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HISTORY WORKSHOP

FENCED IN BY IDEAS OF MODERNITY:
LAND STRUGGLES, "COLOURED" IDENTITY AND CIVIC ACTIVISM IN NAMAQUALAMD (1980-93)

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AFRICANA

HWS 357

HISTORY WORKSHOP CONFERENCE
WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY, 12TH-15TH JULY, 1994

FENCED IN BY IDEAS OF MODERNITY: LAND STRUGGLES, "COLOURED" IDENTITY AND CIVIC ACTIVISM IN NAMAQUALAND (1980-93).

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Jy is nou of aan die een kant of die ander kant. Jy is dus of 'n Raadsman of 'n Gemeentskapkommittee se man ("Hannes Smit", Leliefontein, February, 1994)

... Within these [Namaqualand] communities there is what you could call a class struggle. The people in the communities don't understand the thing as class struggle, but they know that our teachers and business people practice apartheid here ("Manie Kloete", Springbok, February, 1994).

... My personal feeling is that we have spent lots of energy in the campaign to get these economic units[1] set aside. But since then nothing has improved. People got the land back but they still continue in the same way. Just having 20 sheep or so. They're not market-orientated. But its no use if the mining company retrenches you and gives you a few thousand rand to buy a few hundred sheep or so, but you're not market-orientated ("Manie Kloete", Springbok, February, 1994).

[1] "Economic units" were individually-allocated plots that were sold Namaqualand farmers who qualified to buy em in terms of specific criteria, i.e., 250 head of stock or R 3,000 in assets. The introduction of these units in the 980's involved the sub-division of common grazing land into individual grazing "camps". Although these camps ere sold to a small number of residents in the various "Coloured Reserves" of Namaqualand, in 1988 a Supreme ourt case ruling set aside the economic units initiative and the land reverted to the commons.

[2] The research for this paper was generously funded by the Centre for African Studies Oppenheimer Award, niversity of Cape Town, and the Albert Einstein Institution South African Program at the University of /itwatersrand, Project for Civil Society.

In this paper, I draw on Donald Moore's (1993) use of the Gramscian metaphor for environmental resources to understand how the Namaqualand landscape has, especially since the 1980's, become symbolically and materially contested terrain. Environmental resource struggles mobilize actions, shape social identities, and condition understandings of collective interests. Further, although meanings may reinforce existing inequalities, "Gramsci's notion of hegemony reminds us that dominant meanings are always contested, never totalizing, and always unstable" (Moore, 1993, p.383). In this paper, I argue that in situations of heightened forms of multiple and shifting identities, hegemonies and counter-hegemonies are especially fluid and unstable. Struggles over environmental resources will reflect these conditions, and multiple and contested discourses on community and property are likely to emerge. With these Gramscian notions in mind, I focus on the tactical moves and strategizing of civic activists in Namaqualand in the 1980's in contesting and destabilizing attempts by the state, in an alliance with a relatively small group of local elites in Leliefontein (a "Coloured Reserve" in Namaqualand)[1], to purchase what was formerly reserve commonage. The land was parcelled off to better-off local residents who could afford these individual plots ("economic units") on the grounds that this was necessary in order to "conserve" pastures from overstocking and to "modernize" and commercialize livestock production. Opposition to this intervention came from a larger group of communal farmers whose poverty disqualified them from purchasing land, and who were denied access to sections of the commons.

Along with Leliefontein residents and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)[2], civic activists drew on hybrid discourses of modernity and tradition to articulate opposition to economic units. This took the form of calls for "modern" practices of democracy, accountability, and legality, as well as arguments based on historical claims of Namaqualanders with Nama ancestry to "traditional lands". However, these claims about Nama cultural identity and tradition occurred within a context of a "modern", Coloured, predominantly Christian community whose ties to their Nama past appeared to be tenuous or hidden.

Civic activists involved in mobilizing local opposition to economic units, were structurally located in an ambiguous position as intermediaries and conduits of ideas of modernity rendered them susceptible to the very development-thinking they so vehemently opposed. While they drew on Nama tradition in their fight to reinstate communal tenure, they became implicated in development and conservationist ideas about the ecological destructiveness and an "unproductive" nature of communal livestock systems. This way of thinking could ultimately lead them to similar prognoses of South Africa's communal areas to those put forward by advocates of individual tenure. Given their own positions as agents of "development" at the margins of the new state, civic activists and development workers may increasingly find themselves advocating development ideas and practices that conflict and contradict with those of their rural constituencies. For example, by promoting livestock projects involving fenced paddocks[3] and rotation grazing, they may end up contributing to intra-community conflicts similar to those that erupted in Namaqualand in the 1980's. The changing circumstances of South Africa in the 1990's may give further impetus to such development agendas as community development workers increasingly become incorporated into bureaucratic structures and discourses of nation-building and development.

In this paper, I will, as far as possible, allow the voices of civic activists and Leliefontein Reserve residents to be heard as they reconstruct historical narratives of the land struggles of the 1980's. The voices also include those of influential local elites, such as the Raadsmanne, who promoted the economic units and endorsed the Management Boards. The key narratives of the paper consist of accounts by civic activists about how they interpreted and responded to attempts by state institutions - i.e., the Leliefontein Management Board - and local elites to introduce land tenure reform in the Reserves.

The story of economic units: saving the veld for the market

In the early 1980's, the Management Board of Leliefontein, one of six "Coloured" rural Reserves", attempted to privatize common rangelands and introduce individual tenure for those who could afford to buy individually-allocated plots or "economic units". The common grazing area was divided into 47 'economic units' or 'camps' which were sold or hired individually.[4] In 1985, the Department of Local Administration, Housing and Agriculture (DLAHA) authorized the leasing out of 30 of the 47 camps to individuals (and small groups) who qualified in terms of the following criteria: a person had to have 250 head of stock or R3 000 in assets. Economic units meant that a large proportion of the total grazing land would be alienated by a relatively small group of people who qualified to lease the camps. Of the 30 camps that were leased, 18 were hired by people with off-farm sources of income, for example, shop-owners, teachers, pensioners and bureaucrats (Steyn, 1989: 420). Since the early 1960s, this category of "progressive" farmer was deemed the most suitable candidate for the state's goal of promoting the growth of a class of small-scale commercial farmers.[5] Communal farmers, by contrast, were deemed to be unproductive, environmentally destructive and an obstacle to modernization. This construction of communal farming by the state and local elites was contested in a variety of ways as the following pages illustrate.

The economic units initiated intense conflict between a relatively small group of "modernizers" who supported individual tenure, and larger group of communal farmers who demanded the retention of the communal tenure regime. The "modernizers" comprised of relatively well- off residents who claimed that individual tenure was a solution to overgrazing and environmental degradation in the Reserves. Following opposition from communal farmers, lawyers were called in by Leliefontein residents to challenge the economic units initiative in court. The 1988 Supreme Court ruling was that the economic units had to be scrapped since their implementation contravened approved administrative procedure.[6]

Struggles over land and environmental resources continue to shape Namaqualand politics, and while the legal challenge to economic units in 1988 was successful, the conservationist discourse that was used to justify its implementation continues to surface in a variety of national, regional and local contexts. In fact, it is not inconceivable that future policy makers could follow the example of their predecessors in continuing to blame communal farmers for environmentally destructive land use practices, and their failure to embrace "modern" methods of livestock management and land use. This scenario, should it occur, would conform to experiences from post-independence Zimbabwe, and elsewhere in Africa, where communal livestock farmers have been labelled the villain of the piece (Robins, 1993).

The paper will analyze the ways in which these hegemonic "development narratives" are received, rejected or transformed in local contexts by civic activists and development workers

involved in constructing their own counter-hegemonic narratives. In the spirit of the Gramscian metaphor, I will also examine how certain Leliefontein elites appropriated these hegemonic narratives as part of their strategy to transform tenure regimes and accumulate land. Before proceeding with the analysis, however, it is necessary to situate these developments within the context of the making of the Coloured Reserves.

The making of the Coloured Reserves:

The inhabitants of Namaqualand are directly descended from the 'Little Namaqua', a westerly branch of the Khoikhoi peoples that archaeologists believe have lived in the region for over a thousand years. The history of land dispossession in Namaqualand can be traced to the two Khoi-Khoi/Dutch wars in 1658-1660 and 1637-1677, and a smallpox epidemic in 1713 that devastated the population (see Steyn, 1989; Boonzaier, 1980; Sharp, 1977). In 1816, Rev. Barneby Shaw of the Methodist Missionary Society established a mission station in Leliefontein at a time when Trek boers were encroaching onto Namaqua territory. It provided the indigenous population with some degree of protection from the trek boers. In 1909 the Mission Station and Reserves Act established the reserves as communal areas in which tax paying indigenous peoples, defined as 'aborigines or bastards of aboriginal descent', were entitled to graze their animals and cultivate their fields. After 1909 the reserves were administered by the Department of Native Affairs and management boards were chaired by magistrates. From 1950 to 1983, the reserves were under the Department for Coloured Affairs, and thereafter were administered by the Department of Local Administration, Housing and Agriculture (DLAHA) in the House of Representatives.

Namaqualand is a sparsely populated, semi-arid region of 47 700 square kilometres situated in the Northern Cape region in the north-western parts of South Africa. It has a population of 60 234 and comprises 14 small urban settlements, six Coloured rural areas and vast tracts of white-owned land and mining company land.[7] Almost fifty percent of the population is employed on the diamond and copper mines, while nine percent are farm labourers on white farms (Steyn, 1989:416). However, the fluctuations in the mining industry has meant that workers are periodically retrenched n large numbers, and in recent years the situation was exacerbated by the closure of smaller mines (Steyn, 1989). In addition, a significant size of the population are employed in the service and manufacturing sectors of the Western Cape as migrant labourers. The majority of Namaqualand residents, including absent migrant labourers, derive income from the land, primarily as livestock producers. While wheat, barley, rye and oats are grown, the backbone of the agricultural economy is small stock, i.e., goats and sheep.

The communal land tenure system in Namaqualand's reserves has meant that 'registered occupiers' or 'citizens' ('burgers') have guaranteed access to grazing land. Along with rights to vote for the local Management Board, 'citizenship' ('burgerskap') status has meant that tax paying registered residents, by virtue of toekennningsbriewe (letters of allocation), are also entitled to access to small patches of land for wheat cultivation. This has meant that workers who experience job insecurity due to a variety of factors, including fluctuations in the world copper price, have depended on the reserves, both as a place to retire to, and as a safety net in the event of retrenchment. Economic units threatened to undermine the survival strategies of the most vulnerable categories of Namaqualand residents, i.e., women, migrant workers, the unemployed and the aged. By parcelling off large sections of common pasturage to a

latively small group of owners, it caused many stock owners to experience serious stock sses due to a shortage of grazing. It was therefore hardly surprising that this initiative enerated such vehement opposition.

ontesting tenure regimes and development narratives

uring the 1980's, "Coloured" communities in Namaqualand's Reserves experienced intense onflict between the Management Boards and the Community Committees Gemeentskapkommittees) or civics. Confrontations between "Raadsmanne" (Management oard men) and the "Gemeentskapkommittee se manne" divided these communities into those ho supported economic units and those who demanded the retention of communal tenure. lthough civic activists and residents opposed the economic units initiative, they failed to hallenge the conservationist ideas that underpinned it.[8] For example, "Manie Kloete", a 38 ear old Namaqualand-born civic and trade union activist who had been at the forefront of ie anti-economic units struggle, also portrayed communal farmers as "backward", nproductive and practicing traditional ways of farming that were inappropriate for modern onditions. They needed education to make them more "market-oriented". While radical in olitical outlook, when it came to agricultural matters Manie fully accepted and espoused onservationist orthodoxy.

> ... I think that if people are market-orientated people can get more money from what they are doing, you see. And also what I think is that people should also get education on how to be a subsistence farmer because our people still depend on traditional ways and means which, I think was actually a good method of doing these things in the past, but now things have changed. I mean, we don't get the amount rainfall anymore that we used to get in the area. And also more and more people subsistence farmers which means that there's this thing of overgrazing... People don't care about the quality of their stock so that even if you say you're going to be market orientated you also need to be quality orientated, you see. Education needs to be given to people, and they also need more land...

Vith "conservative" conservationist arguments emanating from their "radical" opponents, it s perhaps not surprising that local elites were able to promote economic units as the solution or "unproductive" communal farming. As was suggested earlier, civic activists such as lanie held an ambivalent position on communal farming in Namaqualand arising from their mbiguous role as agents of social change and modernity, as well as custodians of Nama aditional practices (e.g., communal tenure and seasonal transhumance). Although they iewed communal tenure as a positive and authentic feature of Nama culture and identity in he 1980's, their future commitment to development and reconstruction may force them to onclude that communal farming indeed needs to be "modernized" .

he necessity for the "modernization" of Namaqualand agriculture was put forward by roponents of individual tenure and former economic units owners such as "Hannes Smit", retired school principal and former Board member. For him both Nama culture and ommunal tenure were obstacles to progress and modernity. A highly articulate and well-read x-student at the University of Cape Town, Smit developed his argument by referring to texts uch as Professor Sampie Terblanche's commentary on the Theron Commission and North

American anthropologist Oscar Lewis's culture of poverty thesis. I quote extensively from this interview to convey how conservationist and development ideas have been woven onto the fabric of locally-embedded religious discourses on individuality and Christian self-reliance, dignity and self-development (see below). Drawing on these multiple discourses, Smit represents individual tenure as the anti-thesis of communal property regimes in the Reserves, where dependency on charity and protection from competition are cultivated. He juxtaposes modernist ideas about individuality, "development" and progress, against the "backwardness" of "Nama" collective traditions and cultural practices and a "culture of poverty" that he deems endemic within "traditional" communities.

> ... The argument [in the early 1980's] was that people should get rid of the communal system, because it was of no advantage. But people also realize that the communal system is traditional and it is part of the culture of our people. It is therefore not something which can simply be eliminated... There is something else that really obstructs the development of our community, and it is the culture of poverty which has, over the years, become part of the tradition and lifestyle of our people. If we think that this situation has been given to us by God and you do not see a better situation for yourself, then you just accept it. We hope that through improved education people will escape the spiral poverty and dependence... A human being therefore should be responsible for his own progress and this will give him integrity and self-respect. The human being should not have to achieve progress through charity, but by himself with assistance from others.
>
> ... In the communal system here at Leliefontein, concepts like veld [conservation] are not part of the farming culture, with the result that the veld is devastated. [So] something had to be done, and the government, together with the local Management Board, decided to hire the 30 of the 47 farms to people who want to have individual farms [economic units]. They hired the farms for R300,00 a year and after five years you had the choice of buying the farm. From the beginning of this plan, there was opposition from the community. They felt that there should not be economic units in this area, because it was under the communal system, whereby everybody had the right to have access to grazing anywhere. They even went so far to say that when Queen Victoria gave this area to the Namma people under the Cape Colonial Government, it was emphasized that it should not be allocated to individuals... I was one of the people who had an economic unit, and I could see that one could really have a dignified lifestyle from farming ones own plot. After the units were given to you were told how many animals you could keep on that unit, and this prevented overgrazing and degradation of the veld. Our finding was also that after 3 years, there was more prosperity for those farmers. They could send more cattle to the market, the carcasses were of an improved quality and mass. Unfortunately we could not continue with this system... The biggest problem was, "What about those who did not have units, how would they survive"?. The remaining grazing land was not sufficient for all of them...

Hannes Smit did not see Nama identity as a particularly important aspect of the lives of

ordinary Leliefontein people. However, he did concede that their attachment to communal tenure could perhaps be traced to their Nama heritage. He suggested that most Leliefontein people were "modern and Western", and that the emphasis on Nama identity in the late 1980's had merely been a strategic maneuver to buttress claims to land during the 1988 court case. After the case was won, he claimed, Nama identity vanished from sight and sound. Hannes' comments on the younger generations' struggles to secure freehold plots in Cape Town seems to imply that this "traditionalist" attitude would eventually disappear as children in the cities "educate" their parents in rural Namaqualand. This trickle down effect was represented as part of a teleological, modernist narrative about progress and Western-style capitalism. In ten years, he predicted, freehold tenure would take hold in rural Namaqualand.

SR: Do you think that economic units and individual tenure goes against the Nama cultural heritage?

HS: Yes, definitely. The people here believe that the land should be used according to the communal system. In the past, the Nama Kaptein [Captain] was the owner of the land and everyone used it as one community. It will really take time before the people will decide to change this system. If the government decides to bring that change about it will happen rapidly, but there will be opposition from the people here... It is actually strange, because a modern, Western person believes he needs a title-deed for a piece of land. Our children are also struggling in the cities to get a piece of land, while we here are saying no to an opportunity to buy the land... In Cape Town, if your neighbour has more money than you, he can buy your plot from you. This is a principle of your democratic capitalism, of your Western lifestyle. If we want have the democracy of the Western world we will have to take the other things as well...

SR: But people in Namaqualand also want to maintain at the same time their Nama heritage. Being Nama means that they have protection, since the land is reserved for them, and this ensure that next generation will continue to have access to the land.

HS: The fact that they are Namas has not been emphasized of late. It is not one of the important things anymore. I have listened to people in our meetings and you don't hear it anymore. It has been emphasized a lot when they were still fighting the economic units. They were also proud when the lawyer said to them "Namas, now you have your land back". The use of the word "Nama" is not necessary anymore. They are not proud anymore that they are Namas. They are aware of fashion these days and now the mini is out, it has really disappeared. You will for instance still get someone like Japie Bekeur who is one of the big fighters for the rights of the Nama, but he is already an old man. The youngsters do not emphasize that factor about being Nama.

SR: Are they embarrassed about their Nama ancestry?

HS: It seems as if this has been a natural death. There are a lot of things which just disappear from life without anybody being aware of it. It seems as if the Nama story does not fit into the present situation anymore.

To properly understand how these dominant ideas about development and progress have been both sustained and challenged in Namaqualand, it would be necessary to examine discourses emanating from a variety of sources, the state, civics, churches, schools and universities. For this reason, it has been deemed necessary to take into account the role of NGOs and universities in Cape Town in shaping local understandings and responses to the economic units. This approach takes for granted the inter-connections between local and trans-local settings and discourses, and the multiple origins of discourses that constitute hegemonies and counter-hegemonies.

A combination of agencies were involved in shaping collective understandings and actions in Leliefontein in the 1980's. While a narrow legal argument about administrative procedure won the day in Cape Town's Supreme Court in 1988, civic activists and Leliefontein residents, along with Cape Town-based anthropologists, ecologists and NGO personnel, argued against economic units on a number grounds including that it: (1) undermined Leliefontein residents' continued access to land held under communal tenure, (2) violated agreements reached between the Nama and the British Crown in the 19th century, (3) contradicted traditional Nama resource utilization patterns and notions of common property; (4) was based on flawed notions of environmental resource management; and (5) it was implemented without adequate consultation by the Management Board, which was itself an undemocratic and illegitimate apartheid institution.

UCT ecologists, following on from a recent wave of research findings that challenge conservationist orthodoxy (see Cousins, 1988, 1989, 1991), attempted, through letters and reports, to critically engage with policy makers. However, they encountered deeply grained and tenacious conservationist arguments that were prejudiced against communal tenure. These views, which continue to shape development policy throughout Africa, were first encountered in Namaqualand in the form of the 1890 Melville Report where, typically, blame for environmental degradation in the Leliefontein Reserve was attributed to communal grazing. In an argument challenging this conservationist legacy, a University of Cape Town (UCT) archaeologist, Webley, concluded that "since rainfall is very sporadic and extensive droughts are common in Namaqualand, seasonal movements are a vital aspect of the effective utilization of the land" (see SPP files). This type of resource utilization system, Webley suggested, required the flexibility of livestock movement that is only possible under communal tenure arrangements. Members of the Botany Department at UCT put forward a similar argument for the retention of communal tenure.

> As professional ecologists ... we are acutely aware [that] rainfall is unpredictable, and varies greatly from season to season, place to place and year to year. Therefore a great deal of flexibility of livestock movement is necessary if semi-arid and arid rangelands are to be utilized by domestic stock on a sustained yield basis... (Surplus People Project files).

Academics also attempted to draw attention to undemocratic nature of the implementation of the economic units. In a letter written in 1985 to David Dalling, then a Member of

Parliament in the House of Assembly, the faculty of the UCT Social Anthropology and Archaeology Departments drew attention to the issue of inadequate consultation, the fact that the Management Boards looked after the interests of the wealthy at the expense of the poor, and that small stock owners would be seriously disadvantaged by the shrinking of the commonage.

The arguments referred to above reflected a hybrid of modern and traditional discourses on democracy, culture and development. Modern concepts of democracy and accountability were deployed alongside arguments about the need to preserve traditional Nama cultural practices, e.g., communal tenure and seasonal transhumance. Although the majority of Namaqualanders could be described as Western, Christian and modern, anthropologists and lawyers argued that they were the direct descendants of the Nama who had entered into an agreement with Queen Victoria guaranteeing future generations access to communal grazing lands. In another case of the intermingling of the modern and traditional, ecologists challenged conservationist orthodoxy by arguing that "traditional" communal grazing patterns (e.g., seasonal transhumance) were ecologically sustainable in semi-arid regions.[9] Individual tenure, the ecologists argued, would undermine these grazing patterns. Despite the logic and strength of these arguments, the Supreme Court ruling only dealt with technical matters concerning administrative procedure. Yet, it seems reasonable to expect that these arguments, along with direct political action coordinated by the civics, contributed to the overturning of the economic units initiative.

The court decision was the culmination of years of opposition to the Leliefontein Management Board. Tactics of protest and opposition included the following: a tax boycott; the sending of letters, reports, petitions and delegations to government officials; defiance by residents of the exclusion of their stock from pastures that were incorporated into economic units; an assault by a resident on an official who came to impound his animals for grazing on private property; the establishment of civics and a Development Association to challenge the Board's role in Namaqualand communities, and the forging of ties with academics, lawyers, NGOs and COSATU, UDF and ANC activists.

The tax boycott was perhaps one of the most direct challenges to the Board's legitimacy and credibility. It was launched in the late 1980's to protest the Board's alleged financial mismanagement and failure to efficiently deliver social services to these communities. In response, the Board took members of the civic to court in an unsuccessful bid to break the boycott. Having won the case, Leliefontein civic activists proceeded to take over the provision of social services at the community level and establish their on Development Association. These challenges culminated in popular calls for the Board to be dismantled and replaced by more representative and democratic local institutions. By February 1993, the local government restructuring negotiations were about to be set in motion in Namaqualand and the Board was being drawn into negotiations with the civics and brokered by the National Peace Committee.

The "war of position" of the civics: reflections on strategies and tactics deployed in land struggles in Namaqualand.

The 1980's in Leliefontein witnessed conflict between relatively well-off teachers, business people and Board members on the one side, and civic activists and resource-poor

"traditionalist" (communal) farmers on the other. The former supported the economic units, while the latter challenged the economic units as well as the legitimacy of the Board, which they regarded as an undemocratic, corrupt apartheid structure. "Manie Kloete" (see above) described the conflicts between the Board and the civics as follows:

> Ya, the other thing that is very interesting is that within these [Namaqualand] communities there is what you could call a class struggle. The people in the communities don't understand the thing as class struggle, but they know that our teachers and business people practice apartheid here. If I have a shop, or I'm earning a good salary and I have a big house and a car, I will tell my kids not to go and play with those kids because they are not rich. We also find that the wealthy people align themselves with the National Party because they believe that when the ANC takes over their cars and houses will be taken away from them. It is also this sector of the community that pays their taxes to the Board. Some of them are quite influential, because some of them are Principals and so on.

Manie's trade unionist background perhaps led him to emphasize "class struggle" as a key metaphor in attempting to understand local politics in Namaqualand in the 1980's. Like many young Namaqualanders, Manie had to seek work in factories in Cape Town, where he was drawn into the trade union movement and anti-apartheid politics. In the 1980's, he began organizing the truck drivers in Namaqualand and later took on the task of setting up a branch of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in the region. He claimed that NUM was the catalyst for political mobilization that took place in Namaqualand in the 1980's. His account of his experiences as a unionist in the 1980's throws light on the process that made possible the emergence of a civics movement in Namaqualand.

> During the early 1980's that I became involved with the unions and met people like Di Cooper, Dave Lewis, Howard Gabriels. It was during the Red Meat Boycott, it was also after the Wiehahn Commission had been publicized concerning the new labour legislation for the country. So, immediately I became involved in what was called the Western Province Advice Bureau. This was before it changed to General Workers Union, and it was where Dave Lewis and Di Cooper and those people worked. So, I became involved in trade unions, and I was also involved in the unity talks around COSATU... And I think the unions actually showed me a lot in terms of political education. What happened was that during the unity talks around COSATU we realized that we should come down to Namaqualand and organize these big trucking companies [like] Joey's Transport... It was also very difficult because people in the area did not understand unions. Some of them thought that a union was like an insurance [company] or something like that. And also the management of the company was also trying to hinder us from making any progress. Then in 1983 De Beers, which is a huge mining company, were retrenching people, and miners came into contact with myself and Howard Gabriels. And then we explained to them the whole issue about these [COSATU] Unity talks... During that time the mine workers union, NUM, was a small union with about 2000 to 6000 members. Then I met comrade Cyril [Ramaphosa] and discussed the matter with him and then we agreed that myself and Howard Gabriels is

> coming [sic] to Namaqualand again to explore the possibilities. We came in February 1983 and organized some meetings with mine workers where Cyril also addressed the people, and the people started to get interested in becoming part of NUM... I think everyone should actually say thanks to NUM in the area because the NUM was first progressive organization in the area. After NUM [was established] we started to organize the civics... I think SPP, especially Lala Steyn, played a major role in assisting us in setting up these community-based organizations, civics as we call them. Because during that time she was involved with the people from Leliefontein in the economic units issue...

Like Manie, "Pieter Smit", a 33 year old Namaqualand-born civic activist and University of the Western Cape graduate, also viewed the tensions in Leliefontein in the 1980's in class terms. Pieter's own Coloured working class background, as well as his political education at UWC, where completed his B.A degree in 1986, no doubt informed his understanding of local politics. In 1987 he returned to Leliefontein to take up a teaching position at Leliefontein, and was soon drawn into the struggle against economic units.[10] As a teacher, Pieter associated with well-educated and better-off residents who, in many cases, also happened to be economic unit-owners. His account of his involvement in the struggle against the economic units draws attention to his own structural position in Leliefontein and the class and occupational dimensions of conflict. As a teacher he was expected to be "respectable" and refrain from engaging in politics. Moreover, he was seen by the beneficiaries of economic units initiative as their natural ally. Yet, his "political education" at UWC, and his own experiences of poverty and inequality, no doubt influenced his eventual decision to leave teaching and devote his energy to working full-time as a civic activist and development worker.

> In early 1980's we had these economic units which forced people off the land. And some of the older guys, they took up the struggle, and fought against these laws. That made me think. Because these old guys had the guts to fight against the government. This was a lesson for all of us. Some people said, "What are these guys doing holding meetings, meetings? They won't change anything. It's against government don't they know that". But they kept on fighting. There were a lot of set backs, oh yes. But in the end they survived and got this victory. I'm glad to say I was part of that, because as from '87, I came back to the community and saw this hardship. Poverty was part of my life as a citizen of Leliefontein, nobody is rich here. But there was an increase in poverty. There was an increase in diseases like TB. So working in the community, working with the people, made me aware of their problems, and I joined them in their struggle [against economic units]. One part of the community accepted me because I was a teacher who had a [respected] job in the community, and people looked up to me. The poorer people often see teachers, not quite as the enemy, but as people to be afraid of, and who do not freely talk to them. The richer guys, those with a little bit more money than the rest, accept you as their ally. It was those people who had economic units. They were my friends [yet] my personal feeling was that the economic units system was not fair. I remember when my sister married a guy whose father had economic units, and they were very strongly against opposition to the units. So one day my sister said to me, "Everyone has a chance to get

> economic units, why don't they do so?" I said to her, "Look here, there are 800 plus people in this village and there are only 47 economic units in this whole area, not everybody can get these economic units. So that makes it unfair." I was telling her about the increase in TB and the poverty, and I think she and her in-laws felt threatened at that stage. I had sided with the poorer guys, with the guys who were forced off the land. The economic units were supposed to improve the condition of the land, but instead it resulted in over-stocking. A lot of sheep and goats were crowded into one camp [paddock], and some of the people lost their total flock. Even until today some herds have not recovered. And those without economic units suffered because they could not move across the veld with their herds as they used to before because the [paddock] fences obstructed their animals. That of course was trouble. It was a total disaster. I think everybody, even the owners of the economic units was very happy when the thing ended [laughter]. They didn't admit it. Most of us were very happy after the economic units were ended, especially the poorer guys [who had] proved to themselves that they were capable of doing things for themselves...

Civic activists such as Pieter and Manie had anticipated that land struggles in Namaqualand in the 1980's would "conscientize" people about non-racialism and the ANC's national liberation struggle. However, they both discovered that many Coloureds in their region did not appear to be concerned with national issues. Pieter concluded that for the vast majority of Namaqualanders the struggle against economic units was understood as a local struggle divorced from national politics.[11]

> Not everyone here is interested in what is going on nationally. But if what is decided on the national or even regional level is against their interests, they will stand up as one man and fight that issue. They aren't interested in the national struggle for liberation, they always ask, "What's going on with these black people? Why do they kill each other? Why don't they live in peace?" But the Namaqualanders have had their own struggles. Then it was a case of, "Here's a case, it's effecting us and we're going to fight it?" Even with this local government question! It makes no difference to our people that we're going to vote for the first time in our lives. But they want to be part of the local government. There they want to have an input.

In discussions with both Pieter, Manie and other Leliefontein residents in February, 1994, there was tremendous concern about the prospect of being part of a CP-dominated, Northern Cape "Volkstaat". They spoke of a popular demand for a referendum to test whether Namaqualanders wanted to be part of the Northern or Western Cape. They also claimed that most people had social, educational, economic and family ties to the Western Cape, and lacked such ties with Kimberley, the major centre of the Northern Cape. Like political commentators and Markinor polls, who predicted the NP would win the Northern Cape region by a wide margin, civic activists anticipated a strong rightwing presence in the new regional legislature. By winning 50% of the Northern Cape vote, the ANC took many by surprise. The result defied predictions that Northern Cape Coloureds, 54% of the region's population, would vote NP en bloc; they were constructed and represented by observers and polls as having a shared language and cultural identity with Afrikaners, they were essentially

"conservative" and "religious", and were in any case afraid and suspicious of blacks (Weekly Mail & Guardian, May 13, 1994). The representation of Namaqualanders as "conservative and religious" warrants close scrutiny and circumspection, especially in the light of an ANC victory in the Northern Cape. In the following pages I probe the meaning of these terms in the context of Namaqualand, and examine how civic activists understood and worked with these representations of Namaqualand Coloureds?

Prior to the elections, Manie had expressed disappointment with the inadequate attention Namaqualand had received in the ANC's election campaign. As both an ANC organizer and an indigenous Namaqualander, he attributed this neglect to the fact that region was economically underdeveloped and had a low population size. The Northern Cape region is a province without an economic base, its gross domestic product is the lowest of all the provinces, and it has an infant mortality rate of 52 per 1 000 births - almost double that of the Western Cape. These indices of poverty and underdevelopment make the region one of the most economically weak in the entire country (Weekly Mail & Guardian, May, 13, 1994). Given these circumstances, Manie recognized that the civics had a long road ahead of them, and he expressed regret that the UDF had been disbanded, as it had, in his opinion, exercized a stronger presence in Namaqualand than SANCO.[12]

> ... The civics have a huge task here. We had this debate in 1991 about whether the civics should remain or disband? I mean if you look at people in the UDF, they played an important role in the '80s. So, some of our people even will tell you it was a mistake to abandon the UDF, because they now are referring to SANCO. I mean SANCO is not coming off the ground, specifically in our area, because we don't see the SANCO people coming here. They've promised us lots of things, that they will open up offices and so on. Which was different to the UDF, because the UDF would come here on a monthly or weekly basis, [and] there were UDF activists going around the people distributing pamphlets, talking to people. And also I think that in our churches, because Boesak was prominent in the UDF, we find during that time even our ministers were very progressive. But since Boesak moved into the ANC..., I mean the people are having lots of problems with him, especially the older people. They say, "This man has divorced his wife, he's taken a white woman, you know, he walked out of the church..."

References to religion are pervasive in the narratives about events in Namaqualand in the 1980's. For example, Hannes (above) viewed communal tenure as protection for the poor who had come to see their impoverished predicament as God-given and immutable. He believed that private property and unfettered individuality were the means by which people could become self-reliant, dignified and attain oneness "met God die koning bo all konings". His use of language was infused with biblical metaphors, and this tone flowed into his arguments for freehold tenure and economic units.

Biblical metaphors were also pregnant in the language of "Gert Links", an elderly man born in Leliefontein in 1919. In his youth he had attended school, but only for a few years. He was a relatively poor communal farmer, who had been at the forefront of the resistance against economic units, and was now on the Leliefontein Gemeentskapkommittee. Like Hannes Smit, Gert was a fervent believer in self-reliance, fierce independence of mind and,

when necessary, the right to resist interventions that were against the interests of the Leliefontein community. He spoke of the way in which Leliefontein people, upon realizing that the Board was not delivering services efficiently, had exercised initiative by taking over the running of the water pumps, building a clinic and crematorium, and putting forward their own plans for a day hospital and high school. Development, self-reliance and religious discourse fused together in a powerful and empowering message.

> ... The Lord provided for us up until now, the Lord has helped us. We must always say "Thank you" to the Lord. [But] the Lord has told us that we must not sit still. As the saying goes, "A crow that stands still will not get anything to eat." Now we are flying, we don't sit still anymore. We are helping ourselves as far as we can... We feel that each [mission] station should have its own right to develop in its own direction. We don't mind paying taxes, but we want to see what we are paying for. The law also says that you must see what you are paying for, and this is how we feel about this point... The condition of the roads are bad, the animals do not have water and these things are meant to be the responsibility of the Management Board. The water is the biggest problem and for years we have been sitting with this problem. We decided to maintain the [water] pumps ourselves... We are really working hard because we want a High school here. The child who just walked past here, I want him to complete his studies here [in Leliefontein; (laughter)]. My head is full of plans. I told the guys here when we were in the struggle [against economic units], that when the Lord told Moses that he could not see Canaan, Moses told Him that he simply had to see it. And the Lord let it be. Now the Lord must just make us all as one. There should not be a white person or a "kaffir" or whatever it might be. God created the world for us and we should live in it together...

While the religious discourses on individuality and self-reliance of Hannes Smit and Gert Links are similar in many ways, the latter has transformed his Christianity into a charter for independent political action. The characterization of Namaqualanders as "religious and conservative" (see above) begs the question as to what we mean by the term conservative. Leliefontein civic activists who worked closely with people such as Gert Links realized that religion, far from being the "opiate" of the Namaqualanders, had infused their oppositional politics with an intensity and fervor. For Gert Links, the bible teaches that to keep silent about ne's dissatisfaction is a sin against God.

> GL: Ons het twee waters, dit is die tenk en my mond. En my mond moet ons gebruik en dit is my wapen vir die pad. Ek is net spyt ek het so kort tydjie geleer.
>
> SR: Wat baie goed is, u is nie bang om oor die dinge te praat nie. U wil om te praat is 'n groot geskenk.
>
> GL: Ja meneer, ek het geleer. Die Bybel se dat wat gese moet word, moet gese word. 'n Ding wat jy moet se en jy hou dit, dit is sonde. En die tweede ding wat my betref is dat jy kan net maak soos jy wil, maar as ek vir jou 'n ding wil se dan se ek dit. Ek moet net seker wees dat ek

> vrede het met die ding. Maar ek sal nie stilbly nie. Dan is ek vry en is nie skuldig nie (see endnote for translation).[13]

Identity, culture and community: challenges for the civics in the 1990's

Issues of identity are likely to continue to play a significant role in local politics in Namaqualand's Reserves. As a result of an ongoing process of colonization, missionization, miscegenation, apartheid legislation and anti-apartheid discourse, Namaqualanders have come to inhabit multiple and shifting identities as "Nama" (Khoi), "Coloureds", "Basters" (people of mixed ancestry - European, Khoi-San, Tswana), Blacks and "Bruin Afrikaners". In terms of the legacy of apartheid's racial classification grid, only Coloureds qualify to live in Namaqualand's Coloured Reserves. However, with the end of apartheid and the victory of the ANC in the Northern Cape in the April, 1994 elections, the status of these areas as "Coloured Reserves" is uncertain. As a result of these changes, local elites were again calling for individual tenure, this time to preempt possible plans to open the "Coloured Reserves" to landless blacks. Despite attempts to foster a non-racial ideology in the civics and amongst the Namaqualand people, activists such as Manie and Pieter discovered, much to their dismay, that many Namaqualand Coloureds continued to see themselves as culturally, linguistically and socially distinct from Xhosa-speakers.

"Karina Bezuidenhoud", a 43 year old Leliefontein teacher, spoke at length about the racial discrimination that had been directed against Coloureds in the apartheid years. She spoke with anger about the fact that the government had spent considerably more on white education than on Coloureds. She also spoke about her own personal experiences of the humiliations of apartheid, and of neighbouring Kamieskroon whites who were still unwilling to open their schools to Coloured children from Leliefontein. Despite her anger and frustration, she told me that she would vote NP in the April elections. She could not identify with a "black party" (i.e., the ANC) because of what she perceived as the vast differences between Coloured and Black (Xhosa) people. However, Karina's experiences of racism allowed her to recognize Coloured people's shared experiences with blacks, and she could envisage the possibility of improved conditions under a black government. Yet, for Karina, linguistic and cultural differences wkere fixed and essentialized boundary markers and social fences that showed no signs of disappearing off the face of the Namaqualand social landscape.

> ... No, I believe that if you are born a Coloured, then you remain a Coloured. I cannot be a Coloured and then be classified as a Black person. I mean, there is really a big difference between a Coloured and a Black person. And the language question... I listened to people discuss the language question on television. I believe that you must give the person his right to speak his own language. Why should we decide now only to speak English? For me it is not fair... I would struggle to educate the children in a third language, which I myself do not know anything about. I don't even know when a Black person swears in his language because I did not grow up with that language... But you never know what will happen if the Black government takes over. Maybe there will be better work opportunities for us? Because, I mean, we also cannot try to overlook the fact that one's colour makes a difference. I once said to myself that I wished I could lie down in a bath of "Jik" so that I could

become white, and then I would also be able to go to places where only whites were allowed. Because, if you were not white, then things were closed to you...

While civic activists had envisaged that the struggles against economic units and the Management Boards would allow Namaqualand Coloureds to recognize their shared experiences of racial oppression with Blacks, this did not unfold as they had hoped. Inkomers (outsiders), be they white, black or Coloured, continued to be seen as a threat to Namaqualanders. Prior to 1990, "non-Coloureds" had had to obtain permits in order to visit the Reserves. In the case of Blacks, however, fear and mistrust of "the outsider" was particularly pronounced. Civic activists such as Manie observed this in the 1990's, even as apartheid was in the process of being dismantled and Namaqualand becoming incorporated into the Northern Cape region.

SR: Why do you think that Namaqualanders are reluctant to live with black inkomers (outsiders)?

M: I think that's a problem that's going to be with us for many more years to come... Some of our [Namaqualand] people understand that in the future we can't keep black people away. People are even having a problem with white people [coming here]. We discussed this with our civic earlier last year, when the Councils wanted the land to be reserved for Coloured people. They actually sent resolutions to the land conference, also to the House of Reps. They demanded that the so-called Reserves must be kept for so-called Coloured people. And we had this debate... Some of our kids go to Cape Town, Johannesburg and meet a white man or white girl, or a black man or a black girl, and they fall in love, and want to get married. Now what is the position then going to be? Must I then allow my daughter to bring a black husband to Concordia or what should the case be. So these things are taking place in practice, everyday... People are starting to realize that this is not something that we are going to stop. [But] you find that some of your Council members are still conservative and are still trying to implement those old things, you know. You see, what our people are scared about is that... people can come and buy the land and set up big businesses. It's also the responsibility of the civics to teach people and educate people that if a black man or a white man wants to come and stay in Concordia, he's welcome. But he must just fall in with the norms within the community. That is basically what we want... But we don't want our land to be sold. We don't want someone to come in and buy a big piece of land because we want to keep it as communal. So if someone, never mind his colour; he wants to come and stay in Concordia he must just fit in with the norms that we practice in the community...

Given the ANC's electoral success in the Northern Cape, it is unlikely that either the Board or Coloured Namaqualanders will be able to deny Blacks the right to settle in the reserves. Yet, the prospect of an influx of Blacks into the area has generated considerable debate and trepidation. Proponents of individual tenure responded to this new situation by calling for tenure reform as a means of protecting and securing land owned by Namaqualanders from

possible future claims of Black settlers. In 1993, the state responded to the post-apartheid scenario by introducing legislation that makes it possible for the Board, in Manie's own words, to "bring in economic units through the back door." This initiative appeared to be the outcome of efforts by wealthier individuals to lobby government so as to facilitate a process of land accumulation and security of tenure. Should this legislation be acted upon, it would mean that poorer communal farmers would eventually either be driven off the land by market forces, or else suffer large livestock losses in times of drought as a result of being denied access to pastures now privately owned. This scenario prompted communal farmers to be even more determined to defend communal tenure. Yet, it remained to be seen whether blacks would continue to excluded under the communal tenure system.

Manie's experiences in the civics and trade union movement, as well as in the ANC, enabled him to imagine the possibility of Coloureds learning to accept Blacks and overcoming their racial stereotypes and prejudices of inkomers. He believed that the trade unions, schools, as well as the more tolerant attitudes of the younger generation of Coloureds, would facilitate this process of de-racializing Black-Coloured relations. At the same time, however, he recognized the power of constructions of Colouredness and discourses of difference.

> M: You see, most of the communities in Namaqualand are Afrikaans-speaking, and also because of apartheid Blacks used to stay in compounds. For example, when I was a little kid when I used to be a bit naughty my mother would tell me, "Look, daar kom die kaffir en die kaffir gaan jou vang". So as from childhood we were actually scared of Africans. [Then] what happened was that in the unions it was not so difficult to get the people to understand what racism was about. Because, I mean, blacks and Coloureds used to work together, they used to receive the same treatment from the company, although the Black people received much harsher treatment. But there was this relationship between Coloured workers, and Black workers are actually often fluent in Afrikaans. If you go to De Beers mines and you ask black workers how long are they have been working there, they will say up to 20 or 25 years. So there's this relationship... But some of our people are even more racist than whites, actually. It will be a long struggle and long fight to educate people [that] we're all human beings... Education is going to play an important role... We had a meeting yesterday and the point came up, "How can we now allow people from other races to come to our areas because these people are coming to take over our land." Because people are of the impression that after the elections [black] people will flood to this area. Which is not true because there's unemployment here. It would only be stupid people who would flood to an area where they are going to starve anyway... People actually had the idea that Namaqualand should become an independent area. But in terms of our economic situation, I don't think its viable in this point in time... Some people at one stage approached me in the early '90's to join a Coloured Party, and then I spent painstaking hours explaining to the people, "No, I mean, its not going to work out." I mean to fight for Namaqualand's independence will take us another 100 years, even if we had to take up an armed struggle. They will crush us within two days...

Manie spoke extensively of his own mulitiple identities as a Namaqualander, "Baster" (part

Nama, part European), civic activist, trade unionist and member of the ANC. While ascribing to the "non-racial" ideology of the ANC, he also expressed an attraction and affinity towards the Nama culture, language and history, and, like Pieter, expressed the desire to learn to speak Nama, the language of his ancestors. Manie acknowledged that his own "Baster" identity was a significant factor in his interactions with Namaqualand people, especially the older generation. The Nama/Baster issue also influenced employment hiring practices as well as in the church and civic politics. I quote extensively from the interview with Manie to highlight the nuances and subtleties of discourses on Nama and Baster language, culture and identity, and to show how multiple and shifting identities shape local attitudes and influence the contested and unstable character of political discourses, hegemonies and counter-hegemonies. This extract from the interview illustrates the point that Namaqualand civic activists were constantly being made aware of the fluid nature of social identities and contested collective understandings and interests, and that their tactics had to reflect these fleeting and elusive social realities.

M: Basically how we do it in Namaqualand is that a Baster is a child of a Nama and a white person. In all these years there's lots of people like me, basters. A Nama person will maybe marry a Baster and so on. But if you're not having these Khoi features, you're not a Nama. It's very interesting to sit down with people and actually ask them, "How do you know that I am a Baster or a Khoi?" Then also your hair and colour of your eyes and these things will also play a role, you see.

SR: Politically does it make a difference at meetings, I mean, if someone comes across as a Nama, and looks like a Nama?

M: In some areas, yes. For example, for someone like myself, I've proven myself over these years so people don't have problems accepting me. But there is also this problem of accepting other people who are not known and so on. Its actually very interesting to talk to people. About six years in a place called Steinkopf, there was this problem. When people went to church the Basters would sit in front and the Nama people would sit in the back. So its still on people's mind.

SR: What did it mean that the Basters sat in the front of the church?

M: It's like the front seats are reserved for Baster people in that church. The people who sit in the back are people with short hair and Nama-Khoi features, and who are darker than the other people.

SR: Is there an idea that being Nama means being a second-class citizen?

M: Ya, ya, its like being a second class citizen.

SR: Does it not get reversed sometimes?

M: Ya, it sometimes gets reversed. For example, in the Richtersveld its just the opposite. Because the majority of people there are Nama people. So the

few Basters who are there will be isolated from time to time. They'll also be told now and then that you are Basters so you should go to the south, and to be in the north you must be a Nama. Even in terms of getting employment on the mines, it is also a problem. because companies have agreements with the local Management Board down there that they only want to employ people from the southern part of Namaqualand, because these people have the skills. Ordinary labourers and semi-skilled people are recruited from within the Richtersveld. So, if you want qualified people you must recruit in the southern part.

SR: Where does Leliefontein fit in? Is being Baster an advantage there?

M: I think in Leliefontein this is not such a big issue. You'll find the old people like Oom Japie will refer to Khoi people and Baster people even in a church or in a meeting when you ask him to open a meeting with prayer. He prays for the Basters and the Khoi people.

SR: And where will he see himself?

M: He will see himself as being in the Khoi group.

SR: Would he be proud of that?

M: He'd be very proud of that.

SR: Would others in Leliefontein be proud of that Khoi ancestry or is he exceptional?

M: I think Oom Japie is one of quite a number of people who are proud of being Nama and who have part of their finger cut off. The way Oom Japie explained this to me there has been this Nama group about 30 or 40 years ago which was actually like the Broederbond, trying to get things for the Nama people in the area. So they were sworn in and then they cut their finger... There's quite a number of them in the Leliefontein area. But many people in Leliefontein accept the Baster minority... But these things never bother me because I'm accepted everywhere I go. Your younger generation don't identify as Nama or Basters. They just identify themselves as people from Namaqualand. There are older people who make an issue about being Basters or Khoi people.

SR: Do people claim to be able to tell quite easily whether someone is Baster or Khoi?

M: Ya.

SR: During the 1980's being Nama seemed to be quite important in terms of land struggles in Namaqualand.

M: For myself, I identify myself as being a Namaqualander. This thing about Baster and Khoi is not so important for me. I mean, my mother was a Baster and my father originated from Khoi, so I don't have a problem. For me, I can go to Nama people and they will accept me. I can go to Baster people and sometimes I get more problems from them, from the Baster people, because I have a good relationship with old Nama people. And so sometimes there's more acceptance from the so-called Nama people than from the Baster people, due to the fact that I'm also a prominent ANC person. So I sometime am more accepted by the Nama people because I identify myself with their problems, with their experiences. While your sort of Baster people see themselves as an elite group of people.

SR: Are you proud of being Nama?

M: Ya, the thing that I'd really like to do in future is learn Nama. Because the Nama language is only spoken by a few people. I think also, in terms of the new state, it should also see that in Namaqualand the people should also be able to learn the Nama language... We had a meeting here [and] then one person from Koeboes, Kloete, he stood up and he said, "Look, I want someone to translate for me." And then every time he spoke, he spoke in Nama. I mean it was very good for me to feel that this man is not ashamed of speaking Nama... I think its great, man. If everyone here was able to speak Nama you could preserve the language.

SR: Have you raised this issue at all in terms of ANC language policy debates?

M: Ya, we've raised it in terms of language policy at policy conferences [but], to be honest, the ANC see people who speak Nama as only a very small section of the people in the Western Cape. So for them its not a major policy issue, you see. I think we should get local Nama-speaking people to teach others who are interested in speaking Nama.

Despite his embrace of Nama cultural identity, Manie defined himself as a Namaqualander above all else, and he envisaged his role in the civics as looking after the interests of those living in the region.[14] The incorporation of Namaqualand into the Northern Cape, he argued, had created fears that the region would continue to be neglected in terms of economic development. He also spoke at length about the civics role in opposing plans by the government to dump nuclear waste near Port Nolloth and challenging the fact that the region's mineral wealth was not being used to develop infrastructure to benefit its inhabitants. Civics had launched campaigns challenging nuclear energy plans for the region on the grounds that Namaqualanders did not stand to benefit from these plans.

The government wanted to open a nuclear power plant in Kommagas, and there people in Kommagas was quick to organize against it. We don't need that much electricity here. I mean what's going to happen is that they're going to generate nuclear electricity there and it take with these large cables to Witwatersrand. So I mean, we don't need a nuclear power station, you see.

> And then also in terms of the dangers of these things, you know. So that was basically our position. Also what happened is that they are dumping Koeberg's waste here, about 100 km from Springbok. Right, now the argument that came up within the civics is that, "Okay, we must also think economically, also for the future. Let's say we're going to drop our campaigns against this nuclear power plant. Then we must work out something with the government that says, "Okay, we're allowing you to come and build a nuclear power plant here. But then in compensation for that we want all the other plants that produce toxic waste to be moved from Cape Town and other areas to this area, so that our people can have then the benefit of working in these factories." This will also reduce the risk of transporting those toxic waste from Cape Town to here... The civic also had campaigns in Kommagas and Steinkopf because there were rumours that South Africa was going to import toxic waste from European countries and dump it in a place next to Port Nolloth...

Given a widespread perception of the realities of underdevelopment, the plundering of mineral resources and the historical neglect of the needs of Namaqualanders, it seems quite likely that Namaqualanders may in the future become increasingly drawn to an identity as Noord Kaapenaars (Northern Capers). This regional identification will of course be destabilized by identities forges along race, class, ethnicity, locality and language lines. With approximately 70 percent of the population being Afrikaans speaking, it is clear that language will be a critical factor in the future. Although only about 30 percent of the region's population is African (Xhosa and Tswana-speaking), it seems likely that the composition of regional and local government structures could reflect a much higher proportion of Africans than Coloureds. These questions of race and language will probably also be reflected in the civics movement, and remains to be seen how civic activists will deal with it. What will become of the saying, "Namaqualand for Namaqualanders".

Conclusion

Clearly, a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of locally-embedded cultural practices and social identities is of crucial importance for civic activists' attempts to establish credibility and forge consensus within socially and culturally differentiated Namaqualand communities. In the 1980's, the activists involved in the collective struggles against economic units attempted, as far as possible, to submerge social and cultural differences in the name of solidarity. This was feasible in the face of an intervention that threatened the livelihoods of the majority of Namaqualanders. With this immediate threat of economic units removed, however, it remains to be seen how civic activists and the ANC-led government will be able to address the pressing problems of the country's poorest and most underdeveloped province.

The attack on the commons in Namaqualand in the 1980's was justified by the state, and its local allies and beneficiaries, on the grounds that tenure reform would address problems of overstocking, and render the reserves more agriculturally productive and sustainable. This perspective, however, failed to take into account the adverse implications 'economic units' would unleash in terms of exacerbating rural differentiation and landlessness. Privatization of land threatened to undermine access to communal land for a category of rural poor

dependent on both agriculture and wage labor, and vulnerable to fluctuations in the major economic sectors of Namaqualand, i.e. mining and fishing. For these reasons, there was considerable local opposition and protest in response to economic units.

In this paper, I have shown how the radically multiple and shifting nature of social identities in Namaqualand has contributed towards constantly contested and unstable hegemonies and counter-hegemonies, and that this has been particularly evident in struggles over environmental resources in the 1980's and 1990's. This fluidity has had especially significant implications in terms of contestations over the meanings of community, democracy and property. The dramatic social and political transformations of the 1990's have intensified symbolic and material contestations in relation to struggles over environmental resources in Namaqualand, especially land. These contestations over meaning, as tactics to mediate access to resources, have drawn on discourses from a variety of domains and discourses, including religion, conservation, development, democracy, legality and tradition.

In the paper I argue that during the 1980's, notions of traditional Nama identity and land rights were meshed with modernist discourses on democracy and legality in a challenge to dominant conservationist and development ideas about land tenure reform. Civic activists constructed a hybrid discourse on "development" and tradition that reflected their contradictory structural position as agents of modernity and custodians of tradition. This dilemma was evident in the ambivalent stance of activists such as Manie towards communal farming. This led them to conclude that, while it was necessary to retain communal tenure to avoid exacerbating rural differentiation and landlessness, something had to be done to promote more environmentally sustainable, efficient and productive land use amongst communal farmers. As Manie argued, communal livestock farmers had to be educated in order to become more "market-oriented"; fenced paddocks, rotational grazing and commercial attitudes were for him the path to progress. However, such a trajectory seemed destined to collide with local visions and aspirations. Manie's story suggests that while civic activists and development workers may remain committed to communal tenure, their faith and loyalty to a modernist narrative of development may lead them on a collusion path with their ernstwhile allies, Namaqualand's communal farmers. If this were to happen, it would reflect similar scenarios elsewhere in post-colonial Africa.

While civic activists in Namaqualand appeared to be only partially wedded to the hegemonic development narrative, Hannes Smit, a retired school headmaster and former member of the Management Board, was a "true believer". He argued that "Nama traditions" and communal tenure were outmoded and "backward" cultural practices. In his grand teleological vision, grounded in the language of Christianity and modernity, Smit advocated an ideology of individuality and salvation through self-reliance. Drawing on intertextual references to anthropologist Oscar Lewis' culture of poverty thesis, and citing from Sampie Terblanche's commentary on the Theron Commission, he attacked the culture of dependence in the Reserves. The metaphor of the Reserve as charitable protection for the poor collided with Smit's notions of individuality, Christian self-help and self-development. This religious discourse was spliced onto a teleological, modernist script of progress, science, conservation and economic development. As a member of the "Old Guard" of Raadse manne, Smit articulated a powerful argument in favour of individual tenure at a time when a younger generation of activists had successfully mobilized an anti-apartheid "struggle" discourse in order to oppose both economic units and "apartheid structures" such as the Management

Board. While Smit's pro-economic units argument were thoroughly rejected by the majority of Leliefontein Reserve residents, his deployment of conservationist discourses were echoed by some of his chief protagonists in the civics, for example Manie.

Despite the tensions of the 1980's between the Raadsmanne and the Gemeentskapkomittee se manne, the 1990's witnessed some degree of consensus amongst Leliefontein Reserve residents about the "fencing out" inkomers, especially blacks. In response to an imagined "invasion" of (black) inkomers into Namaqualand's Coloured Reserves in the newly de-racialized South Africa, the voice of the tenure reform lobby was once again heard at local meetings, this time offering a strategy for securing Namaqualanders' continued access to land. The "threat" of an influx of "outsiders" reinscribed social boundaries between Coloureds and Blacks, and resulted in attempts to resurrect social fences to "protect" Namaqualanders from possible "black competition" for environmental resources. This was itself a paradox, coming as it did at a time when the racial grid of apartheid was being dismantled. Yet, despite the ideology of non-racialism espoused by civic activists, a significant section of Coloureds in the Reserves appeared determined to fight for "protection through re-Bantustanization." However, regardless of a common stance towards the "outsider threat", calls for private property were no less unpopular in the 1990's. Instead, the majority of Namaqualanders seemed even more committed to the retention of communal tenure - for Namaqualand Coloureds only. However, with ANC-led regional government firmly in place in the Northern Cape, it is unlikely that the Reserves will remain strictly Coloured in composition for much longer.

So, while civic activists such as Manie continued to promote non-racialism in a sea of discourses on cultural difference, he too was caught up in a stream of fluid and multiple identities, as a Nama, Baster, Namaqualander, development worker, civic activist, trade unionist and ANC member. Constructing counter-hegemonies in such conditions of flux, required constructing hybrid oppositional discourses, while acknowledging the tenuous character of constantly contested and unstable collective understandings and interests. Being a working class, Namaqualand "Baster" working in "non-racial", Xhosa-dominated political organizations was good preparation for learning the art of manufacturing hybrid counter-hegemonies.

It remains to be seen what new hegemonies and counter-hegemonies will emerge in the 1990's. The challenges of the Reconstruction Development Program (RSP) of the new government may transform civics into institutions of development and modernization that could be less sympathetic towards "traditional" communal livestock farming. Experiences from post-colonial African countries seem to be cause for concern about the susceptibility of civic organizations to being 'coopted' by governments bent on "modernization" at all costs. In the case of post-independence Zimbabwe, village development committees (Vidcos) were transformed by the state into local institutions for implementing development policies decided upon by Central Government with virtually no consultation with the "targets" of such interventions (Robins, 1990, 1992, 1994). Zimbabwean communal farmers, like their Namaqualand counterparts, where represented as involved in unproductive and ecologically destructive agricultural practices. This negative representation of communal farming provided state planners with a mandate to implement unpopular land use reform exercizes (e.g. villagization and village paddocks) on the grounds that communal land was being used inefficiently and in enivironmentally unsound ways. Where will civics and community

development workers stand in relation to such development discourses should they surface in South African in the 1990's? Given their structural location as incalaric or inter-hierarchical institutions, civics could end up as instruments of a new state that imposes its development projects and policies from above. Like the residents of Namaqualand in the 1980's, civic activists may find themselves having to decide whether they want to become the new raad se manne or the gemeentskap se manne. There may be no room for fence sitting.

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1. Leliefontein is a sparsely populate semi-arid Coloured Reserve in Namaqualand in the Northern Cape comprising a total of 200 000 hectares and with a population of 6 000 (Steyn, 1989:419). When I mention Leliefontein in the text, I am referring to the Reserve as a whole.

2. The Cape Town-based Surplus People Project (SPP) and the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) were particularly active in Namaqualand during the 1980's.

3. Grazing schemes in communal areas that deploy fenced paddocks are notorious for the conflicts over grazing rights that they engender. In addition, there is a growing number of ecologists who argue that fenced paddocks are inappropriate in semi-arid environments since they obstruct the flexibility of movement of livestock in a context where key browse resources are dispersed across the landscape both spatially and temporally. As a result, these interventions often collide with "traditional" grazing patterns such as seasonal transhumance.

4. The size of the units, which varied from 3000 to 5000 hectares, would mean that larger stock owners would have to reduce the numbers of their herds in order to comply with the calculated carrying capacity of an 'economic unit'.

5. The 'economic units' proposal was the outcome of government attempts since the 1960s to promote the commercialization of the livestock economy by privatizing the commons. The 1963 Rural Coloured Areas Act, which replaced the 1909 Missions Stations and Reserves Act, was the beginning of this initiative, and was seen as a means whereby by better-off, 'bona fide' Reserve farmers could buy up land that was formerly commonage.

6. The Legal Resources Centre (LRC), acting on behalf of Leliefontein residents, launched a successful Supreme Court application for an order, which was handed down by Justice R Tebbett on 21 April 1988, directing the Minister of Local Administration, Housing and Agriculture, Mr. David Curry, to reverse the economic units initiative.

7. The six Coloured rural reserves, which comprise 25% of Namaqualand, are Leliefontein, Kommagas, Steinkopf, the Richtersveld, Pella and Concordia. These reserves comprise 70% of the total 1,7 million hectares that makes up the 23 coloured rural areas in South Africa. The population density is low and the total population of the reserves is approximately 27 000, which constitutes 0,2% of the total South African population (Steyn, 1989:416).

8. Consequently, it has been easy for the state to introduce new legislation - Act 112 of 1993 - that makes it possible for Management Boards to slip individual tenure in through the back door.

9. Namaqualand stock farmers have traditionally moved their animals up to winter pastures at stock posts (veeposte) up to 15 km from their villages. This has allowed stock to take advantage of improved water availability and better Sandveld pastures at the stock posts. The ecological logic of this grazing system was confirmed when, in 1985, the introduction of 'economic units' denied farmers access to pastures at stock posts and consequently resulted in heavy stock losses.

10. Pieter was accused by the school authorities of politicizing his pupils and encouraging them to take part in national school boycotts; "Kids took part in a national stayaway and the school authorities held me responsible for it, and it was a hell of an issue at school". This did not stop him from using history lessons on the French Revolution as a means to draw parallels with the ANC's national liberation struggle. Needless to say the school authorities did not appreciate his creativity and he was forced to resign.

11. This community-oriented perspective also informed Pieter's own approach as a development worker in Leliefontein. He believed in self-reliance and was not willing under any circumstances to allow outside agencies to come in and impose their development projects on the Leliefontein people.

12. Manie envisaged a vital role for civics in educating Namaqualanders about their rights under the new constitution, and advocated that COSATU assert its independence from the ANC immediately after the elections. He decided to throw in his lot with the civics despite the poor showing of SANCO, which he described as barely a shadow of the UDF. He also drew attention to the fact that the disbanding of the UDF had meant that leaders such as Allan Boesak, himself a native of Namaqualand, had been absorbed into the ANC leadership to the detriment of the civics.

13.

GL: We have two types of water, the [water] tanks and our mouths. I must use my mouth because it is my weapon for the road. I am just sorry that I did not study further.

SR: What is very good, is that you are not afraid to speak your mind. Your will to speak is a great gift.

GL: Yes Sir, I have learned. The bible says that which needs to be said must be said. If there is something you want to say and you don't, it is a sin. And the other thing about me is that if I want to say something to you, I do so. And you can do what you want to [about it]. I must just be sure that I have peace with it. But I will not keep quiet. I will then be free and not guilty...

14. Namaqualanders, he argued, had different interests and attitudes to Coloureds in Cape Town. He claimed that the strong ANC support amongst Coloureds in Namaqualand was the outcome of, amongst other factors, their less materialistic outlook: "People in Cape Town are more materialistic [and] want TVs and cars, while our people are not just concentrating on material things."