carving. When you have a lion carved into your mask, for example, you will guide warriors with your wisdom and display courage in war.

Toivo: a teller of unconventional tales

A young man, Toivo, offered me a personal and extraordinary narrative of his ideas about crafts. I met Toivo at the Mbangura Wood-carvers Market in Okahandja, Namibia. This craft market is a popular stop for tourists travelling to the northern regions of Namibia. A similar market is situated at the southern end of Okahandja where many tourists travelling to western and north-western Namibia shop for crafts. Toivo approached me while I was browsing through the artefacts on display at his craft selling site. He introduced himself and shared general information with me about the artefacts. His obvious passion for crafts was shown by the way he spent a considerable amount of his time talking about the history of his specific market site and the artefacts within it. His softly spoken manner and patience, combined with his non-pushy salesman persona endeared him to me. We entered into an interesting conversation and he told me some stories that were more unconventional than any others I heard on my route.

On 24 September 2010 this market burned to the ground. Nothing was left, except a few artefacts vendors were able to rescue from the hot, vicious flames. I saw that some of the corrugated iron sheets that were used to construct his selling site were marked from having been exposed to severe heat. He told me that he had lost many artefacts due to the fire because he had been in northern Namibia at that time and he was dependent on a colleague of his to rescue whatever he could. A gas bottle explosion at

a nearby house caused the fire and due to the typical strong spring winds blowing in August and September, the fire rapidly spread across the street to the market area. Many of the thatched structures built by the Okahandja town council were also lost.



Figure 3.1 These wooden masks were sold by Toivo at the Mbangura Wood-carvers Market in Okahandja, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 280-380x350-450mm). Their makers are unknown, but according to Toivo they were made in Zimbabwe. If I refer to the stories Kojo told me about the meanings related to masks, I can interpret these masks sold by Toivo by using Kojo's ideas. These masks depict animals such as fish and a crocodile. According to Kojo, these animals have qualities that the wearers of the masks will adopt during warfare. For example, fish symbolise agility, and feelings of being accustomed to an environment, although alert to threats. The crocodile eating a fish symbolises hunting, predatory behaviour and bravery. Photograph by the author.

Toivo's selling site was in a condition similar to yet noticeably worse than Kojo's. Toivo displayed many artefacts that were damaged; for example, by rain because they had water marks all over them. His selling site was built from the left-over materials his colleagues had been able to rescue from the

fire, pieces of timber, corrugated iron sheets, plastic, cardboard and any recycled materials he could find to build this structure and the display 'shelves' within.

I found it interesting that while I was conversing with Toivo, we were often interrupted by many of the vendors from adjacent craft selling sites. I noticed that the behaviour of these vendors agitated and even embarrassed Toivo, because I had difficulty concentrating on his interesting stories due to all the interruptions. Toivo was considerate towards me and other craft browsers/shoppers and I sensed that he wanted me to have a valuable experience. He thought selling crafts was a good way to earn a living and he also believed that trying to make a living from crafts was stigmatised in Namibia and that people thought that 'crafts is not a proper job'.[325] He said 'only professionals such as teachers, bank clerks and engineers have proper jobs'.[326] When I conducted the interviews later in this study I realised that at least four of my interviewees shared Toivo's view that in Namibia being in the art world is not perceived as a suitable career choice.[327]

Toivo told me that he believes that cultures are captured in their crafts. He thought that many stories and knowledge related to crafts had been lost and that 'no-one' really knew about the traditional meanings in crafts any more.[328] Toivo also mentioned how individual the meanings in crafts can be, and why specific meanings will never be revealed unless they are documented by the craftspeople who make them. Although Toivo didn't explain to me how he understands meanings related to the masks he sold, he thinks studies in crafts are very important and that meanings deriving from crafts should be documented.

Dumisani: managing her work and parenting responsibilities

A middle-aged Zulu craftswoman from Kwazulu-Natal at the Craft Workshop in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, approached me when I entered her selling site, which displayed an array of high quality Zulu baskets in mainly neutral colours. Her warmth, broad smile and friendly attitude attracted me and so we entered into conversation about her sales activities. Her enthusiasm about her work and life as a basket weaver was apparent due to her stories about how she and her weaving group function so that they can combine their social and income generation responsibilities. However, she was quick to tell me about the colours, symbolism, techniques and materials they use in their crafts.

Dumisani spends time away from home in Kwazulu-Natal to work and sell crafts at the Craft Workshop. During this time women from her craft group, who self-manage a basket project in order to sustain themselves, assist her in caring for her family while she invest her time in selling artefacts for the group. At the same time, she assists the group of women by selling baskets in Port Elizabeth.

[325] Field notes, Okahandja, Namibia, 21 January 2011.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011; Interview Iileni, 21 February 2011; Interview Nyangana, 26 February 2011; Interview Andreas, 11 February 2011.
[328] Field notes, Okahandja, Namibia, 21 January 2011.

She is a basket weaver herself and knows how hard members of her group have to work to manage their time and other resources around their households, children and income generating activities to make a living.[329] Dumisani explained how valuable every minute is to them and said that every spare moment is used to produce baskets and other crafts, because craft production is so time consuming. They all work part time to sustain their venture. The rest of their time is usually taken up by their domestic responsibilities.



Figure 3.2 Dumisani is one of the members of this women's group selling mainly woven Zulu baskets, made from Ilala palm leaves, at the Craft Workshop, Port Elizabeth, 2010 (dimensions: various). Photograph by the author.

The fact that they share resources makes their project viable; it means that they all have more time to produce crafts, since they share the responsibility of selling the crafts. This strategy has allowed Dumisani and her group to create several selling points around South Africa and in this way they have expanded their market. After overheads related to craft stalls are paid, the income raised from this project is distributed amongst the members according to their individual sales.

Nyambe: the quiet hippo caller

At the Kangola Craft Centre near Divundu and the Namibian Caprivi strip I met Nyambe, also a young man in his late twenties, sitting at an old wooden table in a relatively small space that was stacked to

[329] Field notes, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 6 December 2010.

the roof with all kinds of crafts from the region. Nevertheless, all the artefacts in this space were neatly grouped by kind and carefully stacked. Carved wooden artefacts were most prominently represented. Nyambe was not overly friendly and I never saw a smile on his face. Softly-spoken, he had a very forthcoming nature; and while he didn't move from his table, he offered me a concise and to the point narrative about each artefact I viewed.

I was wondering whether these narratives were sales strategies taught to southern African craft vendors by Western craft development organisations, or whether this collected and matter-of-fact manner in which some vendors offered information about artefacts is passed on from generation to generation. Nyambe was not the only vendor who told me stories about crafts in this fashion. As Pal Ahluwalia has pointed out, African markets are postcolonial, postmodern spaces where the 'creolisation of cultures' gives rise to hybrid identities and therefore Nyambe's approach may be a blend of several traditions.[330]

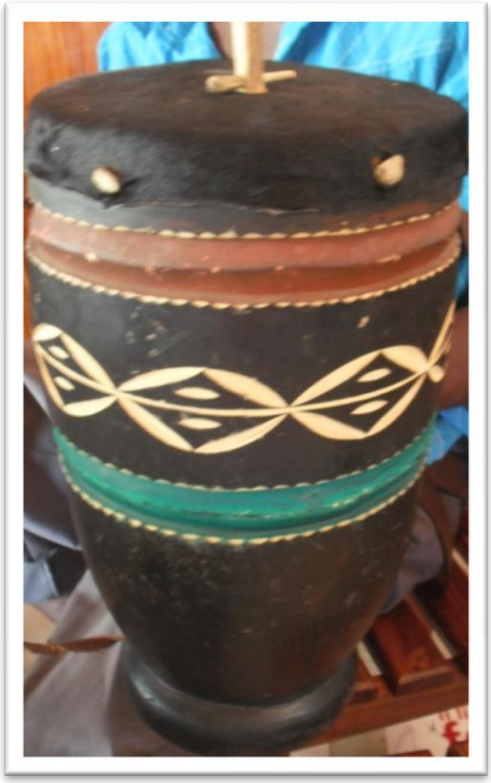

Figure 3.3 Nyambe is holding a Caprivi drum with repetitive signs engraved in the wood. These symmetrical patterns signify crocodile heads. The bottom of this drum is open so that hippo sounds can be produced by rubbing the inside of the drum with a damp cloth. Kangola Craft Centre, Divundu, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 49 cm high). Photograph by the author.

[330] Ahluwalia, "African Market," 140.

When I picked up a wooden carved bracelet, Nyambe asked me whether I knew about Caprivi drums. I replied that I did not and he told me that wooden crafts are produced in vast quantities in the Zambezi region of Namibia, but that drums are especially well-liked by tourists who visit the area. He said most tourists did not know about Caprivian drums, which appear quite insignificant, compared to west African Djembe drums with their geometrical patterns. Nyambe said that tourists' admiration is misguided because 'All zigzag patterns are just decoration and have no meaning'.[331]

Caprivi drums have a piece of goatskin stretched tightly over the top which produces a deep sound when drumming by hand. According to Nyambe, what most people don't realise is that these drums are used to call hippos from the river. If a damp cloth is rubbed on the inside of the drum, it 'makes the sound of a hippo', Nyambe told me.[332] When hippos in the water hear the sounds, they assume it is safe to leave the water so that they and their young ones are able to graze for the night. In the early morning hours the hippos return to the river.

Swaniso: a craftsman on the Kwando

The artefact described in this narrative was sold to me as part of a tourist package when I purchased a boat trip on the Kwando River. Swaniso, a local tourist guide in his early thirties, dressed in a neat khaki uniform, steered the small motor boat we were travelling on towards a quiet spot on the river and switched it off when he was sure no hippos or crocodiles were lurking nearby. The trip thus far was quite exciting, since a large male hippo attempted to scare us away by charging towards the boat. It was quiet and light rain drizzled from a rapidly darkening sky.

Swaniso picked a water lily from the water. It had a long stem, more than one metre in length, since the river was deep. The lily was white with a bright yellow crown in its centre. Swaniso used a pocket knife to carve little indents into the stem of the lily. He pulled every second section off in a small sheer strip which he left uncut. By doing this he skilfully created 'beads' that revealed the lovely textures of the lily's stem. He then shaped a necklace from the stem by knotting the 'string' he created at the base of the flower. Then he placed it around my neck and narrated the purpose of this necklace.

When a young couple's parents have decided they will be married, Swaniso explained, the mothers of the bride and groom meet to prepare these water lily necklaces on the day of the wedding. Since marrying is a family decision, many couples often did not have the opportunity to become acquainted. These lily necklaces are handed to them by their mothers on the morning of their wedding day and with the necklaces comes a task: the lilies must not wilt before the wedding is concluded. Therefore, the couple has to take great care of these lilies, reminding each other to water them regularly and keeping them cool until night time when the ceremony is conducted.

[331] Field notes, Divundu, Namibia, 10 January 2011.
[332] Ibid.

These crafted necklaces serve the purpose of 'ice-breakers' in that caring for these lilies gives the couple the opportunity to get acquainted. At the same time the mothers of the bride and groom have to assess whether the couple is well matched and would make a good team. This is judged by the way they assist each other while caring for their lilies until the wedding is concluded.[333]

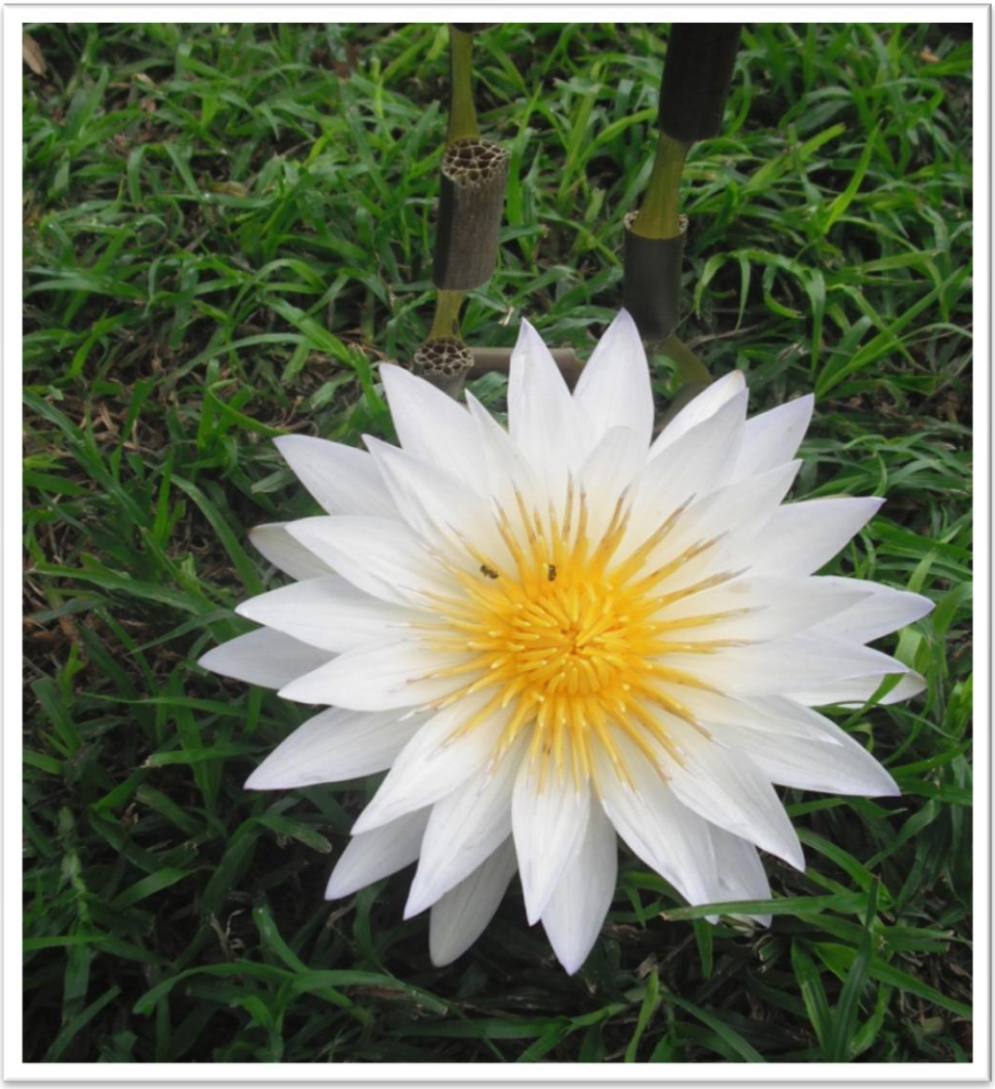

Figure 3.4 Swaniso carved the approximately one metre long stem of this water lily into 'beads' about four to five centimetres in length. He left the outer membrane of the stem uncut and so a continuous 'string' was crafted that is knotted together to form a necklace. Photograph by the author.

[333] Field notes, Divundu, Namibia, 13 January 2011.



Figure 3.5

Swaniso holds up the necklace he crafted. The outer petal leaves of the water lily are soft lilac while the inside crown was bright yellow. It was a rainy afternoon when Swaniso steered the boat out onto the Kwando River in NW Namibia. Kwando River, Divundu, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 96 cm necklace). Photograph by the author.

Vendors' stories offer a deeper insight into the roles artefacts play in people's and groups' lives. Stories such as these are the ingredients that bring craft spaces to life and they are offerings of hospitality to individuals from 'other' cultures and places. Due to these stories, African artefacts can be acknowledged as, and are able to transgress cultural boundaries as, components of modern and alternative existences instead of being seen as symbols of romantic and exotic regions in Africa.

Craft spaces

African craft markets are essential hubs where stories come to life, traditions meet modernity and identities seek validation and recognition. These fusions of tradition with modernity are 'intertwined with the very history of colonialism', yet in these spaces 'it is evident that there is a rage for modernity'.[334] It is this tradition-infused African modernity that has to be understood and recognised by African states, government and non-government organisations. With their recognition and support, new global and virtual markets could be established, which would significantly contribute to the sustainability of African crafts.

[334] Ahluwalia, "African Market," 138.

It is generally accepted that, on the whole, the craft sector reflects a city's and region's 'unique and distinct identity and makes a vital contribution to the local economy and tourism product'.[335] The significance of arts for national and regional economic growth was pointed out in the late seventies in north America.[336] In the new global economy, however, the almost universal emphasis on expansive trading, money markets and capitalist economics, have caused a shift towards 'more global creative industries'.[337] This is particularly true for those cultural industries that relate to the nation state, such as heritage and arts. This new economy is more open to trade than to national culture and it interconnects art, technology and business.[338]

In his global study of urban spaces, Evans concludes that 'transitional and emergent states also use cultural production in sectors such as film/television and traditional arts and heritage to reassert or promote the cultural identity of the new nation-state or ethnic group (for example, eastern Europe, Catalonia, South Africa)'.[339] This is also the case in Namibia, where there is a greater focus on traditional creative forms in art (performing and visual), craft and design instead of 'the more global creative industries', yet local southern African governments characteristically show an interest in the promotion of trade and exchange.

Nettleton argues that the manner in which African artefacts are displayed in and 'around urban areas ... visually demarcates aspects of the cities as African',[340] as do craft markets and other living heritage sites. Ahluwalia illustrates how the African market is a hybrid space, a birthplace for new ideas and innovations that have blended traditional and modern identities.[341] Blends of traditional techniques and materials with modern techniques and materials are found in markets all over southern and sub-Saharan Africa. At the southern tip of Africa there are numerous examples of these blends to be found in wire and beaded artefacts, textiles and jewellery, to name just a few. Artefacts made of recycled materials such as rubber, plastics, wire and metal are good examples of modern materials mixed with traditional and newer making techniques.

In Namibia, for example, the focus since independence has been on developing and upgrading rural towns and cities (such as Oshakati, Ongwediva and Ondangwa) where almost half of the Namibian population lives. This is why, after 1990, the Namibian Government tried to develop cultural industries in the hinterland as well as in the capital city. The following examples describe various craft selling sites in Namibia's rural and urban centres.

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[335] Maurice Devenney, "Arts and Crafts in the Spotlight," *Belfast Telegraph,* August 10, 2011, accessed September 8, 2012, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-29352076.html.
[336] Graeme Evans, "Creative Cities, Creative Spaces and Urban Policy," *Urban Studies* 46, nos. 5&6 (2009): 1009.
[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid., 1026.
[340] Anitra Nettelton, "Life in a Zulu Village: Craft and the Art of Modernity in South Africa," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 3, no. 1 (2010): 55.
[341] Ahluwalia, "African Market," 139.

Craft markets in the City of Windhoek, Namibia

The City of Windhoek (Figure 3.6) offers more than 16 permanent markets, or successful living heritage sites of this kind, to its citizens and tourists.[342] Some of these include community markets where all sorts of goods are traded, especially food. Other markets are more product-focussed, such as the craft markets found in the central business hub of the city. Neat, ample spaces are rented to craft vendors in various locations in the city's central business district (CBD) (Figures 3.7 and 3.8).

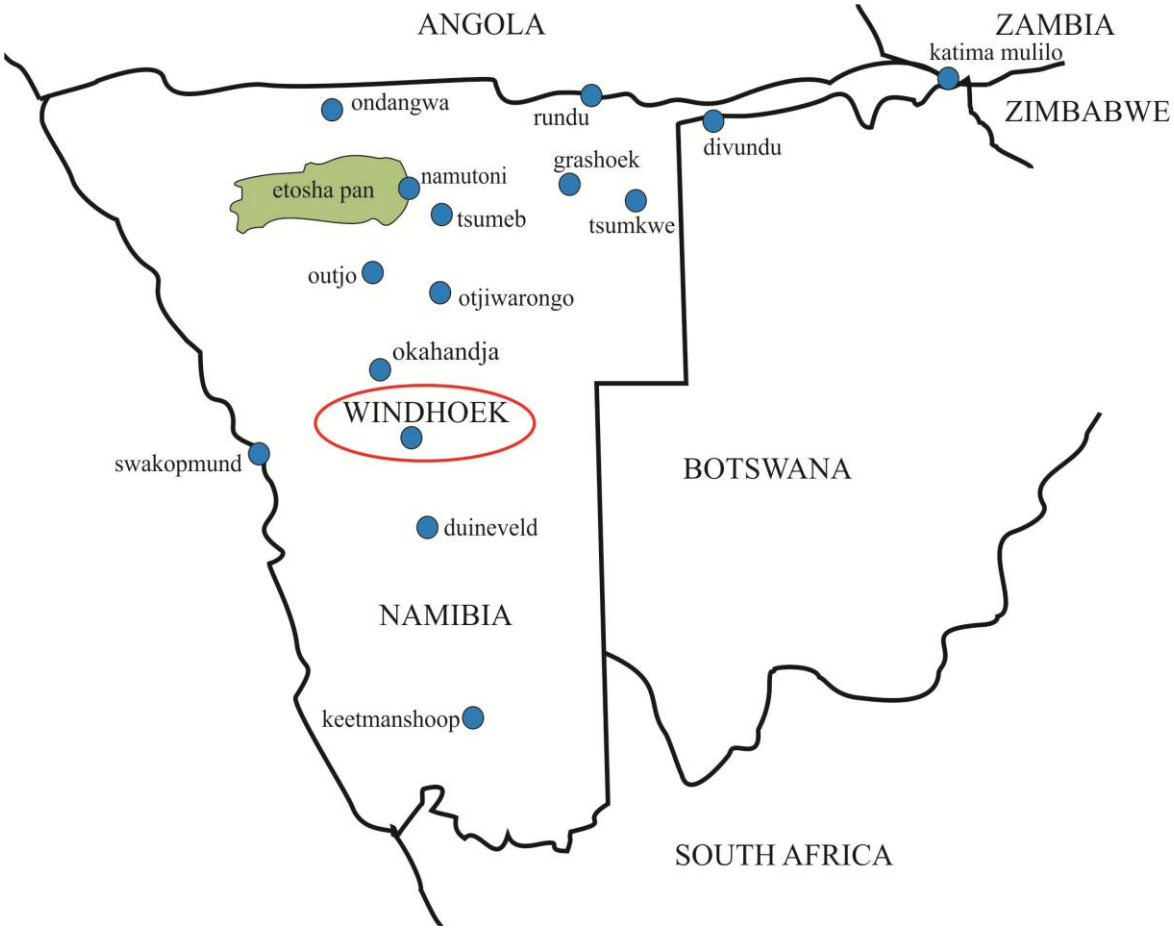

Figure 3.6 A map of Namibia, highlighting key population centres and the capital, Windhoek.

The Micro Entrepreneurial Development Section (MEDS) of the Economic Development, Tourism and Marketing Division (EDTMD) of the City of Windhoek is responsible for the management of these open-air craft markets.[343] The aim of MEDS is to offer 'a conducive, supportive, clean and safe environment for traders, customers and the community'.[344] Named the cleanest city in Africa, the City

[342] *City of Windhoek Department Portal: Economic Development, Tourism and Marketing Division*, accessed September 7, 2012, http://www.windhoekcc.org.na/depa_economic_development_division2.php.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.

of Windhoek's MEDS additionally aims to promote the activities of its tenants and 'ensure effective support to facilitate business growth and development'.[345]

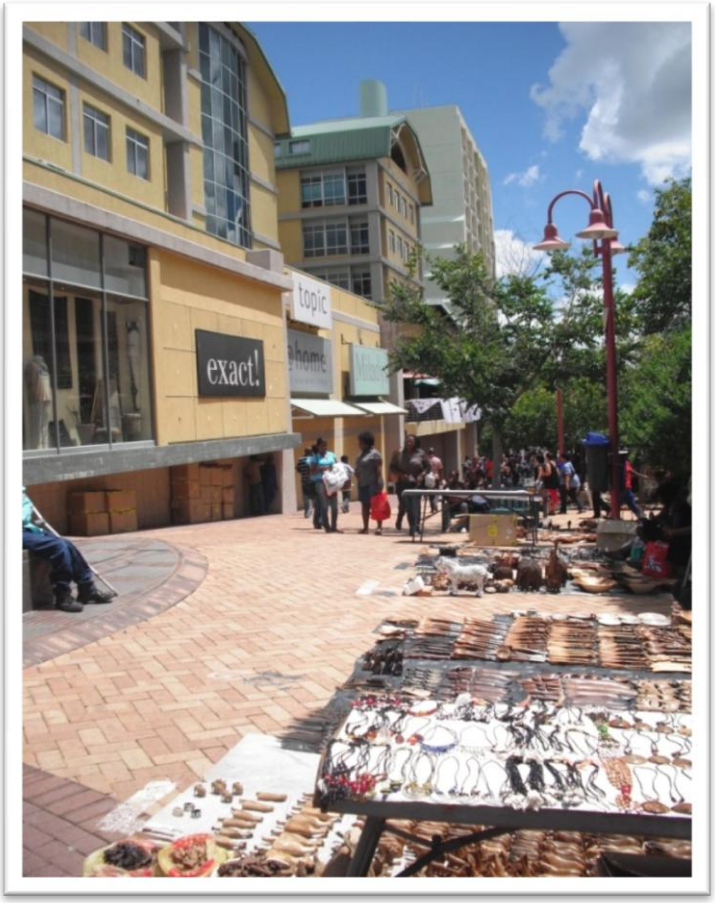

Figure 3.7 A market in the City of Windhoek. This is a craft selling space at the Post Street mall, a pedestrian zone that leads to Wernhill Park, the largest shopping centre in the Windhoek central business district. Vendors from various southern African countries sell crafts here. Photograph by the author.

Small and medium enterprise (SME) activities are promoted through the SME Business Incubation Centre (SMEIC) in Katutura that is able to host 41 entrepreneurs.[346] In June 2013, the SMEIC was rebranded to become the new Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre.[347] Industrial premises are available at three other sites in Windhoek, and training and capacity building workshops are often organised by the City in partnership with various local stakeholders.

[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Denver Isaacs, "Katutura Incubation Centre rebranded," *The Namibian Sun*, July 3, 2013, accessed January 30, 2014, http://sun.com.na/business/katutura-incubation-centre-rebranded.54565.

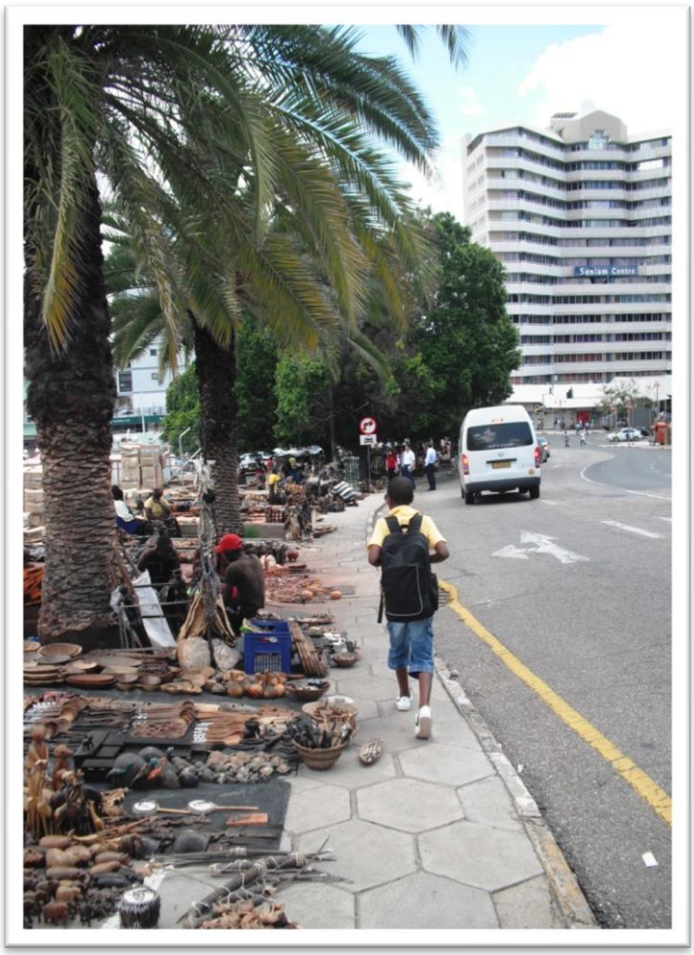

Figure 3.8 Another market in the City of Windhoek. This is a craft space adjacent to the central bus terminal in Independence Avenue. These vendors trade mostly traditional Namibian and some wider African crafts. Wooden objects are most prominently represented in both these spaces in Windhoek. Interestingly, the vendors near the bus terminal were more aggressive in their approach to selling than any other sellers I encountered, except in the town of Tsumkwe and Okahandja. In these locations I sensed an increased level of competition amongst sellers who desperately attempted to 'make a sale'. Photograph by the author.

Craft stalls are rented through the MEDS and the City of Windhoek's website supports vendors by providing the necessary information on how to apply for spaces.[348] These spaces are rented on a 'first come, first served' basis and at most markets the City provides lockable storage facilities to tenants.[349] Periodic markets are offered in the form of street markets in the central city park, called "The Zoo Park".[350] With the clear aim of promoting tourism in the city, the EDTMD values and promotes cultural industries. This organisation cooperated with the City of Vantaa, Finland, which became Windhoek's partner city after Namibia's independence, to draw up an arts and crafts policy for the

[348] *City of Windhoek Department Portal: Economic Development*.
[349] Ibid.
[350] "The Zoo Park," *City of Windhoek Department Portal: Parks and Recreation Division*, accessed 7 September 2012, http://www.windhoekcc.org.na/depa_economic_development_division1.php. The Zoo Park was previously known as the *Denkmalsgarten* (Memorial Garden) and was transferred from the German colonial government to the town of Windhoek on 3 May 1911.

City of Windhoek. Research was conducted in 2006 and the resulting arts and crafts policy was accepted in 2008.[351] Windhoek's CBD craft markets and Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre are professionally managed, giving various opportunities to craftspeople and designers to conduct sustainable practices.

Craft selling site at Duinevled, next to the B1 Main Road in Southern Namibia

The craft selling site at Duineveld, about 90 km south of Rehoboth (Figure 3.9), is situated next to the B1 main road leading to southern Namibia and South Africa. Here men sell handmade patchwork leather carpets that in the Nama language are called *karos*.[352]

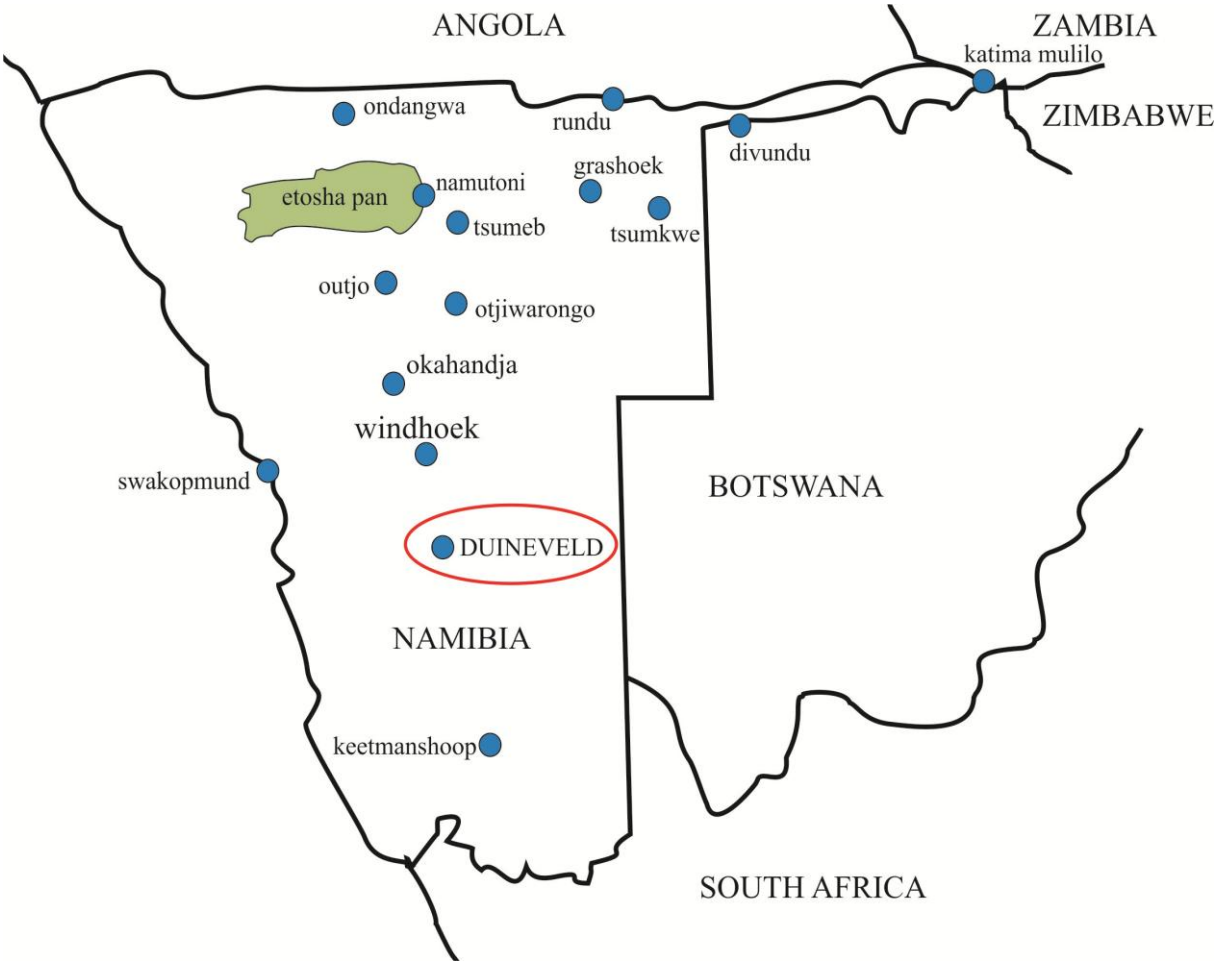

Figure 3.9 Namibia, showing the south-central location of Duineveld.

Functional artefacts, such as cushion covers, place mats, waistcoats and handbags made by using this hide patchwork technique are also sold here alongside tanned springbok, goat and sheep hides. This technique and knowledge has been passed on via generations of Nama women who learned the skills

[351] I was an assistant researcher in this project alongside Dr Satu Miettinen. Dr Miettinen was completing her PhD thesis at the University of Art and Design, Helsinki, Finland. We worked with the EDTMD and the City of Vantaa to produce this research.
[352] *Namibia Holiday and Travel*: *the official Namibian tourism directory*, (Windhoek: Venture Publications, 2011), 47.

from older women in their families.[353] This craft site has been managed and sustained for several generations by individuals from the Duineveld community.[354] A stall made of metal and corrugated iron is set up next to the road while artefacts are hung and scattered on the nearby sheep fence and an additional wire line. Other artefacts are scattered on the ground, placed on newspaper (Figure 3.10).

Three men, or vendors, were managing this craft selling when I visited and they told me that the women, who are situated and working at Duineveld, about four kilometres east of the road, make these artefacts. Women buy skins from local farmers and take them to a local tannery for preparation. The tanned skins are then bought back from the tannery, after which the women produce patchwork hide artefacts by combining karakul,[355] springbok, goat and sheep skin pieces. The Nama came to live in the Namibian south after moving north from Namakwaland to find water and grazing for their herds of sheep and goats.[356] This migration of people to arid areas of southern Namibian happened after 'European expansion' when colonisers settled in the Cape of southern Africa and indigenous groups were forced to move to more arid northerly regions such as Namaqualand and, further north, Namibia.[357] Nowadays some Nama people are herd farmers, yet most live impoverished lives in the southern parts of Namibia where springbok is occasionally hunted as a supplementary food source.[358]

Patchwork is central to Nama identity, and this technique is reflected in many aspects of Nama visual culture. Nama reed huts are built by layering reed mats over a dome-shaped wooden structure, thus creating a 'patchwork' pattern. Nama women use this technique in various ways to produce practical clothing and other household artefacts from textiles, leather and hides. The narrative of patchworking relates to the method of making through layering, assemblage and the blending of materials and textures. The activity points to the Nama's constant movement and interaction with nature.

[353] Memory Biwa, "Stories of the Patchwork Quilt: An Oral History Project of the Nama-German War in Southern Namibia," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*, ed. Andre du Pisanie, Reinhart Kössler, and William A. Lindeke (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstrasser Institut, 2010), 332-333.
[354] Field notes, Duineveld, Namibia, 29 December 2010. From my childhood memories I know that this craft selling site existed before 1985.
[355] *Swakara*, accessed 7 September 2012, http://www.swakara.net/; "The Rise of Swakara Farming," *Farmers Weekly*, accessed 7 September 2012, http://www.farmersweekly.co.za/article.aspx?id=26713&h=The-rise-of-Swakara-farming. Karakuls are hardy sheep that are suitable to southern Namibia's semi-arid climate and therefore provides a sustainable resource to communities in this inhabitable area. Karakul sheep were imported to Namibia between 1900 and 1920 from Uzbekistan. These karakul sheep produce the world renowned Swakara, a registered brand name. These light and silky Swakara pelts are a primary Namibian export product and are harvested according to the Namibian Swakara Board's internationally recognised ethical standards as certified as 'origin assured' by the International Fur Trade Federation.
[356] "Nama," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed September 7, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/402157/Nama.
[357] Biwa, "Stories of the Patchwork Quilt," 338.
[358] Ibid., 360 and 364-65.



Figure 3.10 Nama vendors selling patchwork leather crafts next to the Namibian south-central main road, the B1. Crafts are displayed on the fence and on wire lines. Photograph by the author.

As a 'living heritage'[359] site, this craft selling site has never been developed to the level of a significant tourist attraction in spite of the fact that this site has existed and been maintained by this Duineveld community for decades. This living heritage site, where a distinct ethnic group's artefacts and culture can be experienced, has significant commercial potential for this small community.

Living Museum of the Ju/'hoansi San craft shop, Namibia

The Ju/'hoansi San (Bushmen) is one of the best researched hunter-gatherer societies in the world.[360] The San are indigenous Namibian people whose ancient rock art left subtle visual culture traces in this part of the African environment. The Ju/'hoansi San Living Museum was initiated in 2004 by a German-Namibian cultural tourism operator, Werner Pfeifer, in cooperation with the Ju/'hoansi San community at Grashoek, located close to the C44 road between Grootfontein and Tsumeb (Figure 3.11).[361] The aim of this initiative is 'cultural and nature conservation', by bringing contemporary indigenous Namibian communities in contact with their ancient culture as well as nature.[362]

[359] Millar, "An Overview of the Sector," 9.
[360] Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), 155.
[361] "Cultural Development for Namibia," *The Living Culture Foundation of Namibia (LCFN)*, accessed September 4, 2012, http://www.lcfn.info/en.
[362] Ibid.

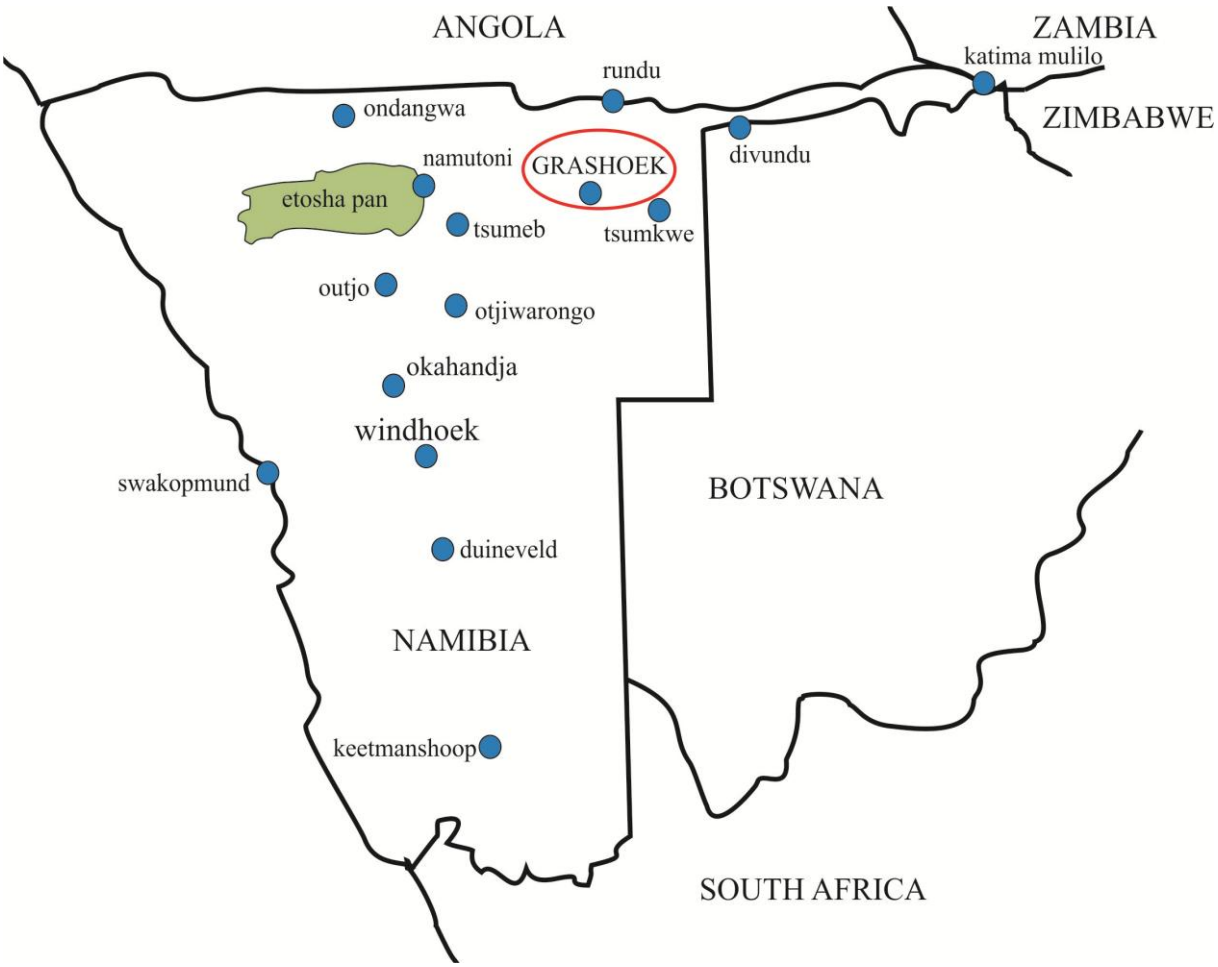

Figure 3.11 The Living Museum of the Ju/'hoansi San is located in Grashoek, a small village near Tsumeb, Grootfontein and Tsumkwe in NW Namibia and is accessible via the C44 gravel road to Tsumkwe.

The concept of the Living Museum

Five Living Museums[363] had been established in Namibia by July 2012, organised by the Living Culture Foundation Namibia (LCFN), a foundation trust that was established in 2004 to support the vision and work of Pfeiffer and the Ju/'hoansi San community at Grashoek in north-eastern Namibia.[364] In 2013 the Living Museums joined the official Museums Association of Namibia (MAN).[365] The LCFN hopes that Living Museums will help to foster Namibian communities' cultural memory and self-respect.

The elders in a Living Museum community pass on their knowledge not only to tourists, but also (and perhaps most importantly) to the younger women, men and children of the community in order to maintain the cultural memory of these groups. Although the LCFN provides support through its

[363] This term is used by the LCFN.
[364] "Cultural Development for Namibia".
[365] "Cultural Development for Namibia," accessed February 10, 2014.

volunteers, no financial sponsorship is used to establish Living Museums.[366] The LCFN has 'members' who donate money and time to help these communities. The funds are not used to build Living Museums but to fill other needs, such as building schools for the communities.[367] All the Museums were built thanks to the initiative and resourcefulness of the Namibian communities where they are located.

The Living Museum is based on the concept of a 'cultural village' or a 'living village' where the 'product' sold is lived experience of traditional culture.[368] Purchasing this product allows visitors 'to experience the full impact and the ambience of a folkloristic and vernacular settlement'.[369] There is a growing interest in this kind of 'alternative' or 'heritage' tourism.[370] Tourists can stay at and sleep in these living villages, learn how to produce craft, how to hunt and how to prepare local food. The programs focus on generating income from community-based tourism while ancient knowledge is maintained, explored, relived and 'passed on to younger generations'.[371] Despite these benefits, it should be kept in mind that the communities who open themselves up to this kind of tourism are at risk of being exploited in a variety of ways since it is one of the most intrusive ways to earn money.[372] Although the LCFN claim that they conduct 'research' at these sites,[373] it should be remembered that all research activities, however useful, are essentially intrusive interventions.

Living Museums in Namibia are run and managed as businesses, and the resources they draw on are mostly non-monetary. These businesses have the advantage that the actors and their families have the opportunity to relive and maintain their cultures,[374] which are at risk of being lost. They provide people with an opportunity to form new individual and group identities away from enslavement by dominant cultures and power relations. On the one hand it can be argued that vulnerable cultures are revived and conserved, yet on the other hand it can be argued that the Living Museums are spaces where ancient cultures are simply put on show to sustain communities by generating income. In reality, the real cultural lives lived in these communities are blends of modernity and tradition, old and new, and no clear lines can be drawn between these dichotomies. What lies in between are spatial and temporal realities in which people have to find their own ways of making sense of their lives, which are being lived not in ancient times but in the present.[375] Narrativity will continue to play an important role in these communities as new identities are continuously taking shape.

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[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Colin van Zyl, "The Role of Tourism in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage with Particular Relevance for South Africa" (PhD thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2008), 143.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid., 91.
[372] Ibid.
[373] "Cultural Development for Namibia".
[374] Ibid. The LCFN website refers to these service providers of cultural tourism as 'actors' and 'performers'.
[375] Polly Wiessner, "Owners of the Future? Calories, Cash, Casualties and Self-Sufficiency in the Nyae-Nyae Area Between 1996 and 2003," *Journal of the Society of Visual Anthropology*, 19, nos. 1 & 2 (2003): 149.

By 2011, 170 Namibians had found permanent employment in a Living Museum, while a total of 1,500 persons profited from income received in these ventures.[376] 10,370 guests visited the sites in 2011 and a total of 1.5 million Namibian dollars was generated (about 150,000 Euro).[377] In 2013 the five Living Museums earned similar income for the communities (about 1.47 million NAD), thereby sustaining their levels of income.[378] As well as providing them with a source of income, the LCFN also hopes to foster an appreciation for natural resources and human dependence on them amongst the Namibian communities that host Living Museums.[379]

Living Museum of the Ju/'hoansi San

The Living Museum of the Ju/'hoansi San craft selling site is situated in Grashoek (Figure 3.11), accessible from the C44 gravel road to Tsumkwe in the Odzondjupa region of Namibia. Access to Grashoek is difficult: a dual track road that is really only suitable for four-wheel drive vehicles limits the number of potential visitors. Although this road was improved in 2012, Grashoek is a good day's journey by road from the capital, on tarred and gravel roads. In rainy seasons the gravel roads are usually slippery and dangerous. (During my field work I almost overturned a four-wheel drive vehicle, although I was driving below the official speed limit.)

The Ju/'hoansi Living Museum craft site is built in the open air with natural resources only, such as sticks and wood (Figure 3.12). Artefacts are presented and displayed in the environment from which they originate. The craft selling structures are fixed, but the artefacts available for tourists are not permanently displayed. Ju/'hoan women and men put the artefacts on display when tourists arrive at the Living Museum and in this way they are protected from natural elements. The craft site generated an income of NAD300,000 (about 30,000 Euro) in 2011 from crafts sold directly to tourists.[380]

All artefacts displayed in this craft site were crafted by hand. Women make personal adornments such as necklaces, bracelets and embroidered leather wraps, while men make personal adornment and weapons such as bows, arrows, arrow vessels and knives. Only natural resources are used. One Ju/'hoan woman, dressed in a hand-embroidered leather shoulder wrap and skirt, and carrying a baby on her back, greeted me with a smile and displayed delicate artefacts she and the other women had

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Wiessner explains that mythologising and romanticised notions of the San assume that the San do not want to, or need to be, other than poor foraging urban Namibians, let alone global citizens with a decent living standard and a hope of becoming 'owners of the future' to use the title of Wiessner's article. Unfortunately, due to all kinds of interventions and disruptions in their lives, the Ju/'hoan interpretation of development aid is based on ideas of unlimited resources that would flow in from 'somewhere else'.

[376] "Cultural development for Namibia".

[377] Ibid.

[378] "Cultural Development for Namibia," accessed February 10, 2014.

[379] Ibid.

[380] Ibid.

made by hanging necklaces and bracelets neatly on wooden horizontal sticks carried by heavier poles in the ground (Figure 3.12).[381]



Figure 3.12 The craft space subtly blends into the environment. Sticks and wood are used to create an original, organic display space for crafted artefacts. Most of the artefacts are personal adornments and in this village men are as occupied with craft fabrication as women are. Crafts are not displayed on a permanent basis. It takes this efficient Ju/'hoan craftspeople a few minutes to arrange their artefacts for tourists. In this way the artefacts are protected from damage caused by natural elements such as sun and rain. Photograph by the author.

Tourists can meet the artefact makers, see how these craftspeople live and work and how they relate to the materials used in their artefacts. Tourists can even learn how to make these crafts during a workshop offered by the community. 'Hunting' excursions with San bows and arrows are also offered as a cultural activity. Hunting is controlled by the Nyae-Nyae Conservancy and therefore these 'hunting' excursions are offered as educational activities in which tourists learn about tracking and the traditional hunting tools of the Ju/'hoansi instead of hunting to kill animals unnecessarily.

Artefacts displayed in this craft site were far removed from museum glass boxes or shop windows and no 'distant objectification' occurred in relation to the artefacts on display.[382] Exhibited in this

[381] Field notes, Grashoek, Namibia, 20 January 2011.

environment, the artefacts do not function as synecdoche, because they are immediately readable and not a removed and silenced part of this Ju/'hoansi San culture. Instead, they are situated directly within it, wholly blending into their cultural, social, geographic and material environment. In this environment these artefacts cannot be romanticised since they have a strong, individual and honest narrative about what they are and where they come from.

An immediate question arises as to how these artefacts can be marketed to be taken outside of their natural environment where they will be isolated or romanticised. This is one of the biggest dilemmas for the San people of southern Africa as their culture is already highly romanticised and mythologised and their 'real circumstances and the fragility of their culture' has been obscured in the process.[383] The San are the original inhabitants of southern Africa, yet their relationship to both black and white inhabitants of this region is 'difficult and tragic' as they have been persecuted by both groups.[384] Approximately 35,000 different San and Khoisan families or groups now live in Namibia.[385] The Ju/'hoansi San in the Living Museum I visited are active protagonists in the strengthening of their cultural identities and their venture is an active protection of their fragile culture.

Tsumeb Arts and Crafts Centre and adjacent SME Support Centre

According to Craft Australia, craft centres are 'peak organisations ... that represent the professional craft and design sector ... [and] engage with the sector at a local, national and international level and offer services and programs that support sustainable practice.'[386] In Namibia 'craft centre' has several meanings, making it an ambiguous term. Some craft centres do represent the Namibian professional craft and design sectors, while others focus more on sales-related activities and function as community craft shops where artefacts of different kinds, but of equally worthy qualities, are sold. Some craft centres have developed identities as community centres where community activities such as meetings, health campaigns and training activities are hosted.

Tsumeb is a larger-sized town (with a population of 19,500) in central northern Namibia and the Tsumeb Arts and Craft Centre (TACC) is found at 18 Main Street (Figure 3.13), next to the Tsumeb SME Support Centre.[387] This centre is supported by the Namibia Community Skills Development

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[382] Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 3-4.
[383] Paul Weinberg, *In Search of the San* (Johannesburg: Double Storey, 2004), 1.
[384] Ibid., 7. Weinberg mentions that approximately 90,000 San live mostly in Namibia and Botswana with a few small and scattered groups living in South Africa, Zambia, South Angola and Zimbabwe. In Namibia and Angola the San became dependent on the South African Army as trekkers during Apartheid and the *Grensoorlog* (Border War).
[385] *Namibia Holiday and Travel*, 45.
[386] "Networks: Australian Craft and Design Centres," *Craft Australia*, accessed September 7, 2012, http://craftaustralia.org.au/networks/acdc.
[387] Namibian Planning Commission, *Namibia 2011 Population And Housing Census: Preliminary Results*, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.gov.na/documents/10180/34849/2011_Preliminary_Result.pdf/0ea026d4-9687-4851-a693-1b97a1317c60.

Foundation (COSDEF), a registered trust that is governed by a board of six trustees.[388] Various Community Skills Development Centres (COSDECs), one of which is the Tsumeb SME Support Centre, are supported and supervised by this trust where trainers offer competency-based skills education to individuals, mostly youth and people previously disadvantaged by colonial and Apartheid regimes, who participate in economic development activities at these centres. Most training initiatives at COSDECs are funded by COSDEF.

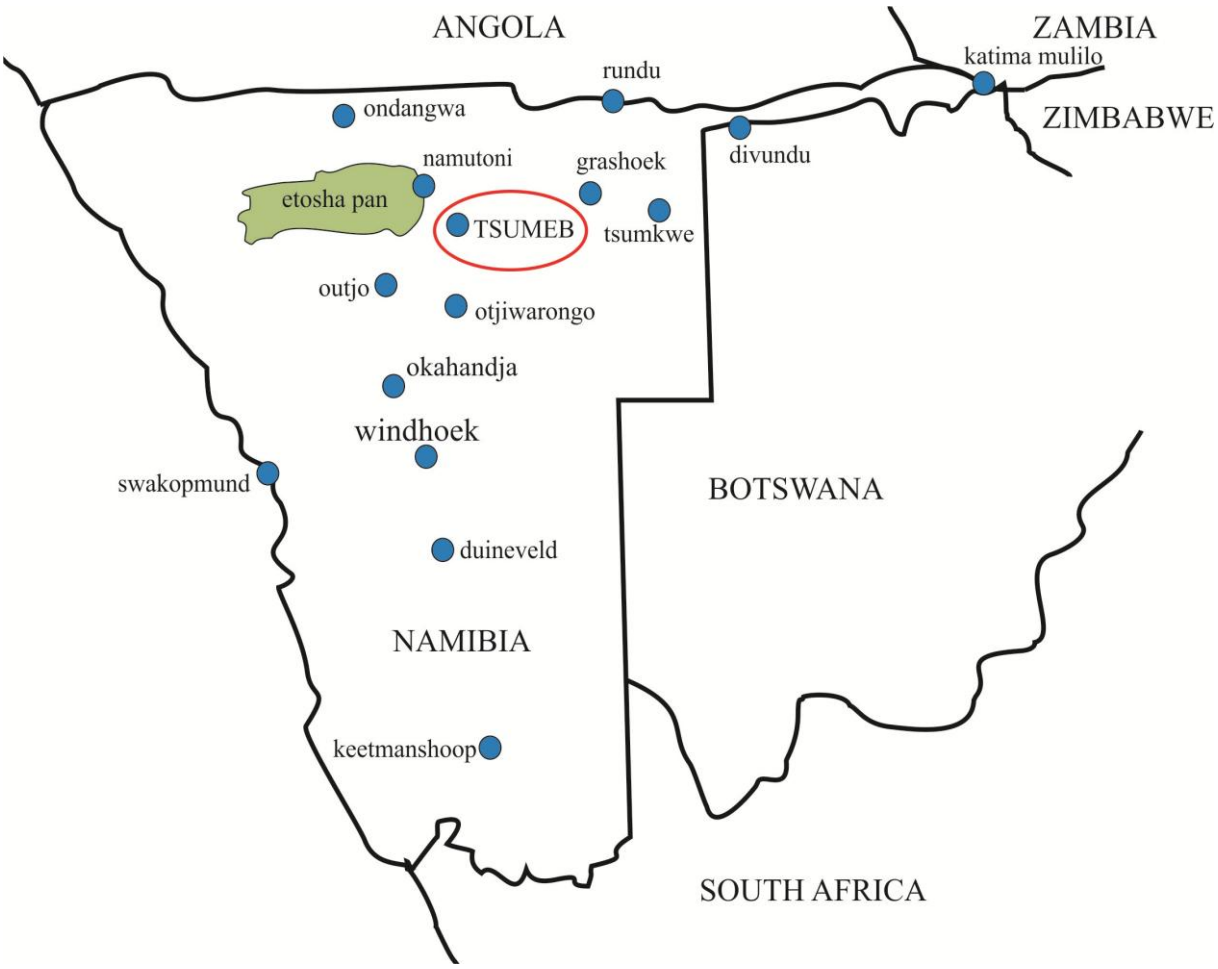

Figure 3.13 Map of Namibia, indicating the central northern town of Tsumeb.

At Tsumeb SME Support Centre (Figure 3.14), a building decorated with colourful geometric painted patterns, I found people caught up in various craft making processes, such as basket weaving, sewing, and a young lady who was eager to show me her solar oven building workshop. This business woman had learned her making skills and got her business knowledge at this COSDEC and she currently rents studio space there, where she produces solar ovens with basic materials such as wood, glass, metal and foil. The wood is sourced locally and is brought to Tsumeb from the Caprivi region. She told me that she had been able to save money to buy land and build a house, and was planning to expand her house

[388] *Community Skills Development Foundation* (*COSDEF*), accessed September 7, 2012, http://www.cosdef.org.na/.

in the future, thanks to the income she generates from her solar oven business.[389] These sustainable, inexpensive ovens are able to cook food and bake bread using solar energy only.



Figure 3.14 Colourful symmetrically painted borders, inspired by geometrical shapes, primary colours and repetition of patterns, decorate the Tsumeb Arts and Crafts Centre (TACC) and the adjacent SME Support Centre. The colourful patterns may be influenced by Ndebele wall paintings. Photograph by the author.

At TACC, I was greeted by a friendly Ovambo-speaking Namibian sales lady. She handed me the centre's business card before she gave me a brief introduction to all the artefacts, individuals and groups represented at this craft centre. Most of the artefacts sold here did not have the name of the producer attached to the artefact – unlike those I had seen in other Namibian craft centres, such as those at Katima, Ondangwa Arts and Cultural Centre and many more outlets. Having the name of a producer attached to an artefact emphasises the individuality of an artefact and, as Nettleton indicates, 'in their most sophisticated manifestations, they [artefacts] demand the recognition of the craftsperson as individual artist'.[390] I detected a kind of artificial sophistication in TACC's presentation that was not

[389] Field notes, Tsumeb, Namibia, 7 January 2011.

[390] Nettelton, "Life in a Zulu Village," 55.

followed through in their representation of the artefact makers. While they had a business card available for browsing customers, the TACC selling site did not represent craft makers in a professional manner, or as professionals: there was limited information available about the makers, the ways they work, processes they follow or the raw materials they use.

Tsumkwe Craft Centre

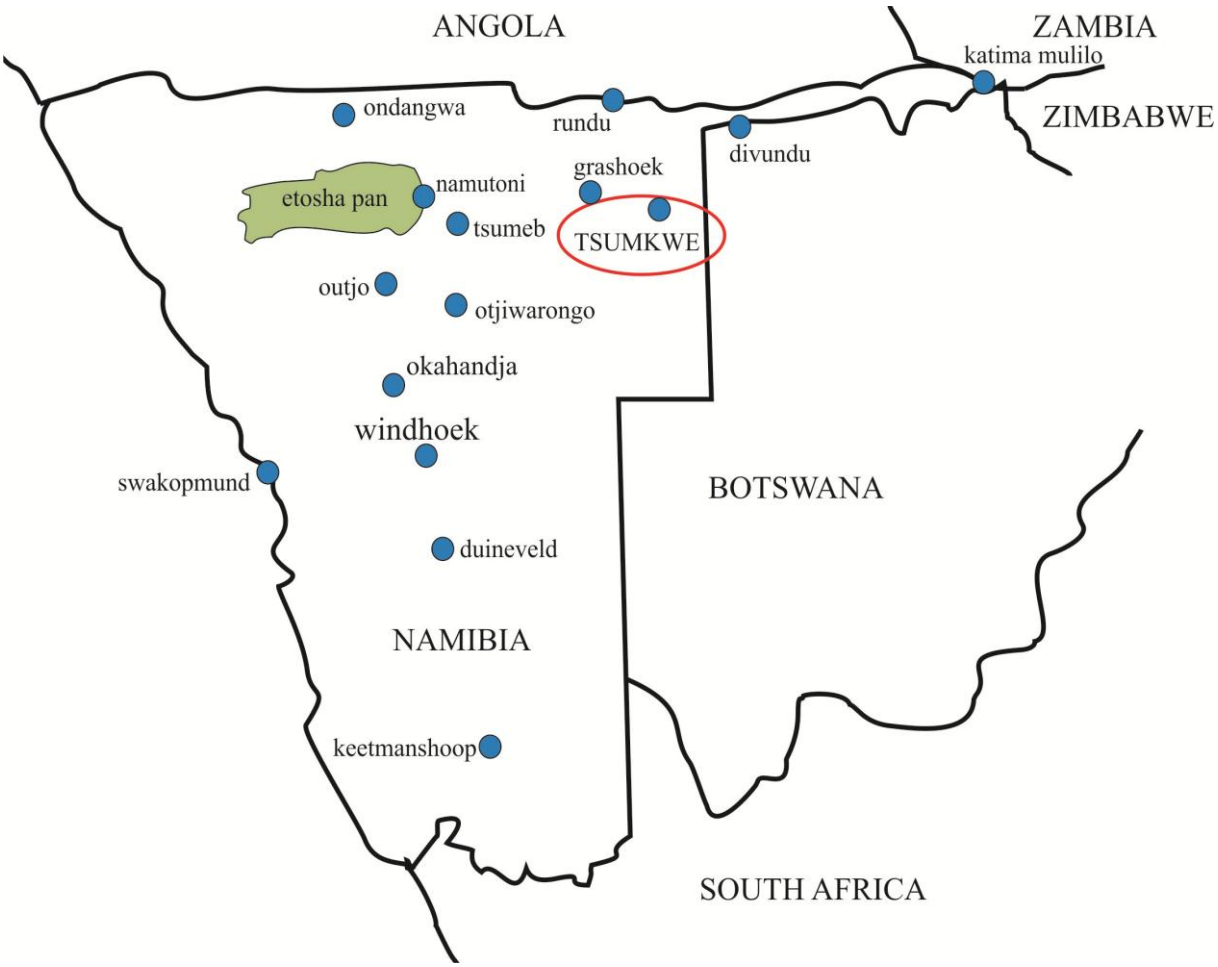

Figure 3.15 Map of Namibia, showing the north western town Tsumkwe, which is accessible by the C44 gravel road and approximately 2.5 hours of travel by car from the main road leading from Grootfontein to Rundu.

The Tsumkwe Craft Centre in north western Namibia was deserted when I visited it on January 18, 2010, except for two women who invited me in and told me everybody was welcome after I asked them where the crafts were sold.[391] These women seemed to be employees of this centre and they told me everybody from the Tsumkwe community (with a population of 9,800) was welcome to come and

[391] Field notes, Tsumkwe, Namibia, 19 January 2011.

use the space as needed.[392] They also told me that 'we do not know where the people are', referring to the craftspeople who were supposed to work at and sell their artefacts in this facility.[393] This answer seemed odd since I had been approached by many desperate craftspeople on the C44, the main 'street' of Tsumkwe adjacent to this craft centre a minute before entering the site. If no one conducts cultural activities at the site, then the Tsumkwe Craft Centre fails as a living heritage site.



Figure 3.16 Tsumkwe Craft Centre is surrounded by a high brick wall behind a barbed wire fence. Photograph by the author.

The centre's architectural design and layout may be the problem. A photograph of the centre in Figure 3.16 shows a high wall that hides the centre from the Tsumkwe main road, C44. This craft site is fenced off by a high wall and barbed wire fence that hides the activities behind it. Additionally, the entrance to this site is situated away from the main road and access is only possible from a side street. If, as Millar argues, markets are living heritage, then a market should never be hidden since the

[392] Namibian Planning Commission, *Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census: Preliminary Results*, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.gov.na/documents/10180/34849/2011_Preliminary_Result.pdf/0ea026d4-9687-4851-a693-1b97a1317c60.
[393] Ibid.

'living' aspect – the experience of seeing the liveliness of the craft making and selling operations – is what attracts customers.

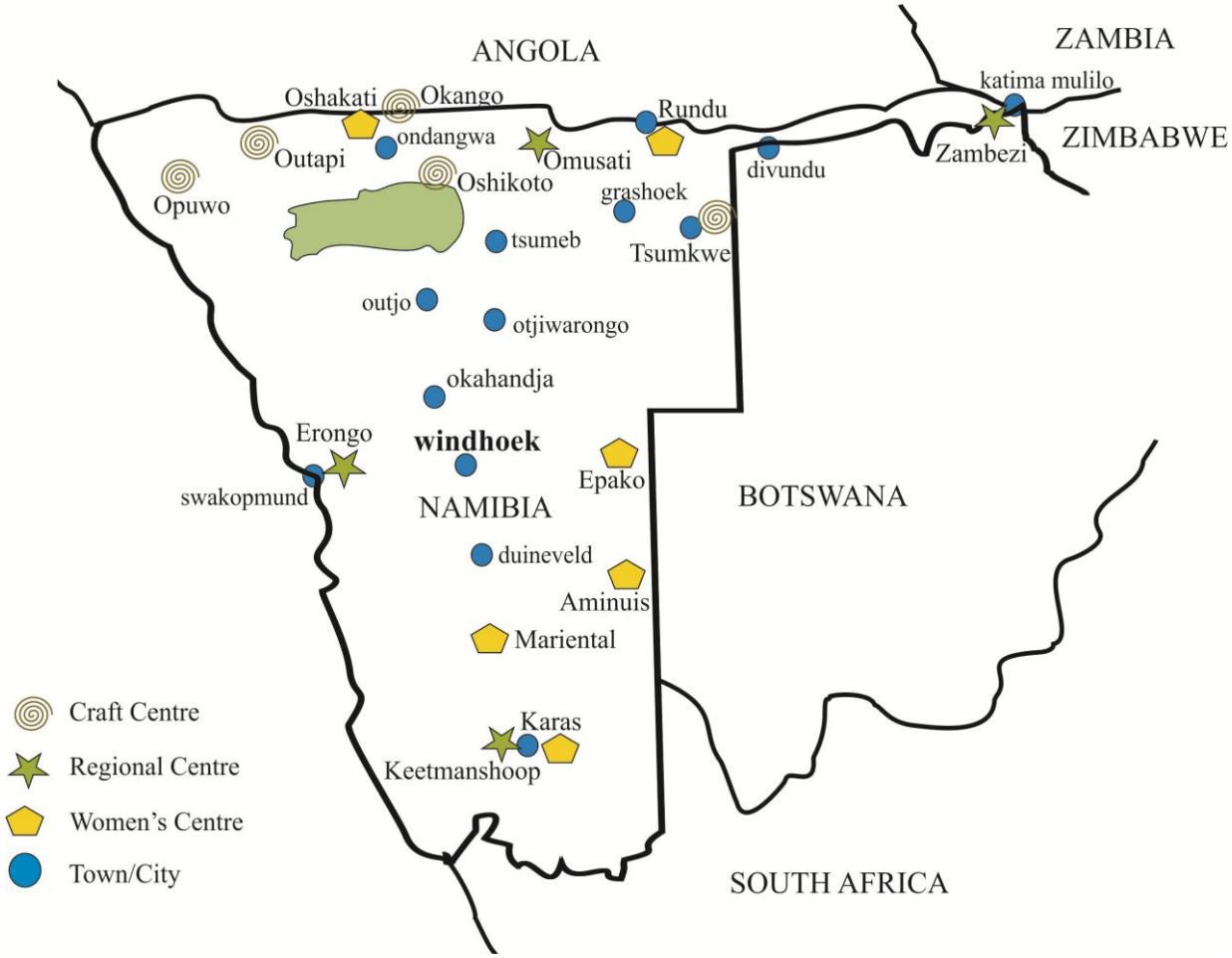

Figure 3.17 This map shows the craft, women and regional centres developed by the Namibian government and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW).

The C44 leads to a petrol station, which is next to this craft centre. While this makes it an obvious place for tourists and travellers to take a break, the station's potential to attract customers to the craft centre is undermined by the high retaining wall, which hides all the visual impact that a living heritage site usually has. It is therefore not surprising that craftspeople prefer to trade their artefacts on the streets of Tsumkwe while this NAD4.48 million venue, a community 'development project' for the rural poor, especially women and children, is barely utilised.[394] The centre was funded and opened in 2005 by the Namibian Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW).[395] It is clear that there was insufficient research and consultation on a local level in planning the access to this potentially valuable site for sustainable Namibian craft and design.[396]

[394] Office of the Auditor-General, Republic of Namibia, *Audit Report on the Accounts of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for the financial year ended 31 March 2006*, no. 517 (2006), 8.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Office of the Auditor-General, Republic of Namibia, *Audit Report on the Accounts of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for the financial year ended 31 March 2006* no. 517 (2006), 8; Office of the

Katima Craft Centre

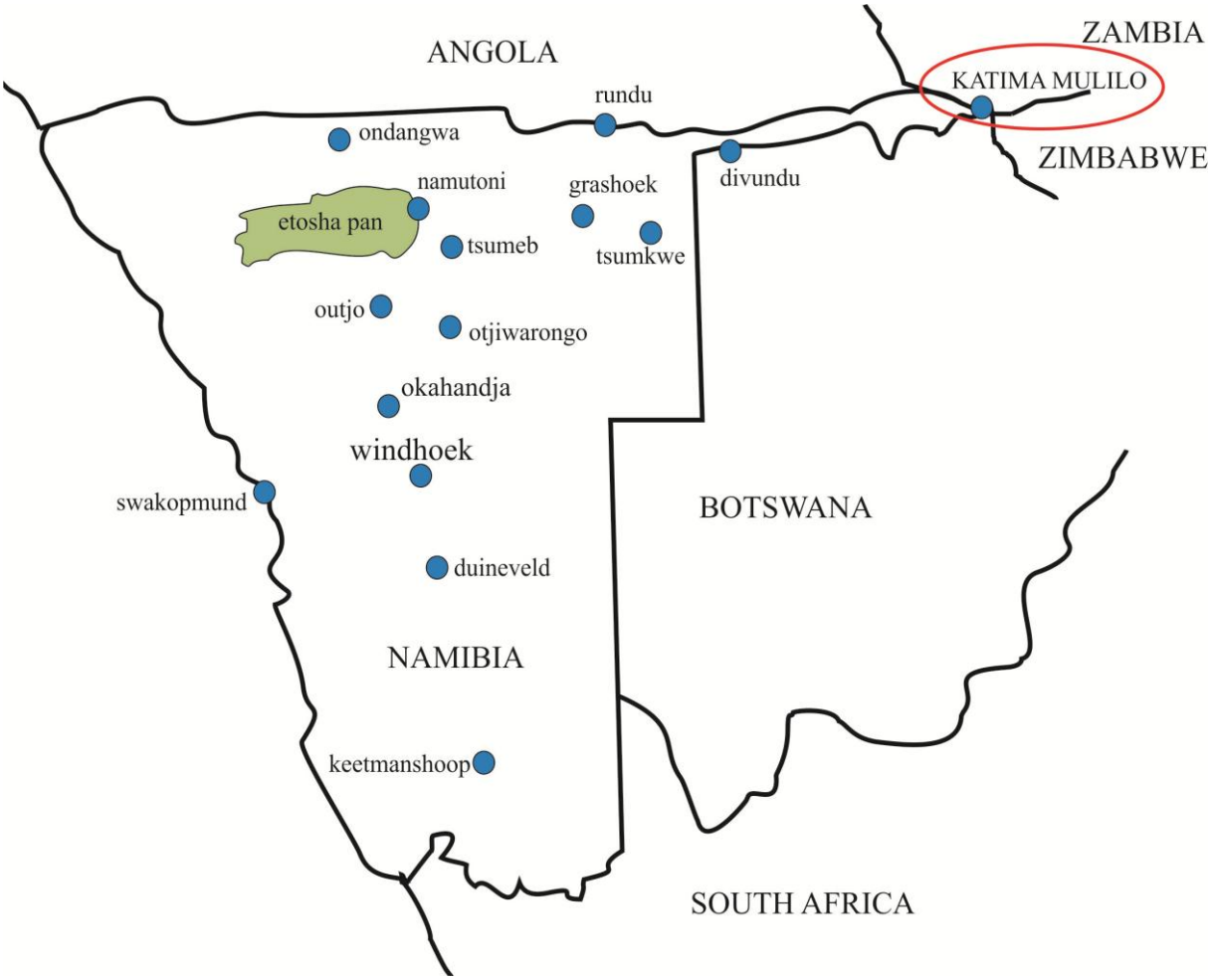

Figure 3.18 Katima Mulilo is the largest Namibian settlement in the north-eastern Zambezi region.

The Katima Craft Centre is adjacent to the Ngweze Market right in the centre of Katima Mulilo (Figure 3.17). Katima Mulilo is a major town (with an urban population of 28,000 and a rural population of 16,200) in Namibia's north eastern region, near the nation's borders with several

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Auditor-General, Republic of Namibia, *Audit Report on the Accounts of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for the financial year ended 31 March 2007*, no. 610 (2007), 8; Office of the Auditor-General, Republic of Namibia, *Audit Report on the Accounts of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for the financial year ended 31 March 2009*, no. 799 (2009), 8; Office of the Auditor-General, Republic of Namibia, *Audit Report on the Accounts of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for the financial year ended 31 March 2011*, no. 1068 (2011), 11. The MWACW invested close to NAD 15 million in the development of regional craft centres in various locations in Namibia between 2005 and 2011. These craft centres are the Tsumkwe Craft Centre discussed here, the Okongo Caft Centre, Opuwo Craft Centre, Oshikoto Craft Centre and the Outapi Craft Centre. The MWACW also invested many more funds in the establishment of community, recreation and women's centres all over the country in Mariental, Keetmanshoop, Oshakati, Epako, Aminus, Rundu, and regional centres in Karas, Erongo, Zambezi and Omusati regions. My research did not include any of these centres apart from the Tsumkwe Craft Centre, but research focusing on the functioning of, and the roles these centres play in rural, social and economic sustainability in Namibia, will be valuable, especially if the same research is able to evaluate the sustainability of craft production and sales at all these centres, because they are valuable resources that are able to sustain Namibian craft and design.

neighbouring states.[397] Since 2003 a foreign not-for-profit development organisation, the Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation, also referred to as 'Lux-Development' or 'Lux-Dev' (a company that is 98 per cent owned by Luxembourg and whose main mission is to 'participate in the implementation of the development cooperation policy of the Luxembourg government, which focuses on poverty eradication and sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental aspects'[398]), has invested NAD163 million in Katima Mulilo's urban development.[399] The Ngwezi Market, a commercial market where various mass-produced imported objects from China and traditional Namibian foods and services are sold, and the Katima Craft Centre development cost Lux-Development 2.92 million Euro.[400]

The complex was completed in 2006, with the aim of improving income for local craft and design traders, producers, and artisans in the informal sector by providing them with suitable physical spaces for selling their artefacts in Katima Mulilo.[401] The craft centre is situated next to the bustling Ngwezi Market, which lends this living heritage site its significant blend of identities. While the craft centre has a Namibian architectural identity with its thatched roof (Figure 3.18), the Ngwesi market has peculiarly arched entrances (Figure 3.19).

The craft centre has a section where baskets are sold from lockable units on one side and a 'gallery' on the other side where mainly wooden artefacts are displayed and sold. All artefacts are sold with the names of producers indicated on their price tags. I did not find any business cards in this venue when I visited it. It was interesting to find wooden carved artefacts made by Caprivi men in the style of Zimbabwean soap stone carving there, a clear indication of how artists' identities blend and mould in this Namibian town that is situated in close proximity to Namibia's borders with Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.[402]

[397] Namibian Planning Commission, *Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census.*
[398] Lux Dev Luxembourg, "Our Agency," accessed January 30, 2014, http://luxdev.lu/en/agency.
[399] Sun Mobi, "Withdrawal Hurt Katima Mulilo," *Namibian Sun*, accessed September 7, 2012, http://m.sun.com.na/content/lux%E2%80%99s-withdrawal-hurt-katima-mulilo.
[400] "Support to the Development of Ngweze Market and the Arts & Craft Centre in Katima Project in Namibia," *Devex*, accessed September 7, 2012, https://www.devex.com/en/projects/support-to-the-development-of-ngweze-market-and-the-arts-craft-centre-in-katima-project-in-namibia/secure?mem=ua&src=loan.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Field notes, Katima Mulilo, Namibia, 12 January 2011.



Figure 3.19 The Katima Craft Centre's thatched roof signifies a Namibian architectural identity. Photograph by the author.



Figure 3.20 Adjacent to the Katima Craft Centre is the bustling Ngwezi market, a prime trading space in Katima Mulilo. Photograph by the author.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Terry and Anthony Cunningham remind us that cultures are not static and that they are continuously reconstructed and evolving according to the needs of current situations.[403] Minette Mans aptly argues that cultural improvisation is valued by many Namibian communities because it allows 'cultural mental templates [to be] maintained or adapted'.[404] Changes have shaped cultures in the past and will continue to do so in the future, and areas of craft production and craft marketing will also be impacted by cultural change. The fact that new names for techniques and artefacts are invented as new artefacts are developed and produced from new materials is an example of how realities are changing in this part of southern Africa's postcolonial landscape. Changes and reconstructions of craft marketing and production will allow these areas to evolve simultaneously. In postcolonial conditions in particular, changes in craft marketing and production can shape desired outcomes, such as increased income generation. Once the essential roles and agencies of craft vendors and 'marketing officers' within the southern African craft sphere are recognised and supported, craft selling and producing sites will be able to draw on the inherent strengths that are the prevalent aspects of African hospitality.

This chapter also illuminated many negative aspects related to craft marketing, which leads me to suggest that craft marketing in southern Africa should draw on the inherent strengths of narratives and African hospitality. In this chapter I have described craft selling sites alongside some of the challenges of establishing sustainable craft marketing practices on the southern African route I travelled. The strong connection between heritage and craft has been used to promote craft markets and craft selling and production sites, such as crafts centres. These sites should be vigorously promoted as 'living heritage'[405] sites by stressing not only their more obvious potential for economic gain, but also acknowledging their vibrancy and dynamics and their role as identity-shaping spaces in which individuals and communities are seeking validation and recognition.

One of the Namibian craft-selling sites mapped in this chapter was Duineveld, where patchwork springbok and goat skin artefacts made by Nama women were sold. Sadly, and in spite of this community sustaining their craft making and selling activities for more than thirty years, they have received little support from craft 'development' organisations operating within Namibia. There were, however, many well-supported craft selling sites in Namibia. One example was the City of Windhoek's craft markets, which exist within a larger supportive network of sixteen markets, three industrial sites and the Bokamoso Entrepreneurial Centre that are distributed over the city's area and supported and maintained by the city council. The Tsumeb Arts and Craft Centre is connected to the Tsumeb SME Support Centre where training activities for community members are supported by the Namibia Community Skills Development Foundation (COSDEF). The Katima Craft Centre is

[403] M. Elizabeth Terry and Anthony B. Cunningham, "The Impact of Commercial Marketing on the Basketry of Southern Africa," *The Journal of Museum Ethnography* no. 4 (1993): 40.
[404] Minette Mans, "Creating a Cultural Policy for Namibia," *Arts Education Policy Review* 101, no. 5 (2000): 14.
[405] Millar, "An Overview of the Sector," 9.

connected to the vibrant Ngwezi Market in Katima Mulilo and, as a result, this craft centre benefits from the hustle and bustle of visitors to the market, including tourists and the local community. The Living Museum at Grashoek, with its positive results from selling crafts, was also mapped and compared to the Tsumkwe Craft Centre, the result of a significant investment in rural development by the Namibian government, but a space that was vacant of community members or groups and void of craft activities.

In Namibia the promotion of crafts as part of heritage and culture has been successful, yet many craft-selling sites could either be improved or turned into more viable ventures that would sustain their immediate communities. Craft making, marketing and selling practices have particular potential to transform 'redundant' spaces into living heritage sites, thus increasing their ability to sustain local communities. Namibia is a country with rich cultural and craft traditions, active craft communities are found in every region. Many of these communities face challenges due to their inaccessibility and thus the benefit they gain from local tourism is usually marginal. Some craft communities, for example those selling their artefacts at the Mashi Craft Centre in Divundu,[406] the Mbangura Woodcarvers Market in Okahandja, and the Namibian Craft Centre in Windhoek, greatly benefit from tourism, yet this is not the case for most Namibian craft selling sites. Many Namibian craft production activities at sites on tourist routes would benefit from improved local, national and international marketing initiatives.

The sustainability of Namibia's craft-producing communities could be improved in three ways: firstly by developing the potential of redundant spaces and transforming them into living heritage sites. The combination of craft centres and craft selling sites with existing living heritage sites (as in the case of the Katima Craft Centre and Ngwezi Market) could possibly enhance the sustainment of craft marketing practices at a local level. Secondly, a focus on small details, such as giving craftspeople individual recognition for their work, will make a significant contribution to the sustainability of practices. Thirdly, educating craftspeople and the public to value human and natural resources related to Namibian craft practices will prevent the devaluation of Namibian crafts. The waste of valuable resources has to be prevented through strategic research with a focus on communities and their specific activities. Research has to inform action plans and target-specific implementation of these plans in cooperation with community members, to prevent failed investments such as the Tsumkwe Craft Centre.

With craft and design vendors' stories and the spaces in which they work in mind, the next chapter investigates the different artefacts sold and distributed along the routes I travelled in southern Africa.

[406] This successful craft venture and selling site offers a culturally significant experience for tourists in the Kavango and Zambei regions while it serves a large craft production community in this area and beyond. Located next to the Kangola Craft Centre, this site is successfully managed by local individuals and Namibian craft consultants. Sales generated at this site are substantial and thus many local families are supported due to the sustainable practices that are followed. This craft centre is not discussed in this chapter due to its expansion in 2011, during my field studies.

Chapter 4

Searching for artefacts in the field

This chapter discusses findings from the first phase of my field study. It provides an overview of the artefacts I came across when I followed a major southern African tourist route from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, and then from Cape Town via Windhoek to Katima Mulilo from 29 November 2010 until 3 March 2011. This chapter aims to illustrate: (a) the various groups of crafts found on the route travelled; and (b) the distribution of the artefact groups at craft-selling sites on the route travelled (at a particular point in time); in order to (c) compare the distribution of artefacts in Namibia and South Africa according to the artefact groups found at the 52 craft sites I visited. This information is an attempt to provide specific details about Namibian craft distribution and will contribute to my reflection on sustainable Namibian craft and design practices.

Artefacts cannot always be clearly 'classified' according to 'type', because artefacts are outcomes of processes in which individuals, situated in fluctuating environments, work and act to express their creative whims in material and temporal realities. Therefore, 'boundaries' between artefact types are permeable, because artefact producers tend to improvise and create by crossing boundaries, pushing the limits of traditions, materials, skills and experiences to invent new combinations and artefact outcomes. Many artefacts also change and grow with their producers, who are themselves caught up in changing realities. In spite of these fluid realities and the diverse contexts in which artefacts are produced in southern Africa, I attempt to arrange the artefacts I encountered into groups to attain an overview of craft and design artefacts produced and marketed in the southern African and the Namibian craft and design worlds.

An overview of artefact groups aims to give a broad outline of various crafts found in and around the Namibian region of southern Africa. The findings reported in this chapter indicate the movement of artefacts in a specific area of southern Africa, as indicated in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below. Factors influencing the availability and origin of artefact 'groups' at craft sites change rapidly according to market trends, artefact availability and how well artefact distribution channels are managed, among other factors. Therefore, the findings in this chapter are temporally specific and subjectively determined. However, the purpose of the artefact distribution overview provided in this chapter is to investigate how Namibian craft distribution compares to that of other southern African crafts in the wider southern African region and, importantly, how Namibian artefacts are successfully marketed and distributed in the southern African region.

This chapter assumes that a widespread distribution of Namibian artefacts, particularly on popular tourist routes, indicates whether strategic national marketing approaches are in place to promote the sale of Namibian artefacts to various consumers. The findings about the distribution of artefacts on the Namibian and South African route are part of this study's attempt to illustrate how the marketing and distribution of Namibian artefacts in this region could be improved and sustained. I aimed to investigate whether Namibian artefacts are broadly marketed and distributed in the southern African region. The underlying principle of strong regional marketing strategies is that they have the potential to sustain local communities.[407] Enhancing local distribution channels means that resources such as local materials, expertise and labour are utilised and the physical distribution of artefacts and goods minimised. This approach, as Kate Fletcher explains, develops human creativity and the variety of goods available because design solutions focus on local challenges. In the process jobs are created and resources are made use of at a local level.[408] These locally-focused approaches are essential for environmental sustainability not only in Namibia, but also globally, because it reduces the carbon footprint of long supply and distribution chains.



Figure 4.1 Field study route map showing the 52 craft selling sites visited.

[407] Kate Fletcher, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles – Design Journeys* (London and Sterling: Earthscan, 2008), 140.
[408] Ibid., 140-141.

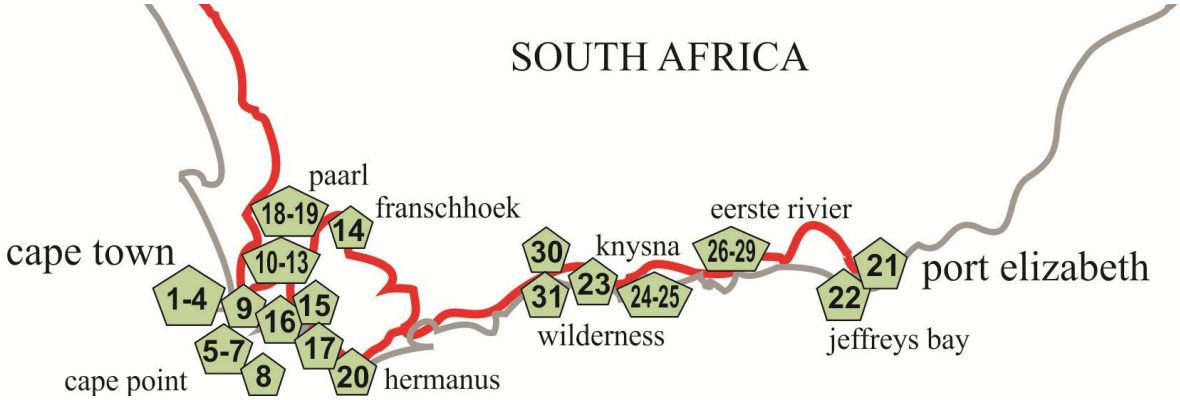

Figure 4.2 Field study route map indicating craft selling sites in South Africa.

I also aim to investigate whether Namibian artefacts are produced in a variety of groups and utilising a diversity of techniques and raw materials, especially locally available raw materials. An overview of the route I travelled and the craft sites I came across are indicated in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 and the artefacts I came across on the route of the field study are represented in groups in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Overview of artefacts

In order to generalise about their distribution in the southern African region, I have arranged the artefacts that I found in the field into 16 groups. A brief description of each group follows and the name I have given to each of them is indicated with bold font.

Artefacts grouped according to the materials used for their making are:

- wood carving and wooden artefacts;
- stone carving and stone artefacts;
- textile artefacts;
- artefacts made from wire and beads;
- artefacts made from recycled materials;
- ceramics and clay artefacts;
- metal artefacts;
- paper and paper maché artefacts;
- glass artefacts;
- leather and fur artefacts; and
- artefacts made from organic materials, such as ostrich egg shell and shell.

Artefacts grouped according to their function are:

- paintings and prints;
- baskets;
- jewellery; and
- fashion and clothing.

Mass-produced imported objects were also grouped and their distribution (along my travelled routes) is indicated in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 together with the fifteen abovementioned artefact groups.[409]

Wood carving and wood (Figure 4.3) artefacts found on the route included masks, carved sculptures, carved animals and carved figurines that were sometimes framed with wood and glass. There were also small pieces of furniture, such as chairs and tables, wooden bowls and vessels, drums, combs, key rings and cutlery, such as salad spoons. Carved wooden artefacts mostly originated from Mozambique, Namibia, Cameroon and Zimbabwe. Popular woods used are ironwood (*Olea capensis*) and kiaat (*Pterocarpus angolensis*). Rich wood carving traditions exist in southern Africa, predominantly in the Namibian Kavango and Zambezi regions.



Figure 4.3 Woodcarving by Kavango craftspeople in northern Namibia displayed at the Ncumcara Community Forest Craft Centre, Rundu, 2011 (dimensions: various). Most carvings are made from kiaat, a hard wood from the *Pterocarpus angolenesis* tree. Functional carved bowls and animals are popular themes used by craftspeople from this region. Photograph by the author.

[409] Mass-produced imported objects are predominantly machine made and imported from mainly Asian countries. These are objects that I would not consider crafts since they are produced by the thousands and they do not display any traces of being made by hand, such as small but peculiar differences detectable amongst artefacts that look (almost) alike. I therefore refer to these items as "objects" instead of artefacts.

Stone carving and stone (Figure 4.4) artefacts found included carved figurines, carved animals, sculptures, bowls, small vessels and key rings. These stone carvings are made from stones like serpentine, opalstone, springstone and soapstone.[410] Zimbabwean stone artefacts were often found and included dishes, animals, single figurines or figurines of couples, or couples with either one or more children or mothers with one or more children.



Figure 4.4

Stone-carved soapstone bowls (image right) fabricated by unknown craftsperson (but believed to be Zimbabwean by the craft vendor who sold the artefact) are regularly seen at Namibian craft markets. This artefact was sold at the Namibian Craft Centre, 2011 (dimensions: 16 cm diameter). Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.5

Cardboard print by Ilovu Achtofel, "My Image in Dogs" (image left) (dimensions: 36 x 49 cm), displayed at the Namibian Craft Centre, 2011.

[410] Gilda Williams, "Stone Types," *Artforum: Art Creations Africa Goldsmiths Research Online* XLVI, no. 10 (2008), accessed September 25, 2012, http://artcreationsafrica.com/index.php/information/stone-types.html.

Paintings and prints (Figure 4.5) found were made using different techniques including mixed media, paint and block printing. They originated from South Africa and Zimbabwe. Cardboard printing, another relief printing technique that developed in Namibian townships during the country's liberation struggle, was not often seen except in some Namibian sites. This technique is practised mostly in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Textile artefacts (Figure 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9) include woven, crocheted, knitted, felted and sewn items, such as bags, dolls, animals, soft toys, wall hangings, batiks, table and bedroom linens such as cushion covers, throws, table cloths and napkins. Embroidery is practised by Namibian women's groups in various styles and techniques. Hand printed and painted textile techniques were fairly recently introduced to Namibia and are practised by a few visual artists and craft groups. A few Namibian carpet-weaving groups produce high quality carpets from karakul wool, a by-product of the Namibian karakul fur and sheep industry. This raw material resulted in the establishment of these carpet weavers who mostly trained indigenous Namibian men as weavers, although some women are also carpet weavers.





Figures 4.6 and 4.7

Handmade woven carpet (image left) (dimensions: 137 x 78 cm) and felted carpets (image below) (dimensions: 61 cm diameter) are produced from karakul wool by Dorkambo weavers in Oniipa, north-central Namibia, and sold at the Ohandje Craft Centre in Ondangwa, 2011. Photographs by the author.



Figure 4.8 This hand embroidery is produced by women from Kirikara in Namibia. The embroidered textile was made by Rosa Linyanwe (in 2006) and then fashioned into a simple bustier by Martha Naruses. Such items are sold by Kirikara in Namibia and Cape Town. Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.9

Hand printed textiles produced by textile students and displayed at the College of the Arts, Windhoek, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 150 x 90cm). Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.10 "Work with our hands" is the name of a Namibian craft group working with beads. They produce jewellery items and giftware such as this necklace, earrings and brooch. These artefacts are sold at the Namibian Craft Centre, 2011 (dimensions: brooch: 60 mm diameter; necklace: 2040 mm length; earrings: 78 mm length). Photograph by the author.

The artefacts made of **wire and beads** (Figure 4.10) that I found included almost any imaginable item, encompassing toys, radios in the shape of a pink Barbie Beatle (Volkswagen car), hats, bags, key rings, all sorts of sculptures, animals, figurines, baskets and tableware, such as place mats, containers and vessels, and more. Most prominently featured in this group were all the memorabilia made for the Football World Cup that was hosted by South Africa in 2010, such as key rings, fridge magnets, sports shoes complete with a Nike logo and shoe laces. In Namibia I came across more woven beading techniques. One Namibian craft group 'Work with our hands' produce complex jewellery by using wire and beads and woven beading techniques (Figure 4.10).

In South Africa crafts made from **recycled materials** (Figure 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13) were well represented, including picture frames, toys, bags, sculptures, lights, baskets and all kinds of memorabilia. Metal artefacts were mostly animals, sculptures, furniture, lamp shades, vessels and ornaments, the majority originating from South Africa and Zimbabwe. In Namibia many visual artists, designers and craftspeople work with recycled materials to create unique artefacts. At Penduka in Windhoek recycled glass beads are hand produced from broken glass. Recycled glass artefacts found included bowls, platters, sculptures, ornaments and goblets originating mainly from South Africa and Swaziland.



Figure 4.11 Recycled glass bracelet produced by Penduka women in Windhoek, Namibia, and sold at their shop in Katutura and at the Namibian Craft Centre, 2011 (dimensions: 64 mm diameter). Photograph by Annie Symonds.



Figure 4.12 Recycled metal vessel by Peter Kewowo, "Feel at home", Namibian Craft Centre, 2011 (dimensions: 47 cm height). Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.13 "Antique Textile" created by Fillipus Sheehama from recycled bottle tops, 2009 (dimensions: 150 x 125 cm). Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.14 Coca-Cola bottles created from paper maché, displayed at African Image, Cape Town, South Africa, 2010 (dimensions: 18-20cm high). Photograph by the author.

Paper and paper maché (Figure 4.14) artefacts were replicas of popular culture items such as Coca-Cola bottles. Picture frames, gift paper, handmade cards and paper were also found, originating from South Africa and Zimbabwe. One Namibian group produced small and delicate ornaments, such as colourful Christmas decorations, but those artefacts were found only at the Namibian Craft Centre.

Ceramics and clay (Figure 4.15) artefacts included vessels, candle holders, bowls and platters, plates, tableware and crockery, ornaments, figurines and wash basins. Most artefacts found in South Africa have a local origin because they are risky to ship due to breakage. In Namibia I found many clay vessels originating from northern Namibia and Zimbabwe.



Figure 4.15 Clay pot was made by M. Kambata, sold by Ohandje Artists Cooperative and displayed at the Ondangwa Cultural Centre, 2011 (dimensions: 33 cm diameter, 13 cm high). Photograph by the author.

Leather and fur (Figure 4.16) artefacts found were clothing, fur coats and jackets, bags, suitcases, purses, belts, shoes, key rings, stationary accessories and tableware such as place mats. These artefacts were mostly produced in South Africa and Namibia. A few furriers operating according to European traditions are fabricating high end leather and fur fashions in Namibia. The Namibian Swakara fur, originating from the karakul (sheep), is an acclaimed trademark in the global fur industry and this currently valuable raw material resulted in the establishment of these small, family-owned and

international award-winning furrier houses in Namibia. Although southern Africa has substantial cattle and sheep farming industries, the amount of leather and fur artefacts produced in this area is relatively small. Clothing that is traditionally made and worn by the indigenous Himba and San is manufactured from leather and hides. Accessories that are traditionally made and worn by indigenous Ovambo, Herero, Kavango and Caprivi traditions, to name a few, are also fabricated from leather and hides.



Figure 4.16 Swakara trench coat, produced in collaboration with the Karakul Board of Namibia, 2006. Photograph by Marcus Weiss, courtesy of the Namibian Karakul Board.

The artefacts I found made from **organic materials** (Figure 4.17 and 4.18), such as ostrich eggshell, seeds, pods and shell, were mostly ornaments, jewellery and accessories. They originated mostly from Namibia and South Africa.

The **baskets** (Figure 4.19) I found were made from organic fibres, mostly makalani, mokola and ilala palm fibre (*Hyphaene petersiana*) and reeds, but also wire, beads and recycled materials are popular materials used for this craft form. All sorts of baskets, made from organic fibres or recycled and new

materials or a combination of these, originated from Namibia, Zambia, South Africa and specifically Kwazulu-Natal, Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho.

Jewellery (4.20, 4.21 and 4.22) that I discovered in the craft centres was made from organic materials, such as shells and seeds, various precious and semi-precious stones and crystals, and metals, including gold, silver, platinum, copper, aluminium and recycled metals. Materials were very often combined in special ways. Often I came across horn set in silver and gold with precious stones, or diamonds combined with antelope horn (from springbok, kudu or gemsbok) and silver, or leather combined with rubber and semi-precious stones. These often unusual combinations were far removed from traditional Western fine jewellery combinations, such as gold combined with diamonds. Often wood, beads, wire, textiles, leather, plastic and other recycled materials had been used to produce unique jewellery.

The rich mineral, precious and semi-precious stone resources in Namibia have resulted in the establishment of several high-end jewellery manufacturers, who work according to European jewellery manufacturing traditions. However, rich ethnic jewellery manufacturing traditions existed amongst indigenous Namibian people. Himba blacksmiths continue to manufacture wire beads and San men and women continue to fabricate ostrich eggshell beads that are woven into complex jewellery artefacts and styles. Many Namibian jewellery producers use predominantly stringing techniques to fabricate jewellery for tourist craft markets.[411]



Figure 4.17 Bracelets woven from makalani palm fibre, displayed at Mashi Crafts, Divundu, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 65-80 mm diameter). Photograph by the author.

[411] Field notes, Okahandja, Namibia, 20 January 2011.



Figure 4.18 Ostrich eggshell jewellery produced by Ju/'hoansi craftspeople from the Nyae-Nyae conservancy in north eastern Namibia. These artefacts are sold by G!hunku crafts in Tsumkwe, 2011 (dimensions: 20 - 22 cm). Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.19 Tray, made by T. Shilunga, made from makalani palm fibre and plastic, displayed at Katima Craft Centre, Katima Mulilo, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 58 cm diameter). Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.20 A variety of necklaces (makers unknown) displayed at a craft selling stand at the Mbangura Wood-carvers Market in Okahandja, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: various). These necklaces are made from a mixture of organic materials, such as Kauri shells, leather, porcupine quills, seeds and pods, and synthetic twine (synthetic fibres originating from animal fodder bags are recycled and used to create some of the twisted necklace strings), plastic beads and even zippers. These necklaces are usually produced by Himba craftspeople and *otjize*, or ochre, is used to stain the strings an earthy reddish colour. Artefacts like these illustrate why it is often impossible to group artefacts in 'categories', because raw materials and techniques find their own routes into new artefacts in the changing cultural landscapes of southern Africa and elsewhere. Photograph by the author.



Figure 4.21 Wooden, brass and silver bracelets crafted by Sylvia von Kühne, displayed at Pambili Shop, Windhoek, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 60-90 mm diameter). Photograph by Attila Giersch.



Figure 4.22 Aluminium necklace with ostrich eggshell beads made by Tameka and sold at Pambili Shop, Windhoek, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 24 cm diameter). Photograph by Attila Giersch.

Fashion and clothing (Figure 4.23) artefacts encountered on the route were mostly basic items. In Namibia I found that exclusive fashion and fur artefact shops were situated so that they were accessible to tourists, for example the Pambili Shop and Katharina Karl Costumes, whereas in South Africa they were situated in shopping centres, such as the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront shopping mall in Cape Town and many similar venues. In Namibia, Nama, Damara, Herero, Ovambo and Tswana traditional clothing is fabricated in very rich cultural traditions, styles, techniques, colours and materials. These styles and techniques are continuously evolving as artisans improvise to allow for subtle changes and personal re-interpretations.

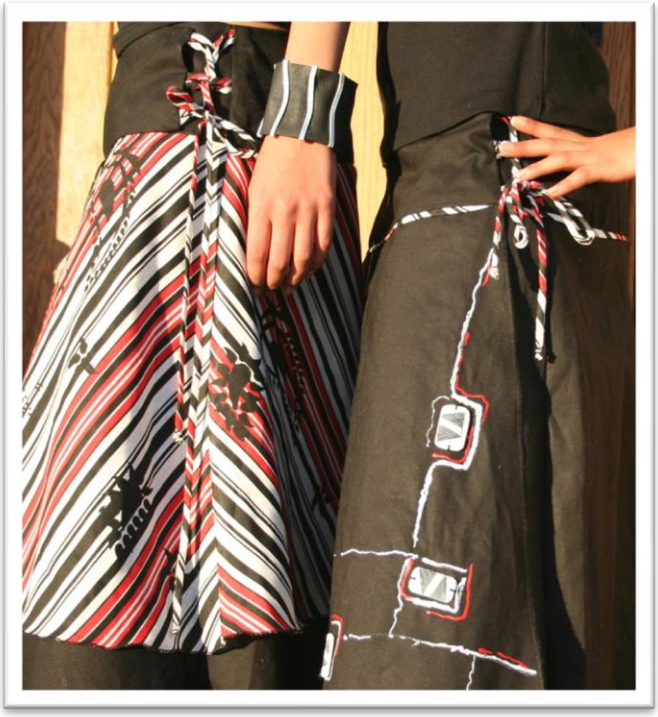

Figure 4.23

Fashion items such as these ondelela and cotton wrap skirts are made by Maria Caley and sold by the Pambili Shop in Windhoek, Namibia, 2011. Photograph by Sanna Silgren.

Mass-produced, imported objects encountered included clothing items, such as sportswear shirts, baseball caps, sunglasses, watches and many more items. I noticed that in South Africa more mass-produced imports, especially clothing and accessories, were sold at the sites where handmade crafts are sold, although this phenomenon is not unknown in Namibia. These mass-produced imports restrain the growth of mostly locally produced textile and clothing crafts that often cannot compete against the cheap prices of these imported items.

Having briefly described the kinds of artefacts found, Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present sites grouped and numbered according to the field study route through the two regions within southern Africa: South Africa (the first 31 sites), from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, and Namibia (the last 21 sites), from Cape Town to Windhoek and Swakopmund, Windhoek to Ondangwa via the Etosha National Park and then Windhoek to Katima Mulilo and back, detouring to Tsumkwe. Site numbers correspond to the accompanying field study route map (Figure 4.1 and 4.2), which shows the location of the sites on this route. The names of these sites are provided in the tables as they are well-known and widely used in the public domain. For each artefact selling site, the kinds of artefacts that were present at that site are indicated by their country of origin, using the abbreviations listed below.

Abbreviations for country of origin

South Africa	RSA	Niger	NIG
Namibia	NAM	Mali	MAL
Mozambique	MZB	Malawi	MLW
Botswana	BOT	Angola	ANG
Lesotho	LST	Liberia	LIB
Swaziland	SWZ	Ethiopia	ETH
Zimbabwe	ZIM	Ivory Coast	IVC
Zambia	ZAM	Ghana	GHA
Kenya	KNY	Chad	CHA
Tanzania	TAN	Guinea	GUI
Democratic Republic of Congo	DRC	Gabon	GBN
Cameroon	CAM	Nigeria	NIR
		Egypt	EGP
Countries such as China (CHI), Indonesia (IDN) and India (INA) are also indicated.			

Table 4.1 South African Sites

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Green Market Square, Cape Town (1)	ANG CAM DRC GBN GUI IVC KNY MZB NIR TAN ZIM	ZIM	RSA ZIM	DRC GHA MAL MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM			RSA	RSA	RSA ZAM SWZ	KNY MZB NIG RSA TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM TAN	CHI
African Image, Cape Town (2)	CAM DRC GHA NIR RSA		RSA	DRC MAL RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA			RSA	RSA ZAM	KNY NAM RSA TAN ZIM	RSA	

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
African Trading Port, Cape Town (3)	ANG CAM CHA DRC ETH GBN GUI IVC KNY LIB MLW MZB NIR RSA ZIM TAN ZAM	KNY ZIM	RSA KNY	DRC GHA MAL MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA	RSA ZIM	RSA	RSA		RSA	NIR RSA	ETH KNY RSA ZIM	CAM RSA ZAM	KNY MLW RSA	RSA	CHI

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
W&A Craft Market, Cape Town (4)	CAM DRC KNY MZB RSA ZIM TAN ZAM	ZIM KNY	RSA ZIM	DRC GHA MAL MZB RSA SWZ TAN	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA	RSA ZIM	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA KNY ZIM	RSA ZAM ANG	DRC KNY MZB NIG RSA TAN ZIM	RSA	CHI
Hombisa Jewellery, Scarborough (5)														RSA		
Red Rock Tribal, Scarborough (6)	CAM DRC GBN GUI NAM NIR RSA TAN				RSA	RSA		RSA	RSA				RSA	RSA ZIM		

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Scarborough craft market (7)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	ZIM					RSAZ AMZI M	RSAZ IM				ZIM	ZAM	RSAZ IM		
Cape Point craft market (8)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	ZIM		RSA	RSA ZIM	RSAZ IM					RSA		RSA ZAM	KNY RSAT ANZI M		CHI

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Afri Trading, Simons Town (9)	DRC CAM GBN GUI KNY MZB NIR RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	KNY ZIM	RSA ZIM	DRC GHA MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM MAL	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM						ZIM	RSA SWZ ZIM	DRC KNY MZB NIG RSA TAN ZIM		
Stellenbosch flea market at the Braak (10)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	KNY ZIM	RSA	RSA ZIM TAN MZB	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM			RSA		RSA ZAM	MZB RSA ZIM		CHI
Karoo Classics, Stellenbosch (11)	RSA			RSA			RSA				RSA	RSA		RSA	RSA	

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Die Dorpstraat Galery, Stellenbosch (12)	RSA		RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA		RSA				EGP MAL NIG RSA		
Johan Swart Ceramic Studio & Gallery, Stellenbosch (13)							RSA									
Due South, Franschhoek (14)	RSA		RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA	RSA			RSA	RSA	RSA NAM		
Vergelegen gift shop, Somerset West (15)			RSA	RSA SWZ	RSA					RSA SWZ	RSA	RSA	RSA SWZ	RSA ZIM		CHI
Strand flea market (16)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM			DRC MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM							RSA ZAM	RSA	RSA ZIM	CHI

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Gordon's Bay flea market (17)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM			DRC MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM						ZAM ZIM	RSA	RSA ZAM ZIM		CHI
Klaus Schnack gallery, Paarl (18)														RSA		
Red Hot Glass, Paarl (19)										RSA						
Hermanus flea market (20)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	ZIM	RSA	DRC MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM			RSA		RSA	RSA TAN ZIM	RSA	CHI

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Craft Workshop, Port Elizabeth (21)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	ZIM	RSA ZIM	DRC MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM			RSA	RSA	RSA ZIM	MZB RSA TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	CHI
Kouga Beach craft stall, Jeffrey's Bay (22)												RSA				
Knysna Arts and Crafts Market (23)	DRC GAB GUI MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM	ZIM	RSA ZIM	DRC MZB RSA SWZ TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM				RSA ZIM	RSA	KNY RSA TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Plettenberg Bay flea market (24)	DRC MZB RSA TAN ZAM ZIM		RSA ZIM	MZB RSA TAN ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM			RSA	RSAZ IM	RSA ZAM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM	CHI
Bobby Hutchinson Interiors, Plettenberg Bay (25)				RSA	RSA		RSA			RSA			RSA	RSA	RSA	
Porcupine, Eersterivier (26)							RSA									
The Mill and Zhandla-Zam, Eersterivier (27)			RSA	RSA SWZ	RSA	RSA			RSA				RSA SWZ	RSA	RSA	
The Potter, Eersterivier (28)							RSA									
African Gifts Gallery, Eersterivier (29)	ZAM ZIM	ZIM	ZIM	ZIM								ZIM	ZAM ZIM	ZIM		

Where and what in SOUTH AFRICA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass produced and imported objects
Scarab Village Market, Sedgefield (30)	DRC KNY RSA TAN ZAM ZIM			RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM		RSA ZIM			RSA		RSA ZAM	RSA ZIM	RSA	INA IDN
Karen Muir pottery studio, Wilderness (31)							RSA									

Table 4.2 Namibian Sites

Where and what in NAMIBIA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass-produced imported objects
Kaross craft selling site at Duineveld (32)											NAM					
Keetmanshoop craft selling site (33)	NAM ZAM													NAM		
Namibia Wildlife Resorts, Etosha souvenir shops (34)	MZB NAM ZAM ZIM	ZIM		RSA	RSA ZIM								NAM RSA	RSA ZIM	RSA	CHI
Tsumeb Craft Centre (35)	NAM ZAM		NAM	NAM								NAM	NAM	NAM		
Ncumcara Community Forest Craft Centre, Rundu (36)	NAM												NAM	NAM		

Where and what in NAMIBIA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass-produced imported objects
Kangola Craft Centre, Divundu (37)	NAM ZAM ZIM	NAM ZIM		NAM			NAM ZAM ZIM						NAM ZAM	NAM ZIM		
Mashi Crafts, Divundu (38)	NAM						NAM						NAM BOT ZAM	NAM		
Katima Craft Centre, Katima Mulilo (39)	NAM ZAM	NAM ZIM											NAM ZAM	NAM		
Ngoma Craft Centre, Katima Mulilo (40)	NAM ZAM						NAM ZAM						NAM ZAM	NAM		
G!hunku Crafts, Tsumkwe (41)	NAM										NAM	NAM		NAM		
Living Museum Ju/'hoansie crafts, Grashoek (42)	NAM											NAM		NAM		

Where and what in NAMIBIA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass-produced imported objects
Ohandje Craft Centre, Ondangwa Cultural Centre (43)	NAM		NAM	NAM			NAM			NAM			NAM	NAM	NAM	
Mbangura Wood-carvers Market, Okahandja (44)	DRC NAM TAN ZAM ZIM	NAM ZIM	NAM	ZIM	NAM ZIM		NAM ZAM ZIM	NAM ZIM			NAM	NAM	NAM ZAM	NAM ZIM		
Namibian Craft Centre, Windhoek (45)	NAM	NAM ZIM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	
Pambili Shop, Windhoek (46)											NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	NAM	
City of Windhoek open craft selling sites at Post Street Mall and corner of Independence Ave and Fidel Castro Street (47)	DRC NAM TAN ZAM ZIM	NAM ZIM			NAM ZIM	NAM ZIM	NAM ZIM	NAM ZIM				NAM	NAM ZAM	NAM ZIM		

Where and what in NAMIBIA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass-produced imported objects
Omba Art Gallery, Windhoek (48)	NAM		NAM	NAM		NAM										
Penduka Shop (49)				NAM						NAM			NAM			
Namcrafts, Windhoek (50)	ANG CAM DRC GBN GUI IVC KNY MZB NIR TAN ZIM	NAM ZIM	NAM TAN ZIM	NAM ZIM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM	NAM				NAM RSA	NAM RSA	NAM RSA SWZ ZAM ANG	KNY NAM NIG RSA TAN ZIM	RSA	CHI INA IDN
African Kirikara Art and Craft, Swakopmund and Hout Bay (51)			NAM ZIM	DRC MAL NAM	RSA ZIM	RSA ZIM	NAM				NAM RSA	NAM	BOT NAM RSA SWZ ZAM	NAM NIG		

Where and what in NAMIBIA	wood carving and wood artefacts	stone carving and stone artefacts	paintings and prints	textile artefacts	artefacts made from wire and beads	artefacts made from recycled materials	ceramics and clay artefacts	metal artefacts	paper and paper maché artefacts	glass artefacts	leather artefacts	artefacts made from organic materials	baskets	jewellery	fashion and clothing	mass-produced imported objects
Swakopmund Craft Market at Am Zoll street (52)	DRC NAM TAN ZAM ZIM	ZIM	NAM TAN ZIM	NAM ZIM	ZIM	ZIM	NAM ZIM	ZIM			NAM	NAM	NAM ZAM	NAM ZIM		

Movement of artefacts in southern Africa

Traditional African crafts have been 'wandering' through Africa as gifts for a long time. Traditional artefacts stemming from specific cultural groups were popular gifts amongst African groups and African crafts have been traded since the early 1920s.[412] Therefore, it is almost impossible to pinpoint the origins of all African artefacts. The artefacts categorised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 were recorded in my field diary and through photographs at the time I encountered them. Due to trading activities, the artefacts at the craft selling sites continually change. The 'origins' of artefacts recorded in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 are an attempt to show the routes artefacts followed in southern Africa at a specific time (November 2010 until March 2011).

These tables reveal a specific and limited point of view of how African artefacts meander through southern Africa and do not claim to provide a complete picture of their journey. The information recorded in the tables is actually an indication of how artefacts are distributed on this southern African route. The information may assist Namibian craft producing groups to gain insights into and understand the Namibian craft marketing and selling situation, compared to that of the wider southern African region. The information in figures 4.24 and 4.25 also indicates the marketing and product development opportunities that exist for Namibian-made artefacts within southern Africa.

The tables illustrate that African wooden artefacts are well represented in southern Africa. I found that traditional tourist artefacts, such as wooden masks, small carved sculptures, vessels and drums are especially popular artefacts at selling sites. African textiles, such as bakuba raffia, mud, Kente and kikoi cloth, and an assortment of African jewellery and personal adornments are also well distributed throughout South Africa. Zimbabwean artefacts are very well represented in both South Africa and Namibia.

Namibian artefacts are not well represented beyond Namibia's borders. Ironically, Namibian wooden artefacts were not spotted at any selling site in South Africa in spite of this country being an ardent producer of wooden artefacts and being a direct neighbour of South Africa. The only Namibian artefacts found in South Africa were Himba bracelets carved from plastic pipe and a small selection of Namibian artefacts sold by one craft selling site in Hout Bay, namely Kirikara. Red Rock Tribal in Scarborough sold a few wooden Himba head rests.

An opportunity exists for Namibian artefacts to be marketed and sold in other African markets. Nine out of twenty Namibian craft selling sites sell mostly Namibian artefacts (about 95 per cent of stock originates from Namibia), while only eight of thirty-one South African craft selling sites sell mostly South African artefacts (where stock is at least 95 per cent originating from South Africa). There is thus a much more nationalistic approach to craft selling in Namibia on the one hand, perhaps due to

[412] Daniel J. Crowley, "African Crafts as Communication," *African Arts*14, no. 2, (February 1981), 66-67.

the limited market that exists in Namibia, but on the other, I found that many 'popular' tourist shops, especially those in national parks and at exclusive lodges and other tourist destinations, sold mainly imported artefacts. These practices undermine the sustainability of the Namibian craft and design world, because due to the small Namibian market, the many suitable artefacts produced by very competent Namibian craftspeople, designers and their organisations should receive fair chances to seize these market opportunities within Namibia.

The Namibian and South African routes

Figures 4.24 and 4.25 indicate the presence of various artefact groups in the market on the routes of my field study. The data presented in these figures was sourced from my travel log, catalogued and presented in pie chart format using Microsoft Excel according to the artefact groups found at the 52 craft sites I visited. When considered together, the charts firstly indicate that all these artefact groups are more consistently represented and distributed in South Africa than in Namibia. Secondly, the groups that are best represented in South Africa are jewellery, textiles, wire and beads, baskets and wooden artefacts (see Figure 4.25). In Namibia wooden artefacts, jewellery and baskets are by far the best represented artefact groups, followed by textile artefacts, artefacts made from organic materials such as ostrich eggshell, and clay and ceramic artefacts (see Figure 4.24). Thirdly, the chart of the Namibian route clearly indicates that there are unexplored and underutilised niche markets in this country that might be pursued, such as artefacts made from recycled materials.[413] Fourthly, both charts indicate that the highest demand is for personal adornment items, such as jewellery, followed by various artefact groups that are used for home decoration.

Finally, the Namibian route chart indicates that artefacts made from natural resources are strongly represented and, therefore, Namibian artefact producers have a significant dependence on the natural environment for their raw materials. Natural resources such as wood, makalani palm fibre, trees that are used for colouring fibres and other organic materials (including pods and seeds, ostrich eggshell, game leather and wild silk cocoons) are in high demand for craft production in Namibia. This puts more than a third of Namibian craft producers in a vulnerable position because of their dependence on these natural resources. For example, baskets are predominantly made from natural resources, since Namibian communities do not usually weave wire baskets. Given this, Namibia's natural resource protection programme could not have been implemented at a more important time,[414] and the ongoing protection and management of natural resources is of the utmost importance for sustaining Namibian craft.

[413] The role of re-used and recycled materials and objects in the Namibian craft and design world is discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 and recycling as a practice is discussed in Tonata and Sonene's portraits in Chapter 8.
[414] Namibia's Community Based Natural Resources Management programme began in 1998 and was outlined in Chapter 1, see pp. 38-39.

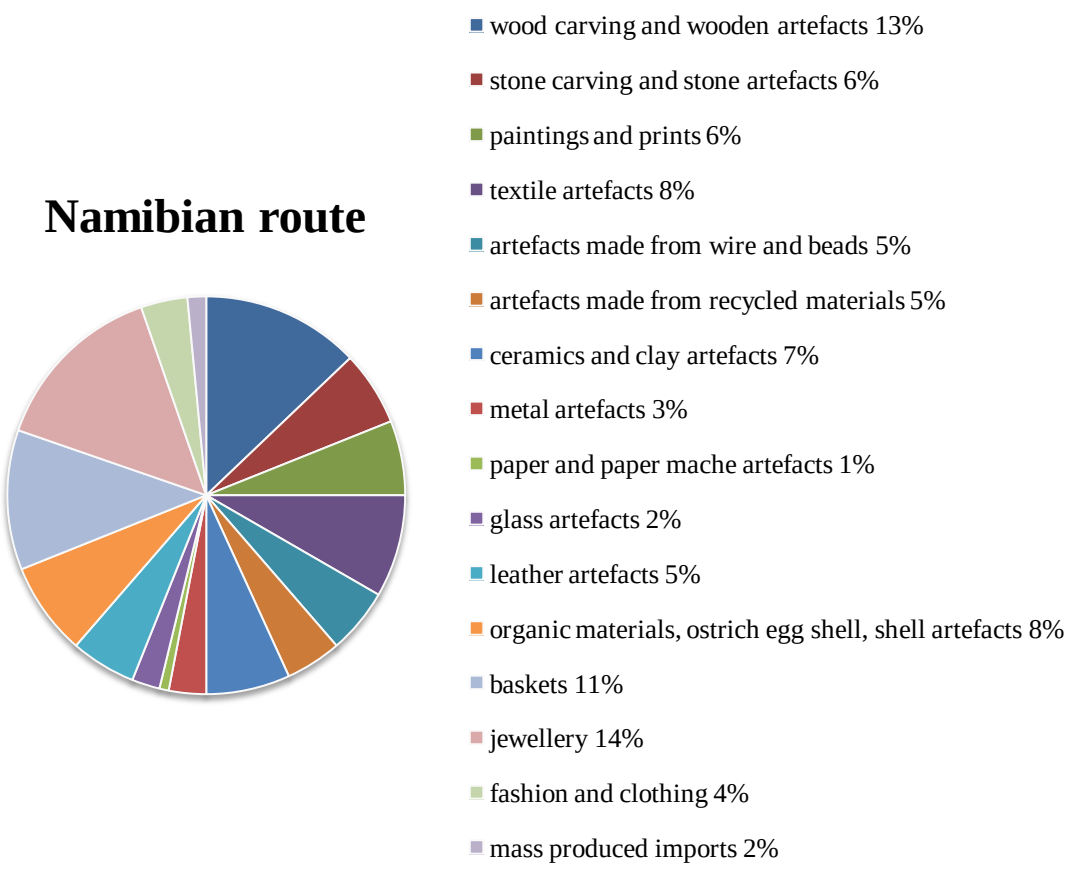

Figure 4.24 This diagram represents artefact groupings from the Namibian route.

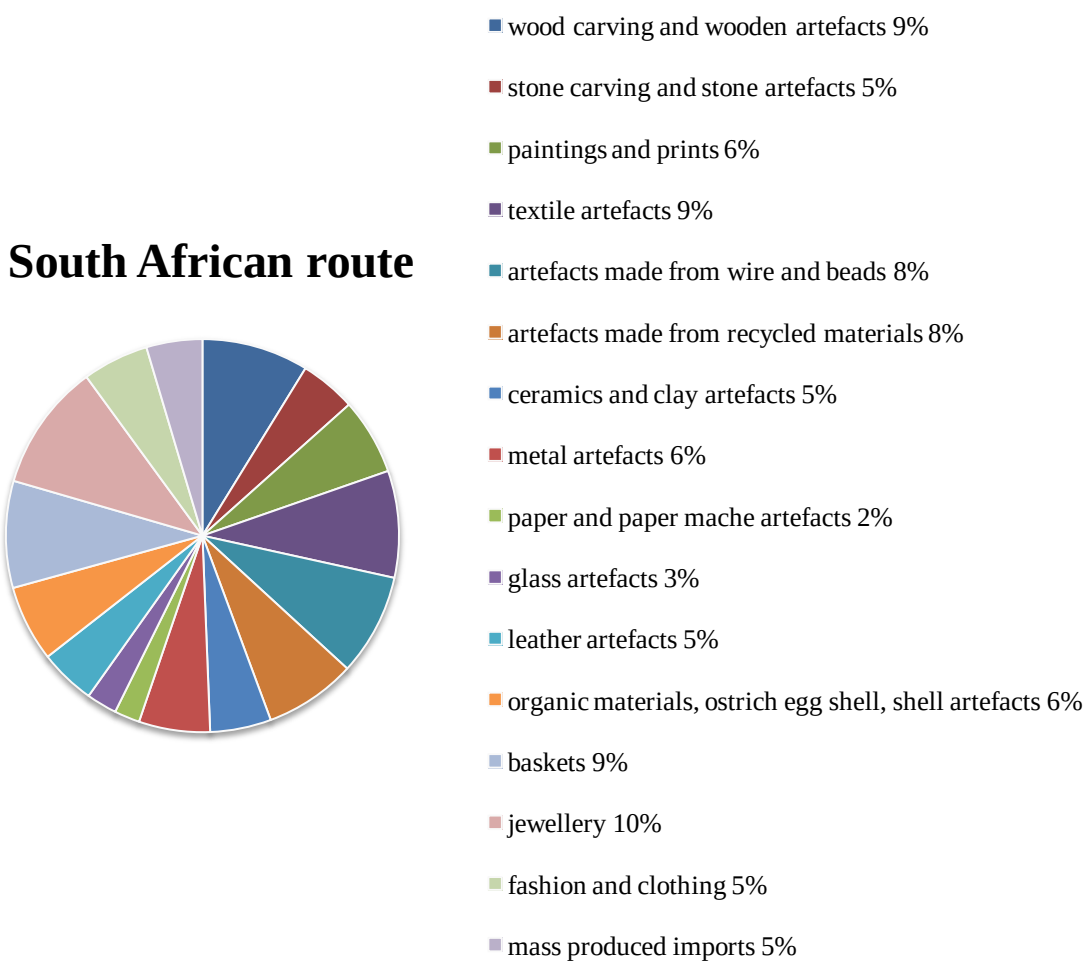

Figure 4.25 This diagram represents artefact groupings from the South African route.

Artefact marketing experiences

During my work in the Namibian craft and design world, especially between 2006 and 2009, I was involved in multiple marketing and sales activities for Namibian artefacts both locally and abroad. The Finnish Foreign Ministry's focus on 'Aid for Trade'[415] and the Namibian Ministry of Trade and Industry's support programmes for Namibian artefact makers, supported the marketing of Namibian artefacts internationally, thus widening and growing international audiences for Namibian artefacts. Unfortunately, initiatives like these are often sporadic and do not foster sustained and sustainable marketing networks. Instead, there needs to be focused, continuous participation in beneficial initiatives, targeted at the right audiences, to strengthen demand in the long-term.

[415] "Aid for Trade," Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, accessed November 1, 2013, http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=85476.

While I was working in the Namibian craft and design world I also learned and experienced that many local shops, catering for tourists at Namibian lodges, game parks and in urban areas, stock vast quantities, and often a majority, of South African and globally-sourced artefacts. Namibian artefacts are inadequately represented in these spaces, despite the many Namibian artefacts that are produced and that could be successfully marketed and sold to and by these retailers. Ironically, it seems that many tourist outlets prefer to import artefacts from South Africa and elsewhere, in spite of the high costs applicable for importing and shipping artefacts to Namibia.

From my experiences in the field as a worker I know that, on the one hand, Namibian artefact makers are not sufficiently active, due to the limited resources of time and human capacity, in driving their marketing strategies and sustaining relationships with the market outlets that are available. On the other, speciality shops and tourist facilities have specific (and often unrealistic) expectations that cannot be met by artefact makers, such as selling artefacts on consignment only, while they do not expect the same of manufacturers from other countries. Another problem is that these outlets often have few sales for designer-makers, and the sales they do achieve are a minor percentage of the overall sales in these outlets. The most challenging issue confronting the Namibian craft and design world is the need to develop and grow sustainable audiences and markets. To deal with this issue, new and sensitive approaches to audience development and artefact marketing – that are locally designed and implemented by communities through the gradual building of capacities and networks – are needed.

The marketing of Namibian artefacts locally and regionally is hindered, and unsustainable practices undermine the Namibian craft and design world. However, questions arise as to why these practices continue and what should be done to stimulate more sustainable marketing practices for Namibian artefacts. My past experiences as a design worker and what I observed during field studies in 2010/11, lead me to ask the following questions:

- Why are imported artefacts sourced and bought instead of local ones?
- What roles do consumer behaviours play in contributing to unsustainable Namibian artefact marketing practices?
- Are habitual buying and consuming behaviours (based on stereotypical notions that ‘what is imported from abroad/South Africa is better’) of the colonial and Apartheid eras involved?
- Is access to and communication with artefact producing communities situated in remote places within Namibia challenging?
- Are Namibian artefacts produced and delivered in a professional manner that stimulates ongoing relationships with buyers?
- Are Namibian artefacts correctly prepared for their markets in ways that stimulate a better understanding of the artefacts and their origins?
- Are Namibian artefacts well-presented within marketing spaces and are producers able to contribute to and guide the professional display of their artefacts?

- What are the narratives that stimulate unsustainable Namibian artefact marketing practices and what are the narratives that are needed to instigate change in the Namibian craft and design world?

This list of questions is definitely not exhaustive, but it opens up issues for the development of sustainable marketing, distribution and selling practices for Namibian artefacts, and suggests further areas of research.

Conclusion

In my mapping of Namibian craft and design, I grouped the various artefacts that I discovered on my route according to their purpose or the materials used for their making. My aim was to create an overview of the distribution patterns of artefacts in and beyond the Namibian region. This strategy allowed me to illustrate that Namibian artefacts are not well-represented in the southern African region and that opportunities exist for seeking out niche markets. I discovered that artefacts made from re-used materials are one example of such a niche market. I also discovered that personal adornment pieces, jewellery, artefacts for specific lifestyle needs and home decorations were popular. Although the artefacts I came across were 'divided' into sixteen groups, often no clear 'divisions' existed between actual artefacts. However, to be able to draw conclusions and discover relationships between artefacts and places, and about the representation and distribution of specific artefacts in southern Africa, this grouping process was necessary.

One important conclusion resulting from the abovementioned process was that artefacts made from materials sourced from the 'natural' Namibian environment constituted a very large proportion of all artefacts produced within Namibia. The vulnerability of Namibia's environment should therefore be considered in all craft activities within this country. The mapping of the distribution of Namibian artefacts in southern Africa also allowed me to pose several questions about craft marketing and selling activities. Two questions: 'what are the narratives that stimulate unsustainable Namibian artefact marketing practices?' and 'what are the narratives that are needed to instigate positive change in the Namibian craft and design world?' summarise the main thrust of this study towards a focus on suitable social, economic and environmental practices that will guide the growth of, and sustain, Namibian craft and design.

The sustainability of local communities is enhanced when design responds to local resources such as expertise, skill and locally available raw materials. This approach also requires 'design for distinctiveness', which means that, through clever design development processes, artefact groups

potentially become more varied and artefacts more creative and distinctive.[416] In addition, this also creates balanced systems where 'natural limits' for production and consumption are recognised.[417] Such 'localism' offers the best potential for limiting exploitation of human resources due to the connectedness that exist between designers, makers and consumers and thus improved opportunities are created for earning higher wages, an important consideration for the Namibian craft and design world.[418] This investigation of Namibian artefact distribution in southern Africa concluded that many improvements could be made to the Namibian craft and design world and that many questions arise about the initiation for sustainable marketing, distribution and selling practices for Namibian artefacts.

This chapter includes several readings of Namibian artefacts found on my route. These readings show my personal interpretations of these artefacts and therefore they include some guessing and validation based on 'subjective probability'.[419] Narrativity connected to artefacts is embedded in their cultural meanings. These meanings relate to artefact makers, histories, localities, processes and materials. The narrative potential of artefacts includes the journeys artefacts take from their making to their distribution in market places and consumers' lives. Meanings, and those multiple meanings that often overlap in artefacts, surpass intentions and have the ability to cut themselves loose from the intentions of their authors. In other words, artefacts are independent from their makers.[420] Therefore the narrative potential of artefacts, since they are also 'texts', is never 'fixed' or verifiable, but rather probable as subjective interpretations that take shape alongside artefact journeys. Thus it is that a basket is given its story by every hand that touches it.

[416] Fletcher, *Sustainable Fashion*, 141.
[417] Ibid.
[418] Ibid., 140.
[419] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 78-79.
[420] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 181.

Chapter 5

Namibian craft communities: Ju/'hoansi

> *this whole process was significant in itself, almost revolutionary ... it unified the maker with the environment ... the body of the maker was identified with the body of the work*[421]

This chapter explores the quality of life, craft practices and ways of work, use of raw materials and tools used by remote Ju/'hoan craftspeople from the craft communities located in the far north eastern parts of Namibia, on the outskirts of the Otjozondjupa region. This chapter aims to illustrate the specificities and issues that influence craft production and sustainability in different Ju/'hoan communities. During my fieldwork, I observed significant differences between the crafts produced by Ju/'hoansi living and working around Tsumkwe and those living at a tourist village around Grashoek. Tsumkwe, a far eastern town in the Kalahari desert, is much less accessible than the community living at Grashoek, situated about 150 kilometres west of Tsumkwe. The varieties in their work, techniques and use of materials will be considered, and I will also reflect on possible causes for the variations that exist.

The narratives relating to Namibian artefacts, the life stories of their producers who work and live in rural postcolonial Namibian settings and the activities related to their creating artefacts are considered in Chapter 5 and 6. Although I was accompanied by guides during all my visits to these communities, I didn't interview participants, but chose to conduct ethnographic observations. This decision was guided by practical reasons including the relatively short periods of time I spent with the participating communities. Although I would not consider myself as an 'insider' in any of these indigenous craft communities, in my previous career in the Namibian craft and design world I spent a considerable amount of time working amongst these groups. The members of these craft producing groups were mostly native born Namibians who had experienced the violence of colonialism. Three indigenous Namibian groups are the focus of the findings I report in Chapter 5 and 6:

- a Ju/'hoan woodcarving and jewellery making group in Grashoek and communities located around Tsumkwe;

[421] Diana Wood Conroy, *Alexander Ian Arcus: Walls and Pathways* (1997) accessed October 2, 2013, http://www.alexanderarcus.com.au/assets_d/45347/download_media/dwc_wallsandpathwaysessay_37kb_132.pdf.

- an ethnically diverse Namibian embroidery group in Orwetoveni on the outskirts of Otjiwarongo; and
- Ovambo basket weaving groups in communities located around Ondangwa.

This chapter reflects on narratives of Ju/'hoan individuals, groups and their artefacts and how their quality of life has an impact on their craft. It considers how they are practising their craft and the narratives[422] impacting on the value of Ju/'hoan crafts and raw materials. To this end, I sketch a portrait of a Ju/'hoan woodcarver, Tcise, describe how Ju/'hoan women craft ostrich eggshell beads and weave jewellery from these beads and discuss artefacts produced by Ju/'hoan craftspeople at Grashoek. The tools and raw materials they use for making their crafts will also be considered.

The Ju/'hoansi are San people. They are one of the !Kung groups living within the Namibian geographical area, in the north-western outskirts of the Kalahari desert.[423] This area is not part of popular Namibian tourist routes and access to this area is usually possible by four-wheel drive or utility vehicles after a substantial drive on a gravel road. The few people visiting these areas are usually professional hunters and eco-tourists. Ju/'hoan craftspeople work in isolated conditions. They are dependent on locally accessible raw materials and the tools they need for craft production usually have to be improvised.

From my own experiences of travelling to Tsumkwe, which included negotiating treacherous roads and access with the conservancy management, I conclude that these villages are seldom visited for viewing craft production and/or buying crafts. Due to the insignificant number of tourists travelling to these areas, suitable distribution channels for the artefacts produced in this area are essential for the Ju/'hoan craftpeople's sustainability. However, I did not come across significant numbers of Ju/'hoan-produced artefacts during my field studies or at the 52 craft sites I visited. These artefacts are underrepresented at tourist and curio shops in urban areas, at lodges and national parks in Namibia.

The conditions in which artefacts are produced in the three rural craft producing communities I visited form an important part of their context. At all these sites I encountered poverty and hardship. However, the communal way in which artefacts are being manufactured and the ways craft practices and work are woven into other everyday tasks contributes to their sustainability. Often children are

[422] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 1984), 3. My understanding of narratives is shaped by what Ricoeur refers to as 'the circle of narrativity'. Although they are told by people, it is the repetition of certain narratives that make them powerful. In this way narratives shape perceptions and they become established in specific areas or cultures as generalised perceptions, because they are often uncritically transferred and repeated. The power of poverty, lack of knowledge, materialism, consumerism and many other forces shape these 'popular' or dominant narratives and it takes equally powerful counter-narratives to undo the circularity and power of these dominant narratives.

[423] Johan S. Malan, *Die Voelker Namibias*, trans. Kuno F. R. Budack (Goettingen and Windhoek: Klaus Hess, 1998), 108.

looked after during craft making, and opportunities to socialise, share advice about all sorts of personal issues and give and receive emotional support were important components of craft practices.

Craft practices have been intertwined with storytelling for thousands of years, argues Walter Benjamin.[424] The intertwined relationship of craft practices with storytelling serves mostly emotional purposes, such as the strengthening of identities and feelings of belonging, and the giving and receiving of support. Benjamin argues that the main purpose of stories is that they contain explicit practical and valuable messages such as 'a moral ... some practical advice ... a proverb or maxim', but in every case a storyteller is someone who 'has counsel for his readers'.[425] Re-interpreted into acts of making, Benjamin's theories mean that a storyteller, or artefact maker, shares his or her story with an audience who will be in contact with that artefact, use it and attach their own meanings to it. In this way artefact makers share their 'practical advice' with their audiences.

Benjamin's theories therefore support my contention that deeper understandings should be sought, beyond artificial 'readings' of artefacts. In other words, an artefact produced by a Ju/'hoan craftsperson should be understood as a story from the maker's life in which they attempt to share significant realities of their lives. Personal stories are, of course, told by the actual person who has experienced the events. This may be part of the therapeutic power behind them. But the listener must remain alert to the fact that the story is 'personal'. The events have been internalised. Whether the teller is passing on family history, recounting an experience or attempting to influence and teach younger generations, they are recounting an experience as they saw it through their biases.

In writing this thesis I am creating a story of my encounters within the Namibian craft and design world's various fluid spaces. In some cases my guides shared stories with me and at other times narratives reached me in different ways – through signs in gestures, performances and individuals' enacted processes with materials, tools and the environments we shared at that time. In all discussions pseudonyms will be used to introduce the participants, the characters of my story.

Ju/'hoan craftspeople

The Ju/'hoansi belong to a collection of southern African hunter-gatherer peoples variously referred to as the San, Khwe and Bushmen (among other names). Individual groups refer to themselves as the Ju/'hoansi and !Kung. During my field research I visited three Ju/'hoan craft producing sites. Access to these communities is challenging. Tsumkwe is a remote town located about 725 kilometres from Namibia's capital, Windhoek, and accessible via the C44 secondary road. Due to high rainfall and the resulting deteriorated condition of the C44 during the summer of 2010/11, my trip to Tsumkwe was

[424] Walter Benjamin, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov," trans. Harry Zohn *Chicago Review* 16, no. 1 (1963): 87.
[425] Ibid., 83.

especially challenging, even by four-wheel drive vehicle. It was raining continuously and on several occasions my vehicle was uncontrollable on the muddy road. After four hours on the muddy C44 I finally reached Tsumkwe in late January 2011.

Before I visited any villages in the Nyae-Nyae conservancy where craftspeople worked, I met my guide, N!ani, who assisted me with translation and guided me to two villages around Tsumkwe. N!ani also introduced me to the Nyae-Nyae conservancy's chairperson and board of directors so that my study could be introduced to them, after which I was permitted to enter the conservancy for a NAD 30.00 entry fee. After two days in the Tsumkwe vicinity, I returned on the C44 to visit a Ju/'hoan community at Grashoek about 150 kilometres west of Tsumkwe and six kilometres north of the C44 where I stayed for two days. In Grashoek I was assisted by Gert, a very friendly, calm and quiet guide who mainly explained activities and processes to me.

Before narrating my own experiences and observations amongst Ju/'hoan craft communities, I will sketch a brief background of the Ju/'hoan communities that are the origin of my narrative.[426] I will look into narratives relating to the Ju/'hoan life styles and consider how these impact on their crafts, their craft practices and the values connected to the raw materials they use in their artefacts. Then I will narrate sketches, or line drawings, in which I will attempt to connect events I have experienced during craftspeople's activities.

Narratives of Ju/'hoansi life and its impact on their craft

The Ju/'hoansi re-settled in and around Tsumkwe, or Tjum!kui[427] in the vernacular, area in northern Namibia after the *Grensoorlog* (Border War, 1966-1989). By that time they had lived disrupted lives, mainly due to this war, and when resettlement occurred the Ju/'hoansi way of life was far removed from their 'mobile forager' lives of two decades earlier.[428] From the early 1970s, the Ju/'hoansi were predominantly farmers who kept small herds of goats, sheep and cattle while they planted some crops.[429] By the time Namibia became independent in 1990, much of their traditional and indigenous

[426] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 184; Paul Ricoeur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life Stories," *Philosophy Today* 47, no. 3 (2003): 24 and 322; Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 115. Arendt writes about the 'web of human relationships' in which human intent and will create both conflicts and harmony. Ricoeur uses the term 'connectedness of life' (after Dilthey), to illustrate how life histories are entangled in actions and the dialectics of memories and anticipation. Ricoeur states that humans are connected with one another in social webs that are knotted together by actions, will, intention, memories, anticipation and expectations. It is the function of narrative, according to Ricoeur, to offer solutions to human conflict and create harmony, because narrative is able to consolidate fragmented human experiences by offering ways to 'work through' life's sorrows and joys.
[427] Polly Wiessner, "Owners of the Future? Calories, Cash, Casualties and Self-Sufficiency in the Nyae-Nyae Area Between 1996 and 2003," *Journal of the Society of Visual Anthropology* 19, no. 1 & 2 (2003): 149.
[428]Ibid., 150; Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 312. Shostak argues that the lives of the !Kung in Namibia and Botswana was disrupted due to the use of !Kung trackers and scouts by the South African army, which fought a guerrilla war against black militants on Namibian territory. These relationships fostered antagonisms between !Kung and other indigenous peoples of southern Africa.
[429] Shostak, *Nisa*, 311.

knowledge had been lost and their hunter-gatherer life styles have slowly come to an end. For example most men under 35 no longer know how to hunt with traditional weapons, because they have not learned traditional hunting techniques from their elders.[430] However, a lifestyle offering access to modern health care, material goods and foods and the opportunity to meet and mingling with other southern African groups is welcomed by many !Kung.[431]

Tsumkwe is within the Nyae-Nyae conservancy, which means that the Ju/'hoansi have to share their natural habitat with various freely roaming animals such as elephants and other game species. Initially, notes Polly Wiessner, it 'was assumed that the Ju/'hoansi, as a people close to nature, could live in harmony with all wildlife', yet a life and resources shared with living beings such as elephants has not been easy. Crops and water sources are repeatedly damaged or destroyed, resulting in communities living in a state of constant stress.[432]

Although the Nyae-Nyae conservancy offers new opportunities in having access to land and its resources, for many Ju/'hoansi life in this conservancy often appears bleak, especially in periods of drought.[433] According to Wiessner's study, there has been an increase in the severity of seasonal hunger.[434] Communities have become dependent on government rations and meat handed out to them by professional hunters who conduct expeditions in the area. Furthermore, the Ju/'hoansi have been introduced to white sugar, tea and alcohol, and have developed a dependency on these non-essential foods and beverages. Many individuals now spend most of their already meagre incomes on these items.[435] Communities living within the borders of the conservancy have become more socially isolated[436] and have moved toward the periphery of Namibian society. They find it difficult to represent themselves on local government issues.

Ju/'hoansi practising their crafts

In the late 1960s, Richard Lee reported that the San Ju/'hoansi spent 12 to 19 hours a week gathering food, which left sufficient time for them to practise their crafts,[437] but research in the 1980s indicated that most hunter-gatherer groups spent seven to eight hours a day collecting food.[438] Wiessner shows

[430] Wiessner, "Owners of the Future," 152.
[431] Shostak, *Nisa*, 312.
[432] Wiessner, "Owners of the Future," 150.
[433] Ibid., 153. Wiessner claims that in 2002 the income of this conservancy was just less than one million Namibian dollars, leaving NAD620 (about 60 Euro) income for each member. Unfortunately these resources were mostly spent on debt repayment and the purchase of alcohol.
[434] Ibid., 151.
[435] Ibid., 154.
[436] Ibid., 155.
[437] Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology: an Applied Perspective* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), 159.
[438] Ferraro and Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology*, 159; Kim Hill, Hillard Kaplan, Kristen Hawkes and Magdalena Hurtado, "Men's Time Allocation to Subsistence Work Among the Ache of Eastern Paraguay," *Human Ecology* 13 (1985): 29-47; Kristen Hawkes and James F. O'Connell, "Affluent Hunters? Comments in Light of the Alyawara Case," *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981): 622-26.

that, in many areas, food gathering often results in only 200 to 500 calories collected per hour.[439] Since food gathering and crafts are both time consuming activities, the practice of either will impact significantly on the other unless their practising is seasonally determined. On the other hand, it may be assumed that in such communities individuals will practise those activities that offer them the highest potential for useful returns.

Crafts provided between 2 and5 per cent of Ju/'hoan income in the 1980s, a proportion that increased to 14 per cent in 2002.[440] Although this number is very low, the manufacture and selling of craft 'has been a reliable standby' for the past four decades.[441] According to Wiessner, the Ju/'hoansi produce 'as many crafts as materials, hours of the day, and markets allow', but it should be remembered that income generated from craft production remains sporadic.[442] She explains that craft production is a preferred option for generating income for both Ju/'hoan men and women of all ages because: (a) it allows flexible practice around other daily chores; (b) all may participate; and (c) jealousy is minimised since no ambiguity exists about the income generated from sales.[443]

Narratives impacting on the value of Ju/'hoan crafts and raw materials

Narratives of power and dominance – that influence perceptions of raw materials used by the Ju/'hoansi for their craft making – are embedded in tourist and foreign market systems. Unfortunately, due to its remote location, tourism to Tsumkwe is sporadic,[444] which has a negative impact on craft sales and stronger craft marketing networks are needed for the selling of Ju/'hoan artefacts.

Traditionally San culture is not based on hierarchical structures but on reciprocity, meaning that they tacitly understood that resources had to be shared.[445] One such tradition is *xaro*, or 'exchange partnerships' between families.[446] Wiessner explains that *xaro* is a survival mechanism involving the provision of assistance by means of living space and sharing of resources with other San families who travel from areas with poor conditions, such as drought.[447] Living areas may be up to 200 kilometres apart, but each San couple may have up to 15 *xaro*, which increases their chances of survival significantly.[448]

It is essential, however, to mention here that, over the course of my lifetime I have seen a decline amongst the Tsumkwe Ju/'hoan community as they have been overcome by poverty and substance

[439] Wiessner, "Owners of the Future," 152.
[440] Ibid., 150 and 154.
[441] Ibid., 153-54.
[442] Ibid., 153.
[443] Ibid.
[444] Ibid., 154.
[445] Ferraro and Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology*, 190.
[446] Wiessner, "Owners of the Future," 155.
[447] Ibid.
[448] Ibid.

abuse, specifically alcohol.[449] Some individuals are so desperate to obtain money for either food or alcohol that they sell off delicately produced high quality crafts to tourists for next to nothing. Apart from being skilfully and delicately handcrafted, the raw materials from which the artefacts are made are extremely scarce, thus adding to their intrinsic market value but this is undermined by occasional harassment and constant begging on the part of the sellers, which severely damages the reputation of these valuable artefacts.[450]

In 2009 a support organisation working with crafts producers in this region, the Hui-a khoe Foundation, had to import ostrich eggshell from an ostrich farm in South Africa in order to provide sufficient raw materials for craftspeople in Nyae-Nyae. The ostrich population has dwindled in this conservancy and therefore eggshell is an extremely scarce resource. In Tsumkwe vast quantities of artefacts are sold (far below their market value) on the main street, most of them made from 'imported' ostrich eggshell. It is an utterly unsustainable system.

On the other hand, the community at Grashoek has remained dependent on found resources for artefact making. Their use of ostrich eggshell is limited, and their artefacts consist of mainly seeds, pods and wood. While the ostrich eggshell artefacts have the potential to sell well in a wider local and international market, the practice of collecting fresh ostrich eggs impacts on the growth of future ostrich populations, which damages the reputation and value of these artefacts, along with the natural environment. These damaging practices must be curbed in both South Africa and Namibia and solutions have to be found for the social problems that drive these practices and behaviours.

During my previous work with various Namibian craft communities and their artefacts, I realised that the value of southern African indigenous materials and techniques was often underestimated. An exemplary case was when I met a buyer in a Scandinavian county in 2007 to follow up on Ju/'hoan artefact sales in a specific shop. The buyer attempted to demonstrate that a particular kind of artefact (similar to the artefact illustrated in Figure 5.13) was not suited for her customers by twisting it violently, arguing that the ostrich eggshell beads would leave 'dust' on a black garment. In her attempt to prove her point, she managed to create 'dust' that fell onto the glass counter between us. The 'dust' was a result of her breaking several delicate beads during her demonstration. I collected the broken artefact after I realised that she had snapped the relatively sturdy yarn it was woven with, gathered together the remaining eggshell beads and broken pieces and left.

A Scandinavian friend of mine, who witnessed this incident, commented dryly outside the meeting place: 'People do not understand that these artefacts are African crown jewels'. Due to her past experiences of working in partnership with Ju/'hoan craft communities, she understood the delicate and time-consuming processes that are involved in fabricating Ju/'hoan jewellery, an understanding

[449] Sebastian Dürrschmidt, "A Living Museum in South Africa?," *The Living Culture Foundation of Namibia News* 2010 June, accessed September 4, 2010, http://www.lcfn.info/en/news-archive/news-2010-june.
[450] Field notes, Tsumkwe, Namibia, 17 January 2011.

that the artefact buyer obviously lacked. I narrate this story to illustrate the misunderstanding that is created in 'webs of lives',[451] which include artefacts, when the violence of dominant stories is not curbed and corrected by narratives of knowledge about these artefacts.

Portraits of Ju/'hoan craftspeople living and working near Tsumkwe

A Ju/'hoan woodcarver

During my stay in Tsumkwe I was escorted to two nearby villages by N!ani. The first village we visited was about 17 kilometres east of Tsumkwe. There were four houses built from a mixture of locally sourced materials, such as logs, sticks and clay, and industrial building materials, such as corrugated iron. No traditional San housing structures made from wood and silky bushman grass (*Stipagrostis uniplumis*[452]) were observed. Four women and 12 children lived in the four houses in this village. These houses were not arranged in the traditional circular format in which doors faced each other, but in a line.[453] These changes in the layout of the living spaces appeared to confirm that these San were 'retreating from traditional behaviour of sharing and interdependence'.[454] The lay-out of the houses indicated that this family's living web was somewhat differently woven and connected than that of their ancestors.

According to Shostak, Ju/'hoansi have experienced lifestyle changes since the 1970s when Herero and Tswana herders entered the traditional hunting-gathering living spaces of various San communities on the lookout for pastures for their goats and cattle.[455] These farmers offered the San opportunities to gain access to food sources such as meat, milk and maize.[456] Herero and Tswana influences also resulted in the building of more permanent housing structures that took a week to build instead of the traditional San housing structures that need a few hours to set up.[457] These more permanent houses were made of clay and corrugated iron, and instead of following the traditional San circular layout patterns for houses, San people adopted the more rectangular housing layouts of their new neighbours.

Tcise was present when we arrived. He carved tortoises from the soft light coloured wood of the tall common commiphora (*Commiphora glandulosa*).[458] Tcise produced five tortoises that day. N!ani explained to me that Tcise had gone out to collect food for his family early that morning, and had

[451] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 144.
[452] Ben-Erik van Wyk and Nigel Gericke, *People's Plants – a Guide to Useful Plants of Southern Africa*, (Pretoria: Briza Publications, 2007), 325.
[453] Field notes, Tsumkwe, Namibia, 17 January 2011.
[454] Ferraro and Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology*, 157.
[455] Shostak, *Nisa*, 193.
[456] Ibid.
[457] Ibid., 195.
[458] Arno Leffers, *Gemsbok Bean and Kalahari Truffle – Traditional Plant Use by the Ju/'hoansi in North-Eastern Namibia* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2003), 73.

caught some frogs that were boiling in two pots on a fire that women were attending to while preparing lunch for these families (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). N!ani, Tcise and the women in this village were wearing Western clothing and self-crafted personal adornment, mostly necklaces, bracelets and rings. These were hand crafted from imported glass and plastic beads, locally sourced pods and seeds, ostrich eggshell beads, wood and some copper and metal. Tcise's *veldskoene* were also handcrafted. Upon reflection I realised that all of these artefacts I observed in this village are expressions of individual and social identities and through such expressions, which are narrative strands, communities are woven together in shared webs of meaning.

After gathering food for his family, Tcise was ready to start his day's craft activities. N!ani told me that Tcise planned to carve some tortoises from wood which he wanted to sell the next day in Tsumkwe to interested buyers, most probably tourists. It was raining heavily in most parts of Namibia during the rainy season of 2010/11. This site was no exception and therefore, the wood this craftsman used was wet. After Tcise had chiselled away at a smallish log with a hand axe, a small wooden tortoise emerged from the wood. Tcise then used his pocket knife to carve the finer details of the tortoise. This roughly chiselled and carved artefact was then smoothed with a small piece of sanding paper and placed next to a fire where it was left to dry. N!ani explained that Tcise would continue to work on this artefact at a later stage, once it had dried out.

During the day N!ani and I visited another village. When we returned, Tcise completed carving the five tortoises and he was sitting at a different fire. He had been joined by four visiting Ju/'hoan men, two of whom were working with him to accomplish the daily task, illustrating how the San habitually assist each other.[459]

In the fire were ten metal rods with lengths varying between 30 and 45 centimetres. These rods were hammered flat at the end and the men used the warm rods to burn patterns onto the carved tortoises. The rods were replaced regularly and returned to the fire to reheat. About three to five marks were burned on the wood with a hot rod before it was returned to the glowing coals of the fire. The marks on the wood were attractive and contrasting, coloured smoky dark brown or black. Tcise was willing to sell me one for whatever I was willing to pay for it.

N!ani told me that Tcise hoped to sell these artefacts for NAD10.00, or less than one Euro each, to tourists the next day. In order to sell his artefacts he had to travel at least 17 kilometres by foot to Tsumkwe (and back) in the hope of meeting some tourists to whom he could sell his artefacts. Alternatively, he could visit the G!hunku craft shop that sells artefacts on a consignment basis. Larger craft marketing and development organisations such as the Omba Arts Trust in Windhoek also sell some Ju/'hoan artefacts. But the odds are that Tcise will find it difficult to sell his tortoises.

[459] Ferraro and Andreatta, *Cultural Anthropology*, 190.

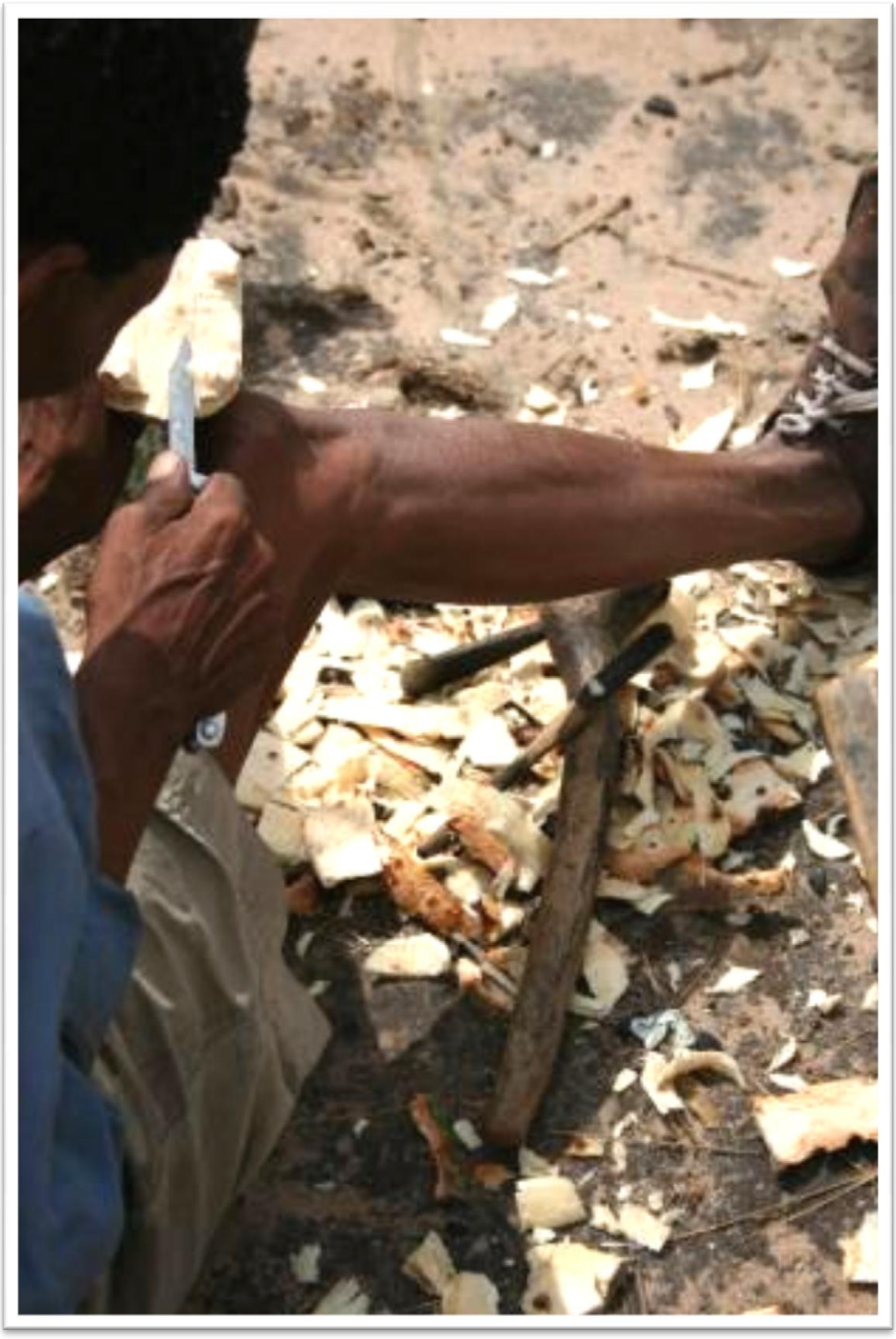

Figure 5.1 Tcise carving a wooden tortoise from the tall common commiphora with a simple pocket knife. Photograph by the author.



Figure 5.2 Tcise dries the wooden tortoise shape next to a fire where women cook lunch. Photograph by the author.

Tcise was carving from memory (since there was no tortoise present on which he could base the sculpture). He worked fast and skilfully with basic tools he had created himself. Every movement of his body aided his work, like the way he squatted in front of the fire with his tools, as if they were an extension of his body. He knew exactly when to return the rods to the fire and when to take them out, using the warm iron rods as 'sensors' to measure and guide his next movements and thereby control his fabrication processes. He continued to work skilfully as he proceeded and shaped the artefact in his hands. I suspected that he had made many of these artefacts in the past as his performances were clearly moulded by repetition, knowledge and ample experience of carving the shape from memory (see Figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5).

Due to the transformative power of stories and the cultural meanings that are connected to artefacts, they gain narrative ability. The meanings that are invested in artefacts by their makers, consciously and unconsciously, contribute to their narrativity. Tcise's improvisatory practices, during which his 'soul, eyes and hand are brought into connection with each other',[460] illustrate why the narrative potential of artefacts is embedded in their cultural meanings. The soul, eyes and hands of the maker interact and bring forth the stories that are carried by artefacts, which are their 'internal narratives'.[461]

[460] Benjamin, "The Story-Teller," 101.
[461] Marcus Banks, *Using Visual Data in Qualitative Research,* (London: SAGE, 2007), 52, doi: 10.4135/9780857020260.

Tcise's tortoise making practices, which included all kinds of stories, were shared with visitors around the fire where he worked. Simultaneously, Tcise's soul, hands and eyes also brought forth the story of making and painting a tortoise.

The tortoise he made appeared to be 'real'; the person who made it was in close contact with the natural world and knew what the tortoises that live in this region of Namibia look like. The patterns painted on its 'shell' looked very much like a shell. The shape was very much that of a small tortoise. These are some of the cultural meanings that Tcise invested in this artefact.[462] These meanings derive from his social background, from when the Ju/'hoansi were hunter-gatherers who conducted various activities around a central fireplace, and Tcise and his family followed suit, making craft, for example, around the fireplace, while also cooking frogs for lunch.



Figure 5.3 Metal rods are heated in a fire and used to burn black-brown 'smoky' marks on the wooden tortoise as seen in Figures 5.4 and 5.5. Photograph by the author.

[462] Amit Zoran, *The Ostrich Egg-shell Beads Craft of the Kalahari People*, accessed on March 21, 2014, http://vimeo.com/59843170.



Figure 5.4 Tcise 'paints' the tortoise shape by burning marks in the wood with hot metal rods. Photograph by the author.



Figure 5.5 Every detail is carefully marked on the wooden tortoise. While Tcise 'paints' the bottom of the tortoise 'shell' he relies on his memories, knowledge of the visual markings on tortoise shells and his previous craft experiences. Photograph by the author.

Additional cultural meanings and personal stories had been invested in the tortoises from the processes and materials Tcise was shaping while he was making them. He shaped local wood from indigenous tall common commiphora trees and so he invested narratives about textility and places of making in his tortoise. He carved his tortoise with a valuable tool, his worn yet functional pocket knife, and so personal markings, handmade inscriptions, or narratives, are invested in the artefact. His tortoise smelled like a mixture of fresh wood, burned wood and smoke and so narratives of the spaces where the artefact was made and other sensual triggers were also invested in the tortoise. The tortoise carried both Tcise's embedded stories and his identities.

Ju/'hoan women crafting ostrich eggshell beads

There are four houses built of wooden poles, white stones and tin ceilings. The houses are neither big nor tall since the Ju/'hoansi are small in stature and slight of build. Pieces of cloth, metal, sheets of corrugated iron and plastic are used to cover the roofs and sides of the houses. It is raining a lot this season and these materials probably prevent rainwater leaking into the houses. Paper and plastic litters the area around the houses and a hungry dog scratches old bones from the area around the fire where the women are cooking lunch in an attempt to feed itself. The animal is in bad physical condition. It is deadly skinny. A woman pokes it in the ribs and shoos it away from the fire.[463]

At the village where Tcise lived and worked an old Ju/'hoan woman, N/'hu, created ostrich eggshell beads. While she was working to fashion her beads, she squatted next to the fire and stirred a pot in which she was cooking a meal (Figure 5.6). Women and children were sitting around the fire and another deadly skinny dog was lurking in the background. N/'hu shaped broken pieces of shell into rough rounds of more or less the same size and strung them on a string. She then rubbed the tightly packed shell pieces on various stones to shape them all into the same size and to give them a smooth, rounded edge. The breaking and the shaping are laborious and time consuming, and a hole must be drilled in the centre of each piece to allow for stringing. Sometimes the resulting beads are fried in sunflower oil to colour them into soft tones of brown. Sunflower oil is valued for cooking by the Ju/'hoansi and therefore using oil is a valuable resource they invest to colour beads in this way. The individually hand-crafted beads are precious artefacts that are then put to use in various stringing and weaving techniques to create jewellery.[464]

[463] Field notes, Tsumkwe, Namibia, 17 January 2011.
[464] Susan Sellschop, Wendy Goldblatt and Doreen Hemp, *Craft South Africa* (Hyde Park: Pan Macmillan SA, 2002), 109. These authors refer to 'bead weaving' that is similar to the techniques used by the San.



Figure 5.6 N/'hu squats on the right side of the fire where a meal is cooked by younger women. She grinds ostrich eggshell beads on a piece of canvas using various stones to smooth their edges into neat round discs. She uses her foot to hold the string of beads in place. Photograph by the author.

In another village of the Ju/'hoansi, about 35 kilometres to the east of Tsumkwe, I saw women using somewhat different techniques to create ostrich eggshell beads. A young woman, Madalena, used a long stick to which a sharp metal point was attached. This tool was handmade and invented by these craftspeople from found objects in their environment. By rubbing this stick between her hands and positioning the sharp point on a piece of ostrich eggshell piece, Madalena drilled a hole through the centre so that the shell bead could be strung or woven (see Figures 5.7 and 5.8).

The drilling technique resembled the activities of the Ju/'hoan men making fire by rubbing a wooden stick on another piece of wood. Both these techniques – drilling a hole in an ostrich bead and making fire – are based on the Ju/'hoansi's indigenous knowledge. These are techniques that require skill, knowledge and patience.

Madalena created little round beads from ostrich eggshell using a small set of pliers and nail clippers. Instead of using stones she had a round grinding disc on which she shaped the beads. Interestingly, Madalena used modern devices such as nail clippers, a commercial grinding disc and pliers (Figure 5.9) to create her beads while N/'hu, the older Ju/'hoan woman, relied on more traditional techniques.

The different techniques and technologies used to create ostrich eggshell beads did not significantly affect the time required to make them. The process remained laborious and time consuming and skills

and training are required to produce good quality beads in required sizes. Tamar Mason commented in an interview in 2002 that southern African crafts people are ‘masters of innovation’ with regards to product development.[465] It is clear that this innovative spirit includes the making of tools, processes and material use.



Figure 5.7 A Ju/’hoan woman rubs a self-made ostrich eggshell ‘drill’ between her hands to create a small hole in the centre of the bead. She handles the ‘drill’ in a similar way to how San men use a stick on soft wood to make fire. Photograph by the author.

[465] Sellschop, Goldblatt and Hemp, *Craft South Africa*, 120.



Figure 5.8 A metal tip is attached to a wooden stick with twine and animal sinew to create a 'drill' for the ostrich eggshell beads. The metal tip is secured in similar fashion to how Ju/'hoan men fabricate their hunting tools. Photograph by the author.



Figure 5.9 Madalena is shaping ostrich eggshell into small beads by using contemporary pliers. Beads are strung together as a means of storing them safely. Photograph by the author.

Ju/'hoan women crafting ostrich eggshell jewellery

A woman wearing a dark blue woollen beanie rolls her sleeping baby gently from her knee and leaves the corrugated shed to have a smoke. I hear her coughing outside. Shortly thereafter she returns, takes a twig of wood and blows on it to light it up. When it starts to smoke she uses it to heat a metal wire which she uses to melt the yarn ends in the knots in her weaving to finish them off neatly. The women start to tease N!ani, my guide, who is sitting on a chair in the corner of the corrugated iron shed. Another man lies on his back in the sand and he joins in the conversation, adding comments, giggling. I hear the corrugated sheets rattling in the wind. It is hot and the shed is filled with smells of smoke and dust. Throughout all these activities the women continue their work.[466]

In the village located 35 kilometres east of Tsumkwe, resources from donors had been used to erect three round structures in a 'bungalow' style. They were constructed from wood, cement and corrugated iron. Some of these bungalows served as classrooms for a small community school where children were taught English words and numbers by singing songs and counting using little pebbles. Other houses were made from locally sourced wood and clay and industrial corrugated iron. There were also two traditional San houses that appeared to be in use. These had been built with soft Bushman grass laid over a few wooden poles planted in the ground in a semi-circular shape to form shelters against natural semi-desert elements such as cold and sun.

A children's playground was next to the school. According to a plaque on one of the bungalows, it had been opened in September 2007 and was funded by Aviva PLC, an international insurance company. It wasn't used by any children, although it was in good working condition. Next to that was a vegetable patch one man was attempting to till. As in the previous village, food growing activities were minimal, if they existed at all, due to the living conditions in this conservancy where animals and humans shared resources, with the result that crops were regularly destroyed by wild animals.

In this village I met four Ju/'hoan women, all dressed in Western clothing. They were crafting ostrich eggshell jewellery in a tin shed where a fire was smouldering. They were sitting on cloth throws on the ground in a circle in various positions with legs crossed or folded beneath them or with one leg folded and one leg stretched in front of them. Before them on the ground were pieces of cloth on which were scattered handmade and other tools, raw materials and various pieces of work in progress. Later I realised these cloth pieces were used to wrap up, store and carry their work and tools.

The women used several recycled plastic containers to store beads and unfinished work to protect them from dust or getting lost. Sewing needles and sturdy nylon yarn were used for weaving. I observed that the women used smouldering twigs from the fire to melt the ends of the yarn to secure

[466] Field notes, Tsumkwe, Namibia, 18 January 2011.

the knots. San ostrich eggshell crafts often have a peculiar yet pleasant smoke smell resulting from the fact that women usually work on them next to these little smouldering fires.



Figure 5.10 A child peacefully at sleep in an *abba karos* on her mother's back. These baby carriers are usually hand crafted from recycled materials. Patchwork *abba karoses* are also common, hence their colourful appearance. The pouch in which the baby rests is often padded with recycled materials such as blankets or towels. This *abba karos* is decorated with rows of flat knife-pleated trim in blue and edged with green, all in cotton textile. This mother has used durable plaited cotton shoulder straps to support the weight of the baby. The top straps are carried on the shoulders and are often criss-crossed on the chest and tied with the bottom straps that fit around the waist. The bottom straps are looped with the top straps pulled through these loops, tying around and under the mother's bust line or waist, depending on her preferred methods of tying the straps. Photograph by the author.

In this village the craft making process was a social event that reinforced their social identities. Children, men and other women frequently dropped in to have a talk, a joke, a play and a giggle. Some of these visitors offered support (where necessary) with either the care of children or the making processes. One lady, for example, dropped in briefly to have a chat and assist with drilling holes in

beads, while a man tended the fire so that the thread ends of knots could be melted and finished off. Children slept close to their mothers or in carry slings (*abba karoses*) on their mother's backs (see Figure 5.10), while others played or were breast fed. The women managed all these activities effortlessly and in harmony with their craft practices. Making processes were seldom interrupted and some older children assisted with bothersome younger siblings.

Three women were weaving bracelets in a herringbone pattern (Figures 5.11 and 5.12). Most of them were weaving four beads per layer or row. They exhibited substantial skill and were working fast considering they wove the beads one by one. One woman completed nine centimetres of her bracelet within 30 minutes, suggesting that these women could weave more than two bracelets per day.



Figure 5.11 A Ju/'hoan woman weaving an ostrich eggshell bracelet in herringbone style. Photograph by the author.

The crafting process continued, consciously and unconsciously, in this dynamic environment. Signals and activities were temporally and spatially interweaving. Bodies extended into the tips of needles, and perceptions, such as touch and vision, extended into the tips of needles. Movements were light and fleeting. Experience guided the touch of the needles threading through the ostrich eggshell beads in a fraction of a moment. Motions were repetitive yet not identical as the designer-makers instinctively

knew what to do at every moment (Figure 5.12). It was apparent that they, to use Ingold's expression, 'know as they go'.[467]

The jewellery makers all demonstrated bead-making skills and I concluded that Ju/'hoan jewellery makers work holistically, they do everything from preparing raw materials to the making and finishing of an artefact. It was clear to me that bead making was used to initiate young women into craft making. Once this skill has been mastered the bead makers are taught more advanced skills, such as stringing, weaving and making fastening devices for jewellery. In this way younger craftspeople were gradually guided by more experienced individuals into this living web through craft making activities, shared knowledge and identities.



Figure 5.12 Hands and touch extend into tools, 'feeling' their way through beads, stitch by stitch, 'knowing as they go' to use Tim Ingold's expression. Photograph by the author.

Some of the crafts communities located around Tsumkwe market their artefacts through Hui-a khoe Foundation. This organisation was founded to support the supply of daily staples, including medicine, clothing and blankets, to San craft communities by exchanging them for their crafts. Although the artefacts aren't exchanged for money, this organisation's bartering system allows craftspeople to attain higher 'prices' for their artefacts than they would get from other craft marketing organisations or the

[467] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 228.

local open or tourist markets. However, due to Tsumkwe's remoteness and the Hui-a khoe Foundation's dependence on artefact sales in local and European markets, the organisation has to overcome considerable difficulties to meet the Ju/'hoan craft communities' dependence on it to sell their finished artefacts. Therefore, the craftswomen I observed often have to travel about 35 kilometres to Tsumkwe (and back) to sell their artefacts to tourists or the local craft shop, G!hunku.

The craft community at Grashoek

Grashoek is a positive, pleasant and open community of Ju/'hoansi. Visiting with the participants was a relief after meeting other Ju/'hoansi in Tsumkwe, where disadvantaged women begged me to purchase high quality artefacts from them for distressingly small amounts of money. At the Living Museum at Grashoek I was welcomed by San men dressed in Western clothing. One of them, Gert, introduced himself to me. He was my guide and he told me, in fairly well-spoken English, that he studies at a university in Windhoek. Gert also told me that while he visits his family, the community is eager to have him around to assist with translation and guide services for the many visiting tourists. Later in the evening, after setting up camp I was aware of two Ju/'hoan men in traditional attire (loin skins), carrying bows and arrows, who quietly and as if they appeared from nowhere, greeted me and showed me the way to where I was able to view the craft work the community produced. This was characteristic of the Ju/'hoansi people who move quietly and unobtrusively, blending into their environment.[468]

The fact that the men had changed their costumes from Western clothing to traditional attire indicates the performative aspect of the Ju/'hoan Living Museum. Members of the Grashoek community normally wear Western clothing. Homes, schools and commercial premises are mostly built using Western materials and methods, although you could find some constructed from local wood and clay. Specific cultural products are created and then sold for profit, after which community performers don their cultural costumes with handcrafted personal adornments to perform traditional rituals. Roles for community members include those of hunters, dancers, craft sellers, story tellers, craftspeople, translators, guides and many more.

At the craft selling site, which I discussed in detail in Chapter 3, I observed that no imported resources had been used in any of the artefacts made. Even the twine used for stringing necklaces and making arrows and bows was made by hand using animal tendons or plant fibres. Women used a wide variety of natural seeds, pods, ostrich eggshell, wood and leather to make the personal adornments they sold to tourists. Various brown and black seeds from the Kalahari podberry tree (*Dialium engleranum*), Zambezi teak tree (*Baikiaea plurijuga*) and camelthorn tree (*Acacia erioloba*) are most popular for

[468] Field notes, Grashoek, Namibia, 19 January 2011.

stringing jewellery as they make striking contrasts with the very scarce white ostrich eggshell beads that are hand ground and drilled.[469]



Figure 5.13
This artefact was fabricated by Musamane Khuruz. Grashoek artefacts are made from organic, locally sourced materials. This artefact is made from makalani nut, ostrich eggshell, Kalahari podberry seeds, camelthorn seeds and handmade wooden beads from the light-coloured wood of the tall common commiphora tree. Craftspeople use recycled paper to indicate the price of the artefact and sometimes they write their names on these recycled 'tags'. This bright pink 'tag' 'appropriately' states: 100% cotton. Photograph by the author.

Copper coloured and reddish pods from the combretum tree family or the Kudu bush (*Combretum apiculatum*), especially the common (*Combretum collinum*), silver (*Combretum psidioides*) and russet (*Combretum hereroense*) combretum varieties are popular for stringing into jewellery, while the wood of the tamboti tree (*Spirostachys africana*) is popular for making wooden carved bracelets.[470] The men use leather, wood, metal and handmade twine to make the weapons they sell to tourists. The light coloured soft wood of the tall common commiphora tree is popular for woodwork amongst San men.[471]

In Grashoek I didn't observe craft production activities because of the many hours I had to travel on severely muddy and dangerous roads to reach my destination. When I arrived at Grashoek, it was late and daily activities had ceased. Unfortunately the hired vehicle I used had to be returned the next day,

[469] Leffers, *Gemsbok Bean and Kalahari Truffle*, 18, 39, 87.
[470] Ibid., 66-69, 178-79.
[471] Ibid., 73.

which meant I only had time to visit the Grashoek craft selling site and attend some cultural performances and dances. However, at the craft selling site I noticed that a large number of men were craft producers of both traditional hunting tools and jewellery.

In Chapter 4 I evaluated various marketing approaches for Namibian artefacts, but noted that mass marketing may not be a suitable approach for all of them. The artefacts fabricated at Grashoek are in this category because these artefacts have meanings that are not suitable for mass marketing channels, which have rigorous production specifics related to production volumes, quality, price and the use of raw materials. These delicately fabricated artefacts sustain the Grashoek community in a particular way, because they are unique memorabilia that are purchased by visitors for the sake of the meanings that are already invested in them at the site where they are purchased. Memories of visitors' experiences at Grashoek – of either Ju/'hoan cultural performances, the cultural activities offered to tourists, craft making 'workshops', or the environment and setting within a significant habitat – are invested in these artefacts.

At the same time, their interaction with Ju/'hoan individuals and the broader community allows tourists to experience a different culture as part of modern life and modern times. Hence exotic notions of the Ju/'hoan are minimised (at least for some visitors and tourists) while cultural awareness about the Ju/'hoan culture and way of life is raised. These are all reasons why the holistic artefact fabrication practices of this community are socially, economically and, most importantly, environmentally sustainable and contribute to the pleasant atmosphere I encountered at Grashoek. This does not mean that this community should be excluded from mass market and production activities, but their approaches to artefact making would need to be strategically redesigned, although such an approach will not necessarily guarantee a sustainable outcome.

Variety among Ju/'hoan craftspeople

In Grashoek, a Ju/'hoan village located next to the C44 secondary road I used to travel to Tsumkwe, the craftspeople made jewellery, leather artefacts and hunting tools. Women produced jewellery and leather clothing and accessories, but not hunting tools (such as arrows, bows or knives), while men produced all of these artefacts. In the villages I visited close to Tsumkwe, only women produced jewellery while men made wooden artefacts. Although Shostak argues that craft production, like most other aspects of Ju/'hoan life, is not based on gender or hierarchical structures, this aspect of Ju/'hoan life is changing due to cultural influences and changes to their life styles, and I observed gendered dimensions to Ju/'hoan craft production.[472]

[472] Shostak, *Nisa*, 218; Field notes, Grashoek, Namibia, 19 January 2011.

Artefacts made by the groups of Ju/'hoansi observed elsewhere (Figure 5.15), and especially east of Tsumkwe, had a different appearance from the artefacts produced at Grashoek. Producers around Grashoek were dependent on materials found within their immediate environment, such as pods, seeds, wood, animal tendons and recycled cotton, yarn and paper; whereas communities east of Tsumkwe had access to 'imported' ostrich eggshell and mainly used this as raw material for their artefacts. In addition, many of the communities near Tsumkwe had received product development training from the Rössing Foundation and the Hui-a khoe Foundation, and produced artefacts to supply the demand created by these organisations. The ostrich eggshell artefact designs therefore appeared to be market orientated, judging by their high quality, valuable materials and clean and simple appearance.



Figure 5.14

An artefact produced by Kxore Nune from Grashoek created from the Kudu bush, Kalahari podberry tree and the camelthorn tree combined with white ostrich eggshell beads, displayed at Grashoek, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 42 cm necklace; 6.5 cm diameter pendant). Photograph by the author.

In comparison the Ju/'hoansi of Grashoek's artefacts (Figure 5.14) were much more individual artistic creations, and it was clear that Western marketing guidelines and minimum quality standards had not influenced the Grashoek craftspeople's working processes and designs. The Grashoek craftspeople produce artefacts only for the selling site at Grashoek, thus they do not have to adhere to any Western ideas of minimum standards. As a result, I observed artefacts made from extremely delicate materials and each artefact appeared to be an expression of its maker. These artefacts probably do not meet the

high quality standards required by marketing support organisations due to the delicate materials and making techniques the artisans have chosen to use. Although these craftspeople are able to sustain their practices because of their sales at the Grashoek craft shop, if the need arose to expand the craft activities at Grashoek strictly market-driven production of these artefacts might be difficult.



Figure 5.15 This is an example of the artefacts made by the Ju/'hoan communities around Tsumkwe. Ostrich egg shell beads, delicate artefacts themselves, are produced and woven into a short snake-like necklace, displayed at Pambili Shop, Windhoek, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 40 x 3.2 cm). Photograph by Attila Giersch.

In Grashoek, the natural environment was woven into individuals' lives and group identities in unique ways. Some communities around Tsumkwe were dependent on imported ostrich eggshell to build their group identities and, sadly, should this raw material become unavailable in the future, its

disappearance will have a direct impact on their individual and group identities. Ju/'hoansi from Grashoek had different threads of life and ways of making crafts from the communities around Tsumkwe, nevertheless their webs of life knotted together because of the many cultural similarities that existed between the groups. Examples of these similarities are the sense of repetition and harmony in the way they worked, their strong sense of the repeated use of particular design elements while fabricating artefacts and the way they improvised tool making.

Conclusion

Craft practices play important roles in craftspeople's existence as meaning-making processes during which they make sense of their lives and circumstances. Some narratives, whether they were acted or spoken, illustrated the ways craftspeople in Ju/'hoan communities produce their tools and delicate artefacts. Stories are crafted and interwoven with their artefacts, the raw materials they work with and the environment in which all these activities unfold.

This chapter also discussed the negative and often dominant narrative representations that are associated with Ju/'hoan artefacts and the delicate raw materials they are made of. Damaging practices (related to the devaluation of labour and materials invested in artefacts) in some areas of this region, discussed earlier in this thesis,[473] and social problems in Ju/'hoan craft communities undermine the value of Ju/'hoan artefacts. The narrative potential of Namibian cultural artefacts and their fabrication should be used to address a wider lack of knowledge related to them.

The quality of life in rural Namibia impacts on craft production. Although Namibians in rural areas often have more ecologically sustainable life styles, poverty and social exclusion is also a sad reality in these areas. In Tsumkwe, the poverty and hardship was unspoken but apparent. It was visible and acted out in the ways that individual adults and children went about their everyday activities, approached me and begged from me. Opportunities for craftspeople in Tsumkwe to generate an income were limited, with a little local craft shop, G!hunku Crafts, attempting to sell artefacts to the few visiting tourists who were overwhelmed by people trying to sell them artefacts and beg from them. An overwrought social situation, lack of opportunity, poverty-stricken people and hungry children further strain the atmosphere of public spaces in Tsumkwe. The very few cultural tourists who visit Tsumkwe would be directly intruding into Ju/'hoan life in these communities. When I visited two craft producing communities around Tsumkwe I noticed that my presence was stressful for the participants; they ignored me, acted as if I was not there, and no eye contact was made with me at any stage by any participant. I concluded from this that their actions were an attempt to cope with the

[473] See Introduction, p. 5 and this chapter, pp. 149-151.

situation. The only way that they could come to terms with my intrusive presence was not to allow me into their field of vision, thus limiting my impact on their space.

In Grashoek, the Ju/'hoan Living Museum discussed in Chapter 3, most community members were involved in an activity that sustains one or more of the 'products' offered to tourists. These include traditional hunting, dancing and game playing, storytelling, tool making, craft workshops, gathering of bush foods and accommodation. A wide variety of artefacts produced by craftspeople are also sold to visiting tourists. As discussed earlier, there is a significant flow of cash to the Grashoek community due to the income they generate from artefacts and services sold to tourists at the Living Museum. They independently produce all 'products' sold to tourists, while their private lives are lived at Grashoek and their income generating activities conducted somewhat separately from Grashoek, in the nearby 'Living Village'. Tourists' intrusion in their private lives may, therefore, be less of a challenge for them. Unlike Tsumkwe, the atmosphere in Grashoek's public spaces was relaxed due to specific 'boundaries', such as a designated area, organised activities, programmes and preset costs, having been put in place for tourists according to terms agreed upon by the community.

The next chapter will continue the themes taken up in this chapter. Craft practices in two different Namibian craft producing communities situated in the vicinity of Ondangwa and Otjiwarongo, will be discussed. As in this chapter, the ways individuals work, live their lives, tell their stories and make their crafts while caring for themselves and their communities will be discussed.

Chapter 6

Namibian craft communities: embroidery and basket weaving

The sound of human voice telling stories or singing, a pervasive oral environment, accompanies the reiterated movements of splicing, plaiting, twining, threading and carving.[474]

This chapter describes craft practices in a Namibian embroidery group from Orwetoveni (a neighbourhood on the periphery of the communal farm area in Otjiwarongo) and three Ovambo basket weaving groups from the Ondangwa area in mid-northern Namibia. It reviews the social, financial and environmental sustainability of these groups' practices. Craft activities are significant in craftspeople's existence as they offer means of sustaining their social webs. In the Otjiwarongo craft group narratives are improvised in iconic and expressive embroidery style. Their embroidery directly transfers narratives related to their lifestyles, community activities and environment into their artefacts.

Craft practices within these communities, such as their use of raw materials and tools, are discussed. First, I reflect on the craft practices of the Namibian embroiderers. The narratives emerging from life in Orwetoveni, the 'narratives of care'[475] emerging from their lives about women's health, the way the group work together and the role of narratives in their embroidery is considered. Then I reflect on the Ovambo basket weavers and the role of their craft organisation, their relationships to their natural environment, weaving and the way they work. The role of their social webs and stories emerging from rural Ondangwa will be considered.

A diverse Namibian craft group from Orwetoveni

At a craft producing site in the Otjiwarongo communal farm area in the Otjozondjupa region of Namibia I observed an embroidery group during February 2011.[476] The members of this group were women from various Namibian and indigenous cultural groups, including the Damara, Ovambo, San,

[474] Diana Wood Conroy, "Touching the Past: Hunting the Future," in *Floating Life: Contemporary Aboriginal Fibre Art*, ed. Diane Moon (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2009), 29.
[475] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 163.
[476] Namibian Planning Commission, *Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census: Preliminary Results*, http://www.gov.na/documents/10180/34849/2011_Preliminary_Result.pdf/0ea026d4-9687-4851-a693-1b97a1317c60, accessed on 30 January 2014. Otjiwarongo is a large Namibian town with a population of 30,400.

Tswana and Herero. The languages spoken by these women were mainly Damara/Nama (Khoekhoegowab) and Afrikaans.

The craft producing group I observed create embroidered textiles. They are part of a craft organisation, Penduka in Windhoek,[477] which offers them support. Members of the group are piece workers who embroider pieces of cloth that are then sewn and finished into artefacts such as household linens and small accessories. The craft organisation, situated in the capital of Namibia, manages remuneration for piece work through the group leaders' bank accounts, while they use courier services to transport embroidered piece work and raw materials between Windhoek and Otjiwarongo. The artefacts are all sewn up and finished in this organisation's factory in Windhoek where between seven and 12 skilled women use industrial sewing machines to fill orders and manufacture artefacts for their outlets.

My guide, whom I've called Johanna to protect her privacy, escorted me to this group and then guided their activities during my observations. Although I did not interview this group or Johanna, I had had a long association with them during my previous career in Namibia, and Johanna casually shared valuable information with me during my observations.

Johanna, an Ovambo-speaking woman, was able to converse fluently in both English and Afrikaans. When she worked with this group, she conversed with them in Afrikaans. She has been part of Penduka for many years, and informed me that there were between 600 and 800 women in the Otjozondjupa region who worked as members of this embroidery group from time to time. Some of the women in the group embroidered regularly, while others managed to fit in craft production when they could, depending on the demands of their domestic responsibilities. Johanna explained to me that many of the group's members had to travel a lot (so that they, their partners or other family members had access to work) and therefore lived somewhat unstable lives depending on work opportunities for them and their partners or other family members.

The group gathered at a group leader's house in Orwetoveni. This location provided a safe environment so that the craftswomen were able to bring their young children with them. At times there were 14 children playing in the yard of Sophia's (the pseudonym I have given the group leader) house, while about 20 women were embroidering. Some children were playing and running around. They were busy and vocal, often demanding attention. Other children were relaxed and quiet, playing close to their mothers with tape measures, mimicking sewing motions and playing with cut-off yarns (Figure 6.1). Two mothers were carrying their children in *abba karoses* where they slept peacefully. Most children were preschool age, although one teenage girl was present, playing on her mobile phone while assisting with the care of her siblings and other children. This craft production site exemplified

[477] Penduka was established in 1992 by Christien Roos and recently celebrated its 20th birthday. Information about this project can be found on their website http://www.penduka.com/en/for-you/webshop/.

the mingling of craft and domestic activities in a manner similar to the sites of the Ju/'hoansi, described in Chapter 5.

Three young women who were embroidering were described as early school leavers by my guide. They were being taught crafting because they had few other work opportunities. The activities in Sophia's front yard were lively due to the children and the women, who talked, laughed, sang and told stories as they worked. The crafting that day opened with hymns and prayers in Khoekhoegowab and English. Eighty to ninety percent of Namibians are Christians, and my guide explained that they were giving thanks for the blessing of the rain and that a new year had started.[478]

Johanna shared a story with me about Sophia who was able to sustain herself and her family financially from the little shop she had set up in front of her house. She sold basic necessities such as sugar, tea, flour, rice and, of course, sweets for children. Sophia's house in Orwetoveni had been constructed as part of a self-help project in which she had participated. According to Johanna, Sophia was happy that she was able to feed and care for her five children. As a group leader, when women from the craft group have been short of cash Sophia has used her personal resources to buy embroidered pieces from the embroiderers since she knows that she will be refunded by Penduka. In this way she assists with the group's cash flow.

Some women in the group were ill, and had to attend hospital to receive medicine for HIV on a regular basis. As they were paid per piece, which was quality graded, their health directly affected their ability to produce work and earn an income. I was struck by the compassion shown by an older woman when one of these outpatients returned from treatment. Her comments revealed the caring relationships that exist between the younger mothers, children and their grandmothers. It was clear that the grandmothers were heavily involved in caring for grandchildren, especially those whose mothers were unwell. Many Namibian grandparents, particularly those living in the rural areas, are left with child rearing responsibilities due to the deaths of the children's parents from HIV. Patterns of migrant work also mean that grandparents often end up caring for their grandchildren.[479]

Interestingly, although many HIV awareness talks had been conducted amongst the embroiderers, the women still avoided HIV testing. They just 'did not want to know'. This is quite a common attitude. In addition, they feared that a positive test would result in their being stigmatised by their communities. Johanna explained that although this craft group had knowledge about the illness, the embroiderers still believed that anyone who contracted it was 'bewitched' and passed away for that reason. It is clear from this that, although women were very compassionate and caring towards one another, some social tensions prevail that are perhaps caused by stigmatisation related to certain health conditions.

[478] Basilius M Kasera, "Christians Without a Backbone," *The Namibian*, March 16, 2012, accessed October 3, 2012, http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=94846&no_cache=1.
[479] Clemens Greiner, "Migration, Translocal Networks and Socio-economic Stratification in Namibia," *Africa* 81, no. 4 (2010): 610.

Many women no longer wanted to embroider narratives about HIV, although they were encouraged to do so by Penduka. There might be many reasons for this reluctance. Taboo. An unwillingness to identify any more with such a devastating illness. Or an unwillingness to include in their embroidered stories the physical and social hardships that are caused by this disease.



Figure 6.1 A craftswoman's lap. Women care for their children during craft activities. Women's laps are spaces for attending to, comforting, feeding and caring for their children. Women's laps are also spaces where crafts are produced. Photograph by the author.

Women in this craft group use mobile phones to communicate with one another about work and related opportunities. There are three group leaders in the Odjozondjupa region who assist the craftswomen in three different locations. The leaders ensure that the craftswomen receive their remuneration for work completed; they hand out raw materials for new assignments; and collect finished pieces from the embroiderers.

One of Johanna's many functions was to ensure that the women made the artefacts required by the market. She also ensured their quality. Tourists, for example, seem to like embroidery styles depicting animals. Upon joining the craft group for the day, she would prepare textiles and yarns for the embroiderers. She gave them measurements and advised them about seam allowances, colour choices

for yarns and stitch quality. Thereafter she allowed them to make their own choices, and was always very respectful towards the other women. Her empathetic way of going about guiding the embroiderers illustrated how well she managed and understood craft production, in spite of not being a full time embroiderer herself.

The women helped one another to complete the tasks assigned them (Figure 6.2). Some women were able to produce between six and 12 pieces of embroidery a day, while the majority produced between seven and ten pieces. Johanna pointed out some women who had placed themselves on the periphery of the group, explaining that they found all the talking and giggling distracting. Although they were sitting apart from the larger group, they worked harmoniously with the other women, occasionally joining in the conversation, but preferring to focus mostly on their work, away from the happy chaos of the children and chattering, singing adults. This was the only group in which I observed craftspeople demonstrate a desire to be at a distance from the group.



Figure 6.2 Women assist each other to determine how the embroidered narrative would be placed on the cloth. Photograph by the author.

Five to six women in this group used pencils to draw pictures on cloth which is then embroidered (Figure 6.3). The women who were better illustrators generously assisted less talented or confident group members by drawing designs for them. The illustrators were also excellent embroiderers. Johanna explained that the women who lacked the confidence to draw could manage the task if pressed, although some of the women said they found it difficult to draw. When they showed their drawings to the group, giggles confirmed that they weren't good at drawing. Nevertheless, when the animals were embroidered in bright primary colours, they turned into uniquely identifiable animations.



Figure 6.3 Not all women are experienced illustrators. Women who are more experienced often assist their group members with this task. Photograph by the author.

The women sat on chairs, boxes and empty plastic crates (in which Sophia usually stores soft drinks that she sells in her shop), as well as all sorts of make-shift seats. They worked in their laps, where they kept threads and tape measures, while some had bags in which they carried the necessities for their embroidery (Figure 6.4). They worked long hours, and when clouds were not hiding the sun, the women quickly moved to shadier spots in the yard to find shelter from the fierce African heat to continue their work. Every lost minute was regarded as lost income.



Figure 6.4 Raw materials: needles, thread and cotton twill textile. Photograph by the author.

Movements, sounds, smells, strokes and images all contributed to the sometimes implicit and sometimes physical contact between these embroiderers and their surrounding material realities. That they took this mélange of activities and actions in their stride was demonstrated by the relaxed atmosphere that prevailed throughout my observations. Moment by moment, the embroiderers were guided by their knowledge of what to do, even as they were entangled in actions, emotions and previous experiences during the process of making and expressing new stories on cloth (Figure 6.5).[480]

The embroidery was done on cotton twill woven textile imported from China via South Africa. The cotton was torn into small squares of about 20 by 20 centimetres. Once embroidered, these pieces were generally sewn into money pouches and small bags. Women embroidered with various colours of 'filosheen' colourfast gold medal rayon yarn on primary red and blue, navy blue, black and dark green cotton. Blanket stitches were favoured by this group, but in the past chain stitch, back stitches, knotted stitches and satin stitches were used, but are now less common. Johanna explained that the women had learnt blanket stitch about four years ago and since then preferred to use it because it is less time consuming. Sophia sells needles in her shop, but the women complained that they were only able to

[480] Tim Ingold, *Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 229.

use one needle from a packet containing five different types, and thus they found the needles expensive.

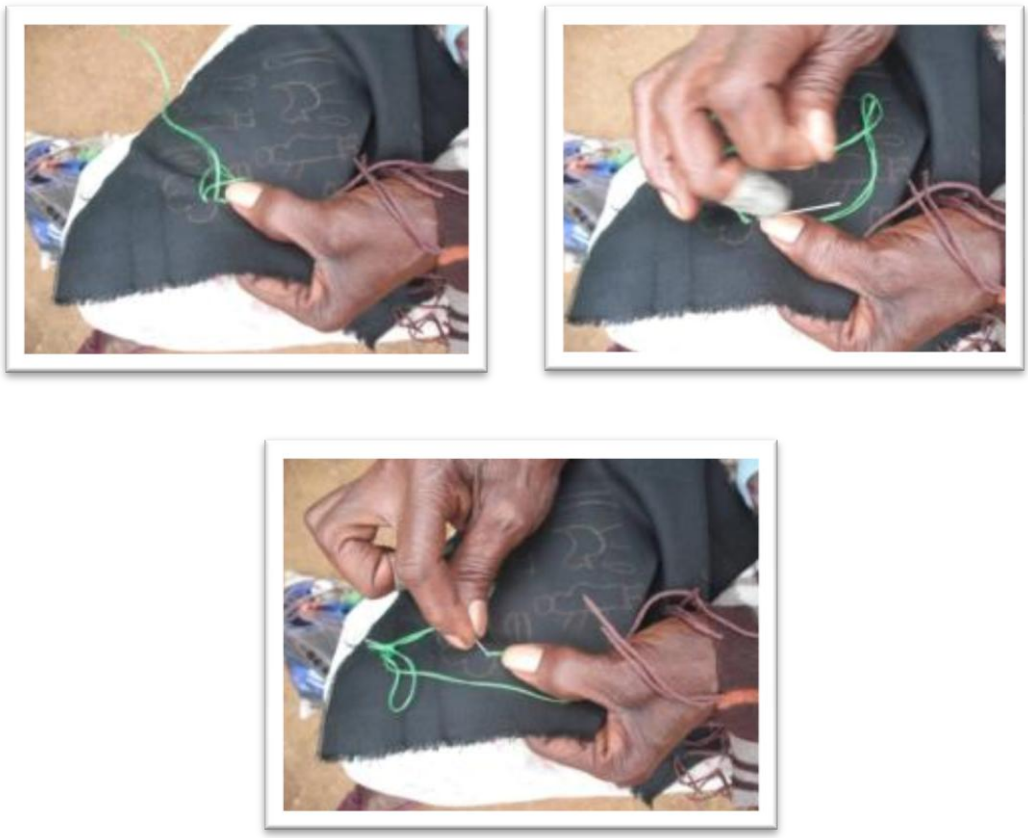

Figure 6.5 Similar to Ju/'hoan women, the Orwetoveni embroiderers' hands and touch extend into tools, 'feeling' their way through the cotton textile, stitch by stitch, 'knowing as they go', in Tim Ingold's phrase. Often women are unconsciously creating their crafts while paying attention to children, conversations or changes in their environment. Photographs by the author.

Narratives play a central role in these embroidered artefacts. Johanna told me the story about how the whole project came into existence. During the 1980s there was a German-speaking Namibian woman who owned a commercial farm with her husband near Otjiwarongo and she encouraged a group of indigenous Namibian women who lived on her farm to use their embroidery skills and hands to occupy themselves. The wives of farm workers who lived with their husbands on white-owned commercial farms were often bored due to their remote location on a farm where their husbands and partners were working long hours as farm labourers. The German-speaking woman encouraged the wives and partners to express the stories of their lives in their embroidery, which gave rise to this distinctive embroidery style in Namibia's Apartheid period.

The Penduka embroidery group had had an interesting experience in 2010 when they cooperated with Belgian artist Eames Demetrios who visited Namibia and gave them new ideas for their designs. He

had been inspired by their work and told the embroiderers 'new' stories to turn into embroidered narratives. Afterwards, a substantial order for 1300 embroidered mats was produced over a three month period. Eames told the women three stories: one about a woman with an angelic voice who sang the most beautiful songs; another about a king who lived on an isolated island; and a third about a woman who carried a big lizard on her shoulder. The women in the group fondly recalled working with Eames, an international artist, and felt that they and Penduka had benefitted from his visit and the income it had generated.

One very interesting narrative appeared in the embroidery. It was about a rabbit (or more correctly a wild hare, referred to as a *springhaas* in Afrikaans, given how the story unfolded). Many women embroidered this rabbit, a distinctive iconic shape, into their animated life and animal stories (Figure 6.6). I found this puzzling because rabbits are rarely kept as pets in Namibia, and Johanna had never seen a 'bunny' in the work before. Eventually, the women explained that the rabbit had crept into the embroidered animations as a reflection of a story told by one of the women about a personal experience. It seems that a wild hare, a common wild animal in Namibia, had come into her yard and attacked a chicken in a pen. The hare (which should not have been able to reach the chicken) had ripped off one of its wings through the pen's wire and, a moment later, decapitated the chicken. What gives this story a somewhat shocking ring to it is that wild hares are not considered to be carnivorous. Almost immediately, the rabbit/hare became part of the embroiderers' collection of animals for inclusion on their cloths.

Whether the chicken-mutilating hare was real or not, this somewhat bizarre story illustrates the importance of narratives to this group. It shows how stories shared among the women contribute to the development of new iconic pictures and motifs, whether the story originates with an international artist or one of the local ladies. The women were very familiar with the process of illustrating stories in their work.

The Penduka craft group is widely acknowledged for their embroidered textiles that narrate stories about life and activities on Namibian commercial farms where these women had lived at some stage of their lives, usually in their youth. Although many of these women now lived in a township in Otjiwarongo, others who embroider for this group live on commercial farms in the surrounding region, Otjozondjupa. Embroidery themes vary, but the most common narratives are about farm life. These narratives are mostly expressions of individual experiences and reference themes such as partnerships between people, love, work, domestic activities, living and coping with HIV, domestic violence and other social issues, such as the dangers of unprotected sex. Illness and poverty are also expressed. The following table highlights some themes that occur in their narrative embroidery.



Figure 6.6 A new narrative emerged during my observations. Johanna commented that she had rarely seen a rabbit in the embroidered narratives produced by this group. The story of a wild hare that mutilated a chicken was told to the group by one of the members. Soon thereafter the icon of a 'rabbit' or 'wild hare' (centre symbol embroidered in green thread) was included in these embroidered narratives. Photograph by the author.

Table 6.1 Embroidered animations of the Orwetoveni group

THEME	EMBROIDERED ANIMATIONS	
People	Women and men	fighting cleaning a yard with a rake collecting and carrying water herding goats chasing dogs away gardening and planting crops harvesting vegetable gardens intercourse using a condom love hearts between couples

	Children	playing with balls or jumping ropes playing netball or soccer herding goats collecting and carrying water going to school
	Men	fighting with their fists killing a snake with a stick beating and kicking each other chopping wood driving cars hunting with *asegaai* (spear) pushing a wheelbarrow
	Women	washing laundry hanging laundry feeding chickens and other animals washing windows of a house collecting wood carrying baskets or buckets on their heads milking cows bathing children carrying food
Animals	Wild animals	birds, lions, antelope, giraffe, elephant, snakes, zebra, ostrich, gemsbok, warthog, kudu, tortoise, fish, hare and even reindeer
	Domestic animals	chickens, cats, dogs, goats and cattle
	Baby animals	domestic animals are often embroidered with their youngsters such as chicks, kittens and calves.
Water	Drinking water Fetching water with canisters Fetching water from a well with a pale Collecting water from a tap Washing laundry and cleaning with water Windmills and dams where domestic animals drink Watering crops in vegetable gardens	
Wood and fire	Collecting, carrying and chopping wood Cooking on open fires Trees, logs and axes Glowing fire Burning logs	
Food	Cooking	

	Pots on open fires Stirring food in a pot with a spoon Churning butter in a calabash Eating food Hanging calabashes in trees to make butter or sour milk Collecting eggs in a basket Chickens laying eggs Cows being milked Fishing from water puddles Women carrying maize meal in sacks
Plants	Trees Wood Cacti in a pot Gardening Vegetable gardens Carrots Greens Fields where young plants grow Omajovas (Namibian wild mushrooms) Maize fields
Weather and seasons	Shining sun Clouds Rainbows Rain and abundance after the rain (green grass and vegetation, fish in ponds)
Health issues	'HIV' 'AIDS' Hospital Beds with people lying on them Stretchers on which sick people are carried Ambulance Nurse Doctor Pills Syringes Sick people being fed while they are in bed Condoms
Traditional clothing	Nama dress Herero dress

I developed this table during my time in the field, because of the variety and recurring themes I encountered.[481] Johanna explained many of the embroidered pieces to me which I noted in my field diary. This table shows that there are many gendered activities in the themes, illustrating a traditional life style and stereotypical roles for men and women. Activities such as fighting, gardening, harvesting, collecting and carrying water and looking after domestic animals are portrayed, while men are depicted as stereotypically masculine. Narratives about men picture violence, hunting, driving cars and chopping wood. Children are depicted at play or going to school and looking after domestic animals. Illustrations of the women depict them busy with domestic activities (Figures 6.7, 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10).



Figure 6.7

Children are playing and skipping rope in the background of this narrative while a woman is working in the field and another woman and man attack each other – kicking and hitting with a stick. Photograph by the author.

According to Johanna, the current (February 2011) dominant themes were about people and their lives. These expressions narrate both reality and fiction. As Paul Ricoeur argues, fiction tells the stories of previous experiences that are developed into 'complex ideas' and thus fictions derive from histories.[482] Experience, Ricoeur explains, is 'in a sense based on the selection and a combination of elements', because thought evades 'what is new and does its best to reduce the new to the old'.[483] These animated narratives are for the narrator experienced realities that are selected in complex identity processes and expressed in identity statements. After all, the 'power of fiction is to transform', states Ricoeur and

[481] Field notes, Otjiwarongo, Namibia, 8 February 2011.
[482] Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World – An International Philosophical Review* 12, no. 2 (1979): 125.
[483] Ibid.

these animated narratives are narrative transformations and a means of making sense of life for these craftspeople.[484] That means the transformative power of fiction assists these women to express their realities in their embroidered narratives.



Figure 6.8 Domestic activities: women are doing washing, cooking and feeding chickens. Photograph by the author.

[484] Ibid., 135.



Figure 6.9 Women doing washing in the background while children play on a slippery-slide in the foreground. Photograph by the author.



Figure 6.10 Narratives of water and rain: the importance of rain and water for working the fields, cleaning and cooking. Photograph by the author.

Ovambo basket weavers

'I'm in a large traditional Ovambo homestead with eight basket weavers. A large peppertree grows in the centre of the homestead. Some of the homestead's outer "walls" are built with wooden poles while some are made of corrugated iron sheets that are propped between wooden poles. Bundled mahangu (pearl millet) stalks are used to cover some walls. The homestead has eight or more traditional rooms, and includes various other buildings, such as a large Western style four bedroom brick house with a corrugated iron roof. We sit under the peppertree and a pleasant breeze cools us. Women are sitting on rags and towels and their work is placed on the rags to keep it clean.'[485]



Figure 6.11 Wooden poles sourced from local forests are used to craft the perimeters of Ovambo homesteads. During colonial times and Apartheid these perimeters were referred to as *kraal*, which means 'animal pen' in Afrikaans. Translated to English it would mean 'fence'. I avoid using the term 'fence' for these perimeters of traditional homesteads, because of the pejorative connotations to *kraal*. They are familiar sights in Namibia's north-central regional landscape. Interior perimeters of traditional homesteads are built in similar fashion, dividing living areas for children, women, men and guests, as well as cooking and food storage areas. In this image a creeper plant with purple flowers is growing over the perimeter. Photograph by the author.

[485] Field notes, Ondangwa, Namibia, 17 February 2011.

In Ondangwa I observed three Ovambo communities, all of them members of an artist-run cooperative.[486] This organisation, Ohandje Artist Cooperative, was established in 2004 and is managed by an elected board of directors that meets on a regular basis to guide the activities of the group. Activities are supervised from a central point in Ondangwa, the Ohandje Arts and Cultural Centre. The Ohandje Artist Cooperative provides services to members who work and live in the four mid-north regions of Namibia: Omusati, Oshikoto, Ohangwena and Oshana.

Artefacts made by the members of this organisation are mainly woven makalani baskets and clay pots, jewellery, wood carvings, prints and recycled glass artefacts. I met my guide for the first time when I went to observe the communities; Patricia was a young Ovambo lady dressed in Western clothing. She shared information with me as unreservedly and graciously as Johanna had. Whilst Johanna had shared many of the processes and ways of work with me, Patricia translated many of the stories the women told each other and me, and so I learnt what role narration played amongst the basket weavers.

From Patricia, who translated the women's stories for me, I learned that narratives play slightly different roles in the lives of these weavers than they did for the embroiderers. Although some basket weavers wove life narratives and scenes of domestic activities into their baskets, their narratives primarily had a more social function, as they shared life stories, advice and sympathy as a form of social support. One woman told us that she received more social support from her basket weaving group than from her own family and thus she was very grateful for the opportunity to be part of the group.

Although crafting was a job, the women's basket weaving activities offered them time away from their domestic responsibilities and provided opportunities to socialise with other women. They also used the gatherings to give and receive advice on craft production, farming, the church and spiritual matters, households and families, to tell life and other kinds of stories and catch up on gossip.

According to Patricia, 53 villages and over 2000 individual members were supported by this organisation. Assistance is provided in the form of sales and marketing of members' artefacts, training activities and cultural exchanges with other Namibian producer groups. I visited villages in the Oshikoto and Oshana regions where women came together to weave baskets. Before they commenced their work, the women met in traditional fashion: formal greetings by hand, bright smiles and a slight curtsy or bow of the knee. I noticed that the women never interrupted or interfered in another's talking. When one woman was speaking, the others would wait until she was finished before anyone else would attempt to speak. They also greeted each other individually while sharing personal information about their families. Thereafter stories were shared amongst them about their wellbeing, their children, school, their husbands, work, the weather, and so on. Unlike other groups, these women

[486] Namibian Planning Commission, *Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census: Preliminary Results*, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.gov.na/documents/10180/34849/2011_Preliminary_Result.pdf/0ea026d4-9687-4851-a693-1b97a1317c60. Ondangwa is a large Namibian town with a population of 33,400.

did not bring young children with them to the meeting, although one mother had her six-month-old baby sleeping on her back in an *abba karos*. Patricia told me that older siblings or grandparents looked after the children while the women took time to be out of the home to come to their association's meetings.

Most of the women were wearing traditional Ovambo dresses to these meetings. Many women were wearing 'traditional' Western wedding bands and *eenjoka* (traditionally these were stringed shell and eggshell necklaces)[487] necklaces, made with materials such as glass and plastic beads, handmade shell beads, pods and seeds, were popular. Nowadays Ovambo women dye their eenjoka bright pink or red, or they use brightly coloured pink glass beads or twine to string their beads so that they match the colour of their Ovambo dresses. Traditionally, eenjoka necklaces were made from eggshell and sea shell beads, but the women I observed continue to refer to stringed necklaces fabricated in this fashion as eenjoka.[488] Mobile phones were common and Patricia told me the women communicate via text messages to keep in touch. One group met every Tuesday to exchange advice on weaving styles, to check on each other and also to find a time when they could be away from home to meet with other women living in villages close by. They share women's health, family and relationship concerns while they support each other and share stories and jokes.

When big orders are received by their association (Ohandje Artist Cooperative) women will leave their villages to go to Ondangwa and work at the Arts and Cultural Centre from early morning until late at night to fill the orders. During planting season in January and February and harvesting season in May, there is a reduction in crafting, since food production consumes most of their time. The peak season for craft production is in the dryer winter months from June to October. During this time the craft organisation participates in several trade fairs such as the Windhoek Agricultural Show and the Ongwediva Annual Trade Fair, where most of their artefacts are sold.

Being members of the organisation spares women from wasting their effort and time sitting next to main roads in an attempt to sell their baskets. The organisation takes care of sales, and the women are able to focus on production. Furthermore, when sold through the craft organisation, the women are able to get the price they want for their work. Buyers at roadside stands often bargain and quibble about prices, which usually costs the basket weavers income. Unfortunately the craft organisation could not sustain their main retail outlet at Namutoni in the Etosha National Park due to high overheads. The failure of this major outlet means that the organisation risks losing the trust of its members, who depend on consistent, well-run markets for their income.

[487] Napandulwe Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia*, eds. Andre du Pisanie, Reinhart Kössler, William A. Lindeke (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstrasser Institut, 2010), 275.
[488] Ibid.

Some women also told Patricia that their combined effort and work for the organisation saved them time by providing good networks for the sourcing of sometimes scarce raw materials such as coloured fibres, dyes and palm fibre for filling. Patricia explained that while the women travel long distances to collect palm fibres for their own work, they harvest some additional fibres which they then sell in their villages to women who do not have access to makalani palms. In this way they get additional income for their travel, work and time invested as in some areas makalani palms are scarce and often over-harvested (Figure 6.12).

Another activity that the Ohandje Artist Cooperative had introduced and supported was the development of makalani gardens. The aim was natural resource management to ensure the availability of raw materials, especially in areas where makalani forests had been depleted due to environmental and agricultural developments. For some reason, however, many gardens have fallen into ruin. The neglect of these gardens can be described as an environmental tragedy because the Cuvelai drainage area in north-central Namibia allows makalani palms to grow taller than anywhere else in southern Africa. During rainy seasons, flood waters from Angola flow to the lower Cuvelai drainage area where they accumulate in lakes that are fed by shallow rivulets, or *oshanas*, thus replenishing valuable ground water.[489] Therefore, maintaining the makalani palm gardens should be a relatively manageable task.

Watching the women work, I noticed that they kept an eye on their environment. Some children were playing in the fields and other children who were passing by after school received a scolding for fighting at school that day. Chatting along, joking, gossiping and giggling, eyes scanned the environment, constantly observing. The physical environment is literally and physically interwoven in the life webs of Ovambo basket weavers while stories serve to keep their social webs intertwined and woven together.

Traditionally, baskets are used for serving, storing and producing food[490] and during the summer Ovambo women are responsible for working the fields and producing the main food source, mahangu.[491] During the winter, women are also responsible for basket weaving. This seasonal rhythm is echoed in the repetitive woven rows on the baskets, a result of the *ompampa* weaving style,[492] reflecting the rhythms seen in mahangu fields and revealing potential narratives about the wider implications of their lives revolving around food production. The rounded shapes of the baskets reflect

[489] Holger Kolberg, Mike Griffin and Rob Simmons, *The Ephemeral Wetlands of Central Northern Namibia*, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, 1997, accessed February 25, 2013, http://www.oceandocs.org/bitstream/1834/458/1/Africa_Wetlands_2.pdf.
[490] Martha Kheoses and Papa N. Shikongeni, *A Link to the Past – A Bridge to the Future: Basketry and Pottery in North-central Namibia* (Windhoek: John Muafangejo Art Centre and Hivos, 2006), 9.
[491] Ibid. Mahangu is pearl millet which is crushed, sifted and cooked in water to produce porridge, called *oshithima*.
[492] *Ompampa* is a weaving technique that does not expose the coil filling and will be discussed in more detail below.

the cyclical nature of their yearly existence, while the earthy tones reflect connections to the wider natural environment.



Figure 6.12 Young makalani palms' soft inner leaves are harvested for basket weaving. Patricia is showing how the young leaves are unopened when they are harvested. Great care must be taken to ensure that plants are not killed when harvesting leaves. Photograph by the author.

Most of the basket weavers swept a clear space on the ground for themselves, then laid out cloths or light rugs on which to sit or squat. Ovambo basket weavers mostly maintain a distinctive upright posture when they sit casually or formally, and when they weave. Their upper torso is held straight, at 90 degrees to their outstretched legs. They maintain this position while working in mahangu and maize fields. When tilling the ground, planting or weeding, they continue to maintain this upright stance, still bent 90 degrees at the hips, with straight legs, upper torsos straight and parallel to the ground (Figure 6.13).

Work in progress is wrapped and carried in cloths. During weaving, these cloths are placed on the ground to keep the work off the ground and free of dirt and dust. Raw materials and works in progress are scattered on the cloths in a colourful array. The women weave to an accompaniment of squeaky sounds produced by moistening the palm fibres with little drops of water then running them carefully between the forefinger and thumb to increase their pliability. The murmur of the women's voices and these subtle squeaks had a soothing effect on me.

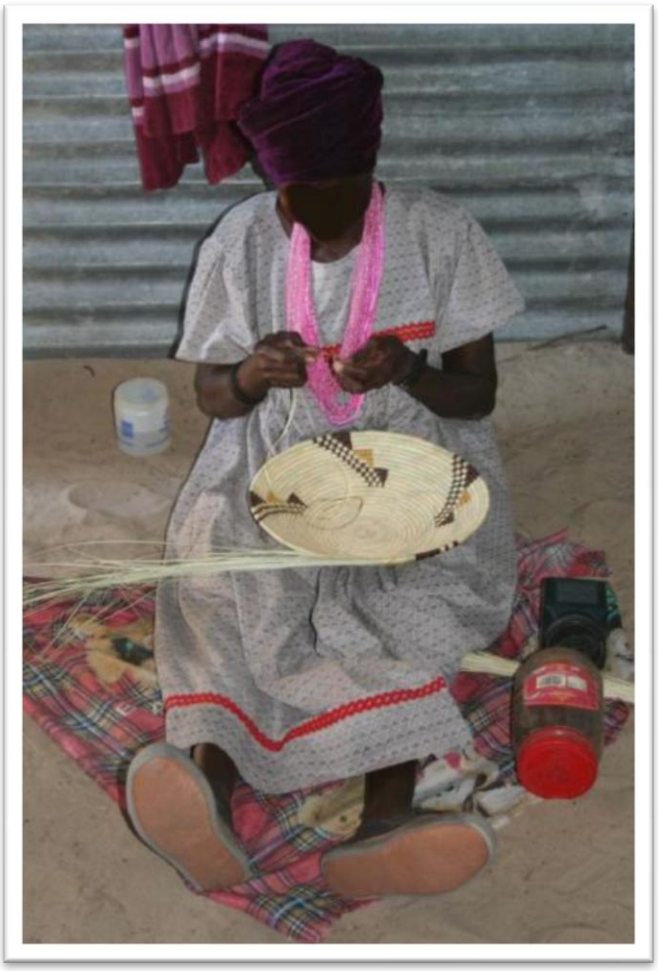

Figure 6.13 An Ovambo woman, one of the research participants, weaves a basket with a geometrical pattern that symbolises a spiral. She sits upright with her back at a perfect 90 degree angle to her outstretched legs. This is a typical posture Ovambo women maintain while weaving baskets. She works on a textile to keep her work clean and this same textile will be used afterwards to cover and carry her work. Various recycled containers are used to keep the makalani fibres moist for weaving and one container holds water used in the weaving process. This woman wears a traditional Ovambo cotton dress, accessorised with eenjoka necklaces. One eenjoka is made from stringed hand-crafted seashell beads that have been dyed pink and the other is made from stringed glass beads. These strings are usually tied together with a decorative button. Photograph by the author.



Figure 6.14

Basket weaving companions (image left): needles for sewing, razor blades for cutting loose hair-like fibres off the finished baskets and mobile phones to receive information about orders, work-shops, trade fairs and association activities. Photograph by the author.

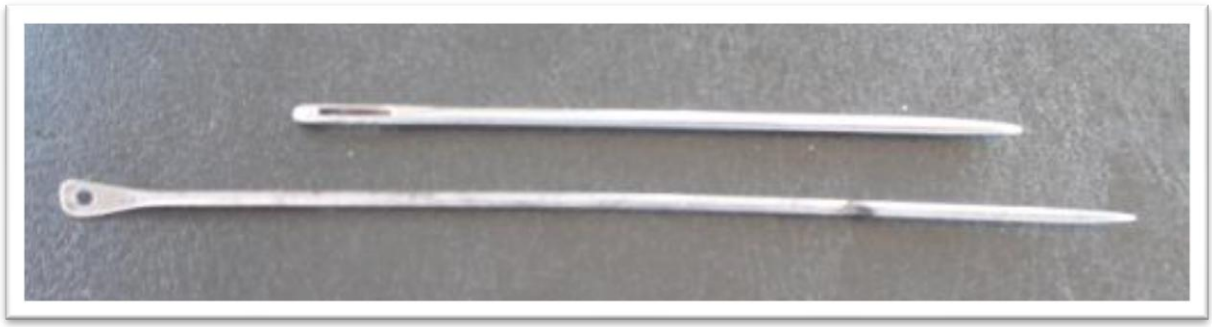

Figure 6.15 The top needle is a commercial one while the bottom needle is manufactured from the metal of an umbrella frame. Photograph by the author.

The tools most often used by basket weavers are needles and razor blades (Figure 6.14) to cut hair-like fibres (the result of pulling the makalani fibres through woven coils during weaving) off the baskets. Needles are bought at local markets. Patricia explained, however, that the sturdiest and best needles are self-crafted from wire found in old umbrellas (Figure 6.15). The wire is cut and sharpened on one end while the other end has an eye through which the umbrella's stretched cloth had been tacked to keep it in place. The craft organisation no longer sold needles to its members, because the women preferred the stronger, homemade needles. From my experience of working with Ovambo basket weavers in the past, I am also aware of that some of them believe that when lightning strikes while a woman weaves, she may be killed. While some women laughed and ridiculed this belief, other women refused to touch their needles when it rained.[493]

[493] I often came across stories about lightning and thus I realised that many Namibians fear lightning. Additionally, northern Namibia is situated in a subtropical region where dramatic and heavy thunderstorms and

Eyes guided the women's work. Hands were never still. Upper torsos swayed gently as palm fibres were pulled through the weaving process. The women's bodies swayed very slightly as arms moved while hands pushed, pulled and grabbed at the fibres and emerging products. Instinctively, fingers knew where the needle was, where it had to be placed and how it had to be manoeuvred so that fibres could be pulled through with the requisite force. All these actions were executed swiftly and smoothly with unconscious effort.

Basket weavers use recycled plastic containers to store their palm fibres. Palm leaf strips are cut and boiled for about 30 minutes to make the leaves more pliable.[494] During this boiling, the leaves are dyed if necessary. Thereafter, the fibres are dried in the shade.[495] Due to the high temperatures and dry winter climate, the fibre strips lose their moisture rapidly. When kept in sealable containers, however, less moisture is needed for working the fibres, which avoids water staining them.

Patricia told me that the women are turning more and more to artificial dyes and stains instead of using natural dyes to colour their baskets. While plant roots and bark from trees, such as the omuve tree, blue bush, omulaadhi and alectra plants are used to create many shades of brown and yellow, sorghum is also used to create reddish brown and pink colours.[496] An oral medication for mouth sores is used to create shades of purple, and artificial red dye is used to create the bright pink colours of Ovambo traditional dresses and eenjoka necklaces. This dye is also used to create shades of pink for the fibres used to weave baskets. Traditionally, woven baskets are only in the palm fibres' natural colours and dark brown. The dark brown colour is produced by plant roots from the varieties mentioned above. Another way of staining the makalani fibres dark brown is to add rusted tin cans to the boiling process, a technique that has been used for the last century or so.[497] Market interest in coloured baskets resulted in the weavers' experimentation with dyes and colours (Figure 6.16).

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lightning is often experienced during rainy seasons. A fear of lightning is therefore a reality for many Namibians. This needle-and-lightning belief was connected to the fact that basket weaving in rainy weather generally poses challenges, such as water stains on baskets exposed to too much water. Newly woven baskets are particularly vulnerable and should be kept dry so that they appear crisp and 'new' as they risk losing their value if they appear old and discoloured. Although holding a needle during rain is harmless, rain itself poses a challenge to basket weavers and therefore a relation between this traditional belief, and that weaving in rainy weather is not a good idea, exists. In other words, these kinds of stories are used to prevent harm that might come to community members.

[494] Kheoses and Shikongeni, *Link to the Past,* 10.

[495] Ibid.

[496] Ibid.

[497] Ibid., 11.



Figure 6.16

Ovambo baskets are usually woven with colours that derive from 'natural' sources in neutral colours such as soft and darker browns, reddish browns, ochre and the natural Makalani fibre's colour. Some rose and pink shades derive from sorghum, but the bright pinks often derive from artificial textile dye that is used for dyeing traditional Ovambo clothing and accessories. Photograph by the author.

Baskets are produced by a coiling technique. The stronger parts of the palm leaves are used for the filling material of baskets while the softer fibres are used for the 'sewing' or *jatata*. Leaves used for filling are cut into thin strips and added as the work progresses so that an even coil width is obtained. Baskets are woven with three *jatata* techniques: (a) *ompampa*, a tight weaving technique that does not expose the coil filling; (b) *embinda*, a V-shape technique that exposes the filling; and (c) *ehendje*, a slightly slanted and spaced technique that exposes the filling.[498]

Ompampa is the most time consuming while *ehendje* is the least time consuming. *Ompampa* is described by Cunningham and Terry as 'close simple oversewing' while they define *embinda* as 'simple oversewing or openwork'.[499] A 'false embroidery technique' is also used in which fibres are woven around the edge of baskets in a decorative chequered pattern instead of being sewn.[500] Patricia informed me about a cultural exchange workshop that was arranged between their organisation and a craft organisation in Rundu in the Kavango region. Since that workshop Ovambo women have also been weaving baskets in a style referred to as 'simple oversewing alternating over two coils'.[501] The three most popular and traditional shapes used by basket weavers are the (a) *ontungwa*, or bowl shape with a base; (b) *elilo*, scooped plate; and (c) *ongalo*, or flat plate shape.[502] Apart from these three

[498] Ibid., 13.
[499] Anthony B. Cunningham and M. Elizabeth Terry, *African Basketry: Grassroot Art from Southern Africa* (Simons Town: Fernwood Press, 2006), 54.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Ibid.
[502] Kheoses and Shikongeni, *Link to the Past*, 12.

shapes, baskets are woven in all sizes and shapes ranging from hats and fish traps to laundry baskets and bins (Figure 6.17).

Weaving patterns are often traditional. The star pattern – in various shapes and varieties – is one of the oldest patterns in use today. Patricia told me the star is easy to weave and women find this simple pattern appealing because it is decorative. Stars symbolise light in the dark night and are thus considered valuable and essential.[503] While some animals appear in the weaving patterns, horses and tortoises are not commonly used, despite my having photographed a basket with a tortoise pattern during my observations (Figure 6.18).



Figure 6.17 The top left basket is woven in a flat tray shape, called *ongalo* (dimensions: 27 cm diameter). The top right basket is woven in a shallow scooped shape called *elilo* (dimensions: 62 cm diameter x 18 cm high). The bottom left basket is woven with a base and is referred to as *ontungwa* (dimensions: 16 cm diameter x 11 cm high). These three shapes are all traditional forms while the bottom right basket is considered a contemporary shape and referred to as 'paper basket' shape (dimensions: 20 cm diameter x 18 cm high). Photographs by the author.

[503] Field notes, Ondangwa, Namibia, 15 February 2011.

Patricia told me that tortoises are respected animals as only kings are allowed to eat this delicacy. They therefore signify royalty and maybe rarity. At wedding ceremonies, tortoise shells are used as containers in which calabash oil is mixed with red ochre. The bride-to-be is then smeared with this red mixture, signifying her new position.



Figure 6.18

This tortoise pattern (image top left) is not commonly used in Ovambo basket weaving. Bertha Kalekela weaves this unique pattern (dimensions: 19 cm diameter). Photograph by the author.



Figure 6.19

This basket (image bottom left) was made by Sofia Gideon, 2011 (dimensions: 23 cm diameter). Various colours are created to produce colourful baskets. This weaving style is typically used by weavers from the Kavango region. This style was adopted by several Ovambo women during a cultural exchange workshop in 2009 in Rundu. This is 'simple oversewing alternating over two coils'.[1] Sofia used a traditional star pattern with alternating star conglomerates. This pattern is often mistakenly considered to be a flower. Basket weavers from Ohandje Cooperative attach their names to their artefacts so that their artefacts can be identified by their marketing organisation. Ohandje Cooperative meticulously documents all artefact sales against their makers' names, ensuring that makers duly receive their monthly income from sales. Sofia used a piece of cardboard attached to her basket with string to identify her as the maker. Photograph by the author.

Patterns are specific to a designer-maker, the area and family group from which she originates. Baskets are started with either coiling from the beginning or with a 'double chequer square' technique (Figure 6.21).[504] Flowers, spirals, organic and geometrical shapes (Figures 6.19 and 6.22) and letters from the alphabet often appear in the woven patterns, and plastics and other recycled materials are cleverly used in the baskets, as well as in jewellery (Figures 6.23 and 6.24).

With Patricia as my translator, I recorded the stories that the women told. One woman recounted how she had often been ridiculed for her craft production by women who did not produce crafts. According to her, the women who did not make crafts believed that craft could not earn them an income. But the storyteller saw things differently. She pointed out that, although her income was not large, it was enough to buy household necessities, pay for medicines and pay her children's school fees. Ironically, the ones who scorned craftwork often borrowed money from her. Therefore, this woman found craft production financially viable since she always had some money when emergencies or special needs arose.



Figure 6.20 This basket was woven by M. Ndjola. It is a small container with a lid, woven with the *embinda* technique, 2009 (dimensions: 7.5 cm diameter x 7 cm high). This shape is contemporary and popular with tourists because it is easily transportable. These small baskets are sometimes referred to as *katiti*, which refers to the small size of these baskets. Photograph by the author.

[504] Cunningham and Terry, *African Basketry*, 51.

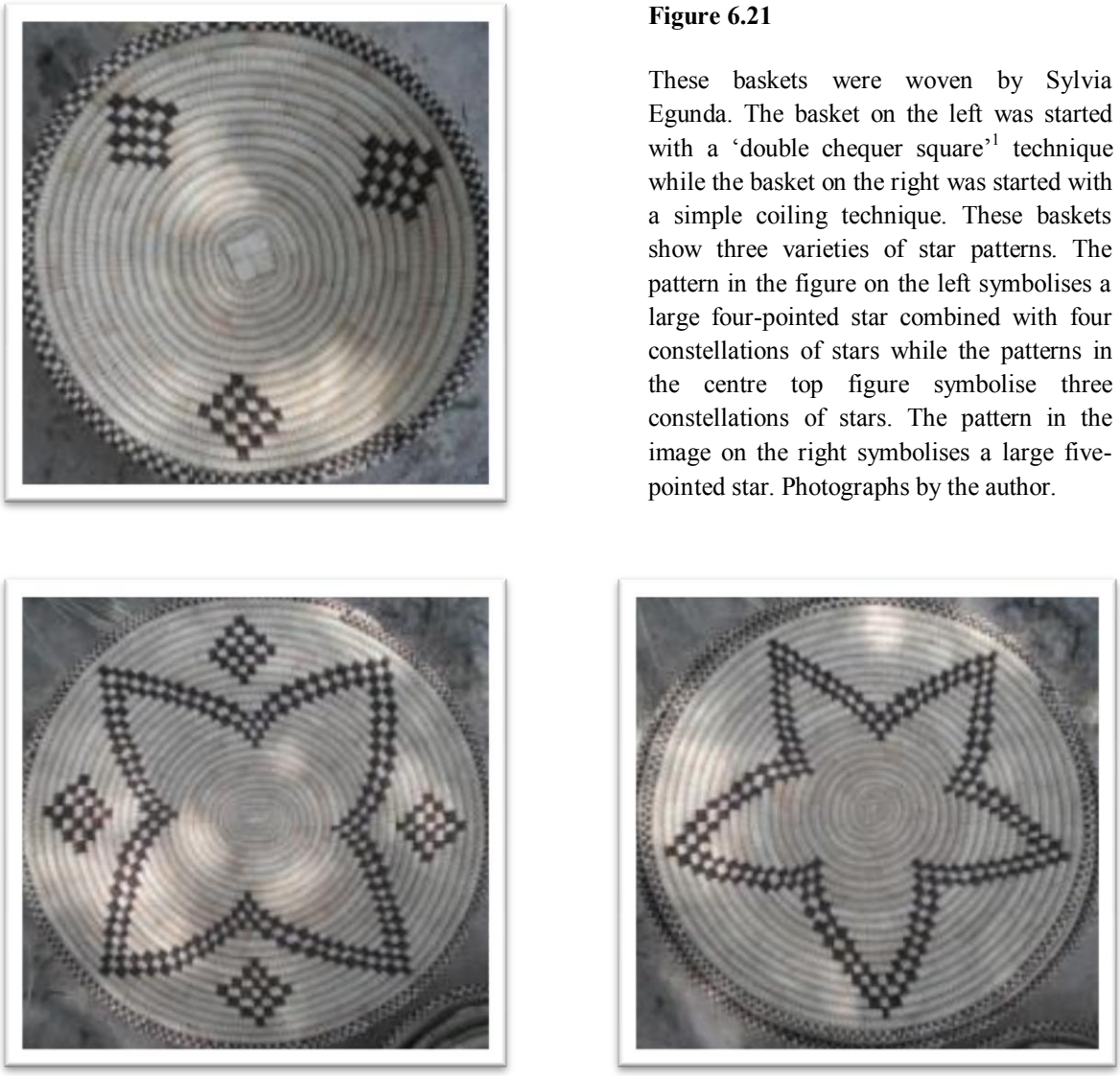

Figure 6.21

These baskets were woven by Sylvia Egunda. The basket on the left was started with a 'double chequer square'[1] technique while the basket on the right was started with a simple coiling technique. These baskets show three varieties of star patterns. The pattern in the figure on the left symbolises a large four-pointed star combined with four constellations of stars while the patterns in the centre top figure symbolise three constellations of stars. The pattern in the image on the right symbolises a large five-pointed star. Photographs by the author.

My field notes record evidence of many tales of hardship and hard work.[505] One woman complained that her goats had run away and she had had to search for them when she wanted to work in her field. Should her goats be caught eating from her neighbour's fields she could receive a fine, which she would have to pay since this is an unwritten rule in Ovambo societies. That is why herding goats, although essential, is so time consuming.

Apart from goat husbandry, the women work in the fields from tilling and planting time until the harvest is brought in. The needs of children, husbands and other family members have to be looked after as well and therefore food preparation takes up much of these women's time. During the summer months (from January until April) as well as the usual domestic work, many traditional foods have to be prepared: mopane worms are harvested, marula juice is made and seeds and fruit are pressed for oil.

[505] Field notes, Ondangwa, Namibia, 15-17 February 2011.

Therefore women are often tired at this time of the year, and time for craft production on dry days is often limited.



Figure 6.22 This basket was woven by M. Eleneus. It was woven with the *ompampa* technique and in the *elilo* shape, 2009 (dimensions: 23 cm diameter). The edges are decorated with what Cunningham and Terry refer to as 'false embroidery technique', or a satin weave technique with floating fibres that are attached to the basket's edge to form a diagonal pattern. The fibres used were dyed with natural and synthetic dyes: the pink yarn's bright colour originates from synthetic dye while the more subdued or soft pinks and reddish brown colours originate from sorghum plant-based dyes. Photograph by the author.



Figure 6.23

This basket was woven by A. Maria in 2009. It is woven in the *ehendje* technique and *ongalo* shape (dimensions: 20 cm diameter). Recycled foil from food packages was cut in strips and used to cover the filling fibres and to create this play of cool blue and silver colours with specks of warm orange. Photograph by the author.



Figure 6.24 This decorative hand carved button (dimensions: 5 cm diameter) is used to tie together the eenjoka necklaces. These buttons have been traditionally carved from ivory, but due to restrictions on the trade of ivory in Namibia, these buttons are now carved from recycled PVC pipes. Photograph by the author.

Part of the women's story was that the younger women, their daughters and nieces, were not interested in crafting. The older women expressed concern about how craft traditions could be sustained since young women were not interested in this traditional activity. Many basket weaving groups had difficulties recruiting young members. Records of the crafters' comments show that the young felt that 'craft production will not buy them cars' and that crafts do not provide sufficient income.

Conclusion

Members of these rural craft producing communities are able to support their own and members of their community's emotional needs and in this way they build resilient communities. In the Orwetoveni community my guide revealed narratives related to health issues and HIV and how the project contributes to women's wellbeing by providing them with income generating opportunities. These groups' interactions with one another, with the children whom they were looking after while producing crafts, their working processes and interactions with their raw materials, all revealed narratives of care, support and social cohesion.

Stories were told in a variety of ways. Stories were shared through singing, gossiping, talking, demonstrating, showing, touching and acting. Stories were received by listening, crying, laughing, giggling and gesturing (such as nods or shrugs). Different ways of sharing stories in working processes were demonstrating, instructing and drawing. Varieties of stories were found in working processes, skills and methods such as embroidering, weaving, carving, cutting, drilling, painting, sewing and tool making. All these activities and actions eventually formed valuable individual and unique story lines because of the way they were told.

Women used stories and explanations to illustrate the effort, time and skill required to make crafts. Individuals were demonstrating, explaining and breaking down processes in steps and sequences so that story lines were able to emerge alongside the sequences emerging from craft processes. Benjamin argued that storytelling and making artefacts by hand go hand-in-hand. They sustain, and historically have sustained, one another's existence, he claimed.[506] Apart from the more obvious roles that narratives play in artefact production, such as providing themes and inspiration for craft making, narratives related to craft production assist craftspeople to make sense of their lives and to translate their life situations and their life narratives into the artefacts they produce.

In these communities some narratives were positive while some were less pleasant. Via my guide, Patricia, Ovambo women told stories about their everyday lives and activities, tasks that have to be fulfilled to contribute positively to their households, the hardships related to those activities, their craft activities, relationships with community and family members. In these communities the quality of life in rural Namibia impacts on craft production. These are examples of the 'narratives of care' Ricoeur refers to, but in these Namibian craft producing communities they were not only spoken but were also *acted*.[507]

I witnessed care in how members of these communities shared advice and knowledge about techniques, materials and working processes while they were producing crafts. Narratives of care

[506] Walter Benjamin, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov," trans. Harry Zohn, *Chicago Review* 16, no. 1 (1963): 87.
[507] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 163.

included describing the need to generate income so that families can be supported and households sustained; mingling domestic and craft activities was often the only option available to allow participants to get things done. Often these narratives of care included more serious realities such as the stress involved in meeting deadlines, an understanding of the fact that lost time means loss of income, and having insufficient time to meet deadlines so that income can be generated for their households. Care is also invested by the organisations that support these craftspeople's work. Care is an integral part of how these organisations came into existence and continue to function. Care is how the craftspeople work with one another, so that these organisations can be sustained.

On a less positive note, Namibian crafts are frequently devalued due to craftspeople's location in remote areas – they are often isolated and cut off from access to larger regional markets. As a result, crafts are sold for much less than they are worth, because craftspeople would rather earn 'some' money than none so crafts are traded for far less than their actual value. These damaging practices stem from a desperate need for income in a 'buyers' market'.

The lack of sustainable marketing networks that include crafts from remote areas is another driving force behind the devaluation of artefacts. On the one hand rural craft production and selling is influenced and often driven by lack of income. But, on the other, crafts are devalued due to the lack of resilient marketing networks and limited access to direct consumer feedback. Insufficient information about consumer demand and market trends results in the overproduction of artefacts (in inadequate market spaces) I observed in Tsumkwe and other remote areas in Namibia.

In Namibia, craft making processes have not been mechanised or industrialised and thus craftspeople are not alienated from the processes of making artefacts. Nevertheless, some Namibian craft communities are experiencing the pressures of Western markets and their expectations of minimum standards of production. In the Orwetoveni embroidery group, for example, the variety of stitches has been sacrificed to simplify creative technique in the service of time, cost and efficiency.

The existing narratives of care discussed in this chapter that support and promote sustainable practices related to social cohesion, emotional wellbeing, the use of local natural resources and sound economic practices should be harnessed, extended, developed and shared in Namibia and the wider region. With these narratives of care in mind, the next chapter investigates the role of craft and design practices and their meanings in the shaping of (postcolonial) identities amongst urban Namibian designer-makers and craftspeople.

Chapter 7

Portraits of urban Namibian designer-makers

In researching the world/s of urban Namibian designer-makers, I interviewed ten participants over a period of two months. All the general findings (which I will outline later in this chapter) derive from data collected during interviews and studio observations conducted in Windhoek. The data from all ten interviews and my observations assisted me in drawing the conclusions of Chapters 7 and 8. Although I interviewed ten urban Namibian designer-makers, I introduce and illustrate portraits of only six of them.[508] In This chapter I introduce five portraits of the participants while I will introduce a sixth portrait in Chapter 8, because it aligns more closely with the themes I discuss in the next chapter. In this chapter I consider the specific social circumstances in which urban Namibian designers work and the role of artefact-making practices in their lives, while in Chapter 8 I will explore the materials these individuals use to create their artefacts, and the roles identities play in their artefact making processes.

This third and final phase of the fieldwork, with its focus on urban contemporary Namibian artefact producers, was crucial because most existing research focuses on rural Namibian cultural groups' craft production and therefore urban producers have been much less researched. In meeting my aim of sketching a holistic overview and a comprehensive map of the Namibian craft and design world, I consider issues related to the social, economic and environmental realities of this group. This provides the basis for my comparison of Namibia's urban and rural craft production communities in the conclusion of this chapter (and in the Conclusion of the thesis).

The five individual portraits I sketch in this chapter are of Sonene, Lisa, Ciara, Patema and Andreas.[509] In presenting (and representing) them I investigate how urban producers' craft and design practices relate to social sustainability and how colonialism and race influence urban Namibian designer-makers' existences. I also explore the meanings they derive from artefact making.

Where applicable, the analysis in this chapter is informed by postcolonial theory. While exploring identities is the general theme of both Chapters 7 and 8, my particular focus is on issues related to

[508] Due to practical considerations, such as word count limitations and the topics I selected for discussion, I was not able to include portraits of all participants. The portraits presented in Chapters 7 and 8 illustrate the themes that emerged from the data and that resonated most strongly with me. Over several months of work, I selected participants' stories to reflect a larger map, or a quilt, that was carefully crafted to reveal the in-depth discussions I had with the participants and their unique life stories. My aim was to create a larger and comprehensive overview of the urban designer-makers' lives, their artefacts, making practices and, most importantly, the meanings they derive from their practices. Like a quilt, or a story, the pieces of material that I selected for these chapters, in combination with the transcribed data from all the interviews, shape the larger narrative that I am representing, and re-presenting, here.

[509] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the participants.

postcolonial identities, hybridity and the complexities and pluralities of identities.[510] Consistent with Stephanie Lawler's sociological views, I attempt to illustrate that identities are often 'managed' by the participants in order to make sense of their lives through artefact making processes,[511] I do not 'measure' identities.[512]

When I was interviewing participants in January and February 2011, I immersed myself in the urban Namibian designer-makers' 'worlds' by observing their practices and spending most of my time amongst them. All ten participants worked and lived in the capital of Namibia, practicing as designer-makers in their craft and design businesses, shops and design studios located in the central business district of Windhoek, or at their homes in various Windhoek suburbs. They worked either part or full time. Four participants were established and experienced designer-makers, while six were still in the process of establishing their businesses. These spaces were filled with lively activity because seven participants shared their production spaces with colleagues occupied with similar activities. Work spaces were not always clearly divided and often tools, space, equipment and even raw materials were shared. Three participants worked in more secluded spaces.

The participants represented various demographic groups; 70 per cent were younger than 35, while the youngest participant was 21 years of age. Participants had very diverse educational backgrounds ranging from university to post secondary school internships to basic high school diploma supplemented with locally conducted design training workshops. Three participants were studying full time while they had businesses to run and clients to attend to. Some participants had to meet responsibilities related to running creative businesses, part time jobs, families and children.

It was not an unfamiliar occurrence to find some work spaces unoccupied.[513] Working processes were often interrupted, untouched for some hours or even days due to the responsibilities participants had, such as having to attend lectures, attend to clients, source raw materials, and attend to family and personal needs such as collecting children from school, doing domestic chores and looking after ill or needy family members. Some participants were literally rushing from one responsibility to another. In this stressed yet energetic atmosphere many participants' activities have become intractably layered and overlapping in order to maximise resources.

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[510] Pal Ahluwalia, "When Does a Settler Become a Native? Citizenship and Identity in a Settler Society," *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001): 72. See Chapter 2, pp. 15-19. Not all participants struggle with issues stemming from postcoloniality, but this possibility cannot be excluded. In some interviews issues related to colonialism and race surfaced explicitly, but the interviewees' stories presented in Chapters 7 and 8 are representations (of both them and myself) and (my) re-presentations, determined by time, the environment in which they occurred, and the specific factors that impacted on the lives of the participants in those circumstances.

[511] Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2008), 3.

[512] Rawi Abdelal et al., ed., *Measuring Identity: A guide for Social Scientists* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[513] Although I never arrived at studios or working places unannounced, the space where I occasionally worked (making artefacts myself) during my field study in Windhoek was connected to three studios where Namibian designer-makers worked. This is why I was able to observe the often hectic schedules some Namibian designer-makers follow. This applies to some designer-makers whom I observed but did not interview.



Figure 7.1 A work space that was shared by two of the participants: a fashion design studio in Windhoek. Photograph by the author.



Figure 7.2 A working space of one of the participants: a jewellery studio in Windhoek. Photograph by the author.

In most studios I had the impression that resources were tight and, as a result, no excess materials, tools or inventory were noticeable. Generally, studios were very small confined spaces and larger spaces were usually shared, again hinting at a lack of resources. In urban spaces electricity and water are standard luxuries. Participants can work anytime of the day or night to process orders and meet deadlines due to the availability of electric light.

In these spaces I met the participants I interviewed. During the interviews, usually at the beginning, participants were asked to narrate their life stories and explain how they became involved in their current craft and design activities. In other words, I asked them to tell me about their careers and lives – 'the whole story'. To encourage them, I often asked about how their careers had started and how they became interested in what they were currently doing. The analysis in this chapter focuses on the life stories they told about how their careers came about.

A portrait of Sonene

I enter a jewellery design studio where Sonene is seated on a chair next to a large window that casts soft light on her face. She is reading a magazine while waiting for me. Our conversation commences casually. Her intelligent, softly-spoken words, the elegant movement of her hands and the open magazine next to her tells me she is at ease in this space. But Sonene is not a jewellery designer and this is not her studio. She chose to have this interview with me in the studio next to hers, so that she would not be interrupted, she explains.

Later, when I did observe her studio, I understood one of the reasons for her decision. It was very busy. In her fashion design studio I noticed the humming of industrial machines, seamstresses acting and performing their work, moving textiles and garments-in-making, fragile paper pattern pieces floating on tables, and textiles waiting to be cut, piled in stacks or draped over dress figures and placed on cutting boards. Most processes were conducted manually; pattern making, cutting, sewing, pressing. The studio was equipped with good basic tools: a large cutting table, industrial sewing machines, steamers and pressing equipment.

During our interview, another reason for her decision to have the interview in a quiet jewellery studio separate from her working space emerged. We were talking about the influences she uses in her work and where she derives her inspiration from when she said: 'Most of the times I use my own identity, but it's very difficult in my creative career, because uh, I share a studio.'[514] The reality is that working in a shared space influences identity processes related to design and creativity and it is often difficult, even for strong personalities and designers with recognisable design styles such as Sonene, to work

[514] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.

under such circumstances. Another of Sonene's frustrations is related to her need to produce custom-made fashion to supplement her income from lecturing at a local university, as she explained:

> So on the business side of things you have to do things of what a client wants and in that way you actually do not do the things that you *want* to do. You don't practice your *skill* of being a designer. But sometimes you take in this job just because you want to pay the bills [...] the clients that I meet, I try to show them what I do and then convince them in some way that this is what I do and that it is more interesting or so, than a certain picture they want me to do.[515]

Sonene grew up and attended high school in rural northern Namibian in the Kavango region. She remembers how she was discouraged from taking art seriously at school:

> Art was never really looked at [as] something that you can make a living off. It was always looked at as something you cannot do much with, something not worth you spending your time or money on. So although I was interested I believe I was always interested in art, and creative things, I never really took it that serious.[516]

It was only later when she went to university that she 'discovered' that her university had a visual arts department. When Sonene left northern Namibia to attend university and study psychology, she realised: 'I rather wanted to do something that I was enjoying and really, psychology didn't really give me that pleasure, so I had to make that decision, this is my life' (said very softly).[517] Initially textile design fascinated her, but in her second year she considered taking fashion design and continued with both these subjects as majors.

While telling her story, Sonene improvises her life story, drawing on her memories, experiences, emotions, and histories. In our conversation she reflects on the role of her cultural background in her identity processes. While Sonene's story reveals how she deals with her identities in specific ways, it is important, as Ien Ang reminds us, to understand that the world, its environments and the communities living within them have changed significantly into an 'interconnected, intermingled world in which virtually all nation states have become territories where various economies, cultures and peoples intersect and interact [and have become] spaces of global flows.'[518] While these transformations were occurring for the world as a whole, Namibia became an independent nation-state seeking its own distinctive social, cultural and political collective identities. At the same time that it became independent, Namibian society also experienced the new, global world. All of a sudden Namibians were not only living together in a shared geographical space (undivided by homelands and

[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London and New York, Routledge, 2001) Kindle edition, 5.

'black' and 'white' spaces) for the first time but, simultaneously, they also experienced the interconnectedness of an intersecting global world.

These local and global changes have an additional impact on Namibians because they live in spaces where 'cultural intermixture'[519] occurs fairly constantly, through contact with people from different African cultures, and tourists, immigrants and labourers from various 'modern' or 'other' cultures. As a result, Namibians often exist in states of multiple consciousnesses and Sonene's story reveals how she experiences these states. In response to my question about how the identities that are represented in her creations change over time, Sonene says:

> I think from the beginning you realise or ask yourself these questions: who you are, where you come from, what are you, why do people where I come from do certain things in a certain manner. But, uhm, my cultural background is actually something that goes in the direction of distinction, because uh-uh, a lot of influence from the Westerners is taking over and I felt that over the time I should try to tell people of how beautiful and how, my culture is and that is actually what has taken over my identity. The *more* I research about my background, the more I actually want to tell the story and a lot of people are actually unaware of this. The more I have actually grown, the more I try to always talk to the elders. What they used to do, how they used to wear, what is important for a woman in my culture, what is the most adorned place and so forth, [...] it is actually fascinating. And you actually do understand, although people think they're so Western, but you actually realise it's the same kind of thinking pattern, of when you dress yourself for example, or what's the place a woman wants to adorn the most. Sometimes it really goes over the Western boundary and it is very interesting and I feel over the years I've actually become even more interested in showing this identity of my cultural background. And that is actually what has shaped my identity as a designer and why I always try to use this cultural background.[520]

Sonene's life in 'modern' Windhoek is far removed from the rural Kavango village where she grew up. However, in both spaces she does not live removed from either her cultural background or 'modern' influences, what she refers to as 'the West'. Instead, she remains in touch with both, although she makes an effort to continue to refer back to and have physical contact with Kavango elders and culture, because this is where she receives knowledge and stories from. Aware of how 'modern' influences are dominating her cultural background, Sonene lives between these two 'worlds', focused on holding on to her cultural background in spaces where the global and the local

[519] Keri E. Iyall Smith, "Hybrid Identities: Theoretical Examinations," in *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, eds. Keri E. Iyall Smith and Patricia Leavy (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 4. The 'cultural intermixture' Iyall Smith refers to is when colonised cultures borrow global influences which they combine with the cultural contexts they live in. These psychological and physical realities are usually expressed as new identities that, alongside 'doubleness', contribute to hybrid identity formations. Iyall Smith also notes that hybridity and cultural intermixture are nowadays viewed positively and are 'considered to be a benefit'.
[520] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.

are continuously flowing and intermingling.[521] Homi Bhaba explains that these 'tethered shadows of deferral and displacement' caused by colonialism are the spaces *in-between* that become problematic for individuals living in postcolonial situations, because these spaces 'constitute the figure of colonial otherness'.[522] According to Ricoeur, the problem with these in-between spaces is that they have to be bridged and constantly negotiated during often stressful internal dialectic processes when individuals are attempting to deal with 'otherness'.[523]

Through her pragmatic approach, in search of similarities between her 'worlds', Sonene is making the best of her situation in a way that provides the benefits Iyall Smith attributes to cultural intermixture and hybridity, because individuals are able to manoeuvre across barriers.[524] Sonene's pragmatism is her attempt to bridge the 'distanciation', the 'cultural estrangement'[525] she experiences between these worlds; she bridges the gap between them via seeking and finding similarities within these worlds. Sonene's grappling with two worlds stems from, but also enhances, her awareness of her subject position; she is aware of her gender, ethnic, racial, geographical, generational and political situations, which all 'inhabit her claim' to her identities.[526]

Although both Sonene's 'worlds' are changing, she attempts to anchor her pluralistic self, her partial identities and her identity as a designer in the similarities between her 'modern' and her Kavango worlds, for example, in the way women dress and behave. She negotiates her identities, crossing over boundaries into new hybrid spaces in which she makes sense of her life through partial assimilation and merging her local and global identities into a 'new' identity.[527] This is how she copes with and sustains her hybrid identities; she blends her complex local and global circumstances despite her awareness of the severe power imbalances between her cultural background and the 'modern' influences she deals with on a daily basis in her postcolonial existence.[528]

As an assistant lecturer at a local university and an established fashion and textile designer, Sonene reaps emotional rewards from her creative practices and her lecturing and training activities in the Namibian craft and design world. She has worked with several rural craft-producing groups, sharing her skills in both fashion and textiles in an attempt to broaden their craft skills. For her, these activities carry deep and significant meanings:

> Yes, it has been rewarding in a sense of you reach so many people. [...] What I interpret as rewarding is, uhm, something that's worthwhile. [...] A reward; I'd look at something like if

[521] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 5.
[522] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 45. Emphasis added.
[523] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 43-44.
[524] Iyall Smith, "Hybrid Identities," 4.
[525] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 43-44.
[526] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 2.
[527] Iyall Smith, "Hybrid Identities," 3-4.
[528] Ibid.

> I've made a contribution to, or if I've changed somebody's life I have really tried to make a difference somewhere.[529]

Sonene's creative practices form the foundation of the knowledge she continues to share with the next generation of Namibian fashion and textile designers and in this way she not only sustains herself emotionally and economically, but also contributes to the sustainability of the Namibian craft and design world.

A portrait of Lisa

Upon entering Lisa's home, I noticed her well-kept garden. The front of her house is framed with brick arches and a patio, yet they do not separate her garden from the living space inside her house. Lisa places herself in such a way that she is able to overlook the fresh, calm greenery. Where we sit in her dining room, I sense her garden entering this space. Lisa's home is filled with handmade artefacts and art. There are a few significant pots and earthenware pieces placed in her living room, including large African pots. Lisa is a potter, although she cannot afford to practice her craft on a full time basis. To earn additional income, she teaches art at a local primary school and pottery to senior secondary students.

Born in England, Lisa moved to Kenya with her parents when she was three years old. She was sent back to England to boarding school for her senior secondary education. During this time she considered Africa to be her 'home' and after completing tertiary education in England, she returned to Africa to teach art. In Africa she lived in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Swaziland, and later settled in Namibia, a place where she loves to live and now considers her 'home'.[530] During her lifetime she has experienced several African states moving towards independence, including Namibia, and so Lisa has lived her life in various colonial and postcolonial situations.

Lisa's lifelong interest in art stems from her childhood in Africa where she saw African potters in the local markets moving their feet while working on improvised potter's wheels that were driven by bicycle chains and wheels. She spent a lot of time observing them and, later in life, drew on these memories to pursue her calling as a potter. While she attended high school in England, she experienced feeling 'removed' from art as she explains:

> I think it's just being away from home in high school which sort of dampened my spirit, because in primary school I was in east Africa and my first few years of high school was in

[529] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.
[530] Interview Lisa, 29 January 2011.

> east Africa and we had a very good art department there. I enjoyed it, but uh, England is just a different planet to Kenya and Tanzania.[531]

Due to her experiences of living in both colonial and postcolonial worlds, Lisa reflects on her postcolonial identities, the difficulties she faced and how she attempted to cope with these worlds, and the subjective turmoil[532] these conditions have caused her throughout her life. She comments:

> So I find there are sort of two sides to me and they don't, they don't really connect, much. I mean, I'm English by birth, I went to Kenya when I was three, so I'm English because my family is English, but I don't feel English completely, because I've spent most of my life in Africa. So I identify a bit with the African so I'm an African-English or an English-African, or I'm not sure. Very difficult! You end up not belonging anywhere if you're not careful.[533]

Lisa's narrative reveals she is steeped in 'uneasy' or 'distressed' postcolonial identities. She refers to 'two sides', what Iyall Smith describes as the double consciousness of hybrid identities which come about through the blending of 'cultural categories' influenced by globalisation's power relations and hierarchies in an 'uneven integration of human life'.[534] Iyall Smith demonstrates that hybridity is a 'cross-category' process during which the local and global become integrated due to the creative ability of an individual or a group to re-imagine their culture.[535] Hybrid identities allow Lisa's two 'worlds' to intersect, their differences to fuse to become a fluid space in which Lisa has the ability to 're-create and re-vision' her local circumstances.[536] Although underpinned by multiplicity, ambivalence and uncertainty, Ang is adamant that hybridity is not simply ephemeral moments in which identity 'swingers' attempt to cope with a lack of commitment.[537] Hybridity is a pragmatic reaction when individuals attempt to cope with conflicting and ambivalent situations[538] and, as Brunsma and Delago show, it is not meaningless, empty and detached from living experiences.[539] Lisa acknowledges that hybridity is a situation that needs care because it is difficult to deal with identities that come about in 'interstitial spaces' where individuals attempt to figure out where they belong and

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[531] Ibid.
[532] Couze Venn, "Aesthetics, Politics, Identity: Diasporic Problematisations," *Critical Arts*, 24, no.3 (2010): 322-323. This subjective turmoil includes the states postcolonial individuals have to endure and during which reinvention is often the only way for them to make sense of their situations. These states or spaces in which a person exists are processes of reconstitution in which temporal and spatial memories are assimilated. What Venn describes as 'becoming different' therefore includes and refers especially to 'newness' that emerges from 'fuzzy and complex' realities. People have a need to become newly 'grounded in a network of relations' in postcolonial conditions which are made up of 'contexts of plural belongings'. The extent to which they succeed is determined by the complexities of their realities.
[533] Interview Lisa, 29 January 2011.
[534] Iyall Smith, "Hybrid Identities," 3-4.
[535] Ibid., 4
[536] Ibid., 5.
[537] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 2.
[538] Ibid., 3.
[539] David L. Brunsma and Daniel J. Delago, "Hybrid Identities," in *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, Smith and Leavy, 334.

where identities are shaped accordingly.[540] It is essential to bear in mind that 'all identity is relational', as Lisa's story illustrates, it is influenced by the environments individuals live in and pass through, and reconstituted and reinterpreted according to various circumstances and social value systems.[541] Lisa's subjective turmoil is caused by these 'active processes of forging new identities'.[542]

Hybrid identities come about in moments of belonging, or identifying with a group, community, culture and place, and unbelonging, when an individual does not identify with any of these elements. Belonging is an individual need; it is about finding a specific place or position in which an individual can feel contented and live a fulfilling life. Unbelonging, by contrast, is a space where a person is in need of finding different ways to 'be' and 'become'.[543] The space in which individuals experience being and becoming is often associated with location and dislocation, placement and displacement, belonging and unbelonging – spaces in which Lisa repeatedly reconstitutes her hybrid identities.[544]

Lisa's pottery practices offered her substantial support, sustaining her emotionally and physically when she fell ill earlier in her life. From then on particular themes, specifically flowers, emerged in the personal work which she produced for her wellbeing or when she produced pottery for specific exhibitions. She reflects on these themes, which have deep personal meanings, and her memories of those times:

> So I suppose there are reoccurring shapes and patterns that you develop and use because you like them or they feel good or they mean more to you or whatever. I had cancer in 2002, and after I came through that, I spent a lot of time making very colourful flowery things. I wanted to, hmmm (sigh), pfhh[545], capture my garden and my pots I suppose. [...] If I sit down and design for myself, maybe a big plate or I do something for an exhibition then I revert back to my flowers I suppose, because they're just incredible. And they don't have any significance and I don't use them at all really in my earthenware, except for my leaves perhaps, but I don't use flowers as such.[546]

Although Lisa indicates in her interview that the use of symbols in her work happened on an unconscious level, she was able to relate her personal experiences with cancer to the use of colourful

[540] Pal Ahluwalia, "Towards (Re)conciliation: the Post-colonial Economy of Giving,"' *Social Identities* 6, no. 1 (2000): 44.
[541] Pal Ahluwalia, "Inventing home: (Re)membering the Nation," *Sikh Formations* 2, no. 2 (2006): 108.
[542] Couze Venn, "Aesthetics, Politics, Identity", 322.
[543] Ibid., 334. Being is about living a life in the present, here and now, while becoming is about growth, development, change and learning gained from experience. This space of being and becoming is not only constituted by these two 'separate' realities. They often overlap in what Venn refers to as complex 'thinking embodiment' processes which allow a person and their environment to function in an epistemological framework that is based on the principles of an 'affective-cognitive dimension of subjectivity'. Being is about living a life in the presence, here and now, while becoming is about growth, development, change and learning gained from experience. To summarise, being is associated with cyclical processes and becoming with linear processes.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Lisa cried during our interview. Here she pauses to catch her breath.
[546] Interview Lisa, 29 January 2011.

flowers in the artefacts she produced after she recovered from her illness. She does not use flower themes in the earthenware and work she produces for sale, but when she creates something personal she uses them since they have significant meaning for her in that she associates her healing from cancer with her garden and flowers. They symbolise her time of celebration, her joy and realisation that she received a different opportunity, a new phase of life in which she can enjoy being alive and 'spend a lot of time making very colourful flowery things'.[547]



Figure 7.3 Lisa's clay artefact shows white flowers on a dark background, 2011 (dimensions: 26 cm diameter). This artefact is not one of those 'colourful, flowery' artefacts she referred to in her story. I found this artefact in her home; therefore, it is one of her 'personal' artefacts, created when she designs for herself, when she reverts back to her flowers, as she explained. This artefact narrates a part of Lisa's life story and her history in relation to her health. The dark background symbolises her 'dark' past when she was ill with cancer, while the white flowers and outside circle symbolise her current and contrasting reality of being a healthy and active woman in her early sixties. Photograph by the author.

Lisa is aware of 'a sort of ... an argument' she has to deal with in her creative and making processes. She finds consolation, attachment and a space of belonging in her clay: 'if I have enough ... I ... go back to clay'.[548] Clay is an important medium for Lisa. It is a substance that requires her to perform certain actions that assist her to work through complex issues of belonging and unbelonging. The physical contact, material qualities and emotional rewards she obtains from her pottery practices assist

[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid.

her to make sense of her life situations. Working in clay assists Lisa to escape into an imaginary world so that she can strengthen her memories of herself, her histories, where she comes from and where she is going to. In this way she is able to cope with her postcolonial realities while sustaining herself emotionally and psychologically.

A portrait of Ciara

Ciara's stories move me, because I sense signs of tensions right from the start. Ciara negotiates her identities openly, honestly and constantly, but in such a way that they become concrete in every expression she utters. She speaks quickly, coherently, and regularly utters the words 'maybe' and 'a little bit', a way of fluctuating between and coping with extremes. Ciara went to university directly after school to study art. At that stage, she was already a mother. Allowing nothing to stand in her way and with a very supportive family, she completed a degree in visual arts. After university Ciara's family encouraged her to gain some international work experience while her parents cared for her son. It was a very difficult time for her and she was torn between her responsibilities as a parent, her love and desire to care for her son and the need to pursue a career. During our conversation Ciara mentions on two occasions that she wishes not to disappoint her family, because of the support they have given her over the years. Currently, she mentions, she lectures at a local university while she produces custom made garments for her growing clientele. She also produces a small ready-made fashion accessory collection for the tourist market and has showcased her fashions in northern Europe on several occasions.

'Identity is something that I struggle with because I don't know who I am',[549] is one of those honest, direct statements which Ciara utters in such a way that her listener knows that her strength lies in the fact that she copes with her life, no matter what. She struggles with a deep sense of self-loss, a sense of unbelonging to her 'self' when she admits that she does not know who she is. The diverse influences stemming from the colonial and postcolonial eras Ciara experienced in Namibia as a young child add to her identity fluctuations and tensions. She moves between competing dominant cultural narratives and is very aware of the cultural boundaries and social expectations deriving from the cultural groups with whom she identifies in her immediate environment. She explains:

> I also think I'm a little bit of a rocker. I think, uh, *my* cultural background is a little bit more of what is expected of me which is more Hip-Hop and Rap, you know, I come more from a black background than a white background, but my friends used to laugh at me because I used to like Rock, and as a black girl, as a coloured girl, uh, that's not really expected *of* us and I think this whole, uh, lace 'n leather, it's also got a little, uh, Rock edge to it and it's something that

[549] Interview Ciara, 2 February 2011.

was maybe a little bit suppressed in the way I was growing *up*, but when I started being creative I was maybe able to express that side of me a little bit more.[550]

Ciara's story reveals her feelings of belonging and unbelonging to some of the cultural spaces she lives in and passes through. She does not identify with Hip-Hop and Rap, which she sees as elements of black culture, but she identifies with Rock, which she feels belongs to white culture. Ciara's experiences with feelings of living 'in-between' races[551] are apparent in her story when she refers to herself as being more black, because she is a 'coloured girl'. Her use of the colonial Apartheid term 'coloured', which refers to people from a 'mixed' race origin, illustrates how colonial pasts remain, consciously and unconsciously, active and sticky in current postcolonial situations, as Fanon argues. He also argues that people with black racial identities possess 'two dimensions: one with [...] fellow blacks, and the other with the whites'.[552] This two-dimensional existence indicates exactly the problematic of 'in-between' lived experiences in which tensions caused by feelings and the awareness of 'us' and 'them' have to be continuously negotiated.

The identity 'crisis' that Ciara experiences, which is partly due to her mixed race subject position and negotiations related to her tastes, show how she is moving between three worlds with different social expectations. These expectations are causes of tensions and stress in her life, because she does not conform to the 'broad set of acts, behaviours and attitudes' and the 'socially and culturally constructed meanings' that are assigned to the particular groups she identifies with.[553] Instead, she uses her fashion designs to express the identities she feels were suppressed during her childhood, because as a fashion designer she can become her 'Rock' identities. To avoid tensions deriving from social expectations, Ciara performs her 'Rock' identities in her creative work, because in this way she becomes who she is in both a theatrical sense and in ways that allow her to re-create 'who she is'. She re-visions her social self and thus makes sense of her life by adopting hybrid, or new identities in flowing spaces that cross the boundaries of both her local situation and the cosmopolitan influences she draws her inspiration from and identifies with.[554]

Ciara not only negotiates her cultural identities related to belonging and unbelonging in her private life on a daily basis, but also in her career; she fluctuates between a practising fashion designer, fashion show choreographer, graphic designer, design lecturer, craftswoman, product developer for local craft communities, and business woman. In order to cope with all her activities she needs several hybrid flowing spaces through which she can move, allowing her to function and enact her many identities. She negotiates her hybridities in states of multiple consciousness and even unconsciousness at times,

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[550] Ibid.
[551] Simon Rozendaal, "Ras: Wat is dat Eigenlijk?" *Elsevier*14, no.10 (1995): 98 and 100-01. Racial identities refer to the significance of the meanings ascribed to racial groups in an individual's lived experiences.
[552] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952), 2.
[553] Fabienne Darling-Wolf, "Disturbingly Hybrid or Distressingly Patriarchal? Gender Hybridity in a Global Environment," in *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, ed. Iyall Smith and Leavy, 66-67.
[554] Iyall Smith, "Hybrid Identities," 4-5.

because it seems that tension, uncertainty, multiplicity and ambivalence is not merely part of Ciara's life – they have *become* her life due to the numerous identities she performs on a daily basis.

Although Ciara deals with tensions deriving from her identity issues on a daily basis, she remains focused on the future and what needs to be done for the Namibian fashion design world. From Ciara's experiences of marketing and showing her fashion design collections abroad, she developed clear ideas about how she can improve her practices by following sound management principles. She became aware how important it is to establish market confidence as a producer. Her vision includes stimulating local production capacities to assist with growing the Namibian fashion design world.[555] She explains that, while her collections were well received overseas, she learned that Namibian fashion designers are 'not ready' to export their artefacts in larger numbers due to a lack in production capacity. Without factories, she does not see how Namibian designers will be able to satisfy buyers' demands for quantity and good quality. Ciara finds Namibian designers have to make their artefacts more affordable by sound calculations and adhering to strict and sound costing and pricing principles. Production capacities have to be increased and markets have to be expanded to reach more outlets for artefacts because, says Ciara: 'We just have to compete with obviously factory-produced clothing and our stuff is a little bit more unique.'[556]

Unsurprisingly, Ciara's brave and clear visions about what has to be done to grow the Namibian fashion world are motivated by her experiences and growing wisdom and imagination. Her experiences in the Namibian fashion design world have obviously been rewarding, judged by her well-shaped visions and ideas. Even if it seems that she is determined to 'conquer' the world, Ciara's story is filled with complexities and hurdles she had to overcome in order to grow her career. Her identity negotiations, caused by social expectations, cultural differences and her personal ambitions, result in constant tensions, she is an ambitious fashion designer focused on sustaining her practices. At the same time, she has developed ambitious visions for the future of the Namibian fashion design world. Although she has substantial ideas, they are sustainable and she realises her limitations: 'As an individual you can't conquer the world, so you have to uh, build locally and then, that's the aim.'[557]

The stories of Sonene, Lisa and Ciara all reveal their hybrid identities and life realities in which they continuously negotiate a sense of being 'in-between'. They cope with their circumstances by literally 'working through' their material environments, because it assists them to find their own narratives through which they make sense of their lives.[558] However, not all participants' life stories, as reflected in the moment of their interviews, were concerned with negotiating the tensions associated with postcolonial belonging, although all participants affirmed the emotional support they derive from their

[555] While I was writing this thesis, Ciara was one of the individuals who established an official body representing Namibian fashion designers with the aim of supporting growth and stimulating business within the Namibian fashion world.
[556] Interview Ciara, 2 February 2011.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Paul Ricoeur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life Stories," *Philosophy Today* 47, no. 3 (2003), 324.

creative practices. Patema reveals her deeply-held ethical identities in her narratives of 'recounting care',[559] while Andreas reveals his concerns for sustainable practices in the Namibian craft and design world.

A portrait of Patema

A young seamstress, Rosalind, is seated behind an industrial sewing machine sewing the bodice of a lavender-coloured chiffon dress. Patema, my interviewee, looks up from her cutting table and in a hurry creates some space for me to sit. While we talk, she continues to lay out, cut and pin the same lavender fabric. Patema manages her interview effortlessly while working between her and Rosalind's work spaces. She interrupts her response to me to assist Rosalind and thereafter, almost seamlessly, she continues our conversation. Every few moments she leaves what she is doing to overlook what Rosalind is doing. Rosalind is a young graduate from a technical vocational training institute in Arandis, a west central town in Namibia where she completed a two year course in clothing manufacturing. She needs guidance from Patema while they drape the lavender bodice on a dress figure to shape it carefully and correct the fit.

Patema's deep, soft voice has a calming effect on me. I immediately sense that her life experiences shaped her into the caring mentor I see before me. After her life story emerges from our conversation, I understand that Patema's life is about care; it radiates from the way she talks and works and how calmly she acts and manages this interview and her work simultaneously. In the same way she carefully handles and drapes the soft chiffon she works with, she caringly talks about a difficult but rewarding life journey that revolves around the care for her ill child, her family and her career.

Patema's interest in fashion design developed from an early age, observing her mother's sewing and dress making activities. She explains how her mother worked without patterns, how she measured, cut and sewed material into beautiful garments for her family. As a young child, Patema joined in these activities, making dresses for her clay dolls. She also made simple skirts for herself, but often she just draped textiles into wearable skirts. She did not attend dressmaking classes, but continued to make clothes in the way she had seen her mother make them. She made many of her clothes she wore at university, where she studied for a degree in business administration and graduated in 1995. She recalls: 'I was just interested in making clothes and I didn't go to [dressmaking] class, we used to do the work, I remember, but it wasn't something deep, but I remember wearing my own clothes, even

[559] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 163.

when I went to university. I would just go to the shop, buy fabric, cut it up myself and make my dresses. I wanted to do something with my sewing, because I knew I had the passion.'[560]

After Patema married and had her first son, who has a serious health condition, she gave up her job in business administration to take care of him. She and her family left Malawi (her country of birth) in 2000, due to a work contract her husband received, for Namibia, a more developed country than Malawi and where they hoped to have better medical care for their son. Patema's story revolves around her lifelong interest in becoming a fashion designer and how it eventually materialised, prompted by various life-changing decisions such as moving with her husband to Namibia, quitting her job in business administration to take care of her son and later, attending a Namibian university where she was able to study fashion design and obtain a degree in visual arts.

Patema was born in an independent Malawi, a democratic country with a multi-party political system, and today, Malawi has a female leader, President Joyce Banda. These may be the reasons why I did not sense notable tensions related to postcolonial conditions and feelings of living and existing 'in-between' while I was conversing with Patema. However, I am not suggesting that because Malawi achieved independence earlier than Namibia that Patema (or any other Malawians or victims of colonial regimes) does not have internal challenges related to coming from a country with a colonial history. Another reason why Patema does not explicitly refer to hybrid identities in her stories may be because she feels less 'in-between' due to her racial background which, unlike Ciara's, is not 'mixed'. She identifies with the Tumbuka ethnic identity, an indigenous group that lives in the northern region of Malawi, from which both her parents originate. All individuals have different challenges to negotiate due to their specific life experiences and Patema negotiates her new and hybrid identities in her own particular ways.

Although her decisions often caused internal tensions, in her story her identities as mother and carer are acknowledged and some of her previous identities are revived and reinforced through the rewarding experiences offered through her fashion design activities. In telling her story Patema reveals that the improvement of her son's health condition and the shaping of her career as fashion designer went hand in hand; these two results came about concurrently. This incident is described as 'therapy' for both herself and her son and her decision not to be in paid work was rewarded later in her life when her son's condition improved simultaneously with the development of her career as fashion designer. These experiences allowed the shaping of her identities as a caring, coping mother and a fashion designer, as she explains:

> It has really been rewarding, because for other people it has also been rewarding, to me and my family, my child, taking him for therapies and all that, when I started making clothes, it was therapy for me as well, because that was one thing that was keeping my mind off

[560] Interview Patema, 25 February 2011.

> whatever I was thinking about. But then on top of that it has been rewarding in such a way that, sometimes I walk on the streets and I see my garments. People have worn what I made for them. Sometimes you check in the magazines and you find, oh, wow, this is something that I made and look it's even here. So, to me it's rewarding, because I feel like people are beginning to respect my creativity. So, in such a way I really feel good, because my son is improving and I'm also improving myself. That is on the part of the creativity. And the other one is that, financially, it has also helped me, because now I earn an income. At first I regret that I quit a job, but I don't feel it anymore, because I think it's alright for me.[561]

In Patema's life story care plays a significant role. Her story is an example of how social cohesion and sustainability are supported by care given to another. First of all her care for her son was rewarded when her life unfolded, allowing her to take care of her dream to become a fashion designer. The care given to her fashion design studies and activities were rewarded by her earning an income, which again allowed her to extend her care of her family. The care given to her son also tied her and her family into the bigger Namibian community, because she feels that the care for her son was rewarded by the community's recognition of her fashion designs. Patema's fashion design practices and the rewards she receives from these practices sustain her socially and economically.

A portrait of Andreas

In a small yet neat jewellery studio I find several work stations which I immediately recognise as jewellery benches. Metal structures on the walls carry various grouped tools, artefacts, stacked boxes, tool boxes and raw materials such as aluminium and copper sheets. Beneath one of the work benches is a medium-sized safe which I assume is used to store precious metals and stones. In the farthest corner Andreas is making a pendant. It is a client's consignment. Most of Andrea's income derives from custom-made jewellery that he produces for a broad clientele base in Namibia. Although he has many regular clients, he also produces various ready-made collections in small quantities to sustain his business. He explains to me that he constantly works under time constraints and so he can only grant me an interview while he works. Andreas talks slowly and thoughtfully, concentrating on both his words and the jewellery piece he is fabricating. While he has many clients, Andreas needs to carefully plan the various ready-made jewellery collections he produces around the availability of resources, the fabrication and skills capacities of his assistants, available time and income generated from sales.

Originating from a German-Namibian background, Andreas's career path started when he was introduced to art during middle school. Again, like many interviewees, he was not able to take art as a subject in senior high school because of limitations in the Namibian secondary educational curriculum.

[561] Interview Patema, 25 February 2011.

Due to his father passing away when he was very young, his family was not able to afford sending him to university and therefore he chose to do an apprenticeship at a local jeweller in Namibia. Although he finds business very risky, in hindsight he is glad about his decisions to establish his own jewellery business. When he collaborated with various Namibian fashion designers later in his career, the experience was positive since it got him out of his 'self-established little area'[562] and he continued to take on more risky projects.

Due to Namibia's limited market for custom-made jewellery, Andreas's approach is to offer a wider variety of artefacts and not to concentrate on only one sector of the market. Focused on his career as a jewellery designer, and on his role as chairperson of an emerging designers' association in Namibia, Andreas says: 'I've learned a lot! I'm proud of what I am, of what I'm doing; uhm [...] I think that I do have the ability of being creative plus manufacturing good quality' (*knocks with his finger on his work bench*).[563] The way Andreas speaks and acts, his tapping with his forefinger on the work bench, illustrate his focused approach and his sense of urgency that 'things have to get done' in the Namibian craft and design world.

Although the association's progress is rather slow and steady, he is very committed to his role. Andreas works with emerging designers from various Namibian cultural groups to promote and sustain their artefact making practices through sales and marketing activities. This group functions as a team. Every member has duties depending on their specific and individual talents, expertise and experience. In this way they function more efficiently by sharing and effectively maximising resources. The members do a significant amount of voluntary work to sustain the organisation. Although he is sceptical about the association's growth, he finds it to be an advantage since it offers them more time to 'cast a very strong foundation'. He adds:

> The longer we stick around more confidence other designers will get in us and will maybe one day join and ask us: "OK guys, how do you do it? Why were you able to stick around for so long?" And then from there we will most probably build a strong community and members.[564]

The group spirit and sense of community Andreas shares with his fellow association members is important to him. Additionally, he is focused on sustainable practices and is determined to become a better business manager so that he can lead the organisation: 'I'm a more down-to-*earth* designer or craftsperson. So I'm concentrating *more* on the hands-on issues. I *do* stuff. Physically. So I'm not this academic person sitting in an office running this big association.'[565] Andreas vents his frustrations about his self-presumed lack of skills related to business management, on one occasion he says: 'Sometimes I wish I could be more of a kind-of-like-a business manager or business person, running a

[562] Interview Andreas, 11 February 2011.
[563] Ibid.
[564] Ibid.
[565] Ibid.

big association, getting people together and moving stuff'; at another stage he comments, 'Now I just have to learn how to become a better manager, (*giggle*), *business* manager.'[566]

Andreas reflects, again in a focused manner, on improving the professionalism of the association and its members. Many of the association's members have travelled to attend international marketing platforms and trade fairs. From these international experiences they have learnt that, on the global stage, there is steep competition amongst artefact producers, especially in fashion design, over the volumes and speed of production. An additional problem is that good quality artefacts are offered at competitive prices. To counteract this, specific local marketing strategies should be developed, as local tourist markets have a significant interest in handmade artefacts. Andreas outlines the problem:

> Europe is enough for us to learn that we are *not* prepared, here in Namibia we have this little bubble around us and we call ourselves 'exclusive' and everything is hand-made. [...] We've been in the craft phase now for the last, say let's start with independence, for the last 20 years. Tourists they come here and they like the crafts.[567]

In our conversation Andreas touched on several issues that frustrate him regarding the growth of the emerging designer association and the Namibian craft and design world in general. He describes his vision of more locally focused, sustainable production and explains that Namibian artefact producers and designer-makers have to 'develop concepts that include materials *here* and manufacturing processes that can be done *here*, in such a way that the prices are also compatible.'[568] The exemplary community spirit existing in Andreas's emerging designer association should be extended to intersect with similar 'outside' or global worlds. This will result in a 'connected' Namibian craft and design world, in which the sharing of knowledge, experiences and ideas about sustainable practices could occur and the frustrating 'little bubble' Andreas mentions will become less of a concern.[569]

Conclusion

Namibia's history of 'circular migration' has resulted in connections and interdependence between Namibian urban dwellers and their extended family (in more remote rural areas).[570] Intimate relationships exist between 'rural' and 'urban' Namibian environments. However, significant contrasts

[566] Ibid.
[567] Ibid.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Clemens Greiner, "Migration, Translocal Networks and Socio-Economic Stratification in Namibia," *Africa* 81, no. 4 (2011): 608-9. Greiner defines 'circular migration' as a 'generalized pattern of movement' and characterises an urban-rural process of movement where the protagonist 'stays for shorter periods and intends to return to the usual place of residence'. Since the 1920s, colonial economic regimes 'forced' colonial Namibian rural populations to migrate from their homelands, or designated reserves, to urban areas and farms where they were hired as labourers.

exist in Namibia as they do between most of the world's urban and rural settings. Both rural and urban artefact makers receive noteworthy emotional support, grounding and rewards from their artefact making practices. In contrast to most of the rural craft practitioners (described in previous chapters) who supplemented their income from craft with farming activities, half of the urban participants supplemented their income (from their creative activities) by working as teachers, lecturers or assistants at art schools, colleges and universities in Windhoek. The other half of the participants were able to run their creative businesses on a full time basis due to the bigger local market offered by a larger population with a higher income in an urban setting.

The role of craft production is socially significant, especially in Namibia where it is practiced as an individual and a social activity. Namibian crafts are not usually produced for 'hobby' purposes, but in order to sustain individuals and groups, Namibian craftspeople and designer-makers are active participants in the Namibian economy's informal sector by being productively involved in and performing their daily routines to secure income for themselves and their families. The transcripts of all ten participants' interviews illustrate that both artistic agency and financial responsibilities are the major driving forces for individual practitioners in the urban Namibian craft and design world.

Both Ciara and Andreas reflected on the value of sustainable practices in the Namibian craft and design world by indicating how specific shifts in focus, that include better management and production practices, will assist sustainability. Their focus on growing the local Namibian craft and design world, their focus on the importance of local production, the importance of building sustainable, well-functioning support groups and the connectedness to various global art worlds is notable. These are acknowledged tactics for sustainable practices.[571]

The social sustainability of the Namibian craft and design worlds (i.e. the social benefits and rewards received from artefact-producing activities) can be improved when their social value is widely recognised and supported. All the participant portraits discussed in this chapter, supported by the transcribed data from all the interviews, revealed the significance of craft and design practices in the lives of urban Namibian designer-makers. These practices provide them with emotional support, because they are a means of self-expression and due to the therapeutic benefits repetitive practices such as artefact making offer. Rewards from their making activities include pride in what they are doing and accomplishing; pleasure and creative expression; the opportunity to learn skills and to continue their development as designer-makers and craftspeople; recognition from their clients and customers, the general public, the media and their smaller social groups such as friends and families; and, for some, the financial benefit of earning (additional) income. Some participants relied on their

[571] Kate Fletcher, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys* (London and Sterling: Earthscan, 2008), 144.

creative practices when they had to deal with severe physical and emotional challenges such as coping with serious illness and recovering from it.

However, there were also tensions resulting from participants' creative practices such as constantly having to deal with limited resources. Most participants experienced significant time pressure caused by the many additional activities they had to take on in order to make a living. The amount of time participants spend on their creative practices does not always compensate for the income generated from it, resulting in tensions caused by unmet social and financial expectations. Another source of frustration derived from the expectations clients have towards designer-makers. Many described how clients impose weak design ideas on them, expecting them to create impossible outcomes. It often takes designer-makers significant amounts of effort, time and persuasion to educate their clients. But because custom-made artefacts provide urban designer-makers with a major source of income (an opportunity very few rural artefact makers have), most persevere and stick it out with their clients 'because you want to pay the bills', as Sonene commented.[572]

Many participants are dealing with their own specific postcolonial situations during constant processes of becoming. Their resolutions to often tricky and difficult postcolonial situations are enacted as hybrid identities in fluid environments where they deal with tensions caused by social and personal expectations. Their hybrid identities, resulting from a sense of double consciousness and also unconsciousness, are negotiated as plural and fluid identities. The specificities of their situations are influenced by race, their cultural backgrounds and their personal histories. Postcolonial conditions are intensely complex social realities that Namibian designer-makers have to deal with, but they are not necessarily negative, as Iyall Smith notes.[573] The social realities and social processes related to cultural backgrounds and postcolonial negotiations often impact on Namibian designer-makers' material identities and their artefacts' design styles, which will be the focus of discussion in the next chapter.

[572] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.
[573] Iyall Smith, "Hybrid Identities," 4.

Chapter 8

Portraits of urban Namibian designer-makers: their artefacts and materials

The previous chapter discussed aspects related to social and economic sustainability, as well as various social processes, such as the postcolonial realities designer-makers have to deal with in their lives and artefact making practices. The aim of this chapter is to discuss how these social realities influence Namibian designer-makers' identities in relation to their artefacts' design styles and the materials they use. In this chapter I reflect on four of the five portraits of the previous chapter (7) by taking a closer look at the portraits of Sonene, Ciara, Andreas and Lisa, and I introduce the sixth portrait (Tonata). The five selected portraits in this chapter show how these designer-makers passionately narrated the meanings of their materials, how materials influence their design and making decisions and how they use materials to shape their identities.[574]

Richard Sennett explains that design styles are characteristic and recognisable ways in which artefact designers and craftspeople interpret, express, realise, and establish their unique identities. In the processes of making, a metamorphosis occurs in which materials become a medium for artisans to express their presence in their artefacts; this establishes their identities in recognisable ways to their clients or the wider public.[575] Craftspeople and designers follow certain approaches and procedures by applying particular (combinations of) design elements such as texture, colour, line, shape and form in creating their artefacts. Artefact makers' design styles depend on viewers and consumers being able to recognise the maker's presence in artefacts for their success.

However, designers also need to express who they are on a personal level and so their identities are also established and interpreted in their work in ways that make it recognisable to themselves. Thus design styles and artefacts become mediums of communication to both a wider public and to their creators, because 'craft turns the craftsman outwards'.[576] Designer-makers are confronted with the becoming of their artefacts *and* of their selves in dialogical processes of making. This is how 'internal and external narratives'[577] relate to artefacts and why narratives are crucial in reading and

[574] The portraits presented in Chapter 8 reflect the themes that emerged from the data and that resonated most strongly with the focus of this study. This does not mean that the five interviewees whose portraits are not represented in this chapter did not consider the themes of this chapter in their responses to my questions. Themes such as the role of material use in improvisatory processes emerged, but these themes are in need of further investigation and are beyond the focus of this study. I used all the transcribed data to make the generalizations presented in Chapters 7 and 8 and the Conclusion.
[575] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 120.
[576] Ibid., 288.
[577] Marcus Banks, *Using Visual Data in Qualitative Research,* 52 (London: SAGE, 2007) doi: 10.4135/9780857020260.

understanding artefacts; in this chapter I will examine these narratives to understand the artefacts and the design styles of their makers.

A portrait of Tonata

After Tonata completed high school he was involved in a youth training programme in the mid-northern regions of Namibia where he focused on micro-business development and farming. As leader of the group of trainees, he remained in contact with them even after he commenced a jewellery internship in Windhoek. In this way he also remained connected to his family and cultural traditions. At the moment he sells his artefact collection at a local craft centre. Tonata *is* his materials. He explains their significance to me:

> Now I'm at a point where I'm getting something out of the raw materials. [...] It means a lot to me. I got now two years' experience. More ideas are still coming. Now, I can say, I am thinking also out of the box whereby I am also putting in new ideas, by putting new stuff together. My products are more like a combination of materials: metals and leathers. I just use to think of something before I come to the right materials that I'm going to use as I'm also putting few of the natural stones, leather and aluminium.[578]

The materials relating to Tonata's ethnicity are tied up with his cultural identities and he uses them to interpret and express these ethnic identities. As an Ovambo-Namibian, Tonata gained craft experience at an early age when he created his own toys. He used various kinds of raw materials such as wood, wire and collected metal scraps to produce toy cars. The maximising of resources, re-using and recycling (almost everything) is a practice that is deeply embedded in the practices of rural Namibians in particular (urban artefact makers are gradually adopting re-using practices). Whether textiles, cloth, plastic, metal or wood, what would be considered outdated goods or rubbish in Western societies are highly valued raw materials in rural Namibia.

Such re-use of materials recalls Diana Wood Conroy's description of the collection of recycled and re-used materials by Australian Indigenous artists as 'hunting and gathering in a postcolonial world'.[579] Wood Conroy explains that the use of natural materials blended with collected materials is common amongst the artists, which is similar to the practice of Namibian artefact makers who create their artefacts in postcolonial worlds. In relation to the use of new materials, Nettleton notes that new imported materials and goods have regularly inspired the development and creation of new crafts in

[578] Interview Tonata, 28 January 2011.
[579] Diana Wood Conroy, "Touching the Past: Hunting the Future," in *Floating Life: Contemporary Aboriginal Fibre Art*, ed. Diane Moon (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2009), 30.

Africa.[580] Craftspeople in rural African regions are inventive, while they continue to draw inspiration from and use traditional raw materials and techniques to establish their identities, they are also able to incorporate non-local materials and techniques into their craft practices whether those materials are old or new.

According to Hahn, recycling materials retrieved from 'global goods' (goods without an African origin) into local artefacts is a process during which global goods are made 'local' to suit specific local needs and contexts related to social, cultural, economic and environmental circumstances.[581] This happens because global goods can be quite impersonal (because their makers are not known to the local users) and through processes of material appropriation and transformation, new artefacts are produced.[582] These artefacts show 'new ways of dealing with the familiar', because they are the outcomes of new meanings.[583] Bree Richards acknowledges that the use of recycled materials suggests attitudes of 'resourcefulness and thriftiness' that usually go hand-in-hand with the blending of skills and the ability to translate 'how things were and how they are now.'[584] Artefact-makers who use recycled materials are therefore able to negotiate temporal barriers related to these materials, because they are able to re-imagine new possibilities for 'old' materials.

Jennifer Craft argues that artefacts fabricated from recycled materials allow their makers to explore issues related to their creativity, memories and their environments, because these artefacts receive 'new life' while they maintain 'memories that might be associated with a particular object'.[585] The wire cars Tonata fabricated as a child are an example of inventing new possibilities for 'old' materials. He crossed the temporal barriers that are placed on what is considered 'new' and 'old', because he recycled redundant wire to make new toys in which he invested particular meanings. The 'newness' Tonata is inventing with his recycled materials, that are combined with additional materials, is another way of what Venn describes as 'becoming different'.[586] Tonata's 'becoming different' allows him to cross borders to also *view* (material possibilities) differently. Tonata's contemporary use of materials (see Figure 8.1), such as metals and leathers, many of which, to use Wood Conroy's expression, he hunts and gathers in his postcolonial world, indicates how he carefully selects and combines his materials in keeping with his memories about his resourcefulness as a child.

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[580] Anitra Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu village: Craft and the Art of Modernity in South Africa," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 3, no. 1 (2010): 67.
[581] Hans Peter Hahn, "Global Goods and the Process of Appropriation," in *Between Resistance and Expansion: Explorations Of Local Vitality In Africa*, eds. Peter Probst and Gerd Spittler (Brunswick and London: Münster, Transaction Publishers, 2004), 213-14.
[582] Ibid., 218 and 220
[583] Ibid., 216 and 227.
[584] Bree Richards, "Lorraine Connelly-Northey: Revisioning the Past," in *Floating Life*, ed. Moon, 101-02.
[585] Jennifer Craft, "The Art of Recycling in Southern Folk Traditions," *Transpositions*, the official blog of the Institute for Theology, Imagination, and the Arts at the University of St Andrews, accessed September 22, 2013, http://www.transpositions.co.uk/2011/02/the-art-of-recycling-in-southern-folk-traditions/.
[586] Couze Venn, "Aesthetics, Politics, Identity: Diasporic Problematisations," *Critical Arts*, 24, no. 3 (2010): 322-323.

Tonata found it very difficult to develop his design style: 'Maybe for the first three months I didn't get any complete idea. I used to make a lot of things, but I just ended up without the right product.'[587] In our conversation I asked Tonata which elements constitute his identities and he indicated that identities tied up in his ethnicity, race and language are key aspects guiding his material choices and design style:

> I can just mention a few, eh, skin colour, language that I'm speaking, the behaviour: *how* I used to be with those other people. Ja, I'm Oshivambo-speaking. As I'm doing now, I'm designing something, I think more like me, how the materials, how we the Ovambos are using, or what materials I can get there in the northern region of our country, where I am from. Just to mention, I can put together stuff like the Ovambo use, like Ondelela, they use leather. Also, what the Ovambo or the Himba [people] wear.[588]

Materials and the symbolism and meanings connected to materiality are important influences tied up in Tonata's work and identities, specifically his cultural identities. He mentions mopane wood, makalani palms, *ondelela* textiles, leather, porcupine quills and copper during our conversation. Unsurprisingly, these are all materials that have significant meanings for someone of his cultural background. He is convinced that his clients connect certain 'beliefs', or meanings to the pieces they buy from him in the craft centre where he sells his artefacts. His clients are 'somebody that would like to have such piece of ah, jewellery, maybe with a certain belief,'[589] he says. In our conversation he does not refer to the meanings connected to shapes, techniques or design styles, but to the meanings his clients attach to the raw materials he uses.

Tonata also attaches considerable meaning to specific raw materials that are culturally significant to him. For example, he explains that:

> [In] Ovambo traditions the elder people understand that copper can also prevent some lightning. If I'm just to make something out of copper, somebody will buy it, would like to have it with the same belief maybe that copper can also maybe prevent lightning, or maybe some sickness in my body.[590]

Tonata's referring to an old Ovambo belief that copper 'prevents lightning' is supported by the high thermal and electrical conductivity of copper; it attracts lightning to a specific area, keeping the

[587] Interview Tonata, 28 January 2011.
[588] Ibid.
[589] Ibid.
[590] Ibid.

surroundings safe from lightning strikes. His traditional belief that copper prevents illness is the topic of some current nutritional research.[591]

It is not surprising that both Tonata's craft practices and raw materials carry significant meaning for him. As a child he learned how precious both raw materials and his skills were and that without them, he was not able to create his toy cars. As a jewellery craftsman and designer, he fabricates bracelets (such as those in Figure 8.1) from recycled (yet valued) aluminium, leather and porcupine quills, materials which he 'hunts and gathers' in a postcolonial Namibian environment.[592] The way in which he alternates the black leather and porcupine quills, framed by the aluminium sides and thus creating a sophisticated graphic appearance, illustrates that careful thought and planning were invested in creating these artefacts. The aluminium was shaped by a hammering technique.



Figure 8.1 Aluminium bracelets made and designed by Tonata with leather and porcupine quill inlays, 2011 (dimensions: 21 cm x 4 cm). Photograph by the author.

[591] Luc Djoussé, "An Answer to Leslie Klevay, Copper in Chocolate May Improve Health," Clinical Nutrition 31, no. 1 (2012): 149; Christi Hanson, "Copper," *Better Nutrition* 68, no. 4 (2006): 18.
[592] Diana Wood Conroy, "Touching the Past", 30.

During our conversation Tonata states that 'what I'm doing is craft', working with his hands and with natural materials, or, as he says: 'valuable raw materials'.[593] He also explains that he does not consider himself a goldsmith, but that he sees himself as a craftsman, because 'I'm not at the point yet where I can make this professional fine stuff'.[594] Reflecting on his phrase 'fine stuff' I realise he refers not only to 'fine' (i.e. delicate and fiddly) techniques, but more likely to 'fine' raw materials such as precious metals and stones, because this is *who* Tonata is. Because of the way he sees them, the materials' value and meanings change. What is often considered as 'meaningless', trash, recycled materials, become 'valuable' materials, and precious materials become 'fine' in his eyes.

Sonene's portrait: second panel[595]

During Sonene's final year of graduate studies one of her lecturers encouraged her to do creative research on Namibian cultural influences. Sonene returned to the villages where she grew up and interviewed several elders in an attempt to document traditional Kavango techniques for dyeing fibres and textiles. Here she came in contact with traditional artefacts such as Kavango baskets, woodcarving and pots which became sources of inspiration for her textile designs. Sonene's cultural background, her contact with Kavango artefacts, Kavango elders and their stories from her ethnic community shaped her design style. She says:

> *Ja*, and most of the times I try to reflect my own identity as a Namibian-Kavango, as a woman. [...] I get [these motifs] from traditional baskets that the Ovambo and the Kavango people do and the traditional clay pots that the Kavango and Ovambo people do. They're normally very bold and they're very systematic next to each other, eh, in a very registered manner, but I never really try to use it in the same way. I'll take it, but play around with the repetition just to come up with something different. So sometimes it looks very distorted, but if you look very closely to the motif and the print you will actually realise where I got the print [from].[596]

The following images (see Figures 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5) show the use of triangular, crossed line and diamond shapes in Kavango, Caprivi and Ovambo woodcarving and basket weaving. Symbols, patterns and materials used in crafts from the northern regions of Namibia often travel over cultural boundaries and so similarities are often found in crafts produced in the Zambezi, Kavango, Ovambo and Kunene (where most Himba people live) regions. The Kavango woodcarvings show diamond-shaped faces and the use of diagonal lines to fill negative spaces between the carved faces. Facial

[593] Interview Tonata, 28 January 2011.
[594] Ibid.
[595] I use the term 'second panel' to connote a diptych to the portraits of Sonene, Ciara, Andreas and Lisa, the first panels were described in Chapter 7.
[596] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.

features are noticeably and repetitively triangular, even though they have softened edges in the carved facial features. The miniature *mokoros* (traditional transportation vessels for efficient travelling in the water-rich areas of northern Namibia, created by hollowing tree trunks) have 'painted' triangular shapes and crossing lines as decoration.[597] A diamond-shaped pattern also featured in several baskets from various northern regions in Namibia.

Influences and patterns deriving from Kavango clay pots, wood carvings and baskets such as those in Figures 8.2 to 8.6 are reworked in Sonene's new textile designs (see Figure 8.7 and 8.8). Diagonal shapes with crossing lines are reinterpreted into playful linking 'chains' that are cleverly spaced and crossed so that her textile designs have a dynamic feel. Patterns 'move' playfully all over the surface connecting with the background and each other, they form relationships to one another due to Sonene's placement of the pattern 'chains'. The background textile, cotton, is dyed with traditional Kavango dyes following recipes she developed during her graduate studies.

Sonene not only draws her inspiration from her Kavango culture, but also from other northern Namibian cultures as she feels 'there are quite a lot of things that are quite similar.'[598] In a multicultural society like Namibia, individuals live, work and function in multicultural realities; this means that individuals are often in contact with others from different cultural groups and therefore many influences cross cultural boundaries to become intermixed cultural elements in both rural and urban settings. The overlap of influences, symbols and patterns as illustrated in the images above (Figures 8.2 – 8.6), are also present in Sonene's artefacts. In her textile design, for example, Sonene uses Himba metal beads, sewn onto her textile with a vibrant, subtly contrasting blue thread. These beads are shaped by Himba blacksmiths from wire that is softened and then shaped in hot coals over an open fire. Thereafter the beads are individually filed to obtain their facetted appearance. Although this textile looks crisp, it is soft due to the many dyeing and boiling processes it underwent. The weight of the beads gives Sonene's textile superb draping qualities.

[597] The decoration might also be burned into the wood, using a similar method to the one T'cise followed in creating his tortoises, as described in Chapter 5, pp. 153-157.
[598] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.



Figure 8.2

Kavango woodcarving, maker unknown, kiaat wood, sold at a craft stall next to the B1 road at Keetmanshoop, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 420x3500mm). Photograph by the author.



Figure 8.3 Miniature *mokoros*, Kavango and Caprivi woodcarving, makers unknown, kiaat and wood from the tall common commiphora, sold at Kangola Crafts in Divundu, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: various). Photograph by the author.



Figure 8.4

This Ovambo basket (left image) has a woven diamond-shaped pattern surrounding a star design, sewn in the *ompampa* technique, sold at the Ondangwa Craft Centre, Namibia. Maker unknown, makalani palm fibre, 2011 (dimensions: 18 cm diameter). Photograph by the author.



Figure 8.5

Kavango and Caprivi baskets (right image) are woven with diamond-shaped patterns, oversewn over two coils. Maker: E. Kambonda, sold at the Katima Craft Centre, makalani palm fibre and recycled plastic, Namibia, 2011 (dimensions: 51 cm diameter). Photograph by the author.



Figure 8.6 A collection of Caprivi and Kavango baskets displayed at the Katima Crafts Centre in Katima Mulilo. The names of makers and the villages where baskets are made are indicated on small paper tags that are attached to every basket, 2011 (dimensions: various). Photograph by the author.

Sonene's textile designs not only reflect her ethnicity, but they are outcomes of moments in which she needed to ground herself in knowing who she is and where she comes from. Her textiles are created and negotiated in these moments of identity making when she turns herself 'outward'.[599] It is a matter of 'discovering' her cultural background through her textiles and her craft.[600] Due to the contemporary feeling of her textiles, it is evident that Sonene uses her artworks to bring together her present and her pasts, her crossings between her cultural consciousness and her modern life in a hybrid creative space that allows her to make sense of her life.

In this particular textile (Figures 8.7 and 8.8), Sonene layers Namibian cultural references including the silk screen pattern that derives from Kavango baskets and pots, the use of bird plum, or brown ivory (*Berchemia discolour*)[601] bark to colour her textile and the use of Himba beads. Her textile has narrative potential, because it comments on how Namibian ethnic groups have overlapping

[599] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 288.
[600] Ibid., 128.
[601] Ben-Erik van Wyk and Nigel Gericke, *People's Plants – a Guide to Useful Plants of Southern Africa* (Pretoria: Briza Publications, 2007), 248. The roots, bark and fruits of bird plum are widely used in southern Africa by many ethnic groups who use parts of the tree to colour plant fibres and leather. The bird plum is used to create brown-reddish and orange colours. The bird plum has become a scarce resource in Botswana due to its use in colouring palm fibres for basket weaving. The extent to which the use of natural dyes has an impact on the Namibian environment has yet to be considered and researched.

similarities; although many Namibian ethnicities are believed to be very different from one another, Sonene does not share this view because she discovered so many overlapping cultural features amongst Namibian ethnic groups during her final graduate design project. In a later conversation I had with Sonene, she explains that her newly developed textiles carry the title *Perunda*, a Kavango word which refers to a place where people who have travelled from different locations come to live together in an informal settlement. Through her textiles she hopes to narrate her belief that Namibians should recognise their similarities instead of focusing on their differences.

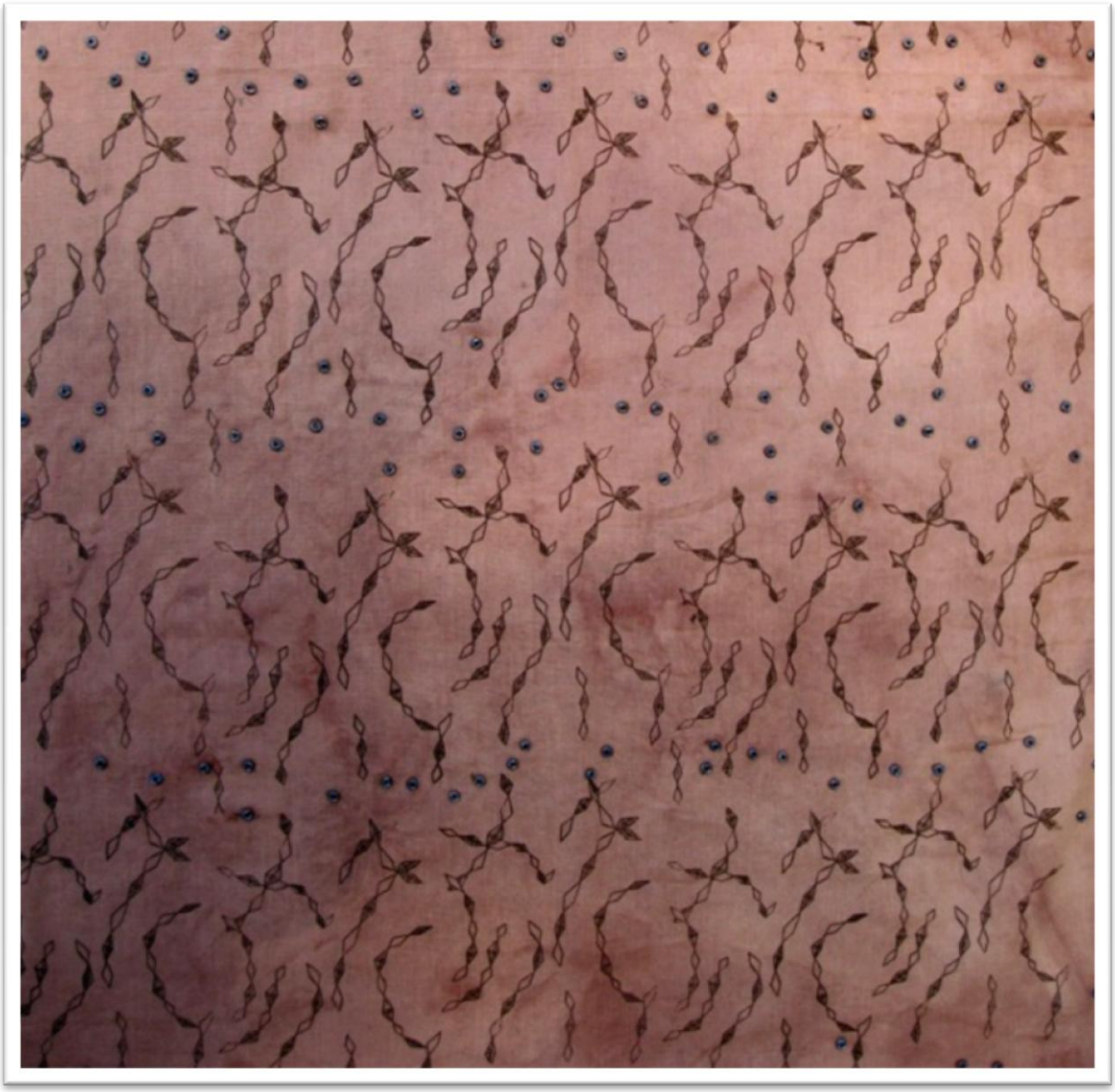



Figure 8.7 and 8.8 Sonene's textile design (p. 249) and a close-up image thereof, screen print on naturally dyed cotton textile with metal Himba beads that are usually made from fencing wire, 2005 (dimensions: 120 x 90 cm). Photograph by Attila Giersch.

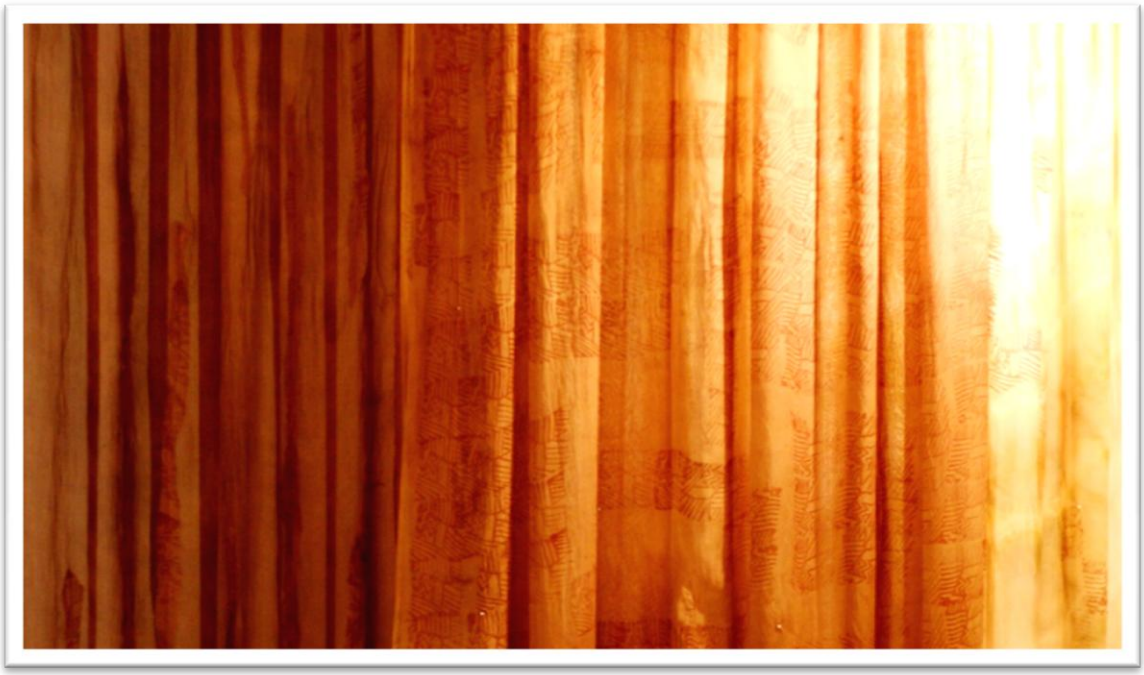

Figure 8.9 Silk textiles, titled *Perunda,* created by Sonene, 2013 (dimensions: 140 x 195 cm). These light, almost floating silk chiffon textiles are dyed with combinations of bird plum, beet root and indigo. Wood blocks, carved by Kavango wood carvers, were used to print the patterns on the textiles with red ochre paste. Embellishments such as golden yarn, appliqué and beads were used to include layers of cultural references. Photograph by the author.

Another traditional artefact Sonene uses in her work are bangles carved with geometric patterns and symbols that are created from recycled PVC (polyvinyl chloride) pipes. Sonene tells me how this craft technique continues to be practiced despite a lack of ivory, the traditional material, which carvers from the northern regions of Namibia used to use for these artefacts. Artefacts, such as bracelets and the *omakipa eendjaba,*[602] a traditional 'button' with symmetrical patterns carved from ivory, were used on traditional belts and stringed necklaces. Due to Namibia's elephant populations, ivory used to be widely available to Namibian people and was also accessible through trade with people from neighbouring African counties.[603] Sonene explains:

> I also use this PVC bracelet that normally the Ovahimba, the Kavango and the Ovambo from Namibia wear around their wrists and I cut them up into small like buttons and I put them onto T-shirts and some garments that I make, and a lot of people who've been here they can relate to it because they can see the part of the bracelet and they feel: "OK, wearing it in a garment it's something different." In the beginning I think they used to wear ivory bracelets, but because of, of all the laws against using ivory and so forth, and also the recycled culture that is coming in, so people started using the PVC pipes (probably from constructors), it's a story of how something that's really traditional has changed now over years, that now they are actually a modern material which is PVC pipe, but still carving it and making African patterns on it. So I believe that is telling a story how culture just lives through time. [...] Uh, using this PVC pipe, it's something that is very modern, it is recycled-green, everything going green, but uh, Namibians, we've started using this for ages now, uh, using recycled pipes and making them into something very African or something that's quite traditional. Uh, at the same time it's a global trend, so I think my products tell a story of how unique but yet similar [they are] to other global trends are in the design [world].[604]

After ivory became unavailable and difficult to access, *omakipa eendjaba* carvers continued to use their skills to carve different materials such as recycled PVC originating from plastic pipes. This solution, to find an alternative material for the production of traditional accessories, resulted in the continuation of an ancient Namibian skill. These PVC bracelets and buttons have a distinctly contemporary appearance due to the use of a modern material. Sonene's story of PVC *omakipa*

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[602] Napandulwe Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," in *The Long Aftermath of War: Reconciliation and Transition in Namibia,* eds. Andre du Pisanie, Reinhart Kössler and William A. Lindeke (Freiburg: Arnold-Bergstrasser Institut, 2010), 259.

[603] Travel News Namibia, Archives 2002, *Ivory in Namibia: Renewed Efforts to Lift the Ban*, accessed November 21, 2012, http://travelnewsnamibia.com/archives/conservation-magazine/lift-ivory-ban/; Panapress, Afrik-News, August 21, 2008, "Ban on All Ivory Products in Namibia", accessed November 22, 2012, http://www.afrik-news.com/article14314.html. The production of the *omakipa eendjaba* cultural artefact declined gradually after the world ivory ban was implemented in 1989. In 2008 a ban on all ivory products followed in Namibia after the country fought for an internationally approved ivory trade quota until 2004. This decision was made by the Namibian government after various *omakipa eendjaba* originating from unknown ivory were sold in Namibia. Every *omakipa eendjaba* sold in Namibia is government certified and *omakipa eendjaba* traders, carvers and jewellers have to be registered with the Namibian government.

[604] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.

eendjaba carving reveals how Namibian craftspeople are using modern materials and old techniques to create 'new' artefacts; it illustrates how craftspeople and designers like her reinvent, reinterpret and redesign traditional influences into their artefacts, allowing them to move into transitional spaces where they can have connections to the various cultural worlds they live in. This replacement of an old, unsustainable raw material by a new one that is in plentiful supply also supports Namibia's environmental conservation objectives.



Figure 8.10 PVC bracelets decorated with engravings in black ink. When these PVC bracelets are made by Himba craftspeople they often use reddish-brown ochre called *otjize* (in the Kwanyama language this reddish-brown ochre is referred to as *olukula*[605]), to colour the PVC, 2011 (dimensions: 7 cm diameter, with various widths ranging from 1 cm to 5 cm). Photograph by the author.

Ciara's portrait: second panel

In the previous chapter the tensions that Ciara experiences in relation to her hybrid identities were discussed. Although she has had many successes in her fashion design career, she bravely reflected on issues related to her identities that she finds confusing and complex. Her postcolonial situations, her hybrid identities and living her life in the constant complexities and conflicts resulting from social expectations all have a significant influence on her design styles. These are often brave and bold fashion statements, similar to how she verbally expresses her severe subjective turmoils and her inner conflicts:

[605] Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," 260.

> I think I am still very confused about *my* design identity. I think I'm still developing and I know there are definite threads and elements that people can see that is [my design], but personally I'm still battling because I'm still very confused about what I want to do sometimes, but yet, I think, uh, it always leads to the same things. I love, uh, call it "feminine, elegantly sexy". I do not like to do conservative clothing. It's always got a little bit of edge to it and then I would say that my design style could probably be described as uh, a little bit Rock-Goth-Afro, so, it's got all these elements in one and that is me as a designer. I always try to work along these lines.[606]

In many of Ciara's collections she risks new approaches, yet she is often not convinced about how her design identities materialise and how she translates them. Reflecting on a recent collection, she says:

> The challenge was to design something really 100 per cent Namibian, but if you look at the design *style* of the clothing, I really was successful in making it [my design]. The design *style* is very sexy and very edgy and unique, uh, whereas the material is maybe something that is a little bit ... not me.[607]

The complexities and specificities related to Ciara's design style, and how she overlaps them, allowing them to flow so that they become a hybrid 'her', are well illustrated in her stories. In this way Ciara attempts to make sense of her self and her design identities – by expressing them in styles and approaches. In her 'Namibian' collection she feels the material is not expressing who she is.

Ciara's design styles will always remain fluid, as she explains:

> I am still evolving and still developing and still discovering a lot about myself through challenges and through maybe situations that you face. [...] I think I will have an identity crisis for the rest of my life, because I will forever be evolving and ever be changing, because that's how you stay current, relevant and unique. You have to constantly change. I think that I do have certain elements that will for always be part of my identity.'[608]

Therefore, Ciara deals with her often conflicting identities by utilising the dynamic potential of her hybrid and ever-changing identities to stay 'relevant' in the Namibian design world. Ciara's narrative indicates the tensions and conflicts she experiences as part of her narrative identity. In her story she explains that some of her design elements remain constant while others will always change. This is an example of her ipse and idem identities[609] at work and how they are realised in her design processes, expressed in her design styles. What Ciara refers to as an 'identity crisis' that she will always have to

[606] Interview Ciara, 2 February 2011.
[607] Ibid.
[608] Ibid.
[609] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 114-116.

deal with, is the (often severe) tensions that occur when individuals have to negotiate, or 'balance', their ipse and idem identities in order to shape their narrative identities. Narrative identity assists individuals, to a greater or lesser extent, to make sense of life.



Figure 8.11

This fashion ensemble by Ciara is a dress with a layered skirt from various textured materials and a laced corset. Pho-tograph by Noël Pelegrin, 2009.

Stark contrasts exist between Ciara's collections (compare Figure 8.11 with 8.12), but she feels they allow her to maintain a competitive 'edge' in the Namibian design world by keeping her audiences interested in her work. In Figure 8.12 we see fashion where Ciara's aim was to create a collection in which she used 'essentially' local Namibian raw materials, design and labour. She, however, was not

convinced that she liked the textiles or that they reflected her design identities as she had envisaged them. She finds that this collection's elegant, feminine and revealing elements are better interpretations of who she is, but that the materials are too distanced from her usual material choices such as 'leather 'n lace'. But changing and expanding her approaches to materials and techniques are important to her because she feels that her presence in her collections can be illustrated in ways other than her choice of materials.

In her 'Namibian' collection, Ciara uses interesting construction techniques and attention to details such as soft ruching, draping, soft tie belts, fringing, lacing and the clever use of volume to create a feminine appearance in this collection (see Figure 8.12). Softness is contrasted with large, chunky leather totes and eye-catching jewellery made by Namibian accessory and jewellery designers with whom she regularly cooperates to show Namibian fashion at international fashion events. In this collection, makalani nuts, springbok and various game leather, as well as ostrich eggshell beads, were used to add 'essentially' Namibian elements to the collection and accessories.



Figure 8.12

Ciara's fashion design: soft, flowing and feminine dress created from natural linen and cotton textiles. Photograph by Simon Dieter, 2010.

In Ciara's previous collections (Figure 8.11) she used dramatic colour combinations such as black and white, red and black and purple and black to express the 'Rock' elements she identifies with. However, her use of leather, combined with soft chiffons and sheer organza, the soft ruching and volume-creating elements she also used in these collections, illustrate how particular and similar elements, or idem identities, are repeated in Ciara's design style through which she is able to translate identities that are 'true' to her. Although Ciara lives with constant change and conflict, she admits that she benefits from her hybridity and her identity fluxes because they allow her to be a unique fashion designer. Change is *who* she is and this is how it 'has' to be for her. Ciara's hybrid and fluxing identities are signalled in the wide-ranging influences and textiles she uses in her work. However, there are more stagnant or grounding idem-identities that make her design style recognisable to her audiences in spite of her many experimentations and new approaches to her materials and techniques. All her identities are in one way or another signalled in her designs, illustrating her presence in the fashion she designs that strut local and global catwalks.

Andreas's portrait: second panel

During our conversation Andreas fabricates a jewellery piece from silver, gold and a semi-precious stone. The stone is not very valuable, he explains, but it has significant meaning for his client since she received the stone from her deceased mother. Aware of the emotional attachment and personal meaning invested by people in artefacts, he explains how he perceives his jewellery:

> You get clients who say: "OK, I have this and this stone, because it symbolises this" or "It's my birth stone", or whatever. I don't even look at that. For me it's just my shapes, my use of metal and surface, but I don't really have a symbol or symbolic attachment to my jewellery pieces.[...] Basically what people like is the feel of the piece of jewellery I think. It is just something that is in line with their taste. How they dress, and maybe colour, they associate with the colour most of the time, the colour of a *stone* that attracts the client's attention. Or the one likes silver and the other one likes gold, uh, the one likes big chunky pieces, the other one likes a fine piece, but it seldom is symbolism.[610]

Materials are crucial in Andreas' design style and design processes. He not only draws his inspiration for new designs from them, but when he speaks about his designs and what people like about them, he mostly refers simultaneously to materials and design elements that signify his design style. When he makes a new artefact, he starts with the raw material; a point many Namibian designer-makers made during our conversations. Andreas explains his process:

[610] Interview Andreas, 11 February 2011.

> Well, first of all I collect the material, something that draws my attention and I have this first thought: "Ah, I can make something from that." The material feels like this and this and I expect the material to react in this and this way, nuh? If I pick up a piece of plastic I feel it, I see it's transparent, I know that it will melt at a low temperature, it becomes flexible and you can shape it. Then there is a very long phase of thinking, then the stuff just lies around, I shift it from corner to corner, the stuff is just cluttering the studio. I have a bag of makalani [nuts] standing down there, uh, and I want to do a lot with that material. I experimented a little already.[611]

How the materials feel, how they appear to be from close investigations and the expectations they raise in designer-makers' minds are important triggers allowing creative 'ah ha' moments, thoughts and emotions that guide processes. Andreas also needs to share some time with raw materials, to allow thinking about them, feeling them while they co-inhabit his working spaces. He has an intense interest in makalani nuts, also referred to as 'vegetable ivory', which are a traditional material associated with northern Namibian cultures. Andreas showed me how he used oven-roasting to change the colours of these nuts to interesting shades of gold and brown.

Although the qualities of materials are significant in shaping Andreas's design style, he also acknowledges that his social status, age and standing as a jewellery designer influence his material choices. 'I work more with *silver*', he says,

> whereas another established jeweller who is much older and has a lot of money in the bank account, he works with 18 carat *gold* and big *diamonds*. So that is *his* material that he is trading in [...] and so it influences my identity, so my collection is more a silver jewellery collection.[612]

In other words, Andreas suggests silver is 'his' material and *who* he is.

During our conversation Andreas reflects on his design style and he indicates that not only materials, but also the influences from his master goldsmith, with whom he worked together in a professional relationship over a period of four years during his apprenticeship, have an impact on his design style. Additionally, his ongoing battle with minimal resources, especially working under time constraints, impacts on his design style.

> My identity was basically shaped by my master goldsmith and you can still see today, although I did change a little bit, but the way that I work and the way that I put and construct my things together is how I was taught. So I still make things that most probably look not the same, but have the same feeling as where I have learned. [...] Uhm, and then on the other

[611] Ibid.
[612] Ibid.

> hand, because of the lack of time, I'm not going to sit down and waste my time with constructing a extremely difficult, complicated, detailed, "*filigraan*" [filigree] thing. I will stick to what I'm doing at the moment: big surfaces, plus big stone, simplistic, keep the work process so that you can construct the piece in 24 hours, because you have to run again and do something else. It's whatever circumstances you live in the moment that shapes the identity of your work.[613]

My questions about symbols and stories did not reverberate with him. Although many participants comfortably conversed about their use and value of signs and stories in their artefacts, three Namibian designer-makers said that their use of signs and stories occurs unconsciously and instinctively, 'distilled by practice rather than by theory.'[614] Andreas explains his position on artefacts' stories:

> But it's purely for marketing reasons of course, it's [stories are] exploited for that alone and, uh, well I can do the same, if I want to with any piece. I mean, inventing stories is easy, it doesn't even have to be the original story of a piece, but you have to see what the clientele reacts to, nuh? It is getting the connection closer to the consumer's passion for the piece, having the story.[615]

Jo-Ann Archibald reminds us that stories help people to 'feel, think and be'.[616] Andreas feels distanced from symbols and stories, yet on the other hand he values the 'feel' of artefacts, and therefore, his symbol-using processes occur unconsciously.[617]

Andreas understands his artefacts to be what they are. He wants them to find their own stories and meanings. His clients have to relate to his artefacts according to their tastes, the way his artefacts appear and are received. He wants his clients to relate to their 'feel', yet, as he mentions, he thinks his clients rarely attach symbolic meanings to his artefacts. Andreas' artefacts are, however, loaded with symbolism as I will demonstrate below. The way I understand Andreas' attitude to his artefacts is that he wishes their users to attach their own meanings to his artefacts, because he values stories relating to artefacts for their ability to convey meanings through intended messages; but he does not want to impose his 'easy stories' on his clients. Also, like many other interviewees, he recognises the significant value of stories for marketing purposes.

Apart from producing luxury jewellery, Andreas also designs a second, more experimental line of jewellery that has a similar style to his goldsmith signature collection. This more experimental

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[613] Ibid.
[614] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 128.
[615] Interview Andreas, 11 February 2011.
[616] Jo-Ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 11, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/unisaau/Doc?id=10348906&ppg=11.
[617] Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, ed. John Freeman (New York: Dell, 1964), 3-8. Jung explains that symbols are 'vague' and they imply hidden realities. Therefore, they are closely connected to feelings, emotions and unconscious rather than cognitive processes. I am using the term 'symbol' in the Jungian sense.

collection, a ready-made, more affordable fashion jewellery series made in small quantities, is based on a particular raw material, aluminium that looks similar to silver, although it has different qualities and requires different fabrication techniques. The artefacts Andreas makes for both his collections are strong pieces, and he says 'I'm definitely not the fine diamond, "*filigraan thingetjies*" that would break apart if you just look at them.'[618] Below (Figure 8.13) is an artefact from Andreas's goldsmith signature collection, illustrating the bold dimensions and lines he identifies with.

His design style is recognised for his use of 'unusual' Namibian-sourced raw materials such as organic plant materials, horn, leather, stone, ostrich eggshell, and wood in combination with metals such as aluminium, silver, oxidised copper, but he also uses gold, palladium and platinum sparingly. Many of the raw materials he chooses to work with have cultural references for indigenous Namibian groups. However, when Andreas uses them, they are reinterpreted in the hybrid space he occupies where his materials blend as his identities do. Due to his artefacts being representations of his hybrid realities, Andreas is reluctant to claim that his artefacts have any symbolic significance other than those his clients wish to bestow on them. He experiments with processes, materials and ideas because he believes, like Ciara, that it advances his contemporary jewellery design practices. His vibrant outlook is evident in how he blends local and global design traditions related to materials and techniques.

Andreas describes his design style as having 'a certain look; it's very strong, it's very masculine, big pieces, rough lines ... or I would say strong lines.'[619] This piece (Figure 8.13) is heavy, supported by a cluster of wire necklaces to be worn on the base of the neck. There is nothing insipid about this piece. It is strong and profound. The cold feel of the silver metal and organic shell is neutralised by the warm colours of the gold and the stone, a red-orange garnet. A bold, dynamic combination of angular and round shapes enhances the piece's interest. The organic shapes and textures in this pendant are inspired by Namibia's natural environment; a theme Andreas admits influences his work significantly. The surface of the silver setting is textured, creating additional warmth by not appearing reflective and shiny. The shapes remind me of Namibian flora, such as the winding leaves of the ancient *Welwitschia mirabilis*, and the shapes of Namib sand dunes.

The *eemba* (Figure 8.13) is carved from the *Conus betulinus*, a shelled sea snail. The shells, collected on the northern Namibian and south Angolan Atlantic shores, are carved to preserve their spiral pattern. They are also passed on from one generation to another. In this way they carry ancient histories and stories about individuals and families; they also often have individual stories connected to them to keep the memories of previous generations and their traditions alive. An *eemba* symbolises wealth and status in several Namibian cultures and is used as a traditional accessory amongst the Kavango, Ovambo and Ovahimba cultures by both men and women. Usually women from rich, high status families wear clusters of *eemba* around their hips on leather belts, aprons, necklaces, as

[618] Interview Andreas, 11 February 2011.
[619] Ibid.

accessories in their hair styles and as body adornment.[620] The *eemba*'s traditional use as a symbol of social status is embedded in Andreas's artefact. Spirals deriving from shells are accepted to symbolise eternity across many cultures. Andreas created a second spiral in silver, situated on top of the *eemba* carrying the garnet and around the stone setting and over the silver he created a third spiral in gold. Although these repetitive elements create rhythm, Andreas (unconsciously) emphasised the spiral by leaving his mark and his presence on the *eemba*.[621] Therefore, Andreas personalised the *eemba*, its meaning and, to a certain extent, its symbolism. This artefact was created as an accessory for a client's wedding gown.



Figure 8.13 Andreas designed and created this silver and gold pendant with an *eemba*[622] shell and orange garnet, 2011 (dimensions: 60 mm diameter). Photograph by the author.

Andreas's strong and perhaps masculine design style is expressed in the artefact's size, weight and strong lines, but his cultural background is reflected in the materials he uses, such as gold, silver and

[620] Anneliese Scherz, Ernst R. Scherz, Gabriel B. Taapopi and Antje Otto, *Hair-styles, Head-dresses and Ornaments in Namibia and Southern Angola* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 1981), 21-22.
[621] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 120.
[622] Shiweda, "Towards a Visual Construction of Omhedi," 259.

semi-precious stones, and the goldsmith traditions he learned and still uses, in a focused and determined manner, from his German-Namibian master goldsmith. However, Andreas also uses various natural and traditional Namibian materials that have significant cultural meanings. Whether on a conscious or unconscious level, Andreas often enhances these materials' traditional cultural meanings when he incorporates them in his artefacts. This is unsurprising, and a result of him living his life in multicultural environments where meanings overlap.

Lisa's portrait: second panel

Lisa feels that her identity as a potter is shaped by the many different influences she has experienced since she was a young child living in Africa, as she explains:

> The identity I have now obviously derives from all the experiences I've had and all the things that I've seen, that I've noticed, you notice everything that you see and you've sort of recorded. I suppose I've seen African pots all through my life, being used, and I've had them and so I suppose that's where my identity comes from, through all those things that you see. And then on the other side of the African me you've got the English-European side which has all those traditional potters in England.[623]

Lisa is emotionally attached to her childhood memories of African pots and this theme features very strongly in her practices. 'I've used African pots for my basic inspiration', she says, 'because I love the African pots and the fact that they're used and they hold things. But then I've sort of changed them and altered them and of course the gourds the Africans choose go along with the pots, the shapes of them.'[624] African symbols and themes feature in her work regularly, for example, the shapes of gourds, African snuff boxes, and symmetrical African patterns are recurring motifs.

The tensions and complexities caused by Lisa's life in various African states, where she experienced colonialism, Apartheid and postcolonial transitions, influence her practices and material choices as a potter. She sees it this way:

> And there's these two sides and they fight for attention, I suppose. It's actually a sort of, hmm, an argument, I suppose, between the African side and the English side because I like porcelain and I love porcelain. I've worked in porcelain for a bit, you know the fineness and the wonderful quality of that, which is totally different from the African earthenware, so those two fight a little bit, because I like them both.[625]

[623] Interview Lisa, 29 January 2011.
[624] Ibid.
[625] Ibid.

Lisa's pots, her creative outcomes, are *who* she is. Her attitudes to her pottery can be described as anthropomorphic; the outcomes are personalised by her giving human qualities to her artefacts, referring to them as parts of her self, which is why she cares where they go after they leave her studio.[626] Irrespective of the material she used for a specific pot, whether it is porcelain or clay, she acknowledges that she needs to allow both these materials to be part of her pots and parts of her since each of them nurtures specific cultural meanings from her two 'worlds', African and European. In explaining the connections between her practice and her identity, Lisa says:

> Pottery gives me an identity I suppose. Uhm, my identities of my pots, they're all little bits of me, so I want them to go somewhere nice. They explain who I am, but then they take on their own sort of feeling, depending on what they are. Hmm, you know, they're all are little, little parts of me.[627]

On the one hand Lisa strongly identifies with her creative practices and her pots. On the other, Lisa feels that the people who use her pots have to be able to relate to them. Therefore, the materials she works with and her design style are important in achieving those aims, as she makes clear:

> I mean bowls are for putting in cupboards therefore eating ice cream out of, you know? And I mean they're supposed to, I mean they must feel good when you use them or cups or whatever. So if you don't get that feeling of enjoyment out of something you use, why use it? Really? [...] It's nice to feel and the shape's good and it gives you a good feeling when you pick it up. Hopefully the people who buy these things are people who can, hmm, feel a sort of familiarity with them. And I think I get along with the people so I hope they like it because it's one of mine. Like I have pots that come from different people and I use them and enjoy them because I think "Oh, this is a bit of them."[628]

During our conversation I asked Lisa whether her artefacts tell stories. She answered by telling me a story about one of her artefacts which was inspired by winds blowing sand. For me, this story evokes her life story and how she was blown by the winds of circumstances, destiny and personal choices, through the deserts and landscapes of Africa.

> Hmm...ok. (Lisa gets an artefact from the room next door.) Hmmm, this is a good story I suppose. (She puts a long necked, gourd-shaped pot between us on the table. See Figure 8.15.) So that one was about the vibrations of the desert, and about the way the sand gets blown and makes ridges against the textures of the, the ... or the non-texture of the sand dunes themselves. So it was the story of what happens to the sand, uhm, when it gets blown. It can

[626] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 120.
[627] Interview Lisa, 29 January 2011.
[628] Ibid.

start off smooth, but as it gets blown it gets, it makes patterns and ridges. So it's a small story, but for me it's a story.[629]

Lisa associates stories of the routes sand travels in the desert with this pot (Figure 8.15). Her associations with the desert and its blowing sand remind me of her hard and difficult fight against cancer and her continuous moving around Africa, until later in her life, when the strong winds had calmed down, she settled, like blown sand, in Namibia – a country that hosts two deserts.



Figure 8.14 An image of the Namib desert where sand, blown by the wind, takes on fascinating textures. Sand and wind find different journeys in this vast landscape where stories of sand, textures and shapes as large as the ever-changing dunes, are continuously reshaped and reshaping. Photograph by the author.

One of Lisa's primary sources of inspiration is her garden. Although she draws inspiration from the Namib desert, its loose, grainy and light sand that travels in the wind, she also draws inspiration from the shapes of leaves, flowers and petals in her garden. In her garden she finds another kind of sand; heavy, stagnant and smooth clay. Clay finds other routes and ways to travel when shaped by her hands and her imagination. These are two different stories 'of what happens to the sand'. The sand-like textures on Lisa's pots are signs of the importance and meaningfulness of sand to her. Textures and shapes created by Lisa's hands when she works her clay are the signs she leaves in her pots, they signal her presence. During these metamorphoses her pots become who she is, carrying her life stories as internal and external narratives.

[629] Ibid.



Figure 8.15 Lisa's gourd-shaped clay pot with side and front views, 2011 (dimensions: 48 cm high). Photographs by the author.

The materials and shapes that Lisa chooses for her pots are wide-ranging, from 'fine' porcelain to 'heavy and rough' clay. Lisa's ability to move between materials is consistent with her having moved geographically between continents and countries. Her moving between continents and between African states is also reflected in her interests in physical training and movement, another subject she studied at university. The more creative forms of physical movement, such as dance, particularly interest her, and these influences are also expressed and translated in her design styles:

> I'm more interested in, uh, creative gymnastics and creative dance than hockey, the feeling of moving, and that comes out in your artwork that you create. So I don't build square things or straight things ... much. And I think there is probably more movement there.[630]

Moving sand, shaping artefacts by methods of overlaying and overlapping all remind me that creating her artefacts is among the ways in which Lisa lives and deals with her hybrid identities and the hybrid spaces she passes through. In Lisa's pots the references to movement are successfully made in a 'heavy' medium. She expresses her attraction to movement and moving environments by leaving her presence in her pots, in the lines and shapes that signal shifts and changes. When she needs grounding however, she moves to make artefacts that are closer to her: 'home', Africa, with its heavy clay and pots with gourd shapes.

Conclusion

Namibian artefacts transport traditional beliefs, wisdom and teachings with the motivation to protect a specific group or individuals and the Namibian environment from harm, as the stories told by participants about copper and PVC show. Since artefacts themselves transport narratives, they have narrative power because they are associated with stories, beliefs and memories. The way artefacts are changed and shaped throughout making processes and the knowledge of materials that is passed on and inherited from previous generations, and how both artefacts and material applications change due to new cultural influences and time, illustrate how artefacts gain narrative ability by finding their own routes, which means that they 'take on their own life'.[631] Namibian designer-makers rely on personal stories as sources of inspiration for their work. In this way personal narratives are incorporated into artefacts, shaping their outcome in making processes and identity translations.

Namibian designer-makers are very aware that specific materials contribute to their artefacts having 'unique' identities. They use materials that have cultural and locational significance such as ondelela, makalani fibre and ostrich egg shell. 'Formal' design elements such as shape and colour are used by Namibian designers to reveal particular identities via their artefacts. These elements are used in a specific 'way', through approaches carefully selected by designer-makers. All participants interviewed made strong references to their use of materials, but after deeper reflection, materials are not only the mediums in which they work; in Namibia, materiality offers ways through which designer-makers can translate and continuously affirm who they are and where they (don't) belong. Internal narratives of Namibian artefacts are closely tied to the material choices their makers have made during production; this is true for artefacts from both rural and urban craft producers. These internal narratives, the

[630] Ibid.
[631] Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*, 10.

personal translations of artefact makers, speak of the social influences and personal situations in artefact producers' lives.

While labelling artefacts' narratives as internal or external is helpful in identifying the kind of stories that artefacts can carry, this categorisation should not be overstated and a clear distinction between 'external' and 'internal' narratives of artefacts is not always possible. External artefact narratives are partly shaped by the meanings artefact users attach to them, as well as the meanings that are attached to artefacts while they follow their particular journeys. But many external narratives may be altered and even internalised while artefacts travel their routes into and out of people's lives. Artefacts are often part of reinvention and transformation processes, such as the recycling processes discussed in Tonata's portrait, through which people and artefacts are confronted with new meanings.

New meanings are often attached to recycled materials and the artefacts produced from them. Sonene's story explains how she reinterprets and re-recycles PVC bracelets into her fashion and textile designs by cutting them up into buttons, thus familiar and new meanings are attached to her artefacts. Sonene's story of cutting up PVC bracelets also shows how artefacts themselves may be recycled to become the 'new', and so narratives related to artefacts have their own routes and changing meanings in an 'outside' world.

All the designer-makers interviewed had different experiences with materials and different approaches to using materials to express their design identities. Some designer-makers have cultural connections with specific materials and design styles – for some their approaches to materials offered them ways to cope with, translate and express their social circumstances. While some participants find materials and stories have significant influence on their design styles, material choices and creative approaches, others had conflicting ideas about stories and felt more distant from them. Andreas, for example, was careful not to impose stories on his clients. His case is also exemplary of how symbolisms and stories are expressed unconsciously. Tonata and Sonene, on the other hand, experience materials' symbolic significance and stories as direct connections to their cultural backgrounds. Lisa finds stories are related to her artefacts, how they come about and how they originate. In this way their design styles are influenced by these grounding, stable idem identities derived from cultural influences, memories, beliefs, and the materials associated with these cultural influences and life experiences.

Participants' design styles also reflected their backgrounds and histories. For some participants, self-expression in their design styles offered them ways to move between different and changing cultural influences. In many other cases, their self-expression through design styles offered them ways to ground themselves in more stable, idem identities. Ciara uses her changing identities to stay 'relevant' in an ever-changing fashion design world, while Lisa uses her various pottery styles and materials to move between her two 'worlds': English and African. The specific postcolonial realities participants have to deal with on a constant basis results in tensions and frustrations. But some participants are able

to use this to their benefit; it prevents stagnation by transforming their approaches, procedures and design styles.

Next, the Conclusion will link my observations of urban designer-makers with my findings about rural craft producers and craft sales in southern Africa to identify common themes and suggest ways to improve the sustainability of Namibia's craft and design world(s).

Conclusion

Improvisers tell a story – they are a story[632]

Through the process of mapping Namibian craft and design, this study sought a deeper understanding of the role of narratives in the Namibian craft and design world. This ethnographic study presented a holistic view of Namibian craft and design by bringing to life the various narratives that shape the realities of the people who are part of this world. In the Introduction of this thesis I asked; 'Who are the people of the Namibian craft and design world?' I also asked what are the issues that its craft and design practitioners grapple with and how their quality of life and the settings in which they work impact on their craft and design practices and so I sought to understand why many Namibian craft and design practitioners continue their practices in spite of the limitations it puts on their quality of life and the absence of secure incomes. Most importantly, I asked; 'What are the *stories* of Namibian craft and design practitioners?'

Another question this study addressed was whether the unavoidable exposure to foreign cultures and lifestyles affects Namibian artefact makers. Are foreign societies and their ways of life alienating Namibian artefact makers from their own cultures or does this exposure possibly reinforce some meaning making processes that relate to their cultures? Is the contact they have with foreign cultures perhaps working in their favour by helping them to retain their cultural authenticity? How do Namibian artefact makers cope with cultural change that they transmit into their creative practices when they have to survive by making a living from their artefacts?

In this Conclusion I will distil the answers I found to these questions and possible solutions to these problems into four themes: stories and care; stories, artefacts and making; sustainable artefact making; and stories and sustainable marketing. Finally, I will reflect on stories as means of coping and suggest possible paths for future researchers. One of the issues identified in the Introduction was that Namibian artefact making communities face problems that could undermine the sustainability of their craft and design practices. Among these are the challenges posed by global markets and their methods of production; environmental challenges and limitations, and the isolated locations in which Namibian craft producing communities live.

[632] Alfonso Montuori, "The Complexity of Improvisation and the Improvisation of Complexity: Social Science, Art and Creativity," *Human Relations* 56, no. 2 (2003): 246.

Stories and care

A considerable number of rich and wide ranging 'narratives of care' were documented in the preceding chapters.[633] Narratives are media for expressing care, because narratives 'recount care'.[634] Patema's care for her family and unwell child, Ciara's parents' care towards her and her son, the three Tsumeb-situated Ju/'hoan women's care for the children who slept on their backs, laps or legs, or were breast fed while they were working, are exemplary narratives that recount care. In Namibian craft spaces complex intermingling of craft makers with family members, children, friends and visitors (who sometimes gave a hand, advice, or some form of emotional support, whether about serious matters or through jokes) was often observed. Children from Orwetoveni shared their mother's laps, accessible and receptive spaces that offered them care and comfort, with craft activities.

Narratives that recounted care were also present and passed on in craft selling and tourism spaces. Dumisani, on the one hand, told the story about how she and the women from her craft group coped with their craft practices, such as making and selling baskets, while they had families and children to attend to. She revealed the care she invested in her family through the sacrifices she made to earn an income by selling artefacts far away from home. At the same time, she illustrated her care towards her group's business matters in Port Elizabeth. Swaniso, likewise, carefully crafted a delicate necklace from a water lily and told a story about the use of lilies to nurture, and test, the partnership of a young Caprivi bride and her groom on their wedding day. He revealed his care for the delicate lily necklace when he told me to regularly submerge it in water to keep it 'alive' during my travels in the Kavango region.

It is through stories that people are able to reach out to one another, that care is transferred, across 'natural' and cultural 'boundaries'. Apart from other stories he told me, Kojo, for example, taught me about the cultural significance of certain animals in Congolese and Cameroonian traditions and how they were used on battle masks designed to give their wearer particular attributes. Nyambe told me about the sounds from Caprivi drums that lure hippopotamuses out of rivers onto the riverbanks where they can graze with their young. Both Kojo and Nyambe revealed their interest in the relationships between people, the symbolism they invest in their artefacts, and the animal world. The stories of Kojo, Dumisani, Nyambe and Swaniso are the kind of stories that should be harnessed for craft practices, because stories nurture the connections between people and their cultures. Their stories *were* the connections they created between my culture and theirs.

Care given towards an 'other' is important, because it builds resilient communities by supporting social networks. Members of Namibian artefact making communities were able to support the emotional needs of their group members, share duties and in this way networks were strengthened and

[633] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 163.
[634] Ibid.

resources were used sustainably. In both rural and urban Namibian craft producing spaces artefact making was a socially engaging process; craftspeople and designer-makers were 'equally engaged with material things and with one another'.[635] Care of craftspeople and designers was also given by support organisations that were actively involved in the Namibian craft and design world, such as Ohandje Artist Cooperative and Penduka, to name a couple. Some of the designer-makers were also connected in a caring network that was created by their own design organisation with the aim of supporting the group's business needs.

In Namibian artefact making practice, care was often extended towards the 'natural' environment. Rural craftspeople worked in close relationships with their environments, due to food harvesting procedures, making crafts in the open and under trees, and travelling far by foot to harvest materials, deliver their artefacts and reach their markets. Due to a general scarcity of resources, ranging from time, money, raw materials, production equipment, and tools to selling networks, many Namibians intuitively take care not to waste resources. In all the Namibian craft communities I visited, recycling practices were the order of the day. Containers to hold raw materials, any materials that were able to be reshaped and remade into 'new' artefacts, functional objects or tools, were re-used and considered valuable. Even the spaces in which craftspeople worked became multiple purpose spaces where children played or went to school, or women worked, and attended craft and health training workshops. People's recycling of limited resources is a form of care for the environment, which should be encouraged.

Recycling is acknowledged to instigate 'economic thrift and environmental care' and thus caring for the Namibian environment is economically worthwhile for all its communities.[636] Greater awareness of the vulnerability of Namibia's environment is needed and should be considered in relation to all craft activities within the country. The power of stories to reduce the negative impact of craft practices on the Namibian environment, needs thorough investigation.

Stories, artefacts and making

In creative worlds, including those in Namibia, stories have historically had a place, because stories usually fill the work spaces where artefacts are made.[637] In addition, an essential raw material of both stories and crafts is experience, and it is passed on orally.[638] It is in the craftsperson's work space where experiences are shared in creative forms such as stories and artefacts and it is through stories

[635] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 125.
[636] Catherine Alexander and Joshua Reno, "Introduction," in *Economies of Recycling*, eds. Catherine Alexander and Joshua Reno (London and New York: Zed Books, 2012), 3.
[637] Diana Wood Conroy, "Touching the Past: Hunting the Future," in *Floating Life: Contemporary Aboriginal Fibre Art*, ed. Diane Moon (Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2009), 29.
[638] Walter Benjamin, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov," trans. Harry Zohn, *Chicago Review*16, no.1 (1963): 81.

that artefact making becomes a meaningful cultural translation that can take an artefact far beyond their origins and the work spaces where they are made.[639]

Stories and artefacts relate to each other, because both are embodied practices. They are about *making* in specific cultural contexts and spaces. An example of this is the making processes involved in Tcise's tortoises, such as woodcarving with his pocket knife and wood painting with hot metal rods, during which it seemed as if Tcise, while he was squatting, was working in the spaces between his hands and also, in the spaces between his handmade leather shoes and his knees. His working spaces were not in studios or at work benches, but they were familiar to him because they were the kind of spaces where cultural practices had been passed on to him. Another example is the basket weaving in the Ovambo homesteads around Ondangwa that Patricia guided me to, where the space between hands and laps were the basket weavers' work 'benches'. In these spaces, the slow rotation of the basket during weaving processes often became mesmerising for the onlooker in the same way that stories have the potential to carry listeners on journeys of meaning making.

Stories have the potential to support connections between frayed and troubled life experiences, because narratives *are* media for recounting care.[640] That is why stories are widely recognised as assisting people's healing from unsettling experiences such as colonialism and Apartheid. The role of stories in helping people to deal with distress was evident in this study, as the portrait of Lisa illustrates. As well as confirming the therapeutic power of storytelling, this study also illustrated that improvisatory processes such as artefact *making* assists Namibian designers and craftspeople to cope emotionally with their changing social worlds, including their colonial and Apartheid heritage. Namibian designers and craftspeople seek out and create new understanding by incorporating cultural elements and symbols, which are captured in their use of materials and technique, in their artefacts' design styles.

The Namibian craft and design practitioners I met shared a passionate interest in the materials they used for making their artefacts. Their materials are not only the mediums in which they work, materiality also offered ways through which they translated and continuously affirmed who they were and where they did and didn't belong. Namibia's social fabric and the participants' postcolonial negotiations also impacted on their identities. Namibian artefact makers use their craft and design practices and their materials to negotiate their hybrid identities. Andreas, for example, embedded narratives in his *eemba* necklace that relate to his specific social environment, in which various different Namibian cultural groups interact on a daily basis, hence his mixture of traditional Namibian and Western materials and techniques.

[639] Ibid.
[640] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 163.

Personal stories serve as sources of inspiration for craftspeople and designers when they make artefacts, and thus personal stories shape artefact outcomes in making processes since artefacts *are* identity translations. The *eemba* pendant created by Andreas will transfer meanings far beyond the spaces of its making. In the *eemba* pendant, Andreas consciously used gold and silver spirals to emphasise the shape of the *eemba*, yet (possibly unconsciously), he also invested it with symbolism that relates to eternity by emphasising the spirals through over layering. It is all the significations in artefacts that shape their distinctive character and so the materials he used were some of the significations that constructed the pendant's (hybrid) character, or 'internal narratives'.[641]

Namibian designer-makers have different experiences with materials and therefore they have diverse approaches to how they use materials when expressing their identities, as Andreas' creation of the *eemba* pendant shows. Some Namibian designer-makers illustrate the difficulties in negotiating hybrid identities. Lisa, for instance, said of her experience: 'You end up not belonging anywhere if you're not careful.'[642] Lisa used and alternated the textilities of her materials, either clay or porcelain, to cope with her hybridity, because clay reminded her of her African 'side' while porcelain reminded her of her English 'side'. Ciara, conversely, presented her tensions when she stated 'identity is something that I struggle with, because I don't know who I am'.[643] Her preferences for 'Rock' influences in her design styles instead of 'Hip-hop', were often difficult to express in her work, because she felt pressured by social and personal expectations. In reflecting on her life, Ciara stated that her design styles and the material she used offered her ways to move between her different cultural influences and the racial tensions she regularly experienced. Sonene was able to find her inspiration in artefacts and symbols that relate to her cultural heritage to give her artefacts distinctive design styles. She layered cultural elements in her fashion and textile designs through the use of materials and elements that have references to specific Namibian cultural groups, such as metal Himba beads and bird plum dyed cotton with silk screen printed Kavango patterns. The abovementioned examples illustrate the ways Namibian designers and craftspeople cope, through their artefact making and use of materials, with the culturally alienating effects they experience through the unavoidable exposure to foreign cultures and their lifestyles on the one hand, and their own cultural heritage and social realities on the other.

On a more practical level, artefact making in Namibia is usually not executed in large quantities and industrialised processes. Making processes generally involve the use of manual techniques, the utilisation of usually simple hand tools, and some basic electrical and industrial equipment. As a result, Namibian artefact making is holistic and makers are not distanced from their making processes

[641] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 121, 146 and 148; Marcus Banks, *Using Visual Data in Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2007), 52, doi: 10.4135/9780857020260. Ricoeur argues that character is shaped by a distinctive set of signs and that 'the identity of a story is the identity of character' and therefore, 'narrative constructs the identity of [...] character'.
[642] Interview Lisa, 29 January 2011.
[643] Interview Ciara, 2 February 2011.

and environments, or the textilities of their raw materials. Rather, they are deeply involved in their procedures, materials and social realities during making. That is why Namibian craftspeople and designer-makers regularly draw on improvised processes, because they are regularly confronted with design problems. Limited resources also contribute to the making of unique artefacts in small quantities.

In Namibian craft and design communities, making techniques, including toolmaking, are guided by experimentation on the one hand and traditions on the other. The improvisatory practices I observed confirm Montuori's argument that improvisation is a forward going process of making that is underpinned by experience, traditions and risk taking during experimentation.[644] Improvisation is often a response to pressing demands and notions of 'having to do what needs to be done'. Therefore, in Namibian artefact making, improvisation is closely related to 'the way we work' instead of being 'free play'.[645] Recognising the role of improvisation in the sustainable development of Namibian craft and design, and documenting and learning from the stories of Namibian improvisers, would open up opportunities for further research.

Sustainable artefact making

Coping with their complex social situations was not the only reason why Namibian artefact makers sustain their creative practices. The question why artefact makers continue their practices despite the lack of quality of life, secure income and the tensions artefact makers have to deal with needs attention. The frustrations artefact makers had to deal with, in both rural and urban communities, resulted from: (a) the constant limitations of resources, such as time pressures, and lack of money to afford better tools or larger and more secluded working spaces; (b) the additional activities they had to undertake to supplement their incomes; (c) the failed social and financial expectations that arose from too many resources that were invested in (financially) unrewarding creative practices; and (d) unrealistic expectations from clients, customers and buyers. However, many craftspeople and designers, like Sonene, persevere and stick it out, 'because you want to pay the bills'.[646] Both rural craftspeople and urban designer-makers continue their creative activities because they find their practices emotionally sustaining. Psychological support is conveyed through 'narratives of care'.[647] This wider and deeper social value of artefact making needs recognition and support to socially sustain the Namibian craft and design world. Furthermore, the narratives and practices of care for the self and

[644] Montuori, "The Complexity of Improvisation," 246.
[645] Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam, "Creativity and Cultural Improvisation," in *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, eds. Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), 12; Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1990), 9.
[646] Interview Sonene, 28 January 2011.
[647] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 163.

for individuals and groups within the Namibian craft and design world help to sustain the Namibian society as a whole.

Namibian artefact makers get various kinds of emotional sustenance from their creative practices. These benefits include: (a) gaining a means of self-expression through making processes in which shaping forms and materials 'converse' with makers, hence reinforcing their sense of purpose and of self; (b) the therapeutic qualities creative, improvisatory and repetitive practices such as artefact making offer; (c) pride in what they are doing and accomplishing; (d) pleasure and creative expression found in the tactile contact with shaping materials into new forms; (e) recognition received from clients and customers, the general public, the media and smaller social groups such as friends and families; (f) the inner resilience gained from 'working through' problems, in a very literal sense, by using tools and materials to cope with complex life circumstances caused by hybridities and feelings of being 'in-between'[648]; and (g) the opportunity to learn and enhance skills and to continue their development as designers and craftspeople. Other reasons why creative practices are maintained include the more obvious financial benefit of earning (additional) income.

The value of sustainable production practices for Namibian craft and design was explicitly addressed by urban designer-makers Ciara and Andreas. They argued that a focus on better management and production methods will assist the long term sustainability of Namibian craft and design. They also advocated the growth and stimulation of Namibian craft and design through a focus on local production, and the building of well-functioning support groups that are connected to various global craft and design worlds. Unsurprisingly, these are all acknowledged strategies for sustainable practices in the scholarly literature on sustainable design.[649]

Although many Namibian craftspeople and designers understand the value of their labour, including the value of the raw materials they use for their artefact making, I met several Ju/'hoan women in Tsumkwe who wanted to trade their delicate artefacts for far below their (market) value. An additional problem within rural Namibian craft making communities, the overproduction of jewellery made from very scarce materials such as ostrich eggshell, was a concern addressed in this study. In spite of the scarcity and, therefore, potentially considerable value of the raw materials that many Namibian craft communities use, and the high quality craftsmanship and long hours of labour invested in the making of artefacts, they are devalued in often isolated places such as Tsumkwe. Such unsustainable valuation and sales practices need to be addressed without delay.

Recycling of materials is widespread in Namibia, because resources are usually limited and recycled materials offer new possibilities to Namibian designer-makers such as Tonata. An additional reason for recycling materials is that most imported materials arrive via South Africa, making them

[648] Paul Ricoeur, "Sorrows and the Making of Life Stories," *Philosophy Today* 47, no.3 (2003): 324.
[649] See, for example, Kate Fletcher, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys* (London and Sterling: Earthscan, 2008), 144.

prohibitively expensive for the majority of Namibians. There are very good artefact collections, such as the PVC bracelets, produced from recycled materials in Namibia. Given the popularity of artefacts made from recycled materials in southern Africa, this is a route more Namibian artefact producers should investigate and embark on. Artefacts from recycled materials are an unfilled gap in the Namibian market, as my artefact distribution summary in Chapter 4 has shown. The importance of recycling in Namibian artefact making practices, such as tool making and recycled containers that are used for raw material preparation for weaving for example, illustrate how sustainable practices related to recycling go deeper than the production of artefacts made from recycled materials.

Stories and sustainable marketing

Stories and artefacts are passed on through people, through human lives and both migrate in all sorts of visual texts from hand to hand, culture to culture. 'External' narratives are the narratives that are connected with artefacts superficially and externally.[650] Both internal and external narratives impact on artefacts, because neither stories nor artefacts are stagnant. They embark on journeys, whether it is from place to place, from time to time, or from context to context.

Some external narratives become harmful because they are the result of powerful 'grand narratives' that are connected to unjust political systems such as colonialism and Apartheid, examples that apply to Namibia. These harmful narratives potentially stimulate negative behaviours that increase ever-growing global problems such as over-consumption, depletion of natural resources and the undermining of human wellbeing. Negative behaviours harm the wellbeing of often peripheral communities, the 'natural' environment and valuable opportunities for the diversification of livelihoods, while they stimulate social and economic inequity and isolation. Romantic narratives about exotic 'people' living in Africa and their even more exotic 'things' are examples of harmful narratives. These narratives have to be deconstructed and remade to recognise all humans' political rights, social interests and ecological concerns.

Another challenge for sustainable marketing is that the work of stories, to facilitate connections between people and people and their 'things', is often interrupted. Such broken links fail to ensure the distribution of Namibian artefacts to suitable wider networks. When this happens, the narratives that are connected to artefacts are sometimes transformed due to the weak links that exist in networks and the often tedious journeys artefacts have to embark upon in marketing processes. It is essential that suitable and sustainable narratives remain connected to Namibian artefacts during their journeys, especially to and through market places where they risk becoming stripped of cultural and historic

[650] Banks, *Using Visual Data*, 52.

meaning.[651] Stories, such as those recounted in this study, should be harnessed for craft marketing, because stories nurture the connections between people and their cultures. Stories also underpin African hospitality. Although friendly attitudes were always welcoming, it was the stories in craft selling sites that established connections between vendors and tourists, sales people and me.

Most rural Namibian craft communities are working in isolation and they are often not well connected to Namibian or global craft and design networks. The lack of resilient marketing networks for artefacts in Namibia impacts negatively on all the craft communities I visited. The women in Orwetoveni were less affected by weak marketing networks due to the strong links Penduka has with specific European markets and the Penduka webshop. Yet, the simplification of creative techniques in the service of time, cost and efficiency is a sad reality in Orwetoveni, where a variety of embroidery stitches, for example, are sacrificed in order to meet market demands on time. Sadly, Penduka, like most Namibian craft communities, experiences pressures to perform according to methods of production that are prescribed mostly by global markets. These pressures are caused by competition in global markets for the lowest possible pricing, on-time delivery and specific quality demands. Although connectedness to, and trade with, global markets can potentially offer sources of income to Namibian artefact making communities, these benefits have to be measured against the abovementioned pressures that these global markets cause. However, suitable niche markets are emerging due to the gradual global growth in ethical and sustainable consumerism.[652] These global niche markets should be explored, because they offer possibilities for diversified and sustainable livelihoods in Namibian artefact making communities.

Marketing is linked with consumer behaviours. Looking at the problem from a global perspective, consumers seem to be making slow and difficult progress towards understanding sustainable consumerism, but they are becoming increasingly aware of and interested in consuming artefacts with clear narratives of their sustainable production. Sustainable design and consumption seems somewhat idealistic, but the idea of local production is that it will gradually be incorporated into mainstream global production.[653] To succeed, these processes need to (a) focus on 'reflective consumption' that shifts towards quality instead of quantity; (b) focus on participatory design in which empathy between consumers and makers is encouraged; and (c) focus on the values and use of 'things' to establish deeper emotional connections between consumers and 'things'.[654] Well-designed and crafted

[651] Anitra Nettleton, "Life in a Zulu village: Craft and the Art of Modernity in South Africa," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 3, no.1 (2010): 59 and 69.
[652] Kevin Murray, "Outsourcing the Hand: An Analysis of Craft-Design Collaborations Across the Global Divide," *Craft and Design Enquiry* 2, no. 4 (2011), 5, accessed May 8, 2012, http://www.craftaustralia.org.au/cde/index. php/cde/article/viewFile/14/11.
[653] Fletcher, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles,* 80; John Gerzema, "The Rise of Mindful Consumption," *McKinsey on Society: Voices on Society - The Socially Conscious Consumer* vol. 4, accessed February 12, 2013, http://voices.mckinseyonsociety.com/the-rise-of-mindful-consumption/; Jonathan Chapman, *Emotionally Durable Design: Objects, Experience And Empathy* (London and Sterling: Earthscan, 2005), 7.
[654] Fletcher, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles,* 80.

narrativity can transport messages of sustainability. *Namibian narratives*, stories of the artefact makers, sellers and Namibian artefacts, should be encouraged and maintained in market spaces.

Sadly, narratives, especially those in market spaces, are often 'empty', false and invented in the commercial sector; while they may purport to support sustainability, but in practice 'sustainability' is often used as a 'tag' and marketing ploy to continue unsustainable habits. New narratives have to be improvised and more stories of Namibian craft and design have to emerge, including those that promote sustainable practices. Connected networks are needed to distribute the stories of Namibian artefact makers and the narratives about what their artefacts essentially are and how they should be understood.

Stories as a means of coping

Postcolonial identities are evolving ones. They are shaping and reshaping, a process that is due to previously instilled dichotomies (such as modern–traditional). They are often lived as multiple, differentiated identities.[655] Identity processes, such as their combination, recombination, fragmentation and reintegration, exist in an uneasy dialogue with conventional binaries and result in tensions within and between identities.[656] In negotiating their identity processes, individuals and groups employ coping mechanisms that are dependent on the surrounding environment, for example, whether they live in harmony or tension. These coping methods are not necessarily clear-cut, linear or smooth; coping in and with these situations entails the management of affect, for example, of feelings of belonging and/or unbelonging, of being different from or the same as an 'other'. Coping also entails the re-combination and overlapping of multiple identities in specific contexts.[657] In other words, individuals in postcolonial nations are negotiating their various identities while the narrative function of identity work helps them to make sense of their life circumstances and surroundings.

In Namibia some individuals and groups have come to understand that their traditions and culture are of interest to local and international audiences. For this reason, individuals and groups have a financial interest in re-inventing local traditional, indigenous artistic expressions and styles.[658] In this thesis, for example, the stories of Sonene, Ciara and Lisa illustrate the tensions they experience between their

[655] Philip de Boeck, "Postcolonialism, Power and Identity: Local and Global Perspectives from Zaire," Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa (*London: Zed Books, 1996), 88.
[656] Stephanie Lawler, *Identity: Sociological perspectives* (Polity Press: Cambridge and Malden, 2008), 3.
[657] Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, 3; Kwame Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 100, accessed July 30, 2012, http://unisa.eblib.com.au.ezlibproxy1.unisa.edu.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=557136.
[658] Ian Fairweather, 'Heritage, identity and youth in postcolonial Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 4, 2006, 719-720 and 735.

'two souls'.[659] Sonene's textile and fashion making practices, allow her to cope with the tensions she experiences between her indigenous culture and Western influences. She combines influences from both worlds in her textile prints and pattern-making. Lisa works through her clay and porcelain to cope with the tensions she feels between her 'English' and 'African' souls. Ciara works through her tensions between her *three* 'souls', her black, white and mixed race worlds, by combining and integrating various design styles, materials and techniques in her fashion designs. She acknowledges that her tensions, her not knowing who she 'is', will continue. The fact that postcolonial tensions usually continue throughout an individual's life, which makes coping a continuous process, is illustrated by Lisa's sense of having coped, and continuing to cope, with her tensions over five decades.

My own experiences during my fieldwork made me acutely aware of these tensions in the postcolonial southern African spaces I travelled through. Not only did I hear the participants' stories about how their artefact-making practices assist them to cope with the realities of their life, I was also confronted continuously by my own conflicting feelings about modernity and tradition, development and cultural preservation. On the one hand I wanted to see the benefits of both the Western and traditional worlds extending to Namibian craft and design worlds, but on the other hand I was constantly alerted to the negative influences these worlds potentially hold. Having reliably functioning marketing and selling systems in place for Namibian craft and design would create income-generating opportunities for many people. At the same time, threats are posed by commercial pressures and global markets, such as distancing the makers from their artefact-making processes. These threats undermine the processes' potential to offer a means of coping with life and creating an identity in a postcolonial context via craft and design work.

During my research I was constantly aware of the continuing postcolonial tensions in Namibia and how they affected me. Like Sonene, Ciara and Lisa I learned to use creative practices, including making, narrating and writing this thesis, to work through issues caused by these tensions. My reflections on histories, lived pasts, my experiences in Namibian craft and design and new knowledge shaped my awareness of future possibilities in spite of the realisation that coping with tensions will continue. From my experiences, it is possible to work through postcolonial tensions during making processes (in which identities are constructed and expressed) to allow new feelings of belonging to shape and nurture. While I acknowledge Namibia's multicultural background, with its various forms and waves of colonisation, I cannot perpetually look back and be held hostage to colonial pasts. Nonetheless, my studies and my work will continue to be informed by postcoloniality as a condition and a process. Sustainable development for Namibian craft and design, as illustrated by the narratives

[659] Groot, *Twee Zielen*, 101.

of this thesis, includes the maintenance of the social, economic and environmental contexts in which it is created, as well as its identities and cultural representations.

Avenues for further research

As I observed in Chapter 1, a good map indicates pointers towards undiscovered areas so I will now discuss themes for further research. Discoveries are always situated in temporal realities that by nature are anticipatory, wanting and waiting to continue. Landscapes and contexts are ever changing and their maps are in need of regular updating, just as this study will, in the future, need supplementing by ongoing discoveries and continued research. This study specifically aims to inspire the creation of knowledge that provides a coherent oversight of, and stimulate more coordinated, sustainable strategies within, the Namibian craft and design world.

Ongoing research is needed on sustainable practices for Namibian craft and design in the areas of marketing, consumer behaviours and business practices. Practice-led research focusing on Namibian design, improvisation, making and innovation will advance the Namibian craft and design world. The impact of craft and design on the Namibian environment should be thoroughly researched to enhance sustainable craft and design practices. Namibian craft and design will also benefit from research related to the role of craft development organisations and of other key organisational players in this world. The relationships, roles and prospects of indigenous knowledge systems in southern African craft and design practices need thorough investigation. The impact of colonialism and missionaries on Namibian artefacts and artefact making practices also offers opportunities for exploration. Finally, and most importantly, a wider understanding of how the individuals and groups that are connected to this world function sustainably should be encouraged through additional ethnographic studies in which the voices of Namibian craftspeople and designers from other Namibian regions become audible.

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