'HOW CAN THE RAIN FALL IN THIS CHAOS?': MYTH AND METAPHOR IN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NORTH-WEST NAMIBIAN LANDSCAPE

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Social anthropology, and more particularly the data on which it is based, namely ethnography, has had to face some fairly stringent criticism and deconstruction over the years, frequently deservedly so. The misplaced certainties of colonialism and the role of anthropology in its various guises in the service of imperial powers (in Namibia as the Afrikaans etnologie and volksgeskiedenis, and German Völkerkunde (see Gordon 2000)); a feminist acknowledging of the particular filtering of observation by an androcentric gaze (see Hodgson 2000); and recent exposés of the devastating impacts of particular researchers on the people with whom they have worked (see Tierney 2000): all these have conspired to induce something of a crisis of faith in the social sciences, and in anthropology in particular. Over the last two decades the discipline, one might say, has been increasingly frustrated. First, by a post-modern problematising of ethnography as first and foremost a writing practice (Clifford 1986:2) - such that observation is reduced to 'the text' which describes it, and claims to empirical 'facts' are treated with varying degrees of suspicion (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Second, by an extreme and necessary reflexivity regarding one's own subject position as an anthropologist (see Hobart 1996), at times rendering the production of ethnography as something more akin to individual psycho-analysis than a 'science of society'. So what might anthropology in the twenty-first century, as well as anthropology in the so-called 'African Renaissance' of this conference, have to offer that is different?

Perhaps the time is ripe for a revitalised, even realist, validation of the way(s) 'culture' filters and moulds the post-modern worlds that we engage in and create as both participants and observers. While anthropology, like other disciplines, has had to shed its old certainties, I relish what are possible research foci in this new landscape. Our field 'sites' now comprise unrelenting interpenetrations of local and global; the actors of our research, not to mention ourselves, are 'permitted' to have changing and dynamic identities; and 'the Anthropological Other' is as likely as ourselves to experience the dislocations and interconnections generated by a decade of radically different mass-communications technology. Given these circumstances, and in acknowledgement of the power and wealth differentials still afforded by access to education, citizenship and so on, it is conceivable that an appropriate role for anthropology today might be the attempt to utilise public-spaces for views that otherwise are likely to go unheard. Undoubtedly, an academic paper will flavour these views with selection by the author, not to mention interpretation and context: it is for the reader to decide if these are justifiable or not, given the material presented. Following Gordon (2000), however, perhaps it is time to celebrate the subversive and advocacy potential of independent (as in not-institutionally-driven) anthropology - in consultation with a group, a people, a culture or counter-culture, who, due to some element of difference, lacks public voice. Such an approach has become increasingly important in attempts at a "corrective and anti-colonial" African environmental history (Beinart 2000:270) that emphasises the role of particular environmental discourses in justifying and extending a colonial hegemony (Leach and Mearns 1996). Even the so-called African Renaissance, advocating a validation of African achievements and of indigenous solutions to contemporary problems (Mbeki 1998), is likely to remain in the province of those with power
and able to access spaces where their views can be heard.

Against this background this paper reviews some discontinuities between a major national-level discourse of land degradation in Namibia (particularly 'desertification' due to overgrazing by domestic livestock) and articulations of vegetation change by people 'on-the-ground' (those experiencing and living from the north-west Namibian environment). This is significant because much development and policy intervention is aimed at reducing the assumed negative environmental effects of livestock (Sullivan 1999:258). Thus particular views of the environment of north-west Namibia, legitimised by invoking the expert-language or 'metalanguage' (see Lyotard 1984) of natural science, influence environmental policy and the choice of interventions aimed at rural-development in ways that impact on local people's lives and livelihoods.

In contrast, recorded oral testimonies from Damara (Nu Khoen) people living primarily in Khorixas District, southern Kunene Region, embody somewhat different perceptions of ecological dynamics and of the causes of these dynamics. While perceptions of deterioration in rainfall and productivity exist in local environmental knowledges, these appear inseparable from expressions of dissatisfaction with wider socio-political processes. As such, statements affirming deterioration are inextricably linked with descriptions of situations that individuals see as exclusionary and undermining. Instead of being a simple biophysical process, ideas of 'land degradation' both literally and metaphorically describe peoples' concerns over broader land policy: including perceptions of a lack of power to determine how land is used, and frustrations over longstanding land claims. Interestingly, local accounts frequently resonate with what has been termed a 'new ecology' emerging particularly from research in drylands and affirming change as the norm, as well as emphasising abiotic sources of change over and above the 'negative' impacts of grazing livestock (see Homewood and Rodgers 1987; Ellis and Swift 1988). These views appear to be supported by several recent natural-science studies conducted in north-west Namibia (discussed below).

This paper juxtaposes and interrogates these narratives of environment by considering the contexts in which they arise, the interests they support, the alternative narratives they may mask, and correspondences and clashes between them. As such, it is suggested that the ways groups of people frame ideas about landscape and landscape dynamics has rather little to do with processes intrinsic to a particular landscape; that is, as a somehow objective and measurable phenomenon. Instead, and following recent interdisciplinary theorising and analysis of landscapes as socially, culturally, politically and psychologically constructed and experienced (see Bender 1993; Schama 1995), I consider that landscapes are inextricably bound with the circumstances of the 'viewer' - with their locations regarding culture, formal education, socio-economic position, gender, age and, importantly, institutional framework and affiliation.

A DRYLAND ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE? BUILDING A DISCOURSE

From the late 1700s outsiders' perceptions of the environment of north-west Namibia have been dismal to say the least - generally describing the landscape as degraded beyond recovery due to human use, particularly through 'over-grazing' by domestic livestock (reviewed in Sullivan 1999; Sullivan 2000). That these views have remained rather static through time, despite dramatic changes in political context and government, can be illustrated by two defining

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111 Some of the issues and material summarised here are the focus of a longer discussion in Sullivan (2000).
assertions. First is that made by Van Warmelo, an 'ethnologist' for the former South African administration who wrote of the settlement of Sesfontein/Nani as that, "... the whole ... area has been over-grazed so thoroughly that only the large trees remain in a level plain of bare sand. There are no young trees nor can any raise its head owing to the intensive browsing of the numerous cattle, goats and donkeys ... as the large trees die off one by one and no others take their place it seems that all vegetation must eventually disappear ..." (Van Warmelo 1962:39). Some decades later, and under the post-apartheid administration we find an almost identical assertion in a statement by the former head of the Directorate of Resource Management, Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) that this, "... is now a desert landscape; grass, or for that matter any growth other than huge acacias is nowhere to be seen. All in all, it is an ecological system put off balance and in danger of collapsing altogether. The only way that something can be done about this, is to have fewer ... livestock" (Lindeque in Menges 1992 in Rohde 1997:368).

This resilient discourse of degradation, however, has been constructed without reference to any supportive natural science 'evidence': that is, data and analyses from structured field experiments, monitoring programmes and so on. Nevertheless, the 'expert' opinion it draws on is clothed with the validity and sanction afforded by the modern 'metanarrative' of science (Lytard 1984). Further, and following Fairhead and Leach (1996), assertions and impressions of desertification have gained currency through occlusion of significant contexts. These include the nuanced implications of current theoretical debate regarding the importance of abiotic factors, primarily rainfall, in driving productivity and land-use in dryland environments over and above the density-dependent effects of livestock (Sullivan and Rohde in press). They also include the historical circumstances and political processes shaping and constraining land-use by communal area inhabitants (as detailed in historiographical work, for example by Lau 1987; Fuller 1993), as well as local narratives and knowledge concerning landscape and biophysical resources.

Current fears of 'desertification' in Namibia are institutionalised in the country's Programme to Combat Desertification (NAPCOD): a joint initiative of the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), MET and MAWRD (with the DRFN running most of its activities) (Seeley 1998). Emphasising multiple linkages between national and international contexts, this programme marks Namibia's status as a signatory of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the programme is funded primarily by the German agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) among other international donors. The Programme's position is summarised in a recent policy review that states, "[t]hat land degradation has, and is continuing to, take place at an alarming rate is an undisputed fact" (Dewdney 1996:i, emphasis added). Given this position it is not surprising that research carried out in north-west Namibia under the programme's auspices began by accepting a view of deteriorating rangelands (Kambatuku et al. 1995:3; Ward 1997:2), or that these studies have affirmed a number of biophysical 'degradation-correlates' with grazing pressure. 'Damaraland' thus has been selected for further NAPCOD work, "... due to the fact that desertification in [this] area is progressing rapidly" (Kamwi 1997:2, emphasis added). While adhering to principles of participation and support for community action in the sustainable use of natural resources (Seeley 1998), environment and development programmes informed by NAPCOD build on an acceptance that 'desertification' caused by unwise land-use practices underlies environmental processes in Namibia's communal areas. They thereby proceed with a view that influencing people to modify their land-use practices will have positive environmental manifestations. As such, we might reasonably invoke Foucault's (1980) influential notion of a
discourse as form of 'power/knowledge' in considering the ramifications of this 'fact' of 'desertification'.

**FINDINGS FROM 'INDEPENDENT' BIOPHYSICAL RESEARCH**

Research conducted in this same area but independently of NAPCOD and drawing on ecological theory embracing non-equilibrium and non-linear dynamics, constructs something of a counter narrative to desertification explanations.

For example, the findings of Ward et al. (1998), who compared sites heavily-stocked under a communal tenure regime (the former Otjimbingwe Reserve) with sites on freehold land lightly-stocked for commercial beef production, contradict normative views of the less-degrading land-use practices by European settler farmers on freehold farms. They found no evidence for differences in vegetation community structure (cover, diversity and richness) of perennial plants on the different categories of land. They also clearly demonstrate that nitrogen, phosphorus and bioassay measures were not significantly different, and that levels of carbon (representing fertility) were actually greater for the communally-managed sites (ibid.:369). They concluded that, "[e]ven though the communal area has 20 times more stock than the commercial farms, soil quality is similar" (ibid.). The fact that for at least 150 years numbers of livestock at Otjimbingwe have been maintained at consistently high, albeit fluctuating, levels relative to neighbouring commercial farms (ibid.:358-360) similarly contradicts fears of declining productivity. The study findings are interpreted as pointing, "... both to the resilience of arid environments to high stocking levels and the over-riding influence of abiotic variables on environmental quality" (ibid.:357).

Similar interpretations have been drawn from a recent structured ecological survey of vegetation designed to assess settlement impact in the northern part of Khorixas District, southern Kunene Region (Sullivan 1999; Sullivan 2000). This dataset comprises 2 760 woody plant individuals in a stratified sample of seventy-five transects; and forty-eight quadrates, with one-half fenced to exclude livestock, in which herbaceous vegetation was monitored over two growing seasons. A number of standard ecological variables, including patterns in community floristics, diversity, cover and population structure, were analysed in relation to measures of use by people and livestock around three focal settlements. These data indicate a number of findings contradictory to common assertions of degradation. First, none of the measured vegetation variables demonstrated that land-use pressure was having a negative impact on anything but a local scale confined to within settlements. Second, for woody vegetation, widening the scale of analysis from that surveyed in a preliminary study of resource-use impacts in the area (Sullivan and Konstant 1997) suggested that localised settlement impacts are within the range of variability expressed by a variety of vegetation measures over larger scales, including areas currently experiencing little or no utilisation by people or livestock. Third, patterns in the woody vegetation dataset at both community and individual-species levels failed to provide consistent evidence for the degrading effects of resource utilisation, even though woody species, through the stability conferred by their longer life spans, can act as longer-term and more robust indicators of vegetation change. Fourth, tree populations demonstrated high recruitment and regenerative potential despite assertions that, "[t]here are no young trees nor can any raise its head owing to the intensive browsing of the numerous cattle, goats and donkeys" (Van Warmelo 1962:39). Finally, herbaceous productivity was highly resilient under good rainfall conditions, even in areas under intensive utilisation by livestock (see Figures 11 and 12, Appendix I).112

112 For information regarding species composition at the different sites see Sullivan (1998).
A recent study based on analyses of archival landscape photographs for 38 sites matched with recent repeat images, and of matched aerial photographs between 1958 and 1981 corresponding to six of these ground photo sites, increases the time-depth of discussion back to the late nineteenth century (Rohde 1997). These data appear to tell the following story: that an increase in woody vegetation has occurred throughout the region since the first half of this century; that this increase includes species used intensively for browse, firewood and building material, and is independent of degree and type of land-use and of land tenure; and that when analysed in conjunction with available rainfall data can be attributed to climatic factors over the last 100 years, primarily a period of relatively high rainfall averages during the first few decades of this century (Rohde 1997:307-331,341-375). This analysis seems to support a "... case for climate change as the dominant factor affecting trees and shrubs within an inherently resilient environment" (ibid.:376). With regard to herbaceous vegetation, these analyses also illustrate, "... that dry periods in the past resulted in denuded landscapes," similar to those that occur today in drought years and without apparently hampering the potential for herbaceous productivity in years with above-average rainfall (ibid.:309).

**LOCAL NARRATIVES: "AND THE WIND IS NOW OUR RAIN"**

Unsurprisingly, people living in and from the landscape of north-west Namibia have their own opinions about its condition. Here I focus on the particularities of individual perception and experience in an attempt to bring out the flavour and texture of such perception (Slim and Thompson 1993) while highlighting the broader historical and socio-political contexts in which it occurs. Selected transcripts are from a broader field project conducted in 1999 which had as its objective the collation of views held by Damara (ǃNū Khoen) people living primarily in Khorixas District, southern Kunene Region, on a range of contemporary issues, particularly those relating to land and resource management (Sullivan and Ganuses in press). It should be noted that interviews took place towards the end of a severely below-average rain season. This attribute of the research is bound to influence immediate perceptions of positive or negative environmental change, but probably would not affect considerations of the causes of such change.

Interview material vividly depicts rainfall as the driving force behind dramatic temporal and spatial variations in vegetation. For example:

> At this plain the grass comes out when it rains, but the rain isn't falling now; ...
> When the rain falls you can't see the ground or the people for the grass. If it is [hao [the time when the land turns green] you cannot see the children for the

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113 Given the apparently even-aged stands of woody vegetation in Figure 13 (Appendix I), primarily of the thorn-tree *Acacia reficiens* Wawra subspecies *reficiens*, I also wonder at the possible causative effects of the rinderpest epidemic of 1897, and the associated impoverishment of Namibian herders and changes in land-use practices that followed (see Bley 1996:124-126). Given the extreme livestock and wildlife losses of more than 95% in some areas caused by this event, it would be surprising if it did not facilitate an 'escape' of woody vegetation, enabling rapid recruitment of woody seedlings due to disease-induced absence of grazing. This is a contrary explanation for a shift from herbaceous to woody vegetation to the normal narrative that 'bush encroachment is caused by the 'over-grazing' of cattle. Loth (1999), in fact, links the establishment of acacia cohorts in Manyara National Park (Kenyan Rift Valley) to crashes in herbivore populations, such as that caused by the rinderpest epidemic (I am grateful to Rick Rohde for drawing my attention to this reference).

grass. When the rain falls the grass and the [hinis [Tribulus species]] come out over the whole place and our dresses get yellow (from walking through the yellow flowers of [hinis]). When it rains, in the places where people stay the grass comes out like in the past. But if it doesn’t rain then there is no grass. There is nothing. (Philippine | Hairo | Nowaxas, 14 April 1999).

The rain that falls [this year] is only half of what it should be and there is nothing growing. The first rain, which came [this season] only touched the ground a little bit. After that it hasn’t fallen. ... But that year when you were coming and going it rained [1994-1995 season]; that rain was good! Yes, if the rain comes, the trees stand alive. If the rain falls things look clean. If there is no rain the leaves get dry, and some of them have no leaves. Only rain makes the ground green and brings the new leaves (Cornelia Hubuhege | | Guruses, 19 April 1999).

Overlying the capriciousness of rainfall, however, is a clear sense of things having deteriorated; having become in some sense 'dirty' or 'untidy'. As | Hairo says, "... it is different now; it is untidy," and Hubuhege reiterates, "... first the place was clean but now the place has become poor, shabby". Generally, this is linked to a perception of overall decline in rainfall, coupled with a shift in the distribution of rain such that it seems to occur later in the season. For example:

I can say that there have been changes. First in this area we got too much rain! And every tree was green and had food [fruits]. But now you see that many trees have died. ... If you compare today's life with that of the old time you can see that life is getting very weak. (Andreas Kharuxab, 12 May 1999).

When we had to move here things were better ... but in about three years' time the area looked different because of severe drought. Yes, when we first came here the rain was falling and the river was flowing. Now the river hasn't flowed for two years. Our things that we brought with us when we first came here died when we got to this place. The cattle are dead, the goats are dead. And because the rain fell only a little in the following years they died like that. ... And the people that remain will also die because of hunger and starvation. (Meda Xamses, 19 April 1999).

It is actually rather difficult to establish from existing rainfall records whether or not a decline in rainfall has occurred. The question remains, therefore, of what we should make of prevalent perceptions of such a decline, and of its apparent effects on people’s lives and livelihoods. I consider that narratives of deteriorating rainfall instead provide a powerful metaphor for portraying the impotence people feel in the face of a century of apartheid-rule, followed by an extremely uncertain policy environment during which the cost of living has risen in real terms for many of Namibia’s citizens. Just as rainfall is something that is uncontrollable, so there are a number of social and political processes which appear intractable to many and which constrain options for self-determination. A sense of powerlessness in the face of current change is conveyed by | Hairo who says:

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115 This is indicated, for example, by a lack of correlation between rainfall from one year to the next, which would indicate a trend over time. In analysis of rainfall data for four stations in north-west Namibia only the data from | Uis had a significant, but relatively weak, serial correlation ($r=-0.52$, $p=0.03$, $n=18$). Data for Fransfontein ($r=-0.08$, $p=0.58$, $n=56$), Khorixas ($r=-0.09$, $p=0.60$, $n=37$) and Sesfontein ($r=-0.08$, $p=0.70$, $n=24$) were not correlated and appeared randomly distributed when plotted graphically (Sullivan 1998:55-58).
When we grew-up in the past the rain was falling. Now I think, 'what's going on?' The clouds come but they don't bring any water; I think to myself what's happening, what's going on? ... Maybe the heart of the people was at one then but is following different paths now, and maybe it is because of this divisiveness that the rain is not falling. ... Before, the old people would do the same things, but now everyone has got their own heart, from the child up to the adult. It's because of the many 'governments' who are trying to change things. When there was just one government things went well; now there are many and everyone wants to get up and have their say. There is no king, and the old government is now finished here in Sesfontein. ... Even the White people would leave if the king said 'go away'. There used to be one king here and one pastor; a woman would sleep at her parents' house and would only go to her own house when she was married. Now there are so many governments and leaders, how can the rain fall in this chaos?

As an elderly woman, |Hairo is understandably nostalgic for a time in the past when peoples' roles in society were relatively clear-cut and where the settlement's hierarchy was established and organised. Perceptions that modernisation processes and a lapse of customs are the ultimate causes of reduced rainfall similarly have been recorded for the Sahel (Cross and Barker 1994). They fit with what are perhaps more generally experienced feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in the face of change, as captured so well by George Orwell in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*:

> [i]t isn't that life was softer than now. Actually it was harsher ... and yet what was it the people had in those days? A feeling of security, even when they weren't secure. More exactly, it was a feeling of continuity. All of them knew they'd got to die ... but what they didn't know was that the order of things could change ... it's easy enough to die if the things you care about are going to survive ... .

What |Hairo also is articulating, however, is a feeling of non-involvement, of non-representation and of discontinuity with the past, in the current plethora of new environment and development initiatives and related local committees in the area. Although operating under a 'community-based' and 'participatory' rhetoric, many such initiatives rely on local committees that are considered by some to be undemocratically elected, to proceed without full involvement of the wider 'community' in terms of consultation and decision-making, and to have exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions in the area (Sullivan in press). Regarding ideas of coherence and historical continuity Landau (1993:4) also argues that for inhabitants of Botswana's eastern Tsapang Hills, "... rain apparently fell only on communities of mutual support".  

Perceptions of deterioration in many cases are explicitly inseparable from feelings of powerlessness in relation to exerting control over the use of land and its resources. As Meda describes:

> When the rain fell strongly that time [1994-1995] then really too many people moved here to || Gaisos. Herero people with many cattle, goats and donkeys. With lots of those things they came to this land and when the rain falls and the grass came out they damaged the grass. This makes the land very bad. It empties because the grass didn’t grow up and pour out its seeds. But now if the people

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[116] I am grateful to Olivia Bennett of the Oral Testimony Programme, The Panos Institute, London, for drawing my attention to this quote.
did not move here in those years when the rain falls then maybe something will
remain. Too many people move in even though the rain is half of what it was. In
some areas the tufts of perennial grasses are no longer there, but maybe when it
rains they will come out again.

And here Andreas, the Damara headman of Kowareb, articulates an almost identical view,
relating it directly to current government policy:

We feel and find that the rain is weak. Every year we have weaknesses in the
rain. But also there are too many livestock in this area. There are too many
livestock of people that we do not know in this area. ... People of other areas
move in with their livestock: people of Opuwo district; people of Hoaruseb area.
When this land became independent the government said that everyone must
move where they want to. ... But those sorts of words bring conflict. ... The
government should look at these things. If the person moves here because of
drought, and if the rain falls at his place at the end of year, then he should take
his livestock back there and farm at his place.

In these passages, livestock clearly are linked to ideas of vegetation degradation. However, such
descriptions seem to arise primarily in contexts of contested claims to land and grazing,
normally associated with instances of recent immigration of herds into areas where others
consider themselves to have relatively long-term claims to the land. Namibia's post-
independence constitution provides for all Namibians to move to wherever they wish on
communal land with the proviso that they, "... take account of the rights and customs of the
local communities living there" (GRN 1991:28-29). Given the absence of an institutional basis
for monitoring the effects of such movements or for protecting the rights of existing residents, as
well as a situation where options for movement are greatest among the wealthy (Rohde 1993),
and where ethnicity as a major axis of difference tends to conspire against certain groups
(Bottelle and Rohde 1995), this otherwise liberal context can be disempowering for existing
inhabitants. Expressing concern over the impact of livestock on available grazing resources is
one way of vocalising anger and frustration at the inequalities supporting such immigration. This
is particularly so when some families know themselves to have been blatantly impoverished by
the policies of previous years, and who perceive the current situation to be one whereby other
Namibians are better able to exploit resources now unavailable to them. A case in point is that of
Meda quoted above. Her family, to all intents and purposes, was evicted in the 1950s from her
home area of !Ao! /aexas (Aukegas) when it was gazetted as Daan Viljoen Game Park for the
use of Windhoek's White inhabitants; their subsequent movement to the marginal environment
of the western reaches of the Ugab (!U+gab) River caused large losses of their primary source of
wealth and subsistence (livestock), and attempts since independence to have their ancestral lands
restored have been all but ignored. On top of this, since 1994 she and other inhabitants of the
western Ugab River have had to contend with an influx of elephant to the area.

CONCLUSION

Local Damara people frequently articulate a view of vegetation changes driven primarily by
extreme rainfall events in a way that resonates strongly with recent non-equilibrium theories of
ecological dynamics in drylands. Perceptions of deterioration in rainfall and productivity exist in
local environmental knowledges, but these appear inseparable from expressions of dissatisfaction
with wider socio-political processes. As such, statements affirming deterioration are inextricably
linked with descriptions of situations that individuals see as being exclusionary and undermining.
Instead of being a simple biophysical process, ideas of 'land degradation' also describe people's
concerns over broader land policy, their anxieties over their lack of power to determine land use, and their frustrations over longstanding land claims.

Given the current pervasiveness, in the academic literature at least, of 'new' ecology and anti-degradationist views, Beinart (2000:284) cautions that, "[a]rguments rooted in an anti-colonial and sometimes populist or anti-modernist discourse can present us with an analytical closure ... comprising] ... too neat an inversion," of prevailing discourses. Regarding the official national narrative of environmental degradation through over- or poor- use of Namibia's natural resources, however, two important points emerge. First, 'desertification' as a narrative of modernity is not necessarily supported by a modernist interrogation of environmental processes, that is, via the structured collection of environmental data. And second, apparent correspondences between oral testimony accounts and affirmations of deterioration can be distinguished by their different attribution of causes. In the oral testimony material, these causes often can be interpreted as literal or metaphorical references to legitimate sources of concern from socio-political arenas.

Given the framework of participation and empowerment governing current environment and development initiatives, it might be considered important that these concerns are taken-up rather than obscured by what can become rather interventionist approaches regarding environmental management. Referring back to my introduction, a legitimate stance for a revitalised post-modern anthropology in the context of today's 'African Renaissance' thus might be an unabashed attempt to make accessible views which exist alongside, and perhaps run counter to, those elaborated in 'expert discourses'. Contextualised oral testimony, and the provision of a public space for the normally unheard views of 'ordinary' individuals perhaps can be a contribution in this direction.

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Figure 11. Fixed-point photographs showing changes in herbaceous productivity over two growing seasons (1995 with above-average rain and 1996 with below-average rain).

a and b are located mid-way between Sesfontein/Namib and Warmquelle with a taken in May 1995 and b taken in July 1996.
Figure 12. Fixed-point photographs showing changes in herbaceous productivity over two growing seasons (1995 with above-average rain and 1996 with below-average rain).

c and d are located five kilometres south of Khowarib with c taken in February 1995 and d taken in July 1996.
a *circa* 1930. b matched photo, taken 7:00 am, 27 April 1995. Interesting points include: the lack of herbaceous cover in a; The thick herbaceous cover following the above-average rains of 1995, primarily of *Stipagrostis* spp.; and the growth of woody plants, primarily *Acacia reficiens* wawra subsp. *reficiens*, in the intervening decades.¹

¹ I am grateful to Rick Rohde for the loan of these images from his archive.
CHALLENGES FOR ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE 'AFRICAN RENAISSANCE'
A SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTRIBUTION

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