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# Group rights on communal land: Okonyoka revisited

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### Importance of group rights

- Private customary land rights protected through registration – group rights not yet
- Urgent: to protect tenure rights of rural poor against unmanaged loss to local elites (land grabbing)
- Causes resentment and increases vulnerability
- Village clusters logical starting point to vest title in groups
- Easier said than done: contestation (traditional authorities; wealthy farmers...)

Source: MCA / Orgut/ COWI. (n.d.). CLS. Case-study report exploring potential for customary group rights in Namibia's northern communal areas. Windhoek.



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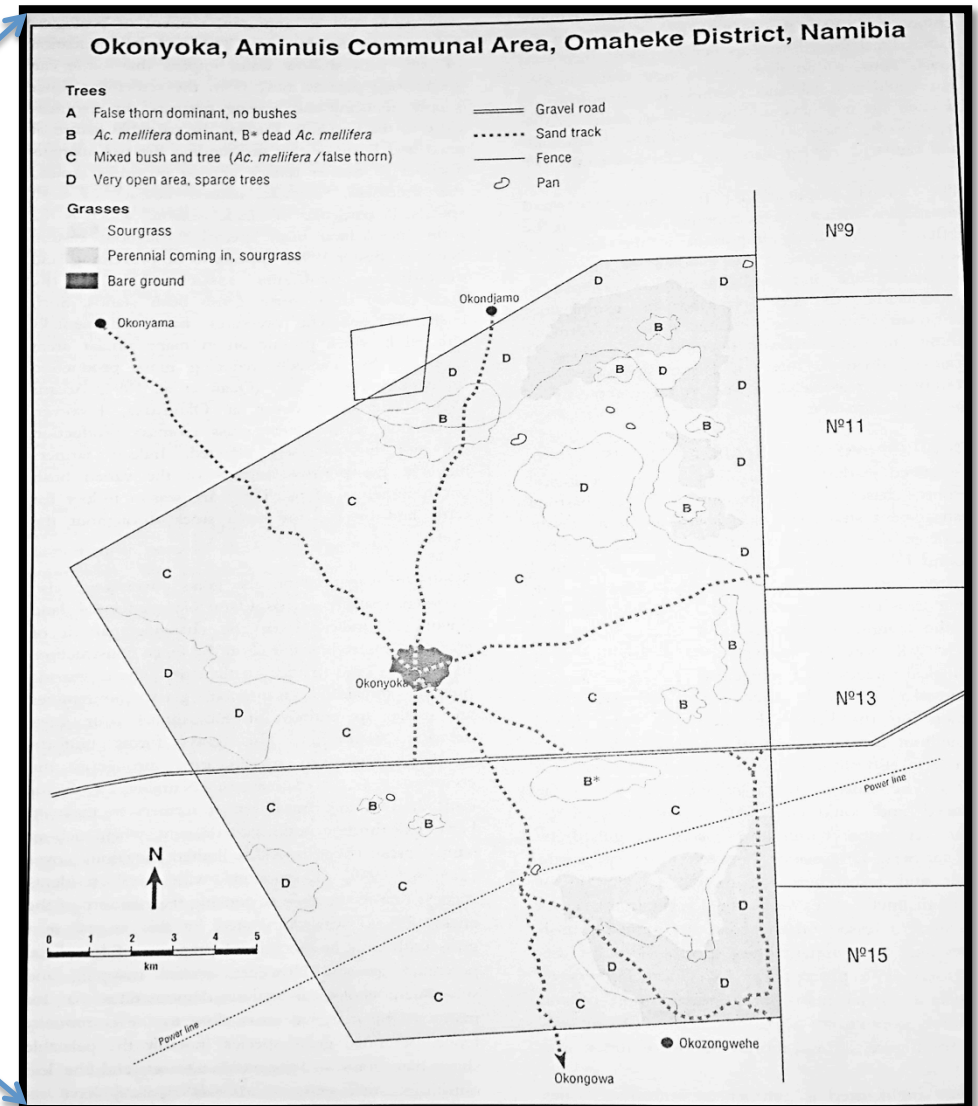
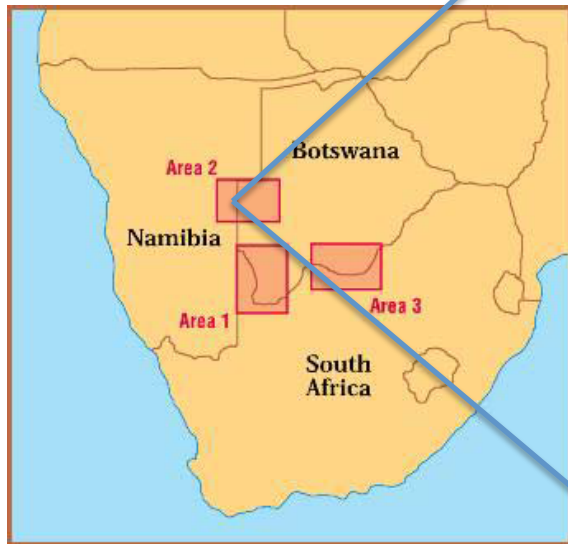
## **Current situation**

- Groups can apply for registration of group rights
- MLR through the support from CLS project and PCLD actively establishing group rights
- Participatory process to establish land rights
- Establishment of legal entities a requirement
- Responding to widespread demands for the protection of group rights to commonages



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# Bottom-up initiatives: Okonyoka



Source: Twyman et al 2002.



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### The village

- Ca 15,000 ha
- 32 households in 2015
- Related through 4 lineages
- 986 cattle, 31 horses, 1,409 goats, 752 sheep or ca 1,400 LSU (WPC records, Feb 2015)
- Formation of new households
- New households building up own livestock



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### Brief history

- Village established 1958
- Increasing pressure on grazing due to new boreholes on its periphery
- Led by youth, villagers discussed protection
- Institutional focus: local water point committee
- Protracted discussion among community and neighbouring communities through their respective water points
- Started to fence in 1998





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# Social implications

### Improvements

- Improved sense of community
- Positive impact on community as a management institution
- Feeling of greater control over rangeland resources

### Challenges / disadvantages

- Increasing pressures on grazing resources made community reluctant to take in more people





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- Young Herero men, who by tradition had to break away from their fathers find it increasingly difficult to find alternative grazing areas
- Some people have multiple grazing rights – in Okonyoka and outside – which may increase the vulnerability of landless households outside
- Female livestock owners find it easier to settle in Okonyoka as they do not have to ‘break away’ from their fathers

***Differences in gender, age and family status are essential to understand wider processes and complexities of power relations, social change and empowerment***



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# Environmental implications

### Improvements

- In many marginal areas close to community fence perennial grass species had re-established themselves due to reduced grazing pressure
- This impacted positively on condition of cattle, particularly during droughts

### Challenges / disadvantages

- Improvements were enabled by exclusion of neighbouring farmers increasing grazing pressures on adjacent villages



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## **Environmental implications ctd**

- These were considering to fence their settlement land
- As community rules tightened access to grazing, some households became increasingly marginalised

***Positive impacts on the environmental resource base as a result of fencing came at the expense of livelihood security of marginalised groups***



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# Policy implications

### Improvements

- Many communities in Aminuis want to follow Okonyoka's lead as a result of positive impact on natural resource base (e.g. Komungondo north of Okonyoka)
- WPC encouraged this development
- Policy gap had provided space for community fencing, empowering some and disempowering others
- Working with organised groups makes it possible for NGOs and others to act as facilitators rather than project implementers



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## **Policy implications ctd**

### **Improvements**

- Okonyoka wanted to diversify into game and wants to establish a conservancy

### **Challenges / disadvantages**

- Positive impacts came at the expense of more marginalise, landless and poor communities
- Unresolved question: should government, NGOs and donor projects be part of a process that further marginalises some members of the wider community despite observable positive impacts?



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## **Policy implications ctd**

- *For community empowerment to work the dynamic interplay of power relations between the differentiated stakeholders and the resource base upon which livelihoods depend must be understood*
- *Best case scenario can only be achieved if the social, environmental and policy implications on the wider community are analysed*



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### Findings

- The fence has disappeared
- Vandalism and theft of fencing material
- Transaction costs of monitoring and guarding fence too high
- Settlement in periphery considered
- Replacement cost also too high (N\$4,000-N\$6,000 /km)







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### Fence contested

- No unanimity on the fenced as recorded by Twyman et al
- Boundaries are disputed
- Violent opposition recorded in its erection
- Okonyoka consulted lawyers
- Petitioned MAWF – advised to resolve outside court



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### Bull camps

- While communal the fence disappeared, private *bull camps* exist
- Estimated to be 30 in number
- 1km x 1km (at least!) = 3,000 ha or 20% of total area
- Typically behind homesteads
- Increasingly further way due to grazing pressure
- Every household is entitled and can apply for a bull camp



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## **Bull camps: Otjinene**





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### Management

- Advantages of enclosures well known: rules of access, protection, better pastures
- Management plan and rules were said to exist
- Not physically available – nor well known by informants
- But: managed to control access - only 2 families granted temporary stay since 1998
- Were relatives of resident households
- Village boundaries porous: degree of flexibility exists



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### Management ctd

- Water point committee still exists
- Functions no longer as described in 2002
- Restricted to manage the water point – whole community said to manage grazing
- Considers requests by outsiders to bring in livestock
- Submits its findings to larger community meeting
- Village Development Committee said to exist with its own bank account



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### Management ctd

- Managing the community is a challenge
- Some leading community members live and work in Windhoek
- Although meetings are said to be minuted, rules and information not properly transferred to new committee – lack of continuity





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### Diversification

- Twyman et al mentioned plans to establish a conservancy
- No diversification has taken place
- ‘We want electricity, not a conservancy’





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### Conclusions

- Limited field work does not support Twyman et al's assessment that empowerment at Okonyoka was 'dynamic and flourishing'
- Protection of group rights generates substantial transaction costs – monitoring, maintenance etc.
- The absence of key community members may pose a challenge for managing common pool resources



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### Conclusion

- Ambivalence about enclosures:
  - Clear advantages
  - Perceived disadvantages – losing access to resources outside village boundary (grazing, resettlement)



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**Thank You.**