CHANGING RESOURCE USE IN NAMIBIA'S LOWER KUISEB RIVER VALLEY:
PERCEPTIONS FROM THE TOPNAAR COMMUNITY

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"Our ancestors came here and saw the green in the dry Namib Desert, and they fell in love with this area. We must give our children a life here, so they also will fall in love with this area."

Chief Seth Kooitjie, 1994
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Map 2: Topnaar Settlements
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO RESOURCE USE IN THE LOWER KUISEB RIVER VALLEY

1.1 Background to the Study and Objectives of the Research

The first state of emergency ever to be declared in Namibia was in 1992 in response to one of the most severe agricultural droughts this century. With the onset of another drought in 1995, the Government of Namibia has once again announced a state of emergency, setting aside millions of Namibian dollars to help victims of the drought through food handouts, food-for-work programmes, drought relief boreholes and other emergency water supplies, as well as subsidies for fodder and for the transport of domestic stock. Provisional estimates predict that more than 100,000 Namibians (approximately 15% of the population) will be dependent on government drought relief aid by the end of 1995. Although Namibia has always been the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa, what we see today is a nation, and a people, unable to cope with their arid environment and unable to make a living from the land in the same way as they did in the past.

Using the Topnaar community as a case study, the primary objective of this paper, therefore, is to describe and explain the changing interrelationships between men and women and their physical environment, the causes of these changes, and the conflicts currently experienced in the management of natural resources in the lower Kuiseb River valley. Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), in partnership with local NGOs and other government Ministries, and with the involvement of Topnaar residents, are embarking on a joint project to design and implement a community based conservation project for the lower Kuiseb catchment area within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park in western Namibia. This paper will assess how different members of the Topnaar community utilised natural resources in the past, and explain how land use practices are changing today. By understanding how different individuals interact with their environment, this paper will recommend possible options for the future co-management of this portion of the Namib-Naukluft Park in order to develop a more integrated and longer term approach to land and water resource management in the lower Kuiseb River valley.

1.2 Introduction to Land and Water Resource Use in the Lower Kuiseb River Valley

The Topnaar people have been living on the banks of the Kuiseb River for thousands of years. In the past they moved over a vast area of the Namib Desert in search of food and shelter. Their traditional living area extended more than 200 kilometres along the Kuiseb River from the Khomas Hochland mountains in the east to the Atlantic Ocean near Walvis Bay, and from the Swakop River in the north into the dune fields south of the Kuiseb River. (See Map) In addition, their forbearers ventured up and down a narrow coastal strip along the Atlantic seaboard fishing and fossicking local marine resources.

Over the millennia, the Topnaar adapted to their hyper-arid environment by utilising a wide range of locally available resources and by evolving a system of land tenure in tune with the
inherent variability of this harsh desert environment. Although the Topnaar continue to hunt wild animals (illegally), herd stock, maintain irrigated gardens, harvest the indigenous !nara melon and utilise the riverine vegetation for firewood, medicines, shelter, and food, they are confined to a fraction of their traditional living area (see Map) and all of their land is owned and administered by the Government of Namibia. They no longer have free access to the coast in the west, or the Kuiseb River stretching from the Homeb settlement to the foothills of the Khomas Hochland in the east. (See Map) Furthermore, more than half of the land they now occupy has been proclaimed as the Namib-Naukluft Game Park with strict conservation laws which directly affect where people are allowed to live and what they are allowed to do. The remaining portion falls under the jurisdiction of the Walvis Bay Town municipality with its own set of planning regulations. As with all communal lands and Game Parks in Namibia, all land and water resources are legally owned by the state. The Topnaar are permitted to live on and use their land with the consent and grace of the Government of Namibia.

Unfortunately, the government also promotes the over-exploitation of Namibia’s most precious natural resource, its fragile water systems, by providing cheap water to a growing population. The Kuiseb River is the lifeblood of the central Namib Desert, a linear oasis within a barren landscape of gravel plains and sand dunes. Seasonal floods recharge natural sand dams beneath the riverbed, providing water for human and domestic stock populations and for a wide variety of indigenous animal and plant species. But over the last hundred years, commercial farmers have gradually cut off the supply of water to the lower Kuiseb River valley by damming the river’s tributaries in the upper part of the Kuiseb catchment. At the same time, Namibia’s Department of Water Affairs (DWA) has been pumping water at a growing rate from the lower Kuiseb valley and delta in order to supply the rapidly expanding towns on the coast and the different mining and industrial activities in the region.

In terms of environmental changes, therefore, the Topnaar have been subjected to more than a century of colonial exploitation and environmental degradation. Many of the Park regulations still in place today are in direct conflict with their traditional land use practices, and many of the natural resources which they were dependent on for centuries have been set aside for a Namibian settler population, most of whom live outside the lower Kuiseb River valley. As a result, the Topnaar are a people increasingly alienated from their environment and from a system of land tenure which, in the past, met their basic, day-to-day needs.

As a result the social economy of the lower Kuiseb is in a state of flux as it evolves from a predominantly subsistence, rural-based economy to a cash-based economy heavily dependent on the goods and services available from outside towns, particularly the economic centre of Walvis Bay nearby and the political centre of Windhoek. (See Map). The food, shelter and incomes available in the Kuiseb valley which once supported entire families have gradually been replaced with goods and services from urban centres outside of the region. Topnaar families rely less and less on each other and their own initiative, and instead look to Government and other outside NGO’s for solutions to their problems.

Families persevere with what they know best—in particular, stock farming, gardening, and !nara
harvesting. Most Topnaar households complain that life today is more difficult than in the past. Even though virtually all their water is provided for free and maintained by the Department of Water Affairs, the lowering of the underground water table has meant much of the riverine vegetation is dying out and thus jeopardising existing land uses activities, such as the harvesting of the !nara melon and stock farming, as well as future land use options, including eco-tourism.

More importantly, families complain that they are rarely consulted about new developments. Today, most Topnaar families receive little or no long term help from outside government and NGO agencies. Topnaar residents resent the fact that the MET and others benefit from developments in the Topnaar living area while they are left to eke a living from a smaller, more populated and less productive area. As control over resources has shifted to the government and as access to land and water resources has diminished, so the Topnaar have suffered internal conflict, manifesting itself in the constant in-fighting and bickering families endure today.

Topnaar families have adapted to these changes by adjusting traditional land tenure systems and by redefining their own roles in the home. In the past, entire families carried out important activities together and family members complemented each other by dividing their labour along gender lines. For example, extended families moved *en masse* to the Kuiseb delta to harvest the !nara during the summer months (December to March). The women stayed near the camp to process the !nara and carry out other domestic chores while the men and older boys were away collecting and selling the !nara pips.

The division of labour described by residents in the past is still evident today, but gender roles are less clearly defined. Men and women make decisions and carry out social and economic activities as individuals rather than as a family unit. The gender roles which once entrenched and supported traditional systems of land tenure have been eroded by the influence of the park rules, a declining natural resource base and the growing importance of cash incomes. Key land use activities which once satisfied the needs of entire households now have to be supplemented with new sources of income, food and shelter. As subsistence activities have become less secure, family members have left, either permanently or temporarily, to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. Both men and women now exchange stock, !nara and other Topnaar products for cash and consumables, and collect second-hand building materials from Walvis Bay to construct their makeshift homes and to fence their gardens.

Gender roles have also been influenced directly by the introduction of schools, the provision of boreholes, pipelines and tapstands to all settlements, the distribution of social security payments (particularly South African pensions at N$ 370 a month), and the growing number of predominantly male settlers. These changing circumstances have affected the size as well as the composition of households and the skills, aspirations and opportunities of all family members. This, in turn, has altered the household division of labour and the way men and women use natural resources in their area. More than ever before, family members are forced to live, work and make decisions independently of one another regardless of their gender.

As new economic opportunities arise in Independent Namibia, so new power struggles are
emerging, particularly between traditional leaders, elected Topnaar representatives and powerful (Topnaar) government officials living outside the lower Kuiseb River valley. These individuals with access to government and private business opportunities are eager to profit from the commercialisation of some of Namibia’s natural resources, most notably the booming fishing and tourist industries. In addition, Topnaar residents claim that some residents benefit more than others from government drought relief fodder and from the provision of boreholes for growing human and stock populations in their area. The Topnaar today are divided not just by the distance between each of the 13 settlements (strung out along the river for more than 100 kilometres), but also by the growing economic and political insecurity of poorer households compared to the privileged group of individuals with access to new opportunities. Wealthier families benefit by having greater access to a wider range of resources, most leading dual lives with a home in Walvis Bay town and another in one of the Topnaar settlements.

A feeling of helplessness among most Topnaar is compounded by the belief that they no longer have a role in local planning and decision-making. In the past individuals and families could rely on their neighbours and their leaders to find solutions to their own problems. The trust and self-reliance which once existed in the community has been eroded by short term policies which promote the over-exploitation of Namibia’s natural resources.

The machinery set in place by the occupying South African administration deliberately undermined and eventually replaced local decision-making structures in order to concentrate power in the hands of central government and away from the people. Today, Topnaar residents complain the community lacks a representative leadership and decision-making structure to involve them in local issues. Most Topnaar residents have been left out of the decision-making process for so long that they no longer feel qualified to make important decisions which affect more people than themselves or their immediate family. The few individuals who do understand the issues and who want to participate in planning feel so removed from Government and their own leaders that they are unable to influence decisions even if they wanted to.

In order to improve the management of the Game Park, the MET has tried to initiate a Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) project in the lower Kuiseb valley combining the needs of local residents with the national policy of sustainable land and water management. Through negotiations with local communities, this policy seeks to develop sustainable benefits for people while conserving the region’s biodiversity.

In March 1992, representatives from Namibia’s Ministry of Environment and Tourism initiated a Socio-ecological Survey in the western reaches of the Namib-Naukluft Park, a region which corresponds to the traditional living area of the Topnaar people today. A delegation, consisting of MET representatives, Topnaar leaders, and government and NGO participants, visited 10 of the 13 Topnaar settlements to discuss natural resource use, conservation and future development within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park.

During village meetings, Topnaar residents repeatedly accused delegation members of creating the many problems the Topnaar face today. Mostly, residents felt they had no control over their
land, leaving them frustrated and insecure, claiming, "animal rights are more protected than human rights", and "since this area has been proclaimed as a Game Park the MET is more concerned with the conservation of game than the conservation and preservation of the traditional owners of the land". (Jones, 1992)

However, residents became less sceptical once the Ministry assured the Topnaar that they had the right to continue living within the park. Over the course of the seven day survey there was a gradual realisation by all groups living and working in the Park that they have a lot more in common than first thought. For the first time the Topnaar were acknowledged as a legitimate user group. "The most important issue for the Topnaar people is the need for government recognition of their rights to the land they occupy. There is a general feeling of uncertainty about what forms of development are allowed within park regulations." (Jones, 1992). It was further agreed in March 1992 that 1) the Topnaar were to become equal partners with the MET in the co-management of the Park, and 2) they would benefit from living in the Namib-Naukluft Game Park.

It was the first time the MET had met with the Topnaar face to face and they had developed sufficient trust to agree on some fundamental principles. Using new approaches to natural resource management, the Topnaar expected a rise in their standard of living and the MET expected an improvement in the conservation of the Park. Unfortunately, both seem to have expected the other to initiate change and begin more detailed discussions. As far as the both groups are concerned, nothing has changed since the Socio-ecological Survey three years ago.

So why has nothing changed? The only conclusion to make is that both groups are either unsure, unable or unwilling to motivate positive changes. The focus of this paper, therefore, will be to investigate changing natural resource use from the perspective of local residents in order to assist the Topnaar, the MET, and other Ministries and NGOs, to develop future land use plans in accordance with the needs of all groups and the region's brittle environment. Article 95 of the Namibian Constitution says:

"The state shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting, inter alia, policies aimed at improving the following: maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future..."

But the question remains, how can developments be planned in the Kuiseb catchment that take into account the environmental degradation of the past years and the constitutional right of all users to make a living from the land?

1.3 Research Methods Used in this Study

There is uncertainty as to how to satisfy the different needs of all resource user’s living in the Kuiseb catchment. Although the Topnaar, the MET and other groups understand some of the
social and environmental conflicts experienced in the Game Park, they are unsure how to resolve them. There is concern over how the Topnaar community uses resources in the Park, how different settlements and families interact with one another, and how the community sees itself living in the Park in the future. What developments are desirable in the lower Kuiseb? What developments are possible? How do we make long term changes in the interests of everyone concerned?

After participating in the Socio-ecological Survey as an observer, it was clear that a short, seven-day appraisal was incapable of answering these questions. A research project of this nature requires considerable time, energy and logistical resources, and no single method could possibly come to grips with the dynamics and perceptions of different community members.

Throughout this study, therefore, methods were chosen which would involve local residents directly. Both funding agencies, the Institute for Southern African Studies (ISAS) at the University of Lesotho and the Social Sciences Division (SSD) at the University of Namibia, recognised the importance of video as a tool for social research and between them provided sufficient funds for a seven month research project from April to November, 1994. Research was supported by most MET officials, most members of the Topnaar community, and staff from the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), a non-government organisation based at Gobabeb where researchers stayed for the duration of the project. A young Nama woman from southern Namibia was hired as a translator who helped break down the barriers between us, the non-Namibian researchers, and wary Topnaar residents. This translator was fundamental in detecting the cultural and political nuances of the region and gave us access to the lifestyles and aspirations of the Topnaar.

Initially, the ISAS sent a four-person film crew to Namibia for 10 days to document the first phase of the project: introducing the project to the Topnaar and gaining people’s trust. Individual and group interviews were conducted with Topnaar residents in five of the eight settlements inside the Namib-Naukluft Game Park. All interviews were filmed and then shown back to participants. Interviews were also shown in neighbouring settlements. In this way, each interview was seen and heard by many different people. Participants were encouraged to comment on what they saw and what each person was saying. These discussions were also documented on video and later transcribed into English. The ISAS then produced a video programme entitled, "Unfulfilled Promises".

Video was readily accepted by the Topnaar as means for sharing opinions, ideas and perceptions. This re-affirmed our assumption that video was both a powerful and an appropriate means of gathering, sharing and disseminating information. In short, it was a good way of communicating, a good "ice-breaker". Video introduced us to the issues and to the personalities in the lower Kuiseb valley.

During these initial interviews, many Topnaar spoke of land rights, claiming the lower Kuiseb valley as part of their ancestral land. After viewing the Lesotho footage, the SSD decided to produce a second video for the "People’s Land Conference" held in Namibia in September,
1994. The making of this documentary, entitled "Living on the Edge", portrayed family life in the lower Kuiseb. Staying with families and camping in villages provided a more informal means of sharing personal experiences. Individuals and families chosen for the film were interviewed over a period ranging from a few days to repeat interviews lasting a few months and all video interviews have been transcribed from the Nama language into English (about 80 pages). Many of their ideas and words have been quoted directly in this paper.

Using the information derived from this initial research, a detailed questionnaire was designed and a survey conducted in five of the eight settlements located inside the Game Park. A total of 12 household questionnaire interviews were completed (15% of all households), each taking between two and four hours to complete. The questionnaire included information on settlement patterns, education, income and expenditure, Topnaar leadership, environmental changes, the use of natural resources within households today and people’s perceptions of natural resource use in the future. Although not statistically valid, this data has been used to complement qualitative data gathered during filming and to compare directly the situation of different households.

During the questionnaire survey, informal interviews were also conducted with other residents to provide more detailed case studies of changing natural resource use and changing gender roles within households. Each case study took between one and two days to complete and case studies have been included in Chapters 3 and 4.

The "People’s Land Conference" in September provided a further opportunity to see Topnaar representatives discussing the land issue and land rights at a different level, this time at a national forum. The video "Living on the Edge" was shown to more than 300 delegates from all over Namibia, and a discussion ensued between conference delegates and a panel consisting of the Topnaar Chief Kooitiie, Councillor Rudolph Dausab, the Director of DRFN and the Director of the Environmental Planning Unit within the MET.

The video was also shown to about 120 Topnaar residents (about 50 adults and 70 children) using facilities at the local primary school in Eduseb village. Copies of the video were distributed free to all people involved in the making of the film, including the Topnaar, NGOs and government departments.

The Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), a Namibian NGO based in Windhoek, visited the DRFN in the lower Kuiseb valley for one week in September to investigate the potential for a Legal and Environmental Awareness Program (LEAP), a joint project to promote environmental law in Namibia. A field visit was organised for LAC paralegal’s to visit the Swartbank settlement to discuss the social, environmental and legal conflicts experienced in the Game Park. Most Topnaar are familiar with the LAC and were keen to participate. The 25 visitors were divided into groups of three or four and taken on a tour of the village by Topnaar guides, without any assistance from researchers. Each group was required to investigate the use, ownership and control of natural resources in the Game Park and present their findings to the whole group. At the end of the field trip, residents asked the LAC to continue working with them and help resolve the confusion surrounding the rights of the Topnaar living in the Game Park.
During October, two one-day group workshops were organised. The first, held in Swartbank, brought together Topnaar from three villages inside the Game Park: Soutrivier, Klipneus and Swartbank. The 19 participants were divided into three groups according to their age and asked to draw the Swartbank settlement as it looked in 1944, as it looks today in 1994, and how they would like Swartbank to look in 2044. Each group elected a spokesperson to discuss their land use change diagrams.

The second group workshop brought together 15 Topnaar from settlements living at the border and outside of the Game Park. Participants were divided into four groups, two groups of women and two groups of men, to compare natural resource use between men and women. Each group was asked to rank resources in order of importance. Secondly, groups were asked to clarify who owned each resource. Lastly, each group was asked to choose a resource they would like to develop and design a project related to that resource in order to improve their standard of living.

Both group workshops are discussed at the end of Chapter 3.

The field research has been supplemented with a desk study, including early accounts of life in the Kuiseb by European explorers; a wealth of scientific papers from the libraries at DRFN, the University of Namibia and the Scientific Society in Windhoek; government documents, including ordinances, policy papers, statistics and alike; independent studies by outside NGOs; development proposals by private businesses; and personal records belonging to Topnaar leaders living in Walvis Bay. The bibliography at the end of this document provides a complete list of written references and other information sources used in the research.

1.4 Introduction to the Kuiseb River Environment

A number of ephemeral rivers, also known as linear oases, flow toward the Atlantic Ocean in northwestern Namibia. All have their headwaters in commercial farming areas (600mm to 250mm), most flow through communal farming areas (300mm to 100mm) and all are protected as conservation areas in their most westward, desert reaches (mainly less than 100mm rainfall). Only recently have researchers, conservationists and planners started to consider entire river catchments as an integrated environmental unit.

The Kuiseb River catchment is the third largest of Namibia’s 12 western flowing ephemeral river catchments and covers an area of approximately 15,500 kilometres. (Jacobson, et al, 1995) Its source lies close to Windhoek more than 1,500 metres above sea level, and flows westward through an area of highland savanna within the Khomas Hochland mountain plateau, down the Gamsberg escarpment and into the hyper-arid environment of the central Namib Desert. At the Atlantic coast the river divides to form a delta 30 kilometres wide.

Rainfall varies considerably both in time and in space with extremely high rates of evaporation throughout the catchment. The upper part of the catchment has a maximum average rainfall of nearly 400mm a year usually falling between January and March. By definition rainfall in the desert is rare averaging about 20mm on the coast, although additional water is provided from coastal fogs penetrating up to 100 kilometres inland. Between 1979 and 1981 recorded annual
fog precipitation averaged 30mm at Gobabeb, 184mm at Swartbank and 80mm at Rooibank sustaining an array of unique desert-dwelling fauna and flora. (Huntley, 1985)

The upper part of the catchment comprises 63% of the entire catchment area and supports 109 private farms, nearly 2000 people and a large number of domestic stock and wildlife (Jacobson, et al, 1995). These commercial farms obtain water from 407 farm dams and 591 subsurface water sources of which 90% are boreholes. The average runoff from the Khomas Hochland and escarpment area has been reduced by about 21% due to the construction of these farm dams, half of which have been built in the last 20 years. (Huntley, 1985)

The lower Kuiseb River valley forms a linear oasis of dense vegetation, a key feature of the central Namib. Periodic rain falling in the catchment headwaters results in floods that recharge underground water sources and transport organic material downstream to generate subsequent forest growth and maintain the river’s tall woodlands. (Jacobson, et al, 1995) Sand and alluvial compartments allow for groundwater storage supporting a riverine forest and providing water for people, domestic stock and wildlife. It is estimated that just 1% to 1.5% of rain falling in the upper catchment reaches the lower Kuiseb valley. The last floodwaters to reach the ocean occurred in 1934 and in 1963. From the river’s source, subsurface flow takes 70 years to reach the ocean. (Huntley, 1985)

Constant fluctuations in woodland structure are brought about by variations in the frequency, intensity and duration of floods. The river is continually changing its form which directly affects the availability and quality of water, the number and structure of settlements, and the health of riparian vegetation on which the wildlife and stock depend. The Kuiseb River system experiences periods of collapse (as the river changes its course and as the water table drops) and rejuvenation (wetter periods and after flooding), depending on inputs from the upper catchment. There are many climatic and hydrological cycles—seasonal cycles, yearly cycles, wetter periods and drier periods, each superimposed one on top of the other.

As a result the river system is extremely fragile and entirely dependent on the erratic rainfall further up-river. It is important to note that whatever hydrological changes take place upstream effect living organisms downstream. The carrying capacity of the desert is very low and will vary from year to year. For example, small nomadic populations of gemsbok, springbok, zebra, ostrich, and alike, depend on limited grazing on the plains and in the dry riverbed and are constantly moving with the rains in search of forage.

Everyone agrees that the health of the lower Kuiseb has degenerated considerably in recent decades, but no one is sure if this is a permanent change or a short term, natural cycle.

Living conditions within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park are extremely harsh and marked by high temperatures, desiccating winds, high rates of evapotranspiration, cold winters, a sea of sand to the south and barren gravel plains to the north. All life is concentrated along the riverbed, and it is crucial to plan for climatic extremes, which are considered normal in this area.
CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORY OF CHANGING RESOURCE USE

2.1 An Historical Overview

2.1.1 Early Inhabitants and European Encounters

The Topnaar’s history is not complete due to scant and varying records, but archaeological evidence suggests that a hunter-gatherer community inhabited the lower Kuiseb catchment area and its adjacent coastline for well over 2,000 years. (Kinahan, 1991) Some of these early dwellers, inhabiting the coastal dunes, drank from fresh water springs and survived on available marine and vegetative resources. Others moved and settled within the upper parts of the Kuiseb catchment area, depending on the availability of water, vegetation and game. Over the last thousand years, the economy of these early inhabitants diversified to include domestic stock farming. (Kinahan, 1991)

More recent history, recorded by European sailors, explorers, and missionaries, documents a Nama people inhabiting Namibia’s central coast and contiguous interior. The earliest records, dating from the late 17th century, were made by Dutch sailors landing in Sandwich Bay, approximately 50 kilometres south of the Kuiseb river’s mouth. Their accounts described a people of light skin colour living in whalebone-beamed huts, possessing cattle, and storing pips "of something resembling pawpaws." (Vigne, 1994; Budack, 1977) These early visits gave the Europeans their first glimpse of an indigenous coastal community that fished, herded stock and harvested the endemic !nara melon. These same encounters, however, ended less than cordial with local inhabitants hurling stones, spears and poisoned arrows at their foreign visitors. (Vigne, 1994) Not until the late 18th century did the Europeans return to the Kuiseb delta.

By the mid-19th century, the Kuiseb delta people, historically documented at this time as the Topnaar, were trading their cattle, sheep and oxen with European sea crews for glass beads, tobacco, and alcohol. While the Europeans were eager to trade domestic stock with the Topnaar, they expressed little economic interest in the indigenous !nara melon. A few accounts, however, depict the !nara melon as an essential source of food and water for the Topnaar. As well, the Topnaar were noted to fish, gather mussels, hunt seabirds, seals and turtles and scavenge from beached whales hunted by Europeans. (Budack, 1975)

By the end of the 19th century, the Topnaar were less economically self-sufficient, having had increased contact with outsiders through trade and decreased dependence on coastal and riverine resources. The selling and bartering of local produce at coastal markets commanded Topnaar economic activity. One explorer wrote, "[the Topnaar] were well acquainted with the sailors; the advent of a ship was of course a great godsend to them, as they bartered, for tobacco, clothes and all sorts of luxuries, the goats’ milk and oxen which a few of them had; but they had been savagely ill-used more than once and had occasionally retaliated." (Galton,

1 Topnaar is a Dutch-Afrikaans term and may be regarded as an approximate translation of the Nama name, =Aonin, meaning "people of a marginal area" (Budack, 1983)
Increased trade placed greater economic importance on stock farming. Large numbers of cattle were driven from the Namibian interior to Walvis Bay for export. This great movement of stock at the end of the 19th century has been associated with the degradation of fragile grazing pastures along the Kuiseb. (Vigne, 1994)

As well as becoming less self-sufficient by the late 19th century, the Topnaar community experienced greater political and social insecurity. They suffered not only from ill treatment by whalers and sailing crews, but also from attacks by Nama, Herero, and German forces. Inter-tribal conflict prevailed and other Namibian communities—the Bushmen, Nama, Damara and Hereros and mixtures of these with Europeans—settled and intermixed with the Topnaar. (Budack, 1983; Vigne, 1994) Many writers during this period observed poverty, alcoholism, prostitution, disease, and famine as common occurrences within the community.

It is not surprising that in 1878 the Topnaar’s chief, Piet //Haibeb, in hopes of accruing greater protection and benefits, agreed to the British annexation of Walvis Bay, and by 1883 petitioned for the annexation of proclaimed Topnaar land outside the Walvis Bay enclave. //Haibeb demarcated the boundaries of Topnaar land as "the whole !Khuiseb area as far as the Gamsberg and from there to Onanis and Horobis on the Swakop and from there to Karibib and in a straight line from there to the sea." (Namibia Archives, 1885-1907) The British annexation of this part of the proclaimed Topnaar territory in 1884, however, did not buffer the Topnaar from the vagaries of modern politics and the onslaught of the modern economy over the following century.

2.1.2 The Economy and Politics of Colonial Rule

Colonial rule shifted from the British to the Germans in the same year, 1884, and in 1920 the colony was entrusted to South Africa by the League of Nations. During these shifts in colonial powers, fishing and harbour industries developed in Walvis Bay and many Topnaar merged with a growing Namibian workforce attracted to these nascent coastal industries. Other Topnaar settled further inland along the Kuiseb river, driven away by urban developments in Walvis Bay.

Colonial development and settlement in Walvis Bay and the neighbouring coastal town of Swakopmund resulted in the construction of water extraction schemes along the Kuiseb river. In 1927, the South African Railways and Harbours developed such schemes at Rooibank (Dausab, et al, 1994), the most westerly Topnaar settlement before reaching the Kuiseb delta. After World War II, however, the Rooibank scheme was insufficient in meeting increased water demands and additional extraction schemes were constructed in the 1960’s near the Topnaar settlement, Swartbank, to supply the growing harbour and mining industries and an expanding coastal population. (Huntley, 1985 and Dausab, et al, 1994)

Parallel to these extraction schemes was the construction of private farm dams in the Kuiseb river’s upper reaches, where rainfall occurs and generates requisite floods that recharge the river’s alluvial aquifers further downstream. The resultant effect of water developments under the South African administration, coupled with the country’s variable rainfall, has been the inevitable lowering of the Kuiseb’s underground water table. For the Topnaar living along the Kuiseb river, this gradual lowering of the water table has jeopardised the community’s water supply as well as the riverine vegetation that they depend on for their survival.
The Topnaar community experienced further stress under colonial rule when in 1964 the South African administration introduced the Odendaal Plan, carving Namibia into separate ethnic homelands. During the years that followed, many indigenous Namibians were removed from their ancestral lands and resettled to marginal lands elsewhere in Namibia. Under this plan, the Topnaar were allocated land near Gibeon, approximately 350 kilometres southeast of their traditional living area. The community, however, refused to resettle, claiming the lower Kuiseb area as their ancestral land.

The Topnaar’s resolution to remain within the lower Kuiseb catchment area was reinforced by their economic dependence on the environment’s resources. The Topnaar have commented repeatedly that their goats and cattle are well adapted to the Kuiseb’s riverine vegetation and any displacement would threaten their stock’s survival. As well, the community as a whole has relied for centuries on the !nara melon, endemic to the Kuiseb region. Topnaar councillor, Rudolph Dausab, has explained best the community’s dependence on !nara:

"As one of the elders said when they were forced by the then [South African] government to leave this area, the Topnaar community can prosper only where the !nara plant can prosper and regenerate. The community requested the government to take the !nara plant and plant it somewhere else. It didn’t matter where, but as long as this plant can grow properly and bear fruit, then our people are willing to leave. We all know that the !nara plant only grows in the Kuiseb. The answer was quite clear: our people are not going to leave what ever the government tries." (Dausab film interview, 1994)

2.1.3 Establishment of the Namib-Naukluft Game Park

While the Topnaar remained on their proclaimed ancestral land, in 1975 the South Africans established regulations for the Namib-Naukluft Game Park whose boundaries included the lower Kuiseb catchment area. The Topnaar’s traditional living area was considered a game and conservation reserve, and the Topnaar were expected to adhere to the newly created park regulations. Park regulations were conceived by South Africa’s Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism without consulting the Topnaar, and as a result contention ensued between the community and government nature conservators.

In some cases, enforced park laws were in direct conflict with Topnaar traditional land use practices. For instance, common Topnaar practices, such as seasonal hunting and the trapping of predators, was prohibited by law. In other cases, park conservators repeatedly attempted to threaten and alienate the Topnaar from their land and its resources. At one settlement, Topnaar houses were burned down by park officials when families temporarily moved elsewhere in search of better grazing. (Bamm film interview, 1994) In another example, park officials introduced rhinoceros along the lower Kuiseb in a reckless attempt

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2 A game and conservation park was first proclaimed for the central Namib Desert by the German administration at the turn of this century, although subsequent proclamations by the South African administration changed both the park boundaries and rules
to force Topnaar inhabitants to move. (Jones, 1992)

With Namibia’s Independence from South Africa in March, 1990, the Game Park and its administrative body, the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism, remained intact. Until now, no park laws have been repealed (Jones, pers comm, 1994) but intimidating tactics aimed at moving the Topnaar have ceased. Instead, the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism, today known as the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), have made efforts to meet with Topnaar community members and discuss problems related to living in a game and conservation park. In March of 1992 the Ministry conducted a Socio-ecological Survey in hopes of designing a land use plan for the lower Kuiseb valley which “integrates the needs and aspirations of the Topnaar people with the needs and objectives of conservation within the Namib-Naukluft Park.” (Jones, 1992) However, the outcome of the survey has been far from satisfactory with the Ministry and Topnaar representatives not following up on park management proposals discussed during the survey. Today, dialogue between the Ministry and the Topnaar is at a standstill with the community remaining wary of park and government officials, as well as confused about the role and motives of the Ministry in the lower Kuiseb.

2.1.4 The Topnaar Today

The Topnaar of today have either merged with the urban population of Walvis Bay or are living in thirteen separate rural settlements scattered along the lower portion of the Kuiseb River. The urban population is estimated to be between 1,000 and 3,000 Topnaar, according to the current Topnaar chief, Seth Kooitjie and his councillor, Rudolph Dausab. Topnaar living along the lower Kuiseb, the focus population of this study, are estimated to range between 350 to 450 adults and children. (Kooitjie, 1994; Namibian Census, 1991) These estimates fluctuate throughout the year since many rural Topnaar frequent Walvis Bay to visit families and friends and to search for or partake in temporary work.

When Namibia attained Independence from South Africa on March 21, 1990, many Topnaar retained their South African passports, particularly since the Walvis Bay enclave, including the Kuiseb delta, remained in South Africa’s hands. However, by March of 1994 Walvis Bay was re-integrated into Namibia and the remaining South African Topnaar were compelled to change their national identity to Namibian. Most Topnaar today comment that they are unwilling to change their national identity since they are not accustomed to Namibia’s lower wages and pensions. South African pensions are quoted at R370 per month as compared with Namibian pensions which are N$135 per month. Currently, the South African rand is equivalent in value to the Namibian dollar.

Regardless of their national identity, today’s Topnaar community is considered to be the few 350 to 450 people living along the lower Kuiseb River. This rural community is generally characterized as an ethnic rather than genetic group—that is, they are bonded by their continued strong ties to their traditional ways of life.

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3 No reliable population statistics are available for Walvis Bay as the enclave was administered by South Africa until 1994 and therefore was not included in the 1991 Namibian Census.
2.2 Traditional Ways of Life

Before repeated contact with outsiders, the Topnaar were significantly dependent upon the natural environment for their day-to-day livelihood. The community once inhabited the Kuiseb delta, where they harvested marine and vegetative resources from the sea and dunes. They also resided along the Kuiseb River which maintained an extensive riverine woodland winding through an otherwise inhospitable rock and sand desert. It is within the lower Kuiseb catchment where the Topnaar drank from natural springs and hand dug wells, hunted wildlife, grazed stock, collected medicinal plants, gathered wood and fodder, harvested the endemic !naramelon, and foraged along the coast.

2.2.1 The River

The Kuiseb River’s ephemeral floods and subterranean flow maintained a riverine woodland providing water, food, medicines, fuel, fodder, and timber to the Topnaar community. Rainfall in the river’s headwaters resulted in floods that recharged groundwater sources and transported organic material downstream to generate subsequent forest growth. (Jacobson, et al, 1995) Groundwater stored in alluvial aquifers fed a riparian forest that supported stock, wildlife and humans. The Kuiseb River was thus an attractive linear oasis for Topnaar settlement—and ultimately for survival in the Namib desert.

Until recently, Topnaar homes were found on both banks of the river and were shaped into domes made of branches or built square with wood. (Jenkins and Brain, 1967; Ward and van Wyk, 1985; Swartbank group interview, 1994) Surface drinking water was available in the form of natural pools and springs arising from the river’s bedrock. (Galton, 1851; Kinahan, 1991; Jacobson, et al, 1995; Swartbank group interview, 1994) Otherwise, Topnaar men dug wells reaching groundwater in alluvial deposits just below the riverbed’s surface. These hand dug wells known as gorras were reinforced with acacia trunks and varied in size and depth according to their purpose and placement along the riverbed. Some gorras were communal while other gorras were built to be used by single families or shared with a few neighbours. Large communal gorras or "pits" were used for washing and to water stock. Smaller gorras, scattered in a linear fashion along the riverbed, were intended to supply secure drinking water to families. Apart from ease of access, with many small hand dug wells, a village could check sicknesses caused by contaminated water since only one or a few families relied on a specific gorra for drinking water. (Swartbank group interview, 1994)

The use of gorras, however, has diminished with the development of water extraction schemes in the Kuiseb catchment over the last century. Private farm dams constructed in the catchment’s headwaters withhold runoff, essential for recharging downstream groundwater sources. (Jacobson, et al, 1995) Extensive pumping schemes at Rooibank, Swartbank and throughout the delta transport the lower Kuiseb basin’s groundwaters to urban and industrial centres at the coast. Consequently, decades of damming and pumping, coupled with the catchment area’s inherent variable rainfall, has resulted in water extraction rates that far exceed recharge rates. (Huntley, 1985; Dausab, et al, 1994; Jacobson, et al, 1995)

High pumping rates and inherently low recharge rates translates to a lowering of the water table—and hence greater difficulty for the Topnaar to site and maintain traditional water sources. Pools of water collected in bedrock no longer remain at the surface after floods.
The semi-permanent natural springs once found at Rooibank have disappeared. Hand-dug wells, which use to reach one to four metres deep, are rarely used and have been replaced by government boreholes reaching 10 to 33 metres deep depending on their placement along the river. (Dausab, et al, 1994) As one Inara harvester in the delta recalls, "I remember when we dug just a few metres and got water next to the dune. Now if we dig, the water is too deep down because of this pumping of water by Water Affairs." (Maasdorp film interview, 1994)

The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) within Namibia's Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development is responsible for maintaining the network of water extraction schemes established over the last century throughout the catchment. Since meeting consumer and industrial demands dictates the department's management agenda, pumping to coastal towns continues at an unsustainable rate. Their response to the Topnaar's developing water crisis was the provision of boreholes to the community over the last decade. While the installation of boreholes may have addressed the immediate water crisis, it has far from eliminated the community's problems regarding water. A Topnaar man found repairing a diesel pump at Soutrivier village recounts a series of water maintenance problems he has encountered in recent years:

"In the past we dug hand dug wells with our own tools. We retained the water with big tree planks and built a framed structure to collect the water. We always cleaned out our hand dug wells. There was always water. Now we cannot use our hand dug wells because the water is too deep underground. The sand fills the hole before you can reach water. We forwarded this problem to Department of Water Affairs and they put up a wind pump. Yet there was no wind, so there was no water. Then they installed a hand pump, but at this place there are only old men and women and the work is too heavy for them. Then they put up this diesel engine, but the drive belt has broken. Everyday I fix this belt using wire but when wire becomes hot it breaks. How can I fix this belt correctly? There is no one going around to our settlements to report these problems to the government. The government doesn't know me, so who will help me?" (Khurisam film interview, 1994)

For the Topnaar, the installation of boreholes has certainly improved the availability of water on a day-to-day basis, but it has also meant that settlements now have less control over their water supplies. Settlements east of Eduseb have either diesel or wind pumps which are considered by the Topnaar to be unreliable in that they depend upon variable inputs like equipment and wind. (Eduseb group interview, 1994) When a wind pump or diesel engine breaks, few communities can afford the necessary tools or equipment for repairs, leaving them helplessly dependent upon government to resolve their maintenance problems. In the above situation at Soutrivier, a month passed before the settlement saw a new drive belt brought by a government agricultural extension officer working over 250 kilometres away near Spitzkoppe. Lack of money within the settlement also meant that this drive belt, costing N$80, was paid for by relatives working in Walvis Bay.

Eduseb and settlements west have access to the Department of Water Affairs' comprehensive network of electrical pumps, pipelines, tanks and taps and therefore rarely encounter problems with water. But they too have little control over their water supplies.
Responsibility over supplies instead falls in the hands of DWA maintenance workers who are stationed at Rooibank to monitor water schemes in the area. Today Rooibank only houses the family of one Topnaar man employed by DWA; the remaining families are not Topnaar and have resettled from other areas of Namibia.

The installation of boreholes and other water supply schemes has not only changed the way the Topnaar use water, but also has markedly affected the way they use other resources. In the past, patterns of Topnaar settlement and movement were determined by the size of herds and the availability of water and vegetation for grazing. Since the Kuiseb River is a linear oasis, Topnaar stock limit their grazing to a riverbed a few hundred metres wide and to riverine vegetation dependent upon the occurrence of irregular floods recharging groundwater sources. Before, when stock herds expanded and/or riverine vegetation diminished, Topnaar families moved their homes and herds along the river in search of better grazing.

Sometimes entire families and herds resettled to a new village; other times only a few family members moved some of their stock. Usually, families returned to their old settlements once the vegetation regenerated, but in some cases families kept their homes and herds at a new settlement. To move, however, families first had to get permission either from the Chief or an elder so as to avoid conflict and overgrazing at the new settlement. If a family's herd expanded greatly, then that family was responsible for seeking a new grazing site to circumvent any disputes with their neighbours. "The main stock owner of the Osswater village explained how as the size of his original goat herd at Soutrivier increased, he was obliged to move his home to a new village, in this way avoiding disputes over pasturage." (Jenkins and Brain, 1967)

Today, however, the Topnaar move their stock less frequently along the river in part due to their limited access to groundwater and thus their greater reliance on boreholes and other water schemes. The Topnaar also attribute their more sedentary lifestyles to park regulations which most community members claim inhibit their movement of stock. One Topnaar man remarked, "As the land has been proclaimed as a park, there are certain rules. You don't have the right to move from this place to another with your stock. Homeb is the last settlement and from here eastward we are not allowed to move." (Bamm film interview, 1994) A Topnaar woman from Swartbank added, "Nature Conservation told us that our stock is eating too much, and that we must settle in one place rather than move around." (Herero film interview, 1994) Park ordinances do not specifically make reference to rules regarding stock movement, but they do allow for park administrators to "take such steps as will ensure the safety of the animal and plant life" in a Game Park. (Nature Conservation Ordinance, 1975) While regulating stock movement may conserve some areas of the Game Park, confining grazing to permanent settlements promotes overgrazing and instead ensures degradation of those areas.

Potential degradation at Topnaar settlements is further exacerbated when coupled with increasing stock numbers recorded by Namibia's Department of Veterinary Services. Goat, cattle and donkey numbers have doubled since 1988, and horses and sheep were reintroduced, along with first introduction of pigs, in 1990. (Department of Veterinary Services, 1993) A 1967 study claimed the number of goats at Swartbank totalled 125. (Jenkins and Brain, 1967) Swartbank community members today estimate a total of 200 goats, yet interestingly they claim goat numbers were even higher in the past, close to eight or nine hundred in 1944.
when water and grazing was more abundant. (Swartbank group interview, 1994) The recent growth in herds today can be attributed to the provision of permanent water supplies and more recently drought relief fodder to Topnaar settlements.

Increased stock numbers at permanent settlements, coupled with high water extraction rates, has placed greater pressure on the Kuiseb’s riverine forest, a vital resource base both the wildlife and the Topnaar have long been dependent upon. Ethnobotanists have recorded the current and historical use of 46 plant species by the Topnaar for food, medicines, cosmetics, fuel, fodder and timber. (Van den Eynden, et al, 1992) Plant use for medicine and timber is becoming less popular today since the Topnaar have greater access to clinics and tend to use scrap metal and other by-products for constructing homes. However, the Topnaar remain highly dependent on the Kuiseb’s riverine vegetation for fuel, stockades and fodder.

Prevalent in the Kuiseb is the anaboom tree which the Topnaar have used for construction and firewood, but most importantly, as fodder for their stock. Goats and cattle graze on the tree’s leaves and pods which contain seeds rich in protein.4 (Van den Eynden, et al, 1992) Another important tree is the camel thorn, which the Topnaar claim is the best firewood since it produces little smoke. In the past, the Topnaar produced coals from the camel thorn’s wood to sell in Walvis Bay. One Topnaar woman commented that selling coals provided her family with money to buy food during the winter months when the !nara season was over. (Herero, S. 1994) Today, the sale of wood products is outlawed under park regulations, although families continue to sell firewood to customers in Walvis Bay. The camel thorn’s leaves and pods also provide forage for stock, and in the past, the pulp of the pods was eaten by the Topnaar during times of food scarcity. (Van den Eynden, et al, 1992)

Other Acacias species are prevalent along the Kuiseb, along with the salt-resistant Tamarix, the “false ebony” or Euclea, and the fruit-bearing sycamore fig, date palm and Salvadora persica trees. Various lichens, fungi, succulents, herbs and the wild tobacco plant, Nicotinana glauca, grow along the riverbed and on the adjacent gravel plains. (Jenkins and Brain, 1967; Van den Eynden, et al, 1992) These species have been used in various forms to cure animal and human ailments, poison predators, protect the skin from damaging sun rays, heal wounds, provide food for people, stock and wildlife, and build stockades and homes.

The Topnaar’s reliance on the river and its ability to support plant life has left them vulnerable to the natural occurrences of drought. Depending on the amount of rainfall which can deviate as much as 70% above or below its mean, floods transporting nutrients and seedlings for subsequent forest growth fluctuate in number and capacity from year to year. (Jacobson, et al, 1995) In the past, the Topnaar dealt with the Kuiseb catchment’s inherently variable climate by adopting flexible strategies, such as moving their stock along the river and balancing their reliance on riverine vegetation with other resources in the delta and from the sea.

4 The fodder available in the Kuiseb’s riverbed is highly nutritious according to the community and makes for “surprisingly fat goats and cows” as other Namibians have commented when visiting what looks like an otherwise barren and inhospitable desert. (Legal Assistance Centre field visit to Swartbank, October, 1994)
Today, however, more permanent settlements, greater stock numbers, increased water extraction rates, and a past decade of smaller floods has potentially jeopardized the Kuiseb’s inherently fragile environment. The Topnaar no longer move their stock since permanent water sources have been installed, and according to the Topnaar, semi-nomadic practices are discouraged by MET nature conservators. As well, fewer and fewer community members travel to the delta to harvest the !nara melon and no Topnaar exploit marine resources as they did in the past. The decreased utilisation of fewer natural resources leaves them today more dependent on the riverine forest for farming activities and urban centres for wages and remittances.

Tapping groundwater sources at an unsustainable rate has further grave effects on the riverine vegetation. The anaboom tree, although well-adapted to survive along ephemeral rivers, requires continued access to groundwater. (Jacobson, et al, 1995) The drop in floods since the early 1980’s combined with intensive water extraction schemes in the lower Kuiseb has led to the collapse of the anaboom tree. (Ward, et al, 1983) Its collapse has been confirmed by many Topnaar and in particular one woman grieved that "all the big ana trees have died because there is less water; the stock now eats from the bitter trees so the meat and milk taste bitter." (Kolmann, 1994) Other Topnaar have commented that in general there are fewer trees than in the past, particularly palm trees and young trees, and that the Kuiseb’s few remaining fig trees no longer bear fruit. (Swarthbank group interview, 1994)

Like the Kuiseb’s riverine vegetation, wildlife has been an important natural resource that has traditionally supported the Topnaar community. History points to the existence of large mammals, such as elephant, rhino, leopard, and lion, which visited the Kuiseb riverbed in search of water over a century ago. Early travellers wrote of large pits found along the riverbed apparently used to trap rhino and described the hunting of lion near the Kuiseb delta. (Alexander, 1838; Galton, 1851) Today, two hundred year old, well preserved elephant tracks can be found in silt deposits near Rooibank. (Kinahan, et al, 1991)

The Topnaar have reported from oral tradition and personal experience an abundance of wildlife species, including giraffe and leopard, that travelled down the Khomas Hochland mountains through the Kuiseb canyon to their settlements during years of copious rainfall. They also speak of better rains and more frequent floods in the past that encouraged the growth of grasses on the gravel plains and healthier riverine vegetation which in turn attracted greater numbers of springbok, gemsbok, ostriches and various types of wild dogs and cats, hares, jackals and hyena. (Swarthbank group interview, 1994)

Before enactment of the 1975 Nature Conservation Ordinance in which hunting and trapping is prohibited in conservation areas, the Topnaar had a well established hunting season called lamis. During this season—May, June and July—Topnaar men trapped, snared, speared and more recently shot game for its meat and skins. Rules pertaining to hunting were enforced by Topnaar conservators who have been described as "men on horses from Walvis Bay", "great grandfathers" and/or "counsellors". According to the Topnaar, these conservators regulated hunting by ensuring that communities hunted only what they needed and they never hunted during the off-season when wildlife mated and when alternative foods, such as !nara, were available. As well, the counsellors were responsible for assessing environmental damage and administering poisons for predators.
After the *lamis* when successful hunters returned to their settlement, families from other settlements joined in a large celebratory feast. Game meat was preserved as biltong for the off-season months and skins were sewn together to form rugs or softened to make bridles. Rugs and bridles were sold in Walvis Bay to purchase food supplies supporting families until the upcoming !nara season.

Other animal by-products used by the Topnaar include honey for eating and for brewing honey beer, and animal faeces and ostrich eggshell for concocting traditional medicines. One Topnaar woman explained how and why she makes traditional medicines today:

"When a woman gives birth and her child becomes sick, I mix the ostrich eggshell with other medicines to make a powder. This powder I give to the sick baby and the baby will be cured. To heal a child's wound or cut I put on a powder made from the faeces of the bat-eared fox and wood shavings. These are some of the traditional medicines we use which cost us nothing."

(Herero S. film interview, 1994)

Today, most large predators and large game have long since disappeared from the lower Kuiseb catchment in part due to centuries of hunting by European and South African travellers and settlers. More recently, the construction of dams and fences by private farmers in the Kuiseb's headwaters has meant the provision of land and water to livestock rather than wildlife, and the obstruction of game migration routes. Furthermore, water extraction schemes have destroyed natural springs and potentially damaged riverine vegetation, both essential resources for wildlife. Game species, such as the gemsbok, have also been frightened away by a growing human population. The result has been a sharp decline of wildlife numbers in the catchment area, particularly in the lower portion within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park.

The Topnaar claim that the proclamation of the Namib-Naukluft Game Park coincides with the decline in game numbers. One woman commented, "When this was not a park, there was even more dangerous game here. But Nature Conservation has taken all the game to Etosha. They have just left the jackals so that they can hurt our stock. If you kill a jackal, you will be jailed." (Herero S. film interview, 1994) Most Topnaar remark that they have always lived with wildlife, yet with the establishment of park regulations, they feel they are today alienated from wildlife.

According to the 1975 Nature Conservation Ordinance which applies to all public game reserves in Namibia, the hunting, trapping or poisoning of predators is illegal and can warrant a maximum fine of N$200,000 or imprisonment for 20 years as amended in 1986. For the Topnaar, who have traditionally hunted and trapped wildlife, this law is considered unfair and makes stock farming difficult. Predators, such as jackal and hyena, that once fed on game, now attack stock, which signifies a loss in income or food for a Topnaar farmer. Today, the community does not benefit from wildlife conservation policies as implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and it is therefore not surprising that the Topnaar describe game as "hurtful", "damaging" and "useless". (Eduseb group interview, 1994)
2.2.2 The Delta

!Nara, endemic to the Kuiseb delta, was, and still is today, culturally and economically important to the Topnaar community. Their traditional reliance on this wild curcubit for food and water and in particular the past practice of private ownership over inherited family !nara plots made the Topnaar distinct among other Nama groups who traditionally herded, hunted and gathered on communal property.

!Nara, *Acanthosicyos horridus*, is most abundant among the dunes of the Kuiseb delta, although !nara patches grow within the hummocks of dunes extending along the Kuiseb River towards Homeb. The thorned !nara plant traps itself in the sand and sinks its thick taproot up to 40 metres deep to reach the water table. The Topnaar typically harvest the !nara from November to May when the green, warty, melon-shaped fruit becomes ripe. Some Topnaar have suggested that there is a winter harvesting season from June to August; however, this season may be a recent phenomenon since fewer Topnaar are harvesting the !nara leaving more !nara available throughout the year.

In the past, entire families moved annually to the Kuiseb delta to harvest the !nara melon. One elderly Topnaar, Reuben Skryver, remembered as a child Topnaar families building semi-permanent homes and hand-dug wells in the delta. He recalled networks of families harvesting !nara, sharing food, exchanging goods, and tending plots for absentee owners. (Skryver film interview, 1994) Men, women and children would partake in the harvesting and processing of !nara. While labour was not strictly divided, men tended to collect and then bury ripe !nara in the sand to soften the fruit for eating and processing, and women were generally responsible for processing the melon.

!Nara can be eaten raw and its inner pulp has a rich, creamy taste. However, since the pulp contains cucurbintins which burn the mouth and since !nara is seasonal, the Topnaar have developed methods for preparing and preserving the melon. !Nara is traditionally boiled and the melon’s pips are separated from the pulp. The cooked pulp of the !nara is prepared as a soup or preserved as a dried flat cake, known as = goa-garibeb. (Budack, 1983) This dried fruit roll can last for several years and in the past provided the Topnaar with a secure source of food during off-season periods.

!Nara pips, once separated from the pulp, are left to dry on hard ground or on the tops of roofs. After a few days of drying in the sun, they can be eaten like nuts or compressed to extract an oil used in foods or as an ointment. The Topnaar traditionally use !nara oil for moisturizing and protecting the skin from sunburn. (Van den Eynden, et al, 1992) !Nara pips, which keep for up to a year and are 31% protein, are both a convenient and nutritious source of food for the Topnaar, their stock and wildlife. (Budack, 1983; Van den Eynden, et al, 1992) As well, dried pips are an important source of cash income for the Topnaar. Sacked and sold to buyers in Walvis Bay, they currently bring a price ranging between N$3.50/kg to N$4.50/kg depending on the purchasing individual or company. One harvester sold 13 bags (each approximately 50 kgs) and earned N$2,200 in 1993. (Skryver film interview, 1994)

While stock farming and fishing were important means of subsistence, !nara was a resource that never failed the Topnaar. In the past, herds may have declined due to drought and
conflict, and coastal fishing and gathering may not have always promised a good catch. In comparison, !nara was an attractively secure resource and in time a growing number of Topnaar and foreign settlers came to the delta for harvesting. Most likely competition for !nara increased and disputes over access arose. The increased number of harvesters and thus the greater potential for conflicts probably resulted in the Topnaar creating private property rights, a practice that sets them apart from other Nama groups whose community resource areas were regarded as communal property.

In the past, the !nara fields were strictly divided into private patches, belonging to individual extended families and inherited through successive generations. All members of an extended family had equal rights to the !nara plants in their patch, yet a head family member, usually male but in some cases female, was titled as owner. This system of private ownership helped to regulate conflict and ensured management and maintenance of healthy !nara fields.

In 1905 one trader wrote, "[The Topnaar] are said to have strong respect for property rights attached to every single plant, and it hardly ever happens that somebody steals from his neighbour." (Budack, 1983) When disputes over theft did occur, they were resolved by a chief or legal council. Legal proceedings were the norm in conflicts between Topnaar; however, outsiders did not receive equivalent treatment. A Professor Schultz in 1907 wrote, "With Bergdamara and Bushmen they make short work. Several cases became known to me of thieves who were simply shot down like game from a stand at that Nara bush where the owner had discovered their tracks, thereby at once pronouncing a sentence of death." (Budack, 1983)

Not only was it imperative to respect your neighbour's property, but families were urged to maintain the health of their own fields. If a family was unable to travel to the delta in a given year, then they asked a neighbour to harvest their !nara field rather than neglect it. The harvesting and maintenance of all fields ensured the health of the delta's entire !nara complex. If fields were neglected, unattended !nara would rot, infecting its own taproot as well as its neighbours. The result was smaller fruit for the following year. (Skryver and Maasdorp film interview, 1994) The Topnaar safeguarded the health of their !nara by burning down infertile, rotting, and harvested fields. This practice is said to have helped stimulate the growth of more fruit for the next season. (Skryver and Maasdorp film interview, 1994)

The Topnaar's unique system of land tenure, however, has virtually died out. According to community sources, private ownership over !nara patches became defunct by the late 1970's. Most Topnaar remarked that the breakdown of property rights can be correlated with "the death of the old chiefs and strong men". As well, ownership rules may have ceased due to the decreased importance of !nara as a secure, attainable resource. With the development of commercialism and industry in Walvis Bay and the provision of government schemes such as drought relief and pensions, the work involved to harvest the !nara is relatively difficult and less attractive compared with an income-earning service job, the promise of a pensioner's check, or stock farming with boreholes and packaged relief fodder.

The establishment of park regulations in 1975 also affected the !nara tenure system. Park regulations forbade the burning of !nara fields as protection against wildlife. (Skryver film interview, 1994; Nature Conservation Ordinance, 1975) In the past, burning was practised
by the Topnaar to ensure the healthy fruition of !nara for the coming years. If Topnaar families could no longer manage their plots by burning them, then it may not have been desirable to harvest solely from their private fields. Rather, a more random search for healthy, large !nara fruits might promise a better harvest in a neighbour’s plot.

Deteriorating !nara fields due to a potential lack of subterranean water may also help to explain the breakdown of the Topnaar’s inherited plot system. In the early 1960’s, a flood barrier was constructed in the Kuiseb delta to halt floods from reaching nearby Walvis Bay. The Kuiseb River bifurcates 30 km from the coast, with its southern arm heading southwesterly towards a delta of dunes and its northern branch once reaching the ocean at Walvis Bay. The barrier, while stopping surface flow, was built on granite bedrock and therefore also blocks the river’s subterranean flow. The result has been a steady deterioration over the last three decades of the Topnaar’s northern !nara fields. (Vanden Endyen, et. al., 1992) In 1975, anthropologist Budack mapped the Topnaar’s private !nara fields, with the majority falling inside the Kuiseb’s northern arm. (Budack, 1977) Today, the Topnaar no longer harvest this once important northwesterly arm of the delta, and their abandonment of the deteriorating field may have led to the discontinuation of private ownership.

Decades of damming and pumping the Kuiseb River may have a detrimental effect on the !nara fields in the southwesterly arm of the delta. Today, both Topnaar harvesters and !nara pip buyers from Walvis Bay comment on the low productivity of the !nara bush. They claim that there are fewer !nara per bush and the fruit and pips themselves are smaller. If such is the case, then to inherit an assigned, private plot may not be advantageous if that plot is unhealthy and unproductive and more fruitful plots lie elsewhere. Today harvesters travel all over the Kuiseb delta, camping and collecting !nara in any plot. The low productivity of !nara, along with the commercial and employment attractions in Walvis Bay and the provision of boreholes and fodder for easier stock farming, may help to explain why today less Topnaar choose to travel to the delta and harvest the !nara.

Today, the Topnaar complain that harvesting the !nara is done on an individualistic basis. Entire families no longer visit the delta for the full season, but rather individuals, mostly men, come earlier and for shorter periods, occasionally harvesting !nara before it is ripe. The Topnaar proclaim that in the past a family could be assured of a secure harvest and income from selling !nara pips; whereas, today, both Topnaar and outsiders harvest whenever and wherever they like to earn a bit of money from just a few bags of !nara pips. Elderly Topnaar complain too that the young Topnaar are "too lazy" to work on !nara and they only harvest a few bags of !nara to "earn enough money to get drunk".

2.2.3 The Sea

Besides the once important practice of private ownership, the Topnaar are also distinguished from other Namibian Nama groups in their past maritime activities. It has been argued that the Topnaar were divided in their subsistence activities—with some practising pastoralism, others harvesting !nara, another group harvesting from the sea, and all trading with each other. (Budack, 1977) Yet archaeological evidence and written history has suggested that perhaps a past Topnaar people practised a mix of subsistence activities; for instance, bringing cattle from inland for bartering at the coast and once there exploiting resources from the delta and sea. (Alexander, 1838; Kinahan, 1991; Vigne, 1994) Nonetheless, most Topnaar today,
living in both Walvis Bay and along the Kuiseb River, are aware of their past maritime culture, and common Topnaar surnames such as "Kasper" have been linked to past fishing activities.

The Topnaar caught fish in the shallow lagoons of Walvis and Sandwich Bay with either their bare hands or spears made from *Tamarix* wood or the gemsbok’s horn. Salmon, mackerel, kabeljou, pilchards, sting rays, and sand sharks were commonly caught and then salted, dried, and grilled on a fire, unless first boiled to extract fish oil or poisons. Beached whales, dolphins, porpoises and seals were considered a great feast, feeding Topnaar families for months. Meat was preserved in the damp sand or dried as biltong. Whale oil and blubber, used as food and skin ointment, was stored in sea bamboo canes, and whale ribs formed Topnaar huts. Seal skins were made into clothes or infant carriers. The Topnaar also roasted sea turtles in their shell, which then formed a useful and much sought after storage basin. Both Topnaar men and women hunted seabirds with five-foot long bows and arrows and collected birds’ eggs. Mussels were also collected for food and jewellery. (Budack, 1977)

The Topnaar’s link to the sea is important today since fishing is a profitable business, occupying third place behind mining and agriculture in the Namibian economy. (Hoff and Overgard, 1993) Namibians from all over the country have formed companies and applied for fishing concessions in order to reap benefits from this lucrative business, primarily based at Walvis Bay. Yet despite their historical connection to the sea, few Topnaar are involved in fishing today. In 1993, Topnaar representatives from Walvis Bay and Windhoek established a fishing company and secured a fishing quota. However, it remains unclear whether this company is private or whether a percentage of its revenues are placed in a community trust fund as promised to the rural Topnaar living along the lower Kuiseb.
CHAPTER THREE
COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGING RESOURCE USE

3.1. Introduction to the Social Economy of the Topnaar

The previous chapter describes how resource use among the Topnaar has been shaped by people's adaptations to their history and environment. Today, the Topnaar are continually modifying their lifestyles to take advantage of new opportunities and to face new challenges due to their changing environment and developing social economy.

The Topnaar living in the lower Kuiseb River valley have been trading, moving, settling and inter-marrying with their Nama, Bantu and European neighbours for centuries. These invasions of different peoples and their cultural practices have altered or replaced many of the Topnaar customs and traditional ways of life. It is not uncommon to hear outsiders comment on the disintegration of the Topnaar community. Many Topnaar agree that things are changing very quickly and the community is not as homogenous and closely knit as it used to be:

"In the old days we, the Topnaar, were like each other, not rich and not poor. There were no powerful people. Each person could have a say and do it his way. We were working together. We were sympathetic to each other. Now I can see it is his problem, so he must deal with it alone. Things are changing so fast and each day brings a new problem. We cannot solve these problems now......no water, no !nara." (Araeb, 1994)

This situation described in the lower Kuiseb is also true of any other people in Namibia, a nation heavily influenced by past policies which created extreme disparities in income and welfare between, and within, different ethnic groups.

Underlying this wave of social and infrastructural change though is a much more resilient Topnaar culture and a social economy not dissimilar to the one described more than a hundred years ago. However hostile these invasions have been, the Topnaar have succeeded in adapting to these influences, either by accepting new practices or simply by rejecting what they consider to be outside impositions.

Although many families are adamant that they are poorer today than they were in the past, they have successfully evolved new ways to continue making a living from their traditional land despite its reduced size and deteriorating health. Living in the desert and within the protectorate of a Game Park, the Topnaar have remained relatively isolated. In the absence of alternative income-generating activities, the Topnaar have continued to utilise a wide range of local resources.

Most families are involved in stock farming, !nara harvesting or gardening and as before, all these activities are entirely dependent on the underground water extracted from the Kuiseb
riverbed. However, each of these activities is becoming increasingly commercialised. Families have tended to develop only those options which will earn them sufficient money to meet their basic needs.

Families supplement the food and incomes derived from farming and !nara harvesting by working in nearby towns. Remittances from employed relatives provide an important source of additional income for most families. Social security payments, particularly South African pensions at N$370 a month (compared to Namibian pensions at N$135 a month) also cushion seasonal shortfalls in incomes derived from working the land.

There has been a shift in emphasis from a predominantly rural, subsistence-based economy to a cash-based economy heavily dependent on the outside world, particularly the markets, goods and services available from Walvis Bay, Windhoek and elsewhere.

Namibian Independence in March 1990 marked another period of rapid change and transformation: 1) the formal recognition by the MET that the Topnaar will benefit from developments in the Namib-Naukluft Game Park; 2) the reintegration of Walvis Bay back into Namibia in March 1994; and 3) the new economic opportunities opening up in the private business sector, particularly from tourism, fishing and !nara harvesting. These changes and opportunities have expanded the socio-economic and political sphere of the Topnaar community. For instance, many Topnaar make decisions on behalf of the community even though they live and work outside the lower Kuiseb. At the same time, these changes and opportunities have created greater disparities within the community. Not all Topnaar benefit equally from developments, even though many projects are initiated in the name of the community.

When asked, who are the Topnaar today, most people respond with broad definitions corresponding to their open borders and traditional ways of life. A Topnaar can be "anyone accepting, conforming and practising the tradition and culture of the Topnaar" (Chief Kooitjie, 1994) or "anyone living in the lower Kuiseb River valley, including Walvis Bay". (Councillor Dausab, 1994). "We are all Topnaar whether we are black or white. We are all born here and live the same way, doing the same things. You can tell if someone is not a Topnaar. They cause problems and will leave." (Swartbank group interview, 1994)

Most Topnaar have moved away from the coast, away from a life in the delta and by the sea. The health and variety of resources along the lower Kuiseb River is poorer today than it was in the past. Many Topnaar recognise some land uses, such as stock farming, exert great pressure on their environment. Yet without economic alternatives, they are forced to make use of an already stressed environment.

The following interview with Immanuel Araeb, a 66 year old man from Ururas, introduces some of the recent environmental changes affecting the social economy of households in the lower Kuiseb valley.
What are the most important resources for you and your family?

"My stock and my garden. Our only income is my South African pension, N$ 370 a month, and I heard this will drop to N$ 135 soon. The goats, cattle and the garden provide a lot of the food we eat. If I cannot sell a goat then I can take something from the garden. I plant vegetables throughout the year and the stock is always there. !Nara is seasonal. If I can collect 25 to 50 kg of !nara pips locally then I will go to Walvis Bay, sell them, and buy food, clothes and other goods. The stock mostly live off the river, but I give some of the mealies from my garden to the chickens, and the husks I give to the goats. Sometimes, if we bring !nara home, then we feed the rotten !nara and leftover skins to the goats."

What were the most important resources for your family when you were young?

"When I was young I lived in Walvis Bay. During vacations I came back to help my family, working with my grandfather, looking after our goats and garden. When I retired from the army, I came back here to develop my stock and garden."

"In the old days, people had gardens too. People lived much nearer the river, and on the side where the dunes are now, where the water was abundant. We built hand-dug wells, and around them, if we had enough water, we planted gardens. We didn’t have to carry water or use a plastic pipe like now. We fenced gardens with poles, like a kraal, to keep the goats out and to stop them falling in the well."

"Back then men and women used many different plants for food and medicines. Today the fig tree, the !nara and the "red berry tree" are still used, but not the others."

How has the river changed?

The vegetation in the river has changed. It used to be green all over. The trees and plants have died out now. In the past we got more rain and the river would flood. Now it does not rain and the river does not flow as strong, only a weak, narrow river like this year, and less often. It used to push down to the delta, now it stops further up.

In the Bible they talk of the 7 good years and the 7 bad years. It was just like that, some years were good, some were bad. Now the water is so much less....all we get is drought, drought. There are no good years anymore. The pumping of water is not good, it has dried out the river and now there is not enough grazing for my stock."

What were the settlements and grazing like when you were young?

"When I was a teenager, there were more people and more villages in the Kuiseb. Most of the people have died out and the villages are deserted. We used to live all along the river in families. If I slaughtered a goat, then I shared it. We came together and shared, telling stories and sitting around the fire. Today, this is not the case. The family houses and settlements look the same,
but it is just that we work less together now, and there are less people, so there are less villages. The old people died out, and when the young people left, villages became abandoned.

"The reason people have settled where they are is because there is water. In the old days there were more people in settlements, like at Homeb. Settlements look the same but there were more families then. There has always been more people living in the area downriver from Eduseb.

"When there was a drought we moved our stock to Natab, or Osswater, or past Homeb. In the old days people moved around more. We farmed more with sheep and they need grass, so we were always forced to move and set up new settlements. The sheep farmers were concentrated in settlements upriver, like Homeb, where there was more grass.

"There were the same number of cattle in the past. This is because you cannot afford to slaughter a cow just to feed the family, only when you sell it, so the numbers remain more or less the same. People moved a lot more—grazing being the key factor—but now this is a Park we have to get permission to move, so most people stay in the same place.

"I spent two or three years here [Ururas], then when I was 16 we moved upriver. The locusts came at this time and damaged all the vegetation so we had to move. The locusts came in their thousands and would settle on one tree. So we decided to burn the trees. Soon there were very few trees left, but still the locusts came. Not everyone left, some stayed on to fight the locusts, but we left with our stock for the area past Homeb.

How important was !nara when you were young?

In the older days some people depended on the !nara completely, the people without stock. They would go to the delta, settle there and make money. I would go with my grandfather on a donkey (we had no donkey cart then) to harvest and process the !nara. A man would come from Walvis Bay and buy our pips. If you did not own a plot you could not collect. I don’t know why it has changed but I think it is better now. There used to be fights over the plots and a lot of confusion. Now we do not have plots and we are free to go to the delta and take what we need. This is good because you are free to collect what you need to survive. There are many people still harvesting the !nara but it is mostly young people, the people with donkey carts, the strong people.

A conversation about community morale, decision-making and representation

"Our elders told us stories about the land, our leaders and our history. Today, any problem is my problem. So, we go alone to solve the problems. Our leaders live at Homeb and Osswater. They have nothing to do with us.

"Since this area has been proclaimed a Park, our problems have started. We were told to report them to Gobabeb, but they don’t ask us what our problems are, or solve them. [Chief] Kooltjie does not solve them. We don’t know why. And there is no transport to solve them.
"The outsiders have come, made decisions and proclaimed a Park. Our leaders say they will solve the problems but they don’t. If the leaders want to do things for themselves, they do it. When it comes to our problems, they don’t solve them. So I think they have power, but they are not interested."

3.2 Key Land Use Activities

3.2.1 Human Settlement

Until the late 1960’s most settlements were semi-permanent. Topnaar moved up and down the river in search of water, grazing, game, veld foods and !nara. A total of 66 Topnaar settlements have been mapped along the lower Kuiseb River valley from the coast to the Kuiseb canyon, 200 kilometres. (Ward and Van Wyk, 1985) Today most of these early Topnaar settlements lie empty and derelict.

During the 1960’s the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) installed the first boreholes along the Kuiseb River and since this time permanent settlements have been established each supplied with a borehole or a pipeline owned and maintained by the DWA.

In March 1966 researchers working at Gobabeb estimated the total population of the lower Kuiseb to be about 130 people living in eight settlements, "although it was not possible to carry out an altogether complete census as many of the permanent inhabitants were away from their homes working either in Walvis Bay or on road construction projects." (Jenkins and Brain, 1967).

The 1991 Namibian Population and Housing census records a total of 313 people living in nine villages inside the Game Park. There is no official census data for Topnaar settlements falling inside the Walvis Bay enclave which was administered by South Africa at the time of the survey in 1991. According to this research study approximately 110 people are currently living in five settlements inside the Walvis Bay enclave.

Today the Topnaar chief, Seth Kooitjie, estimates the rural population of the lower Kuiseb to be about 450 people with another 950 urbanised Topnaar living in Walvis Bay. Councillor Rudolph Dausab estimates the number of Topnaar living in the lower Kuiseb to be about 400 with around 3000 residents in Walvis Bay. We estimate that there are between 350 and 450 people living in the lower Kuiseb river valley, although this will fluctuate by as much as 150 people throughout the year due to the large movement of people between rural settlements and Walvis Bay.

Thirteen settlements are spaced between two and 15 kilometres apart and lining the northern bank of the river for about 130 kilometres. Within villages dwelling areas and kraals are constantly being relocated, intermingled and overlain on the same spot. Makeshift homes are constructed from second-hand and scrap building materials: flattened metal oil drums, corrugated iron sheeting, old signs, former South African Defence Force (SADF) firing range targets, cardboard boxes, timber, wire, bark and disused cars and buses...anything people can find.
Topnaar Settlements | Jenkins and Brain (March 1966) | Population and Housing census (December 1991) | Our estimates (September 1994)
---|---|---|---
GAME PARK:
Homeb | 0 | 6 | 6
Osswater | 5 | 21 | 25
Natab (1 & 2) | 2 | 2 | 15
Gobabeb | N/A | 21<sup>1</sup> | 25
Soutrivier | 10 | 18 | 20
Klipneus & | 7 | N/A | 10
Swarthbank | 3 | 36 | 20
Eduseb | 6 | 188<sup>2</sup> | 210<sup>3</sup>
Ururas | 17 | 21 | 20
SUB-TOTAL | 122 | 313 | 351
WALVIS BAY ENCLAVE:
"Reeds"/Goatanab | 0 | N/A | 3<sup>4</sup>
Dawe-draais | 0 | N/A | 10
Armstraat | 0 | N/A | 10
Rooibank | 11 | N/A | 40<sup>5</sup>
TOTAL | 133 | N/A | 424

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1 In 1991 the total population of Gobabeb was 21, of which 16 were Topnaar and 5 were foreign researchers

2 Of the 188 Topnaar living in Eduseb, 117 were school children at the local primary school and 71 were Topnaar living along the river. In addition, most of the 20 teaching staff originate from outside the lower Kuiseb, from Walvis Bay and from southern Namibia

3 The Eduseb school has grown since 1991 and the Rotary Club of Walvis Bay built an extension to the existing classrooms to accommodate the increase in pupils

4 According to residents in neighbouring Ururas, "Reeds" is a new settlement established in 1994 by a recently married couple with a newborn baby

5 Of the 40 or so residents living in the Department of Water Affairs housing complex at Rooibank, one family (five people) were Topnaar, the rest were government employees originating from other parts of Namibia
Contradictory to the perceptions of the Topnaar (who tell us that people are leaving the rural area), during her 28 years living at Gobabeb, the Director of the DRFN has observed a rise in the number of people living in the lower Kuiseb Valley (Seely, pers comm, 1994). And if Jenkins and Brain’s (1966) estimate of 130 people in eight villages are compared with today’s (1994) estimate of 424 in 13 villages, then the net population of the lower Kuiseb has, indeed, more than tripled over the last 28 years. Yet it is not possible to calculate the annual growth rate, as no stable or average population has ever been calculated, and there is no data available on population mobility, birth rates or death rates.

The mean population density is around 3 people per kilometre (420 people within a 130 kilometre strip, 1 kilometre wide). This will be lower, about 1 person per kilometre, in settlements further upriver in the Game Park between Homeb and Swartbank. Settlements between Eduseb and Rooibank are nearer to Walvis Bay and have a higher population density of about 10 persons per kilometre.

A large scale water supply and road infrastructure has attracted both Topnaar and outside residents to settlements between Eduseb and Rooibank. It is here where local job opportunities are concentrated and where other services, such as a school and church, have been constructed. For example, in the early 1970’s Eduseb was, “roughly the same size as Swartbank today” (Seely, pers comm, 1994) with about 25 people. In the early 1980’s the government built a primary school there and connected the settlement to the main water supply network feeding Walvis Bay. With improved job opportunities and water provision, Eduseb has since become the largest settlement in the lower Kuiseb, with about 200 people. One Eduseb resident explained, "when our grandfathers set up Eduseb there were fewer people here. But now there is a school and the jobs attracted all of us." (Engelbrecht household, 1994)

Corresponding with Jenkins and Brain’s survey of 1966, today there are more males (55%) than females (45%) living along the lower Kuiseb, especially between the ages of 20 and 45. This is in contrast to the situation in most communal (rural) areas of Namibia where the migrant labour system has resulted in a gender imbalance where women outnumber men. (UNICEF/NISER, 1991)

The age structure is typical for a developing country, skewed towards a younger generation: 43% are less than 15 years of age, 52% are adults (aged 15 to 59) and 5% are pensioners (60+). As Jenkins and Brain reported, "Many of the people aged between 20 and 40 years who belong in these villages were absent, working in Walvis Bay and elsewhere". (Jenkins and Brain, 1967)

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6 Much of the statistical data included in this section is derived from the 1991 Population and Housing Census. Unfortunately, this data set includes only those nine villages falling inside the Namib-Naukluft Game Park, and excludes the four settlements inside the former Walvis Bay enclave.
Most Topnaar are born in the lower Kuiseb and 62% are registered in Swakopmund, the local Enumeration District. The remaining 38% originate from elsewhere: 11% from the Karas Region, 4% from the Hardap Region, 7% from Windhoek, 10% from the Northern Regions and 6% originate from other countries. There is no significant difference between the origin of male and female Topnaar residents and most have close relatives born outside the lower Kuiseb, especially Walvis Bay. As a result, 85% of the Topnaar population speak Nama/Damara. Interestingly, more women speak Nama/Damara than men: 90% of women compared to 81% of the men. Furthermore, more than 30% of all adult males aged 15 to 59 do not speak Nama/Damara, compared to 14% of all women the same age.

In the absence of more detailed information, the statistics reported in the 1991 census suggest that the rapid population growth rate experienced over the last three decades cannot be due solely to local births and a low mortality rate. It is rather the result of an influx of Topnaar men and women from Walvis Bay to the lower Kuiseb and a movement of economically active men (mainly in the 20 to 45 age group) into the lower Kuiseb valley from other parts of Namibia.

It is these same outsiders which are most highly qualified. For example, all the university degree holders resident in the lower Kuiseb are researchers at Gobabeb. More than half of all Topnaar have no formal education. Of the 47% which have attended school, 23% reached secondary school. As would be expected, the younger generation are better educated than their elders. The census data is not sufficiently detailed to compare education attainment of male and female residents.

The census data reveals no significant influx of children from other areas of Namibia and other language groups, which suggests that most of the 117 children at Eduseb school are Topnaar.

All Topnaar mention that the skills which in the past were handed down to younger family members as a matter of survival are today being ignored. With children away from school and younger adults looking for work in Walvis Bay, people’s knowledge of locally available natural resources is dying out. Young people no longer know where to find medicinal plants or !nara, and they don’t know how to process or use them. More and more emphasis is being placed on a formal education to secure employment.

Matriculating from school is considered to be very important. Families invest in their children’s education as a means of securing a regular cash income and to improve their standard of living in the future. However, those families which make a living solely from available natural resources in the lower Kuiseb tend to be poorer households and struggle to fund their children’s educations. Whereas, households with regular cash incomes from other sources such as formal jobs, pensions and remittances from relatives in Walvis Bay are in a better position to pay for the completion of their children’s education. Virtually all unemployed young Topnaar state that they were forced to leave school early, most citing high school fees and responsibility to their family. "My mother was alone so I had to leave school, come here, and look after her." Government pensions play a critical role in maintaining household economies and without them children are often the first to suffer. "When my grandparents died, I had to leave school because
we had no money to pay my hostel fees."

Raising money for their children's education places severe strain on adult family members. Many Topnaar suggest that any benefits derived from future projects should first be put into a trust fund to help pay for their children's education.

There are 62 households (HHs) in the Game Park with an average of 3.5 persons (virtually all have between one and seven members) of which 73% are male headed and 27% are female headed. There is no significant difference in the size of male and female headed HHs. The occurrence of female headed HHs seems less to do with absent men but more as a result of social practices which defer marriage before the man has achieved financial independence from his parents or older siblings. (Rohde, 1993) This is supported by many men and women who mentioned that either they cannot afford to get married in the formal sense, or they see no benefit from marriage. The latter situation is most common among older couples which have been married before and now live with a new partner.

The Topnaar are highly mobile and many do not live permanently at their own homestead. Younger members in particular are constantly visiting friends and relatives in other settlements and travelling to Walvis Bay to buy provisions, searching for a job, attending school and looking for entertainment. All family members periodically visit Walvis Bay for medical reasons and those with jobs in Walvis Bay and elsewhere are continually moving back and forth from their home to their place of work. With relatives scattered all over the country, particularly in the main urban centres and in the former 'homelands', many Topnaar are constantly moving in and out of the Kuiseb River valley.

With a low average of only 3.5 persons per HH it is clear that many family members live either permanently or temporarily away from their home in the Kuiseb. In addition, !nara harvesting and stock farming compel family members to move away from their permanent home, often for weeks or months at a time. Very few Topnaar have access to modern transport and communication facilities, meaning they have to go in person to accomplish all but the most basic domestic tasks. This further increases mobility. The population of the lower Kuiseb valley can fluctuate by as much as 40% (150 people) depending on each phase of the agricultural and harvesting calendar and the timing of school and work holidays.

Within the lower Kuiseb, variations in village populations are even more pronounced. It is not uncommon to visit one of the smaller, poorer settlements, such as Natabor Klipneus, and find no one home. Family members have access to other households through blood entitlements and extended family networks. Apart from their time spent in Walvis Bay, individuals will spend long periods of time working and living with other relatives in other settlements. On Christmas

7 The census data does not differentiate between de facto HHs (headed by a single mother or a woman in the absence of male migrant workers) and de jure female HHs (headed by a woman who is widowed or divorced)
day 1994, researchers found Eduseb village virtually empty (about 20 people) where only weeks before there had been more than 200 people present when the school was open.

Individuals and families travel by road and by taking well known short-cuts through the riverbed and across the gravel plains to visit neighbouring settlements. Most travel on foot, hitching rides as they go, or travel by bicycle or on one of the many donkey carts owned by the Topnaar. Often residents move considerable distances although very few travel by car because they are infrequent and expensive. The privileged few owning cars and bakkies charge extortionate taxi rates which few can afford. When forced to travel by car a resident will have to pay N$140 for a one-way trip between Walvis Bay and Homeb, about 150 kilometres along a reasonable, albeit corrugated, gravel road (Bamm, 1994) or pay N$80 to travel between Walvis Bay to Eduseb (Andreas, 1994). All Topnaar complain about the complete absence of local vehicular transport, particularly the elderly.

According to staff at Gobabeb, the health situation has improved markedly in recent years attributed to improved health supervision from researchers at Gobabeb and to the introduction of a mobile clinic to the area, albeit infrequently. Researchers at Gobabeb recounted how a decade ago they observed numerous cases of poor nutrition, particularly among children, and repeated cases of premature birth and miscarriage directly related to the well known web of poor diet, poor hygiene and high alcohol consumption.

During this study, it appears that alcohol abuse remains the most observable health and social problem within the community and is prevalent throughout all settlements. Although there are no ‘bottle stores’ in the lower Kuiseb, Topnaar residents procure alcohol from a wide range of sources: from shops in Walvis Bay, from dealers travelling from Walvis Bay at the end of each month and on weekends and selling to settlements directly, and from ‘Tombo’ beer brewers locally (for example at Rooibank).

The consumption of alcohol varies according to an individual’s access to cash. Settlements where there are jobs and regular cash incomes have the highest incidence of alcohol related problems. Numerous cases of alcohol abuse resulting in stabbings, rapes, fights and wife beatings were recounted to researchers. Like many other communities under severe social stress, it is mostly the male drinkers which cause these problems although the smaller number of drinking mothers must also effect the welfare of their children and other dependents directly. Although many Topnaar talked to us about the serious problem of alcohol within the community this report is biased in that researchers did not work closely with those families most severely affected and as a result it is impossible to make anything but general statements.

According to some members of the Topnaar community, TB is prevalent amongst poorer families and heavy drinkers and smokers, and the incidence of STD’s is widespread, although again no data is available. Like the many acts of violence in the community, most cases of health problems go unreported unless it threatens lives.
Any discussion regarding human settlement and socio-economic activities of the Topnaar must consider the long history of contact between the growing market town of Walvis Bay and the agricultural and harvesting economy of the lower Kuiseb valley.

The establishment of the Game Park formally separated the Topnaar into two distinct planning areas, those living inside the Namib-Naukluft Game Park and those living inside the Walvis Bay enclave. The Walvis Bay enclave, administered by the municipality, covers an area of approximately 1000 km² and has been the focus of all developments in the lower Kuiseb valley for the last 100 years. At the same time Topnaar settlements in the Park witnessed a complete absence of social and infrastructural developments until the early 1980’s. Furthermore, from March 1990 until March 1994, an international border existed between Walvis Bay (South Africa) and the Game Park (Namibia), further entrenching divisions between the two planning areas.

For generations, therefore, Topnaar families were attracted to the jobs, entertainments and services offered in the preferential development area of Walvis Bay, so much so that there are now three times as many Topnaar living in the Walvis Bay than there are living in the Game Park. (Kooitjie, 1994; Dausab, 1994)

The Topnaar living in Walvis Bay tend to reside in the suburbs of "Narraville" and "Kuisebmond". As well as the place-names, there is an important economic and social link between the rural and urban populations. Topnaar visiting or working in Walvis Bay stay with friends and relatives in these suburbs and there is a well developed network of exchange and reciprocity between the two groups. Walvis Bay is an important marketplace for the sale of Topnaar stock, !nara pips, crops, firewood, timber, and alike. In return Topnaar receive cash incomes used to purchase basic goods and services.

With a minimal internal cash economy Topnaar families rely on Walvis Bay for virtually all their income. The only Topnaar villages where jobs are available are Gobabeb (four Topnaar families), Eduseb (about 10 Topnaar families) and Rooibank (one Topnaar family). Young men and women are forced to travel periodically to Walvis Bay in search of employment to supplement incomes from farming and harvesting. Virtually all Topnaar stated that the bulk of their food comes from Walvis Bay, supplemented with local produce from farming, !nara harvesting and gardening in the lower Kuiseb.

All government departments and private businesses are located in Walvis Bay. There are no shops in the lower Kuiseb, and pensions, secondary education, health services, water supply maintenance, agricultural and veterinary extension and municipal offices are available only in Walvis Bay. With the Topnaar leadership (the Chief and his Councillors) living in Walvis Bay, the sphere of influence of Topnaar politics and their social economy is far wider than just the lower Kuiseb River valley.

Since Independence in 1990, there has been a huge influx of job-seekers into Walvis Bay. Most originate from the northern regions, driven by a declining natural resource base in their own
area. Topnaar residents describe a saturated job market and few of them have been able to secure permanent or temporary work in recent years. Walvis Bay is flooded with cheap, unskilled labour. Poorly qualified Topnaar are unable to compete with the influx of job-seekers and are now returning to rural settlements in the lower Kuiseb to try and make a living from stock farming, gardening, Inara harvesting and the sale of other natural resources such as firewood and construction poles.

In the lower Kuiseb valley today there is a pool of bored, unemployed and uneducated youngsters who do not aspire to the same rural life as their parents. They wish for a car, a permanent house with water, electricity and a TV, and they want a permanent job. Most have no means of achieving these dreams and continue with what they know best, with one foot in the urban life of their friends and the other in their rural home with their family. Virtually all young Topnaar men and women state that without further education they have no means of improving their standard of living and succeeding in the modern world, namely, achieving economic security and material wealth.

Walvis Bay is likely to exert greater influence in the future. There is no official census data available for Walvis Bay, but it is estimated that the population has increased by as much as 70% since Independence, from 23,000 in 1991 (Population Census of South Africa, 1991) to between 38,000 and 50,000 in 1994. Government has plans to establish a Free Trade Zone in the enclave to stimulate further economic growth in the region. Lucas Kapembe from the Legal Assistance Centre in Walvis Bay stated that "the increase in population is rapidly leading to unemployment, crime, water depletion and pollution. There are now 6,800 people living in squatter camps without proper facilities. There is a plan for a Free Trade Zone but there are a lot of negative implications including further attraction of populations to Walvis Bay."

The current rate of urban growth will place greater pressure on key natural resources in the Kuiseb valley. In the short term at least, water extracted from the Kuiseb will continue to provide the bulk of urban demand. As one recent study concluded, "the entire west coast, and Walvis Bay in particular, is today threatened by a water crisis of a magnitude never before faced in the history of water development." (Dausab, et al, 1994) Furthermore, some Topnaar predict an even greater movement of people from Walvis Bay to settlements in the lower Kuiseb, especially if prospects in the towns continue to deteriorate and if new projects are started in the Game Park.

Any land management strategy in the lower Kuiseb must take into account a highly mobile and

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8 Taken from a recent DRFN water study (Dausab, 1994) This study also reported an annual growth rate of 2.7%, but this is certainly an underestimate, based on statistics prior to the re-integration of Walvis Bay into Namibia

9 Taken from a seminar given by Lucas Kapembe, a para-legal for Legal Assistance Centre based in Walvis Bay (26/09/1994)
growing population, and a deteriorating natural resource base. Without jobs in Walvis Bay, the Topnaar are becoming more and more dependent on the incomes and foods generated from key land use activities in the lower Kuiseb. The Topnaar have developed multiple strategies to try and secure sufficient money to meet their basic needs, but many families state that they are finding it increasingly difficult to attain economic security. As one Topnaar father said, "The small amount of money I earn can't buy what it used to. I work harder and harder and yet I see myself going backwards." (Bamm, 1994)

At the same time, rising unemployment in Walvis Bay and in the lower Kuiseb means Topnaar families will be looking to Government for drought relief fodder and food support in the future. The younger generation in particular are spurned by their elders for being uninterested in traditional land use activities and are accused of being a burden to the family. In the absence of jobs, only stock farming is perceived as worthwhile by most younger men and women, and only because there is a guaranteed cash income from buyers in Walvis Bay. Moreover, farming has been made easier in recent years with the distribution of clean water and cheap fodder by Government.

3.2.2 Water

Water drawn from beneath the Kuiseb River is the most important natural resource for the Topnaar because it dictates where people can live and how other resources can be used.

Virtually no infrastructural development has taken place in the lower Kuiseb, only those which would serve South Africa's needs, namely, a deep sea harbour, the different mining activities in the area, coastal towns and related service industries and access routes. All these developments require huge quantities of water. Aquifers in the delta, near Rooibank and Swartbank, were developed to pipe water to the growing towns on the coast and today the Kuiseb River continues to provide much of the water consumed in central western Namibia. (Dausab, et al, 1994)

"The primary problem the [Kuiseb River] ecosystem faces at the moment is a lack of water, claimed by two powerful users at both ends of the river". (Dausab, et al, 1994). In the upper part of the catchment commercial farmers have constructed more than 400 farm dams which have reduced runoff by approximately 21% (Huntley, et al, 1985), although "the DWA believes the reduced water flow experienced in the lower Kuiseb can be attributed mainly to improved farming practices by commercial farmers, increased infiltration because of better vegetation cover and a drop in water runoff, which seems rather far fetched." (Seely pers comm, 1994). Water is also being pumped from the lower Kuiseb valley and, according to recent studies, "excessive water extraction is undermining the ecological integrity of the river." (Jacobson, et al, 1995)

In response to the lowering of the underground water table and the occurrence of increasingly brackish water, the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) has installed boreholes to all settlements in the Game Park not connected to the main water pipeline scheme. From Homeb to Swartbank there are seven villages now reliant on boreholes and from Eduseb to Rooibank there are six villages dependent on piped water.
Only Swartbank has a hand-dug well today and this is used only when there is a problem with the wind-powered borehole. Klipneus is one other settlement with a windmill. In this upper section of the Game Park, all other settlements rely on diesel engines to obtain water from their boreholes. Residents explained that the villages with the best water systems today are "from Eduseb to Rooibank", "Homeb and Osswater because they don't have water problems and one can see that their stock is expanding" and lastly "Gobabeb".

All water points are owned by the DWA, but in practice, richer farmers, in Homeb and Osswater for example, have enough money to buy oil, diesel and spare parts and install pipelines using their own money. Some farmers in these settlements have their homes based in Walvis Bay and therefore have direct access to government departments to deal with serious water problems almost immediately. Poorer settlements without money, tools and spare parts are forced to wait for the DWA, sometimes for weeks on end, to fix all but the simplest water problems.

As a result, water use and land use, among the Topnaar has changed radically in the last 20 years. During interviews Topnaar residents gave their impressions of the water situation today. "There has been a water crisis for years. The river is drying up and the taps which the DWA installed are too far away to make a garden. We tried to make a hand-dug well but it is not possible since the water is too deep now. We only have enough water for ourselves and our stock. The boreholes have helped stock farmers but only if it rains and the grazing is sufficient to feed our goats." (Skryver, M. 1994)

Topnaar living in the lower section of the river and dependent upon the network of DWA pipelines have also been affected. "We stopped using hand-dug wells and pits about 12-13 years ago. Now Water Affairs does everything there are no problems with the supply and maintenance of our water." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "The DWA built a weir to stop the Kuiseb flooding Walvis Bay. Most of the !nara in this area has died out or no longer produces fruit. Overpumping of water in the delta has caused the !nara to suffer, the pips and the fruit are much smaller than they used to be." (Schweickhardt, commercial !nara buyer living in Walvis Bay, pers comm, 1994)

A recent study revealed that water consumption in the Kuiseb catchment is directly related to income; the more money you earn, the more water you use. "The consumption at Homeb is similar to that of the high income group in Walvis Bay. Gardens are the major consumers of water in Walvis Bay, whereas goats consume most of the water at Homeb," although tourists also use the water there. (Dausab, et al, 1994). Other Topnaar settlements are poorer and therefore consume less water, equivalent to middle and low income groups in Walvis Bay.

The Topnaar still have 'rules' concerning water use based on common sense. "Everyone takes care not to use too much water. We look after the water to prevent wastage." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "If I see a tap open I close it." (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "Anyone can use our water and if someone wants to water their stock here they must get permission first." (Animab, 1994) As a recent study concluded, "wastage of water by Topnaar villagers is minimal." (Dausab, et al, 1994)

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To help solve the water crisis in central Namibia, where the political and economic capital Windhoek is located, the DWA have proposed to build a dam in the Kuiseb catchment on a private farm outside of the Namib-Naukluft Game Park. The Donkersan Dam, proposed for construction in 2006, will withhold 70% of the total run-off of the Kuiseb River. (Dausab, et al, 1994) The DWA acknowledge that if the dam is built the Topnaar will have to be resettled and the damage it will cause to the environment downstream will be irreversible.

When we spoke to the Topnaar about the possibility of this dam being built they were angered and saddened. We asked them to consider what might happen. "I foresee that all the vegetation will disappear and my stock will die out. Jobs are difficult to find but perhaps I will sell my stock and seek work." (Swaitbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "It will be very hard. There is no rain and they are already pumping a lot of water to the towns." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "That means we will not have enough water. They are already taking all our water. They want us to die out don't they?" (Visser, F. Leosothen film interview, 1994) "It's a bad idea. There are more and more dams all along the Kuiseb, all over. If this dam is built we will all die out, for sure." (Skryver, M. 1994)

When asked how they might prevent the dam from being built, residents were angered or at a loss. "I have no idea." (Swaitbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "I disagree, but until it happens I don't know what I can do?" (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "I don't have any power. My opinion is a minority" (Herero, L. 1994) "I don't have any options because my say is too weak." (Herero, S. 1994) "I don't know what to say." (Skryver, M. 1994) And, during a recent field trip to Swartbank by the Legal Assistance Centre, one woman was so angered at the prospect that she repeatedly left the group to calm down.

The likely trend is a growth in demand for Kuiseb water in the future. Walvis Bay is one of fastest growing towns in Namibia, and the booming fishing industry and the construction of a Free Trade Zone near to Walvis Bay will further increase demand. The DWA is considering a number of options including the desalinisation of sea water at the coast. All future developments, not to mention the continued existence of coastal towns, will be dictated by the availability of clean water.

3.2.3 !Nara

The harvesting of !nara no longer represents the main source of subsistence throughout the year for the majority of Topnaar families. Only a handful of individuals migrate to the Kuiseb delta each summer and they are driven by the cash incomes earned from selling the pips in nearby Walvis Bay. A Namibian ethnographer, Budack, describes his excursion to the !nara fields in February 1983: "I encountered only five groups of harvesters in the field led by Ruben Xoagub, his son Petuel, Johannes Bees, Lydia Swaitbooi and Oupa Heinrich Eron." (Budack, 1983)

During our time in the lower Kuiseb, which included a trip to the delta in July 1994, we encountered all but one of these same family groups harvesting the !nara in the delta. What this implies is that today there are only a small number of households dependent on the !nara for their
economic livelihood. Virtually all Topnaar families have abandoned the seasonal practice of moving to the delta to harvest the !nara.

A new pattern is emerging where individuals, mostly men, travel to the delta for a few weeks each season and collect just enough !nara to make a few hundred dollars for their purpose—to pay hostel fees or to buy provisions or a few goats. Most Topnaar families harvest the !nara locally and on a much smaller scale. People now collect !nara from the few !nara bushes growing around settlements, along the river’s edge and between the dunes.

Residents were asked to describe where they harvest today. Virtually every person responded in the same way, saying that they collect "from the local area", "in the dunes over there", and "around our village". When asked what this !nara is used for residents explained "to feed our stock" and "to supplement the other food we eat". Residents say that the !nara collected locally is available for a longer period in the year and used for domestic purposes only, unlike the !nara collected in the delta which produces a larger and more profitable harvest for sale commercially in Walvis Bay. Usually the !nara harvested in the delta is collected between January and March, although it appears that the season has been extended in recent years. As fewer and fewer people are harvesting the !nara, there are now more fruit left over for harvesting later in the year during the winter season from May to July. (Skryver film interview, 1994)

According to the Topnaar, changing !nara practices has affected the related gender roles. "These days it is the men who go to the delta. The women sometimes help but they mostly stay at home and look after the farm and the children." (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "When we are working in the delta there are no women around today so we [men] are the ones responsible for processing the !nara." (Maasdorp film interview, 1994) "The men and the boys collect the !nara from nearby and the women process it at home. But there are less and less around here." (Skryver, M. 1994)

Strict rules which once governed the ownership and use of private !nara plots have almost disappeared. The only person with a respected !nara plot today is Lydia Swartbooi, an important figurehead in the community. All Topnaar described a breakdown in the private ownership of !nara plots in the delta today. "There are no rules today...first come, first served" (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "If you go to the delta you can find anyone there and litter also." (Herero, S. 1994) "There are no rules today. This has not affected me but I know it is difficult for others who rely on it." (Visser, J. 1994) One resident explained how the breakdown of the !nara plot system has affected him: "Fewer people work in the delta now. When we go there, we find people have already been before us so we have to find a new area to harvest. When the men owned plots we earned more money. Now there is competition between us and sometimes you cannot collect enough to sell. The plot system stopped all grievances and it was good for the !nara too because everyone observed their own fields and looked after them well, so we all had more !nara to sell. The rules changed about 15 years ago. As the chief and strong men died out, so did the rules. With no rules people go early to the delta when the !nara is still not ripe and they stay for a longer time. By the time we get there, the !nara is gone." (Animab, 1994)
The Topnaar take it for granted that they as a group have basic rights over the !nara. "There are no rules except for outsiders, they are not allowed to harvest the !nara. It is only the Topnaar including those living in Walvis Bay who can come to the delta. If everyone is allowed to harvest the !nara and take what they want then it will damage our lives. We need it all for ourselves because it is important to us." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) There is strong cultural attachment to !nara, even to those who do not rely on it.

Reuben is about 70 years old. He is an exception today, spending so much time in the delta. He describes his life as a !nara harvester.

"I come down to the delta at the end of December. It takes me two days by donkey cart from Klipneus where my family lives, and I overnight in Eduseb with my son-in-law, Nicholas. We pack up the donkey cart with chickens and goats for fresh meat and milk, and other foods like maize, sugar and tea. We have provisions to stay in the delta until May, harvesting as many !nara as we can. We have a base camp under the shade of some small trees where we have built a small shack made of tin and wood.

"Each morning we get up at 6 am, moving from !nara field to !nara field, collecting all the ripe !nara. In the afternoon we come back and cook the !nara in 50 gallon oil drums until nightfall. During this summer season, many other people, mostly men, are coming from Walvis Bay and from the Kuiseb to harvest !nara at the delta, staying for one or two weeks only, taking what they need, then leaving with one or two bags of !nara pips. Some of these people are not Topnaar but they know how to harvest. They take only what they need to get enough money for whatever their purpose. Most are men who are unemployed and some just stay to get drunk. We stay in the delta until there are no more !nara.

"One time I hired two young Ovambo guys to help. When I gave them their money they said never again would they work in the !nara fields. They complained it was too windy, the hours were too long and the work too hard. Many of the Topnaar are too lazy to work on the !nara and the children are learning other ways, that is why the fields are so empty nowadays. Other Topnaar have more stock, so for them farming is more important.

"There are more !nara for us today and there are more !nara which lie rotting. All the fields are neglected and people do as they please. It affects me because the fields are dying out. As the fruit ripens and dies it rots and damages the roots. We used to burn down the !nara bushes which did not fruit and this stimulates their growth to give more fruit. Then Nature Conservation told us not to burn down the !nara bushes anymore because it affects the vegetation and food for their game.

10 Reuben's son-in-law, Nicholas resigned from his previous low-paying job at the Eduseb school (N$ 300 a month) to help Reuben harvest the !nara, where the pay is better and the lifestyle more flexible.
"It's sad the young people don't come anymore... each for himself, God for all. This place we are sitting on belongs to Chief Kooitjie's family. I have never seen him harvesting the !nara. If he was worried about the !nara, he would be here and I would move. In the early 1970's the plots became abandoned and now the ownership of plots has died out. The only person today owning a !nara plot is Lydia Swartbooi from Armstraat. She is more than 70 years old. Every year her family comes to the same place. We respect her plot and leave it alone.

"In May I pay for a ride to Walvis Bay, sell my !nara pips and buy all the things I need for the farm. Besides a little bit of farming, !nara is my work to get a few dollars. The money I earn from !nara I can use to buy stock to support my family. Last year I sold 13 bags (approximately 50 kg each = 650 kg) and earned about N$ 2,200. I also brought 6 bags home with me which we use on the farm for eating, exchanging and selling."

"I stay in Klipneus for a month, then pack up the donkey cart and head back to the delta, usually from June to August, to collect more !nara during this winter season.

"I am always selling to the same company, Flamingo Furnishers in Walvis Bay. The owner comes to us to buy the !nara and he doesn't take money for petrol. I am satisfied with the price [N$3.50/kg] and my salary, although the price has not increased for the last three years. It's hard to have a job anywhere else. Other people give better prices for !nara (one coloured man gives 4.50/kg), but I prefer to sell my !nara to Flamingo Furnishers because if I need money, they will always help me, they know me well. Today, there are more buyers and you can earn more money than in the past. The demand and the price is going up, especially since Independence."

We discussed the effect of pumping on the !nara plants.

"It is true, I must dig deeper to find water today, not like the old days when it was at the surface. In the northern channel there were !nara fields, the river used to flow a lot and the vegetation was green. Now the river has stopped flowing because they built a weir, and the pumping is killing the Ana trees. The river gets blocked by the dunes and that's why the trees are dying out. Today the pips are smaller like the fruit."

What about the future of the !nara?

"Nicholas and I are always talking around the fire at night. We talk of improving our salaries and setting up a bigger !nara business. We want better lives, that's why we want more money. If buyers could come together they might decide to set up a factory, or we could ask someone to help us. We could process the !nara here instead of overseas and in Cape Town. We could

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11 Back on his farm in Klipneus, the !nara is processed and used in many ways. Reuben and his family eat the pips and make cakes, soup and 'chocolate' (a malty, resinous pulp resembling a fruit loaf). The women grind !nara pips into a powder which is used as a sunscreen, and the stock and poultry eat anything leftover.
get better prices and employ more people in the !nara business. I am worried that this might attract outsiders and this will affect me because they are not Topnaar and this is not their land. I must ask the Chief and his councillors about this issue because outsiders will compete with us. We must organise with the Chief, and see if the !nara plots can be re-established under our control.

"The Topnaar must be involved. We must be consulted. I come all the way from Kipnewo to support my family, and I just see all these things being done. They do whatever they want on our land.

"I learned the !nara life from my parents and I cannot survive without it."

3.2.4 Stock Farming

As !nara has declined in importance so households have shifted their time and money into stock farming for food and cash incomes.

For many Topnaar, stock farming is the most important land use activity. With boreholes installed in all settlements and the recent distribution of subsidised fodder to Topnaar farmers, many households, particularly ones headed by wealthy farmers, have been able to increase their herds.

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(Source: Mr Burger, Veterinary Services, Windhoek)

In 1966 there were 1,754 goats in the lower Kuiseb, similar to numbers recorded in the late 1980's. (Jenkins and Brain, 1967). Over a six year period from 1988 to 1993 the number of goats increased by about 60% to nearly 2,400. Topnaar state this number has risen further in the last two years. (Bamm, D; Herero, S; Kooitjie, S; Dausab, R. 1994)

Cattle and donkeys have increased two-fold and horses and sheep have been re-introduced recently. According to residents, pigs were brought into the area for the first time in 1992. Topnaar have also commented that in the past they had more donkeys. Mr. Burger at Veterinary
Services in Windhoek believes donkeys have been substituted for goats since the early 1980's, due to a South African Defence Force move to shoot donkeys caught trespassing into Walvis Bay, and because Walvis Bay residents stole them. (Burger, pers comm, 1994)

Veterinary statistics are not available for individual settlements, but Topnaar state that there are concentrations of cattle and donkeys at Swartbank, Eduseb and Ururas. According to Topnaar working at Gobabeb, donkeys cost as much as N$300 or N$400 each\(^{12}\). This gives a good indication of their practical value, used for transporting people and goods and for eating. One Topnaar noted, however, that "donkeys destroy the pastures on the plains when they rip up the soil."

In 1988 there were 20 registered stock owners and in 1993 there were 23. Stock ownership (and therefore distribution) is highly skewed with a few large scale commercial farmers and a larger number of smaller semi-subsistence stock owners. In 1993 the Topnaar Chief kept approximately 300 goats at Homeb and his father (the previous Chief) owned about 400 goats at Osswater. Combined Homeb and Osswater has 30 people, 9% of the total population residing in the Game Park, and close to 900 goats, nearly 40% of all goats found in the Game Park. Three or four Topnaar families have more than 100 goats but most goat farmers own around 40-50 goats each.

In practice, stock are distributed to many more individuals than just the 23 registered stock owners. Veterinary officials record the name of one owner but there are other adult relatives who also own goats within the family herd and many more people have access to the milk, meat, skins and cash generated from the slaughter of a goat. (Herero, S. 1994; Bamm, 1994)

The veterinary officer for the region noted that the larger stock owners are absentee farmers living in Walvis Bay. They use family members or hire Topnaar farmhands while they are away and pay them a small amount of cash and/or provide them with basic foods and provisions. Large scale farmers tend to own vehicles which they use to buy and sell stock\(^{13}\). By selling stock directly to buyers in Walvis Bay, they receive higher prices, around N$160 to 200 per head (Kooitiie 1994). With 200 to 400 goats each, plus a few cattle and horses, these stock farmers are wealthy. Most Topnaar are without transport and wait for buyers to come upriver from Walvis Bay. As a result they receive lower prices, around N$80 to 120 per head. (Bamm D; Araeb, I. 1994) Others travel by donkey cart or pay for a taxi and sell directly to buyers in Walvis Bay in order to receive higher prices. (Eduseb group workshop, 1994)

The sale of animals is also dependent on the availability of appropriate stock, adult males not kids or pregnant females. People's need for money will also dictate what they sell. Families sell

\(^{12}\) In southern Namibia, donkeys sell for about N$ 100 each and in Ovamboland they sell for less approximately $200 (LAC workshop, Gobabeb, 1994)

\(^{13}\) In 1994 Chief Kooitiie bought N$5,000 worth of high grade goats from a farmer near Solitaire (Kooitiie, pers comm, 1994)
a goat when they have to pay school or hostel fees and when there is an emergency or special occasion. Most farmers do not eat their stock, particularly cattle which are rarely slaughtered due to their high value. One resident went on to explain, "At Osswater and Homeb their stock is expanding. The people there hang on to their goats because they have other incomes. They don't have to sell. At other places, there is less stock but they still have to sell to get the money they need." (Animab, 1944)

The stocking ratios average about 18 goats per km (2,374 goats confined to a 130 kilometre strip along the riverbed), plus about 1 LSU/km for cattle and another 1 LSU/km for donkeys. There are also a small, but growing number of sheep, pigs and horses. No one knows if this number of stock can forage sustainably along the riverbed or whether stock numbers can be increased further under existing or improved grazing systems. Accounts by early explorers describe large numbers of goats and 'great stock' (cattle) living along the lower Kuiseb and all residents talk of fluctuating stock numbers with periods of plenty and periods of drought.

A preliminary study investigating the impact of goats on the riparian vegetation reported a 1.5 metre browse line, an absence of ground cover and habitat disruption around settlements and water points in the upper section of the Game Park. (Gabriel, pers comm, 1994)

All Topnaar describe changing grazing regimes, although their opinions and experiences differ widely. "In the past if there was a drought and I needed to move because of grazing problems in my village, I would get permission from the chief. But now we have no chief and this does not happen." (Animab, 1994) "Now the stock is increasing and it seems as if people move up and down the river as they like taking other people's grazing." (Skryver, M. 1994) "When we have water problems here [Natab], we move our goats to Osswater to water them. They can go and return in a day. They do not stay overnight." (Animab, 1994) "You cannot just settle at a place and start farming, you must get permission from the chief. The rule is the same as it was in the past." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "There is no movement of people and stock up and down the river anymore. Stock go by themselves. If they go missing, we look for them." (Herero, S. 1994) Topnaar do not herd their goats, rather "my dog shepherdsthe stock and protects them from the predators in the river." (Visser, J. 1994) Young dogs are trained to accompany and protect goats. "We use dogs as herders. We usually choose an aggressive puppy to live with the lambs until they are like brother and sister" (Araeb, 1994) All Topnaar claim they can identify each other's stock easily.

One researcher working in former Damaraland noted "the flexibility inherent in early pastoral systems was smothered by the instruments of colonial authority." (Rohde, 1993) In the context of the Kuiseb valley, Park regulations, unscrupulous traders14, permanent watering points and

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14 A recent phenomenon has been the sale of liquor and other narcotics by 'dealers' from Walvis Bay. After a few drinks residents have been known to swap a goat worth N$120 for a bottle of 'hard stuff'. "People will end up losing all their goats. If the police don't deal with it, we will." (Chief Kooitjie, pers comm, 1994)
a weakened leadership has meant people practice a more sedentary form of range management. "Today Nature Conservation told us we are not allowed to move around freely in the veld." (Visser, J. 1994) Topnaar residents now lead a more sedentary lifestyle with an emphasis on commercial stock farming. It is likely that farmers will continue with existing grazing patterns as the work involved in stock farming is considerably less than !nara harvesting and incomes are higher than other land use activities, such as gardening and selling firewood.

During this study, around June and July, there was evidence of growth in the local farming sector. Old kraals were being dismantled and new ones built (Homeb, Osswater, Natab, Swartbank). As new lambs were born and as family herds increased, separate kraals were built on a new site to accommodate both mature and newborn stock. As new residents arrived in the lower Kuiseb (Swartbank) and as Topnaar moved from settlement to settlement (Natab, Osswater), they set up new kraals and homesteads.

In the lower Kuiseb the allocation of land, grazing and water rights is arbitrated by residents themselves and by the Chief and his Council when and where necessary. "The allocation of land, grazing and water rights seems to have been a process of accommodation at the points of least resistance...In practice, this meant that newcomers would look towards settlements where relatives already stayed." (Rohde, 1993) In the same way Topnaar families and their leaders resolve disputes over access to farming resources themselves. "On the whole, rights to access of land were negotiated on an informal basis...indeed, membership of a specific--mostly ethnically defined--community, entailed automatic rights to land." (Adams and Werner, 1990)

As Chief Kooitiie pointed out "the constitution gives every individual the freedom to settle anywhere in Namibia as long as they respect the rights and laws of the traditional landowners. If I want to move from Homeb to Soutrivier, I must write to the Chief's Council and in my application give the reasons why I intend to move. The council will then decide. Any Topnaar can write to the Chief. In the old days, we had to get permission from the MET and from the DWA. But when I became the Chief [1980], the traditional rules were brought back under my authority. I can now control any influx of settlers. I will never deny Topnaar from other parts of Namibia. Since Independence there has been numerous applications from other language groups, particularly young Ovambo guys, to come and farm in the Kuiseb. I always ask 1) what type of farming do you want to practice? and, 2) what are your interests in the community and the Kuiseb? Most say they want to be independent and do their own thing. So I say, 'no'. The Kuiseb is not just a farming area, it's our traditional ground. If you come you must obey our rules and respect our culture." (Kooitiie, 1994)

According to Councillor Dausab, the decision to distribute drought relief fodder to farmers caused as many problems as it solved. "The problem started when the grazing became very bad and the floods came down and washed away all the Ana pods which our goats eat. The government supplied us with fodder, but they told us that only farmers with more than 50 goats were eligible. We went back to them and explained that if this is the case, then only four or five families will benefit because there are only four or five families with more than 50 goats. In the end, those with five goats received 1 bag for free, those with 10 goats received one bag for free
and one at half price and those with 50 goats or more received 10 bags a month. But there was much bickering. Some received a lot of fodder and others received none. And the timing of the drought relief was poor. We waited for four months without anything when the drought was at its worst. There was no financial assistance to organise the drought relief, either from the government or from the community. I had to travel twice to Karibib, more than 200 kilometres from Walvis Bay, using my own transport, not to mention all the work I did in the community organising and distributing the fodder." (Dausab, 1994)

There is also conflict between farmers and MET Nature Conservators. As they have always done, predators eat stock. The problem is not that stock are eaten, but that the Topnaar no longer benefit from living with wildlife. In the past, Topnaar farmers put up with predators because they could supplement their diet with meat from game. Today they receive no compensation whatsoever, financial or nutritional, from stock losses by predators. Any discussion of stock farming induces bitter reminders of the complete disregard by the MET for Topnaar opinions and practices. Such discussions are usually followed by detailed accounts of recent and memorable hyena and jackal attacks and the ensuing methods used to trap or poison them.

All stock owners between Homeb and Ururas are affected by predators. During the 1992 Socio-ecological Survey, the MET promised residents they would investigate the problem but no research or practical steps have been taken to deal with these conflicts.

With ten members, the Herero family is larger than most other Topnaar households. They are struggling to adapt to the changes going on around them. Headed by a 55 year old widow, the Herero family relies heavily on their stock to make a living in Swartbank.

What are the most important things for you here on a day-to-day basis?

"My family and my stock. My family help me on the farm, looking after the stock on which we depend, and collecting firewood and going to town. I get milk everyday, always 2 litres from my cow-- I am very proud of this cow, she has already given me 12 calves-- and meat, butter and skins from my goats, which I can sell or exchange if I need money." All family members benefit form their mother's 10 cattle, 50 goats and 15 donkeys and two of her adult children, Ritchie and Lorraine, each inherited a handful of goats which live in Sophia's kraal. They can sell their goats, but they must consult their mother first.

Ritchie and Lorraine, like many of their friends, cannot find work in Walvis Bay. "It's expensive to stay and look for a job there, and the pay is nothing. If I put in an application for factory work, I can be waiting without a reply for months." Farming is not Ritchie's favourite option but, "it is always something I can rely on and you are your own boss. Sometimes though, I get so bored here, looking at all the old faces. I am young and I move around, all along the Kuiseb". Lorraine agrees with her brother. "I went to school in Gibeon [in southern Namibia]. I saw how other people lived, and coming back here is depressing sometimes. All my school friends live in Walvis Bay now. I'm the only one who settled in the Kuiseb."
Both Lorraine and Ritchie realise the importance of stock farming in the future. "I will farm like my mother and follow in my forefathers footsteps. The problem is Ritchie and I are moving around a lot. We can't stay here all the time. After 2 or 3 months you have to go to Walvis Bay, see friends and look for a job. Who would look after the house and kraal then? That's why we stay with our mother. I am poorly qualified, and can't speak English. For me, farming is better pay and more secure, but I cannot set up my own place yet."

For all of Sophia's children, their main frustration is having to have left school early. Ritchie was conscripted into the army and had to leave his school in Keetmanshoop in the far south after completing Standard 8. "It would be nice to get more education, but we can't afford it". This is a reality shared by many young Topnaar. "I would like to continue studying agriculture, my favourite subject at school, because it will be useful in the future." Sophia attends literacy classes held at the Eduseb School, about 2 hours away on her donkey cart, because "education is needed here." Lorraine said she would like to be trained as a nurse or social worker.

Lorraine also has other desires. "I want to see more of the Namib. I don't even know where I am from. We have not seen the Park and we do not understand all the things going on here. We don't know all the minerals and rocks, animals and plants." Ritchie thinks the Topnaar must have a chance for more education about the Park too, "I don't even know if I should farm, learn about game or look for a job elsewhere. We need training to work in the Kuiseb to improve our lives here. This is where I want to be."

Sophia collects and makes her own medicines using parts of plants and animals she finds along the Kuiseb River. "You learn tradition if you are interested. Ritchie and Lorraine are not yet interested. I wish to teach them but they are not concerned." Lorraine explained that "nowadays traditional medicine is a waste of time. If you are ill you go to a clinic. Anyway, they taste horrible and take a lot of time to prepare. But I take them if my mother gives them to me, especially because the clinic is expensive and sometimes we don't have money. Maybe one day I will become interested, when I have a child and I have more time." Ritchie told us, "I used to 'go for the bottle', but I stopped. Now I listen, and try to learn more. But my friends don't think it's cool and medicines take a lot of time to prepare."

It seems Sophia's children would like to leave the Topnaar tradition behind. Is this unrealistic? They cannot advance in an urban world without a school education. The knowledge they learn in the Kuiseb is 'free' and they will probably have to use it someday.

Sophia is well known as a story-teller and the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation recorded some of her stories for the Nama/Damara radio station. Sophia told us that many of her stories are about "the old ways, and how the youth can learn the old ways so they can survive in the future." Sophia believes that her children should take advantage of local experiences to benefit from all the natural resources in the area, not just from stock farming, but also from the use of medicinal plants, hand-dug wells, processing the !nara and gardening. These skills could also prove useful for alternative income-generation in the future, such as eco-tourism.
The Kuiseb environment, the river, the vegetation, the wildlife and the water—how have all these things changed since you were young?

Sophia responded that "water is a problem. Today there is no water. And where there is water, there are too many people and too many stock. I won’t settle in Soutrivier or Klipneus because there are already too many people living there and I don’t want to stress the environment further. You can’t just settle where people are already living, you must get permission first. You must find a place with enough grazing in case people complain. We are forced to settle because our life has been restricted. The laws prevent us from moving around and setting up a new farm. We can’t take our stock east of Homeb anymore, and the vegetation is less near existing settlements. It is difficult to move to other settlements because the stock are used to staying in the same area these days, not moving around."

Ritchie explained further the water problem. "I’m only talking about the things I’ve seen and know. The water stopped flowing at the end of the 1970’s, that was the last time we had big floods. And we see the water table dropping because of the pumping. The vegetation is green here, but at Eduseb there is less. They have big, white dams [DWA reservoirs] and they continue pumping without informing us. They want the stock to die out, and that will be the end of the Topnaar”. We asked the Herero family why they don’t ask the leaders for help. Sophia replied, "maybe the chief has said to himself, ‘I am a chief for myself’, maybe he doesn’t want to help us. Everyone is a chief on his own these days. I don’t know if other people agree with what I say. I suggest that the community comes together to resolve these problems. If we could come together, then at least we will have a chance to disagree with each other."

"The DWA never asked for our advice on water, and they never give us any support. We could have helped them. We could have shown them how to dig for water, in the middle of the river where the water tastes good. But without asking or informing us, they put the wind pump in the middle of the big trees, where the roots make the water taste bitter. Either the DWA is unqualified or they are too embarrassed to ask us."

Sophia could well be misinformed about the siting of a wind pump in the middle of the river since a flood is more likely to wash it away. But what is clear is that there has been no consultation or feedback from the DWA, from the MET or from Topnaar leaders about many of the conflicts arising from competition for resources. This lack of consultation is what frustrates Topnaar, not having any say in what goes on in their area and not having developments explained to them. Why is there a need for pumping? Who is benefitting from the water pumped from the Kuiseb? Why does the DWA think it necessary to build another dam along the Kuiseb at the Donkersan site? Are there no alternatives? As Ritchie explained, "we are not informed. Even the Chief and Rudolph [Topnaar Councillor] do not inform us. They act for their own benefit."

"Swartbank is the only settlement today with a hand dug well, the only place along the Kuiseb where the water table is close enough to the surface to use a hand dug well. It is important because if there is a problem with the watertank, or the wind pump or the pipeline, the men can’t
fix it. We can always rely on the hand dug well and the water from the well tastes better. The women can fix any problem with the hand dug well. One problem is the east winds which fill open wells with sand." The best option may be to develop both systems. "If the DWA gave us money instead for a hand dug well, we could cover and fence it in."

The Herero family prefers the wind pump to a diesel engine because, "it is easier to repair. We don’t have to pay for diesel, oil, and drive belts, and the old people don’t know engines."

What do you think of the idea of a partnership between the Topnaar and the MET to co-manage the Park?

"We have seen no changes since [the Socio-ecological Survey in] 1992. The Topnaar have offered the idea to have local representatives at Ganab [Park Headquarters], but the Ministry told us there is no money and the Topnaar are unqualified. We don’t have a say in our land, yet we know what is good for our land."

During the 1992 Socio-ecological Survey, the MET proposed a land use plan demarcating the lower Kuiseb into three land use zones: a general development zone from the Walvis Bay border to Swartbank, a multiple use zone from Swartbank to Gobabeb where both aspects of development and conservation could take place, and a wilderness zone from Gobabeb east. We asked the Herero family what they thought of the proposed land zoning. "I don’t think it is a good idea at all. The Topnaar could not survive within an area even more restricted than at present, along the river between Gobabeb to Rooibank. Vegetation is already scarce because of the pumping of water. There would be conflict between commercial farmers and subsistence farmers, problems with water and the stealing of stock, fights over grazing, and too much stress on the environment and the community."

What type of conflict exists between stock and wildlife in the Park?

"I didn't see a conflict between game and stock. There has been no change since I was born here. Nature Conservation [the MET] is saying our stock is eating up the vegetation and there is not enough left for their wildlife. How can they say this when stock and game have always existed together? Only since the Kuiseb was proclaimed a Game Park has the game left, and yet the Ministry blames us.

"In the past we hunted sustainably, now it is only the rich whites who can afford hunting licences, and we can’t have meat and skins for eating and selling like we used to. I want a licence to hunt. They must give us one for a season. We have told them of our desire to hunt but we are disregarded. The Chief and the school principal asked Nature Conservation for a hunting licence but we still haven't received any response from Nature Conservation. Commercial farmers just pay and they can hunt, but not us."

"At the time of the survey we did talk about the predator problem with Dr. Berry [MET researcher based at Gobabeb], but there has been no response and no solution. We are still
losing goats regularly."

Ritchie added, "we also want to learn Park conservation but the Ministry won't help us be a part of their work." Sophia concluded, "I am restricted in everything I do. My land has been proclaimed as theirs. Where is my game? Where are my medicinal plants? Today, I am forced to rely on farming alone. We all want to be commercial farmers and we all want to survive here, so how can they talk about constraining our farming and restricting our grazing?"

* * * *

The head of another household, Daniel Bam, also relies heavily on stock farming to support his family of seven. He supplements his income from farming with wages he earns as a grounds keeper at the Eduseb school. Working full-time at Eduseb, Daniel is separated from his wife who tends their goats and looks after the children in Osswater. He combines his incomes from farming, !nara harvesting, and his job in order to send his three sons to school.

He explained how the Topnaar economy has shifted with time: from a predominantly subsistence lifestyle to a cash economy, from an internal economy founded on barter, exchange and reciprocity using the natural resources of the lower Kuiseb River valley to the one we see today with a greater reliance on the individual and the 'outside world'. As he explained, "Money is important yet we cannot afford most things. I spend all my money on food and my children's school fees. We rely on stock farming. It is important to invest in the children. I want my kids to have a job. Yet I want them also to learn farming since jobs in the Kuiseb are scarce and unemployment in Walvis Bay is a problem. One of my kids wants to be a principal, one wants to be a lawyer and the other wants to be a carpenter, but they also want to own animals and farm here in the Kuiseb. I teach my children, 'remember your tradition'."

How important is farming today?

"I have a job at Eduseb school as a labourer but I am also farming at Osswater. Farming is the most important thing I am doing, and I get meat and milk which I can sell for clothes. I pay the expensive hostel fees by selling goats and using my wages."

Joel Visser, an older relative and farmhand interjected, "We can always rely on farming. I have never had a job but I can always fall back on farming." Daniel continued, "But farming must be sustainable with people living in scattered villages. Traditionally we farmed upstream but Nature Conservation restricts how we farm and settle. We don't have more stock now. This is not why the vegetation is damaged, it is the overpumping of water and Nature Conservation's rules.

"I get N$ 522 each month, my salary for working as a handyman at Eduseb school. Some of this goes to a pension plan, some to taxes, and I have two insurance policies, which leaves me with N$ 300 a month. I try each month to put N$ 150 aside for my kids' education, but it is not enough for my kids' hostel fees, let alone shoes and food. My kids are at a private school in
Swakopmund and it costs N$ 120 per child per term, N$ 1,440 per year, plus about another N$ 1,000 at the clinic, and for uniforms and books. Hostel fees are very strict. I have to pay on time otherwise my kids’ are thrown out.

"My wife is here in Osswater. I inherited residency rights from my father. I originally settled at Natab and my stock was expanding successfully. Then my father became ill so I moved to Osswater and took over his farm. I got a job in order to support my family. But I was too far away from the farm, working 80km away at Eduseb. My herd started shrinking, I was going backwards. My stock were being looked after by someone else and my goats died. I brought my goats to Ururas near where I work and my mum looked after them for me. When she died, I moved them back to Osswater after receiving permission from Chief Kooitjie. At Eduseb and Ururas people have too many stock, it’s overgrazed. Now Joel helps look after the stock with my wife. Joel is too old [and asthmatic]. That’s why my wife is here and we are separated."

Joel’s pension [N$ 370 per month] is shared to help out the entire Bamm household, especially fuel and transport, insurance and food. Joel has 5 goats and Daniel has 45 which are shared between other adult family members. Daniel clearly is thinking of the future. "I can’t leave a burden...old people must invest for their own funeral and leave money for the rest of the family, not debts. The money I earn can’t buy what it used to. Money is more important but it has less value."

What is the relationship between the MET and the Topnaar?

"Nature Conservation won’t accept our ideas and ways of life, but they expect us to accept their rules. The report they wrote [from the 1992 Socio-ecological Survey] was inaccurate. There is no compromise from our side or from their side. They have limited our lifestyle." With regard to the MET proposal for land zoning along the Kuiseb, Daniel explained, "they want to have farming only from Gobabeb westwards. That is unacceptable because it is unsustainable, and without farming what do we have? Nature Conservation does not succeed in court because the courts recognise that this is our land."

Why are the Topnaar talking about land rights in Independent Namibia?

"We are thinking of our children when we speak of land rights because they are the ones who will settle here. The Kuiseb is a beautiful place. It is home. Land rights will bring security, power and cohesion back to the community.

"Before neighbours assisted each other. Today there is less sharing of resources, you must pay for help and people are less willing to share. In the past people worked together. When we lost our land rights the community fell apart, conflicts began and everyone is for his- or her-self."
3.2.5 Gardening

Since the DWA installed a network of pipelines and tapstands to settlements downriver from Eduseb, virtually all households in these settlements have gardens. Some of these are substantial, up to 50 metres by 20 metres, but most are smaller. All are irrigated with plastic piping or hoses and fertilised with cattle and goat dung. Most gardens grow a range of vegetables, fruits, crops and flowers for family members, for stock, and sometimes for sale.

Settlements in the Game Park from Homeb to Swartbank have a tougher time with gardens. It’s much hotter away from the coast, the water necessary for irrigation is less reliable and more saline, insects attack anything with moisture, and family members are more mobile making it difficult for them to maintain a garden. Stock are an added competitor, especially the nimble goats and the growing pig population. The 23 pigs found in the lower Kuiseb reside at Soutrivier (2) and Eduseb (21). Apart from attacking small children, the pigs are constantly causing problems for gardeners. They break down fences and knock over rubbish-bins, eating everything and anything in sight. Some of them are enormous, roaming from rubbish tip to quagmire about each water point.

During our stay, we had to assist workers at Gobabeb after one of the infamous Soutrivier pigs first ate all the fish in the bird pond next to the research station, then attacked one of the worker’s children, and was finally caught after breaking into Old Dave’s garden.

Gardening can be successful in the lower Kuiseb but it requires serious investment and time: siting plots on the best soils and fencing them in, using shade netting when necessary, and having access to sufficient inputs such as seed, manure and quality water. Many residents reliant on boreholes said it is impossible due to lack of water, know-how and money.

Its biological viability is also questionable with sand storms, ‘east winds’, high temperatures, high evaporation, cold winters and saline soils. Two households between Homeb and Swartbank have small gardens and both because they have access to outside advice, seed and fencing from the pastor at Swartbank and from research staff at Gobabeb.

Gardens in Namibia are a major consumer of water which may not be appropriate for the Topnaar on a large scale. But with the demand for food locally and a potentially large market in Walvis Bay, gardening may become a possibility for more households in the future.

This potential has already been recognised by the Topnaar. A large garden has been set up by men and women at Eduseb for the school children and local Topnaar populace. The garden has been operative on and off for the last two years with assistance from a Windhoek-based NGO, the Namibia Development Trust. The viability of this commercial gardening venture is discussed at the end of this chapter in section 3.3.2, page 72.
3.2.6 Wild Plants and Animals

Although much of the lower Kuiseb River valley falls within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park, there has been increasing concern for the health of the vegetation and wildlife dependent on the Kuiseb River. Vegetation along a linear oasis is continually changing with the hydrological variations of the river catchment. Despite these inherent natural changes, overpumping, damming and overstocking have stressed the riparian vegetation to the extent that certain species are dying. The !nara, Ana trees, and palm trees\(^{15}\) are dying off due to the rapid lowering of the water table. Any seedlings which do germinate are grazed by Topnaar stock before they reach maturity and a definite browse-line is evident either side of all Topnaar settlements.

Residents explained what this change in vegetation means for them. "The trees are dying, there is no grass anymore and there is not enough food for our stock. There are less pods so now I have to go out and collect them." (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "The locusts have eaten all the new buds and flowers and have damaged the trees." (Animab, 1994) "Our stock have to travel much further to find enough grazing, but there is no competition between farmers." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "Some figs trees have died out and others no longer produce fruit. Today I do not look for medicines, I am too old and the young people don't know how." (Visser, J. 1994)

In the past Topnaar families produced charcoal for sale in Walvis Bay. This was made illegal with the establishment of the Park. Today a few families collect fallen acacia species and sell bundles of firewood for N$5 to N$10 in Walvis Bay. Topnaar were asked about the availability of firewood and timber. "There is still lots of firewood and Rudolph [Dausab] collects it in his bakkie." (Bamm, 1994) "I don't use much wood for housing. You can see the wood in my kraal is old and there is plenty of firewood in the river for cooking. I don't see any change." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "I don't use all the trees because I'm not allowed to." (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "More trees are dying so there's always enough for me to burn and to build a kraal." (Herero, S. 1994)

Wildlife has also suffered in recent decades as a consequence of commercial farm fences, poor rainfall, small floods and human population pressure. Many animal species have experienced a decline in numbers, although occasionally large and small game such as ostrich, springbok, gemsbok, wild cats and jackal can be seen all along the Kuiseb, except between Eduseb and Rooibank where an unbroken line of settlement frightens game away. There are many unique insect and plant species and many birds, especially in the delta. On one occasion we observed a flock of 29 ostrich at Soutrivier but it is unlikely that there is sufficient game left for Topnaar to cull animals for domestic consumption even if the MET allowed them to.

\(^{15}\) Palms do not grow in the Kuiseb River naturally, they were introduced by missionaries more than a century ago (Seely, M. pers comm, 1994)
There is a history of human and wildlife interaction along the Kuiseb River. At Mirabib Hill shelter for example there are "some poorly preserved paintings of animals and human figures" as well as stone age tools and artifacts. (Sandelowsky, 1974). During our visit older residents recounted wildlife stories told to them by their elders, and some remember hunting themselves all along the Kuiseb. Since the area has been proclaimed as a Game Park, this aspect of the Topnaar culture has been suppressed and is gradually dying out, although it would be wrong to think that Topnaar residents no longer hunt the few wild animals which remain here.

Topnaar farmers trap and poison predators and other small game in strict defiance of MET policing, ignoring the threat of a heavy fine or imprisonment. This study did not try to gauge the incidence of hunting, but walking into people's homes was evidence enough of its occurrence. Hunting is not considered to be a criminal offence by the Topnaar themselves and we were offered skins to buy on more than one occasion. Many Topnaar were confident enough to tell us that they and others have hunted and resent the fact that some people have been arrested and harassed which is wrong and hypocritical in their minds. "This park effects me because I grew up eating game meat. We don't have a licence to hunt anymore." (Herero film interview, 1994) "In the past the South Africans gave us poisons to kill the jackals, hyena and wild cats which harmed our goats. I still kill jackals by poisoning them. What am I supposed to do? Nature Conservation does not pay me for my bitten and dead goats."

Regardless of right or wrong, outlawing hunting has not prevented people from doing it and all Topnaar say game numbers have been dropping consistently. "When Nature Conservation came, all the animals left. I don't know why though." (Visser, J. 1994) "In the past the game was plentiful, but now I just see one or two." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) Furthermore, there is no other issue which brings so much anger and resentment from the Topnaar. It has become a matter of principle, a political statement used to demonstrate how unfair and discriminatory the MET continues to be in its thinking and in its Park management practices. This conflict was fuelled by the MET at the 1992 Socio-ecological Survey when they assured Topnaar they would provide game meat to pensioners and to school children to compensate for problems experienced in the past. This has never even been attempted. The MET does not trust the Topnaar to manage game 'properly' and the Topnaar do not trust the MET promises. The management of predators, and wildlife in general, is an important point of contention which will have to be discussed and agreed upon before the two groups can become anything like 'equal partners' in the co-management of the Park.

One Topnaar farmer mulled over the possible solutions to the predator problem. "We should have meetings to solve the predator problem. It will be difficult though. If we set traps they will catch everything not just predators, and if we lay down poisons all animals will be killed, so I don't know what the answer is. They have already promised to help with this but nothing has happened. There needs to be a joint solution with compensation for stock owners when their goats are killed by jackals or hyena." (Bamm, 1994)
3.2.7 Tourism and Park Management

Researchers discussed with Topnaar residents different options for tourist partnerships within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park and the lower Kuiseb. Residents stated that a tourist business managed solely by the Topnaar would be impossible as they do not have the skills or money necessary or cooperative structures in place to make collective decisions. A tourist camp run by the MET alone was also rejected because this situation, currently experienced in the lower Kuiseb, is considered unfair as it excludes any Topnaar involvement. A joint venture between Topnaar and private business was considered the second best option, but most residents were sceptical of outsiders' motives, questioning the likelihood of an equal partnership when so much money was at stake.

Despite the history of conflict between the Topnaar and the MET, despite the broken promises made by the MET at the Socio-ecological Survey, and despite the fact that no Topnaar have heard of the MET's Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme proposed for the lower Kuiseb, the tourist option preferred by most Topnaar is a partnership between the MET and the Topnaar. "The MET are already involved in the tourist industry. We know them and they know this area, and the Topnaar cannot do it alone." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "If they have changed their old ways and I can be assured of an income, I will say yes, we can work together." (Animab, 1994) "We can exchange ideas. The Topnaar can tell the Ministry about our ways of using resources and the Ministry can teach us about tourism." (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "Only if people are willing and if there is education and training for the Topnaar. That is the biggest problem, we are uneducated." (Visser, 1994) "That is the best option of them all. Not the MET alone and not the Topnaar alone because we do not have the money or the skills." (Herero, S. 1994) Topnaar are aware that no tourism at all is unrealistic because "it will happen anyway." (Animab, 1994)

Other residents, however, were hesitant and a few disagreed outright at the possibility of an MET/Topnaar partnership. "I don’t think it’s a good idea because there is little communication between us and them. There has been no response since the 1992 meeting [Socio-ecological Survey] and the Topnaar are not pursuing these ideas." (Visser, 1994) "They told us this will happen and that will happen, but nothing good ever happens. They pump the river dry and they do not communicate with us, so I doubt they will ever do anything for us. The name has changed, but they remain the same. It is too difficult to think of how we want the future. All I can say is that there is a big gap between us and them at Ganab [MET Park Headquarters], and between us and Gobabeb [MET and DRFN researchers], and between Gobabeb [DRFN staff] and the Ministry staff. What they must do is bring us together, that is all." (Animab, 1994)

Residents were also asked to consider the concept and possibility of game farming in the region (which we acknowledge is expensive and difficult and which can take many different forms) in order to gauge people’s response to new ideas and to see how people responded to the chance of benefitting from wildlife in return for their cooperation. One thing was clear, any opportunity to provide jobs was seen as a positive step in the eyes of the Topnaar. The younger generation in particular aspire to earning a regular salary, and all would prefer jobs in the lower Kuiseb
rather than in Walvis Bay. Some Topnaar gave their views on the idea of game farming. "Maybe it's a good idea. There is less game today but it could be good for tourists and it could help us learn more about animals, maybe even teach us new ways of improving our farms. I'm afraid though, if tourists come--because we have nothing and because we cannot start a game farm by ourselves--they will take our land and exclude us." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "The government should help us with financing, and the Topnaar and the MET should work together to maintain it. The young people should benefit and receive money for education. The MET should help us because the Topnaar are jealous of each other." (Herero S. 1994)

Some other Topnaar, however, disagreed with the idea of game farming. "No, there is not enough game here." (Araeb, 1994) "I'm not against game farming but there is no game here so they will have to bring game from other areas." (Skryver, M. 1994) "No. There is already a tourist campsite at Homeb. If we could have gained from this, we would support the idea of a game farm. Why should we support it when we know we will get nothing from it? I mean, many of the Topnaar haven't even seen the rest camp there, we don't even know if we are allowed there." (Animab, 1994) "How can we contribute? We are never involved in any projects, so I doubt they will make a game farm here." (Herero, L., 1994) This last comment revealed a common belief held by many Topnaar that the internal problems experienced in the community and their general mistrust of outsiders will scare off any potential investors.

After decades of conflict and apathy in the community and in the MET, it will take time and considerable investment before the Topnaar can develop the skills and the confidence to manage projects on an equal basis with the MET and other groups. In terms of what individuals can offer in return for possible MET input, most men say, "as an employee or as a labourer, but I don't know what type of work," and the women tend to reply, "as a secretary or as a cleaner."

The community's reluctance and uncertainty toward tourism and park management became even more apparent when asked if they would be willing to give up their goats for game farming. Almost every person stated emphatically, 'no', usually because they know nothing about game farming: if it will work, who will be involved, and who will benefit. As with other ideas, the Topnaar stick to what they know and trust. "I cannot say if I will give up my goats, it will depend if I can be guaranteed an income from game farming." (Animab, 1994)

We asked Topnaar families why they thought tourists visited the lower Kuiseb valley? "I don't know." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "We don't see tourists here." (Animab, 1994) "They come to see the Topnaar." (Visser, 1994) "They like to visit us and the !Nara and look at the desert." (Herero, L. 1994) Most Topnaar have heard that tourism has potential in the area, but they have very limited contact with tourists and little knowledge of the tourist industry. The Topnaar, however, support the idea of jobs and incomes related to tourism. We asked them what they thought of tourism as a possible means of combining conservation and rural development. "If the whole community decides, then yes I will agree to it. The problem is, all the land is community property and needs community consensus." (Skryver, M. 1994) "Yes, but I don't know if it can work because of the lack of education amongst the Topnaar." (Herero, S. 1994)
During the Socio-Ecological Survey, it was agreed that "the Ministry should appoint local people to vacant posts within the park wherever possible." We asked residents what they thought about the idea of Topnaar Nature Conservators. "Some Topnaar applied for jobs as Nature Conservators but we were told there is no money." (Herero, L. 1994) "It is the best way to protect our goats [from predators] because they will understand our problems." (Visser, 1994) "Topnaar Nature Conservators is a bad idea. There will be problems and disagreements if conservators are appointed by outsiders." (Swartbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "If we can negotiate among ourselves and organise for a full community decision, then yes. The problem is we Topnaar point fingers at each other and this gets in the way of progress. We must come together first." (Skryver, M. 1994)

Many private tour guides we spoke to mentioned that, contrary to popular belief, many foreign visitors are eager to have closer contact with local residents and prefer the growing number of well managed 'community rest camps' to government and private game parks. Most tour operations currently disregard all but the most 'exotic' peoples, and it is questionable whether these select groups benefit, socially or economically, from tourists staring at them through camera lenses. No one wants to look at goats and squaller, and this certainly is one side of the lower Kuiseb; but in order to attract the "right kind of tourists", the Topnaar would like to build on certain community attributes, such as !nara harvesting and !nara trails, donkey cart rides, guided walks into the dunes and along the river, and tours to other spectacular sites such as Swartbank mountain and the Homeb canyons, not to mention the possibility of 'rustic' stop-over accommodation. Such developments would create closer contacts between tourists and the Topnaar.

As one resident explained, "There is a lot of untapped talent here, we just need the opportunity to use our skills before they are lost forever: selling skins for mats, making chairs, furniture and other crafts, collecting rare stones and making curios. The young people aren't interested yet the old people have the knowledge. I want to make crafts but I will need help to find out what tourists will buy. I will benefit because I will do the job myself." (Animab, 1994)

A few Topnaar aired their views concerning the MET's proposal to zone the river into different land use areas. "I can't see how it will work. Each development will effect the other. If we move all our stock from Homeb, Osswater and Natab to Swartbank, there will be too many stock squeezed into a small area which will cause other problems. We never agreed to move our stock from Homeb. And the 'development zone' will attract people from all over. I think it's another way for them to get our land." (Animab, 1994) "My opinion doesn't count." (Visser, J. 1994) "I am against the idea. They came and proclaimed this land zoning without our permission and they will move us out. It's just another way for them to get us out of here." (Bamm film interview, 1994)

3.2.8 The Desert Research Foundation of Namibia and the Topnaar

In terms of possible partnerships and future land use options, we spoke to the Topnaar about their relationship with the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), an applied research
institute based at Gobabeb, on the site of an old Topnaar settlement. All Topnaar have heard of "Gobabeb" but most are unclear what staff do there, apart from, "they study the insects" (Engelbrecht household, 1994), and "Patricia Skyer [a DRFN community organiser] helped us with social work." (Visser, J. 1994) We asked how they would like to see the Topnaar working with the DRFN staff. "I want to be able to speak with Mary [Seely, Director of the DRFN] about my problems and to let my children go to Gobabeb for education. They could come and talk to us in our villages about developments and projects." (Herero, L. 1994) "We could have community education and we could share ideas on gardening and stock farming, learning skills and environmental education. The open day at Gobabeb is excellent. It is interesting and fun. The students which live there should come into the community more because they live here with us in the Kuiseb." (Swarthbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "Patricia Skyer was excellent and she genuinely tried to bring us together. She distributed educational material to us, written in Nama and Afrikaans, not in English." (Animab, 1994)

With all their positive ideas, we asked residents what stops them from having closer contact with Gobabeb. "We do not make an effort to meet with them and they have no time." (Kham, Lesotho film interview, 1994) "I cannot make an appointment before I come because there are no phones or means of transport." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "There is a community gap both ways." (Herero, L. 1994) "I see the sign, 'no entry', and we can't just go in. Even school kids need permits to enter." (Animab, 1994) "There is a lack of interest from the Chief and therefore people will not become involved." (Swarthbooi and Herero, R. 1994) "The Topnaar are unable to communicate because we don't have an education. There is not enough information about Gobabeb so I don't know much about it." (Herero, S. 1994)

Both the MET and the DRFN wish to involve the Topnaar in research and development projects and most Topnaar wish to work more closely with them, but they continue to work independently of one another. To overcome this problem all groups support the idea of a joint Park management committee, but as the Topnaar pointed out "there must be equal representation from the Topnaar and the MET." (Engelbrecht household, 1994) "I doubt if the Ministry, or any other tourist operator, will give us a share in running the Park, and if they did, how would the money be distributed?" (Herero, L. 1994) "To have a real partnership, we have to offer something and that must come with negotiations so that we are equal in our work and equal in our benefits." (Swarthbooi and Herero, R. 1994)

The Topnaar have been excluded from taking part in planning sessions or decisions concerning their traditional living area. As a result, they have become increasingly alienated from their natural environment. This alienation, in turn, has affected the social relations between individuals and families. Furthermore, the community's lack of involvement in decision-making for the area has tainted the relationship between the Topnaar and their leaders, as well as between individuals and families within the community. Having been repeatedly excluded, residents, although hopeful at times, generally remain wary of the MET, the DWA, the DRFN, visiting NGOs and private entrepreneurs.
3.3 Community Group Workshops

After six months of fieldwork in the lower Kuiseb, which included the filming of two documentaries and a series of questionnaire and informal interviews, we had gathered a considerable amount of information from different individuals. During September, we fed much of this information back to residents through two one-day group workshops, where participants could discuss as a group issues related to natural resource use.

3.3.1 The Swartbank Group Workshop

Swartbank's makeshift community church served as a meeting place for this group workshop. Nineteen villagers (twelve men and seven women) from Swartbank and the nearby settlements of Sourivier and Klipneus attended the workshop. Chief Kooitjie unexpectedly arrived for the latter half of the workshop, mostly commenting on participant's work and raising questions concerning the future of the community. The youngest participating resident was eighteen years and the oldest was seventy-seven years. Three of the residents were born in Topnaar settlements in the Walvis Bay enclave, while seven were born in Walvis Bay and nine were born in the Game Park.

Participants were divided into three groups. Each group was asked to draw a land-use diagram of the Swartbank settlement depicting the years 1944, 1994, and 2044, a span of a hundred years. The 1944 group consisted mostly of elderly Topnaar, the average age being sixty-two years. Initially, members of this group were hesitant in drawing, claiming they couldn't write and therefore couldn't draw. With no formal education, members of this group had difficulty accepting the method of explaining their thoughts using pen and paper, and instead a researcher drew their diagram as they recalled Swartbank in 1944. For them, 1944 was not a specific date but rather recalled a time when these elderly residents were children or young adults. For instance, the group depicted in their drawing the Kuiseb flood of 1934 whose waters reached Walvis Bay and inundated the town for weeks. As well, references were made to their "grannies" who told stories of leopard and lion and a time when there were more Topnaar and stock living in the area than today.

The age of members in the 1994 group ranged from eighteen to fifty-six years. Their diagram depicted basic features found at Swartbank today, such as trees, animals, people, houses, kraals, water structures, a graveyard, and the community church. Members from the 2044 group were in their early twenties and thirties. This group immediately took to drawing Swartbank as they would like to see it in fifty years time. Their drawing, relative to the others, was very detailed and colourful.

At the end of an hour, each group chose a spokesperson to explain their diagram. Chief Kooitjie arrived at this time and along with the participants commented on each diagram. All agreed that the 1944 and 1994 diagrams were accurate representations of the settlement. The 2044 diagram generated much discussion, particularly concerning the depicted availability of rain and water in the desert environment, the chosen types of development and who would be responsible for
carrying out these developments, as well as the impact of encroachment by outside settlers. The group workshop ended with Chief Kooitjie reiterating the current and future problems of desertification and a diminishing water supply. He pointed out that perhaps it was unwise to turn down the government’s extended offer of land near Gibeon in Namibia’s far south since the land in the lower Kuiseb was under severe stress.
THE RIVER: As compared to today, rains were more frequent and floods were more intense and longer lasting. The 1934 flood swept much of the settlement away and altered the river's course. Rock pools lasted two to three months after the floods and were used for washing, watering stock, and drinking but only after the water was first boiled. There were no boreholes because water was readily available on or near the surface. Gorras, or hand dug wells, were built for a family or groups of families. A large community gorra, or pit, was built for supplying water to everyone's stock.

VEGETATION: A greater number of trees grew in and along the river, and grasses on the plains were abundant with the rains. Stock moved over a greater area, foraging from the northern plains and further south into the dunes; whereas today, less water and vegetation confines stock to the riverbed. There were many veldfoods like figs and honey. Today fig trees do not bear fruit and fewer bees make it difficult to find honey. Many plant and animal products were used to concoct medicines since there were no schools, mobile clinics or hospitals. Today home-made medicines are rarely used since most have not been educated by their elders as to how to make them.

WILDLIFE: Animal species were more varied and abundant. There were lions, leopards, rhino, elephant, giraffe, wild dogs, springbok, gemsbok, ostriches, hares, wildcats, and different types of jackal and hyena. Animals came from the canyon with the rains when vegetation and water was abundant. Elders and councillors controlled hunting. Each year, men hunted for one to three months during the winter season, collecting enough meat for the rest of the year. A big communal feast was held after this hunting period, known as the !amis.

SETTLEMENT: The dunes were much further from the river, approximately 10 kilometres from where they are today. Homes, found on both sides of the river, were either domed-shaped and made with branches, known as haie-oms, or were wooden and square. Around each home was a fenced garden where the old men planted tobacco, maize, tomatoes, pumpkins, watermelon and gourds for carrying milk. Stock numbers were greater, yet not all Topnaar farmed. Some harvested !nara, others worked on the skins of wild animals, and some made charcoal to sell.

WALVIS BAY: Villagers were less dependent on Walvis Bay, and more dependent on natural resources. Town supplies were cheaper and were bought in large quantities to last one or two months. Today residents travel every week to town to buy small amounts of food and clothing with the little money they have.
1944

1934 BIG FLOOD

RAIN

DUNES FURTHER FROM RIVER

WOODEN HOUSES

KRAAL

GARDENS

± 400 PEOPLE

HAND DUG WELLS

WATER POOL

LEOPARD

FLOWING RIVER

800-900 GOATS

200-400 CATTLE

300-500 DONKEYS

MANY TREES

GRASS ON THE PLAINS DURING RAINS
LAND USE IN SWARTBANK IN 1994

THE RIVER: The river floods less frequently, the watertable is lower, and there are no rock pools. A borehole and windmill has been installed by the Department of Water Affairs because it is becoming more difficult to reach groundwater. A few hand dug wells are used when the wind does not blow, the windmill breaks, and at the end of the dry season when the water from the windmill becomes brackish.

VEGETATION: Due to the lack of water, the big trees are dying out, particularly the Ana and camel thorn trees. The few younger trees left are weak and are eaten by the goats. This year (1994) a swarm of locusts had damaged the trees, eating their new leaves and flowers. There are virtually no veldfoods here and medicinal plants are rarely used.

WILDLIFE: Game is scarce. One or two gemsbok visit each year with the rains and ostriches are found eating l'arar. There are still many jackal and hyena.

SETTLEMENT and AGRICULTURE: There are about twenty or twenty five people in fifteen homes spread out over more than one kilometre on the north bank of the river. Homes are square and made of tin and wood. A gravel road connects Swartbank with the other settlements along the river and Walvis Bay. People travel by donkey carts or hitch a lift with a passing vehicle. People no longer plant gardens due to poor water supplies. Stock numbers are significantly lower than in the past since rain and grazing is scarce and the watertable has lowered with fewer floods and overpumping. Water for stock comes from storage tanks connected by pipeline to the borehole and watering trough.

WALVIS BAY: Most of the people have gone to Walvis Bay. When the settlers came and established the coastal town, most of the men left to seek urban employment, leaving their wives and children with the old men in the lower Kuiseb. All the young people have left to attend school in town; they then stay to look for a job. Only a small number ever return to the lower Kuiseb to farm and "to rest".
1994

Dying Trees
Few Young Trees

Riverbed
Too Many Jackals

Gemsbok

50 Cattle

Church
20 People
50 Donkeys

Nara

Dunes

Hand Dug Well

Locust in Trees

Nara

Salty Water

Kraal

Mountain
"Swartbank as we would like to see it in 50 years time"

THE RIVER: Rain will be copious and floods will occur frequently. A windmill will provide water from the river. Water will be stored in tanks and piped to houses, stock troughs, gardens, and a school, clinic, post office and drinking club. The use of hand dug wells was not mentioned.

Participants were asked how they could be assured of good rains and floods in fifty years time, and if not, where would they get the water to succour all their developments?

"There are so many big reservoirs in this area and none of the water comes to us. If we want development, they [the Department of Water Affairs] must pump water to us. Once the water has been pumped out it will be gone forever. They must stop the pumping and save some for us."

"We have always refused to leave the Kuiseb area, and now without water, they are forcing us to move."

Chief Kooitjie proceeded to ask residents, "If in twenty years the problem of water and jobs becomes too much, what will you do? The desert is advancing. When the dunes cover the trees and river, when we are forced to move, what then?"

An angry young person responded, "We will stay on and die here! We will not sit here and do nothing! When this time comes we will be wise and know more answers, and learn how to manage this area properly as we did in the past." The older participants were confused and offended. "God created everything, even us. God will decide if we have to move. How can you say we will have to move, you are not God!" Chief Kooitjie went on to explain, "As a chief, I can never force you to leave the Kuiseb, even though I know we have land near Gibeon. If we lose that land now, where will we go, where will we end up?"

VEGETATION: More rain and a flowing river will provide sufficient water for healthy riparian vegetation. There will be a healthy grass sward, and abundance of Ana trees for the stock, and fruit trees for residents. !Nara will be used as before with residents travelling to the delta to process it in order to support their families.

WILDLIFE: People would like to see gemsbok, springbok, ostriches, and other birds, but no hyena and jackal.

SETTLEMENT: Swartbank would thrive with 400 to 500 people living there, similar to population numbers in the past. An old living site would be revived in the eastern section of the settlement, and the present living site would be upgraded to accommodate a growing population. Other developments include a post office with telephones, a church with a clock and bell, a bottle
store with nearby toilets, a bar hall to supply liquor when the bottle store is closed, a "desert bar" for visitors, a school for Sub-A to Grade 12 children, a clinic, chemist and small shopping centre, a house for the chief so he can stay for overnight visits, sports facilities such as a football pitch, and a tar road with sign posts showing dangerous corners. People will have cars or donkey carts for transport. As in the past, each household will have a garden and stock numbers will be greater. A committee would decide on stock quotas, but it was undecided whether quotas would be for the household or community level.

The women participants felt that social services and jobs were most important. "I could be a cleaner or learn to be a nurse and work in the school or clinic." One elderly woman commented that she did not like the bottle store next to the church. In jest, a young man answered, "In fifty years time we will rule, so it does not matter what you old people think." Another middle-aged women added, "In the future we cannot stay the same and we must adapt to the changes. Although I prefer the quiet farm life."

Participants were then asked who would pay and be responsible for carrying out all these developments? "Topnaar families must contribute money. Then we can show the government the money we've collected, so they can help us. All these years the old and new government have not helped us, except with pensions. The government must help because they have built up other areas on Namibia. We should not ask for bottle stores, bars and clubs, but instead, the government can help us with developments which will benefit people, like training centres to teach us skills like carpentry, nursing, agriculture, English, sewing and needlework."

A discussion concerning future settlers from outside the community

Researchers commented if government is responsible for funding developments at Swartbank, then Namibians from all over will pay for these developments through taxes and therefore will have a right to settle at Swartbank. Participants were asked whether settlers outside the community would be welcomed?

Generally, many of the younger Topnaar didn't mind a "mix" of people at the settlement; whereas, their elders were opposed to having any settlers who were not Topnaar.

"If the Ovambo or Herero come with their cattle, there will be great conflict!"
"We will not compromise our !nara fields in the delta. Everything else, yes, but they cannot use our !nara fields. The !nara belongs to the Topnaar, and that is all!"
"As the chief, I think we need to manage development in a new way to prevent improper development and to sort out conflicts between settlers and local residents."

A discussion about tourism and their relationship with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Researchers commented to participants that they did not see any depiction in the diagram of tourism developments. Have residents considered tourism as a land use option?
"We are not reluctant to work with the MET if they come and ask us. They must change the rules—not rule us—but work with and educate us, and create a comfortable tourist environment. There are problems with the Socio-ecological Survey which we must discuss with them. They said they wanted to come back and talk with us, but nothing has come from them. They promised they would do things, like provide meat in the hunting season for the old people. And we heard that the President gave Bessinger, [the Minister of Environment and Tourism] permission for the MET to provide meat to the people. But again nothing has come. Things have been lost and there is no change, no trust. We are going backwards."

3.3.2 The Eduseb Group Workshop

A second group workshop was held at Eduseb's primary school with 15 participants from Swartbank, Eduseb, Ururas, /Goatanab, and Dawe-draais. Four participants from Swartbank were eager to join the group activity at Eduseb after partaking in a previous day's group activity at Swartbank. Three participants were in their late teens (all men), six were in their early to late 20s (all women), and the remaining men and women ranged in age from 33 to 57 years. Two women participants were teachers at Eduseb but were originally from Karasburg in the far south of Namibia. Two men worked as labourers at Eduseb's primary school, and the rest were unemployed.

For the workshop, participants were divided into four groups: two groups of four men, one group of four women, and one group of three women. Groups were divided along gender lines to compare whether men and women use resources differently.

Initially, each group was asked to rank in order of importance the following resources: water, wildlife, stock, !nara, vegetation, land for gardens, and land for settlement and development. The following table lists the rankings of each group:

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<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Group 2 (4 Men)</th>
<th>Group 3 (3 Women)</th>
<th>Group 4 (4 Men)</th>
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<td>Land for Settlement/ Development</td>
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All groups ranked water first, as the most important resource since people, stock and vegetation depended on it for their day to day survival. The groups agreed that the water system from Eduseb west was reliable since it comprised of electric pumps and a comprehensive network of taps, tanks and pipelines. They also agreed that settlements east of Eduseb suffered from a less reliable water system; these upriver settlements depended on diesel and wind pumps which in turn depend on variable inputs like equipment and wind. Groups were concerned mainly with overpumping to nearby urban centres, specifically its degrading effect on the Kuiseb river's vegetation and the quality of their drinking water. Water sources east of Eduseb were noted as brackish, particularly towards the end of the year.

All groups listed wildlife as the least important resource since the community had no "right" or "control" over game. Living in a game park placed restrictions on how they utilised and managed wildlife. They claimed a "permit or licence" is required to hunt game; whereas, in the past, they hunted freely in accordance with "strict" community rules, such as hunting only during a winter season. "Today, if a Topnaar hunts, he will be jailed." All groups felt they have no control over predators, and one group went as far as to say that they "hate" and were "hurt" by "jackals and wildlife". Another group listed wildlife as least important since it was the "priority of Nature Conservation [Ministry of Environment and Tourism]" rather than the Topnaar people.

Two groups listed vegetation as the second most important resource since people and stock relied on it. Another group listed land for settlement and development as important since people "cannot do anything without land to live on". Another group listed their second resource as stock which provided them with meat, milk, skins and money.

Three of the groups placed stock before !nara as a more important resource. A debate over the importance of stock versus !nara ensued; all groups finally agreed that both resources were equally important to the Topnaar community. The group that placed !nara before stock argued that while !nara was "more difficult to work with" in terms of time and effort, it was more profitable and easier to sell when compared with stock. This group of women said they sold !nara to Eduseb's school children, Namibians living in the south, and buyers in Walvis Bay. Generally, if they sold small packets of !nara to local Topnaar and other Namibians, they received higher payments compared with selling large sacks to companies in Walvis Bay which had fixed prices. Moreover, the women commented that not all Topnaar could be commercial farmers and some did not own stock; therefore, such families were more dependent on !nara as a crucial income source. "!Nara helps families pay their children's hostel fees."

Topnaar residents, including participants from the group workshop at Eduseb, have commented repeatedly that water from the Kuiseb catchment area is being pumped to northern towns such as Khorixas and Omaruru in former Damaraland and further north to the Ovamboland region. While this information is incorrect, it reflects that the Topnaar fear "their" water is being used for government developments elsewhere and they are left neglected.
The other groups claimed !nara was seasonal, and therefore more Topnaar families relied on stock farming throughout the year. While they recognised prices for stock were low, stock farming required less labour input than !nara harvesting. Stock sales were important since they provided families with money to purchase basic necessities and pay school fees. Moreover, stock provided milk and meat for subsistence and Topnaar families recognised stock as a status symbol.

Land for gardens varied in ranking among groups, yet all agreed gardens were valuable since they provided fruits and vegetables mostly for subsistence.

Not including the first and last rankings, the variation of resource rankings among the groups may reflect how the Topnaar are reliant on a relatively diverse resource base. In some instances, a family may prefer gardening to harvesting !nara; however, the family will partake in both activities. One participating labourer earned a salary, farmed with goats, and spent 2 months out of the year harvesting the !nara. This labourer relied on multiple incomes to pay for his three sons’ educations, two of whom attended private schools in Swakopmund.

After the task of ranking the resources was completed, all three women from Group 3 were called away to work in the school’s kitchen. The remaining three groups were asked to comment on the question, "who owns each resource?" Ownership was defined as having control over and responsibility for the resource.

Initially, all groups claimed that the Department of Water Affairs owned all the water in the lower Kuiseb River valley. In the past, however, the Topnaar owned water since they were responsible for siting, installing and maintaining their own hand dug wells.

When referring to Eduseb and settlements west, responsibility over water fell in the hands of the Department of Water Affairs since they provided and maintained water structures in those settlements. However, when referring to Swartbank and settlements east, both the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Rural Development and the Topnaar community were responsible for maintaining water. Agricultural extension officers from the Ministry supplied eastern settlements with drive belts for the diesel engines, and Councillor Rudolph Dausab had been appointed by the Chief to maintain the water systems at Homeb and Oswater. All groups agreed that it is best if local people had a say over the supply and maintenance of water.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism, also known as Nature Conservation, owned wildlife, vegetation, and land for settlement and development, although as one group commented, "we don’t accept them as the real owners". The land belonged to the Topnaar in the "real sense", yet it was "taken away" by the people from Nature Conservation who proclaimed the land as a park and restricted all types of development. During the 1992 Socio-ecological Survey, the Topnaar had asked the Ministry of Environment and Tourism why the community was not allowed to build permanent houses in the Game Park. According to group participants, Ministry officials replied that even their park staff did not have permanent housing. Permanent buildings and houses, however, are provided to Ministry staff, including Topnaar labourers working for the Ministry, at Gobabeb and Ganab. It is also interesting to note, however, that housing
builders from Windhoek were prepared to supply cheap permanent building materials to families in Eduseb; yet according to group participants, the Eduseb residents turned down the building company’s offer since the community thought permanent housing might attract settlers from Walvis Bay.

Nature Conservation also owned vegetation since, according to participants, park regulations restricted Topnaar stock movement, and therefore Topnaar residents did not have full access to vegetation within the Game Park. Topnaar residents then could not claim themselves as owners of this resource.

Stock and !nara were owned by the Topnaar. One group commented, however, that it seemed at times "jackals and hyenas are the owners" of their stock. Although the Topnaar owned their stock, they did not own the vegetation which their stock fed on, nor did they own the wildlife which attacked and killed their stock.

While !nara was adamantly proclaimed as belonging to the Topnaar, the groups were uncertain as to whether the community had full control and responsibility over their !nara fields. The group of women said Nature Conservation had "divided their !nara fields, blocking water to one field so that the !nara plant would die out." "Nature Conservation is trying to kill our !nara, slowly, without us noticing; it is their way to get rid of us." From their perspective, Nature Conservation was concerned only with the health of the delta’s fauna, but not with its flora.

The other groups claimed Nature Conservation officers patrolled the delta like policemen, "looking after their wildlife", and putting up signs that prevented people from harvesting !nara near the ocean. "We use to harvest the !nara right up to the coast. Now if you are caught near places like Sandwich Harbour, you are in big trouble."

The Topnaar owned their gardens and the groups commented that Nature Conservation had never placed restrictions on the community concerning their gardens.

Lastly, each group was asked to choose a resource that they would like to develop in order to improve their standard of living. The groups were asked how would they develop the resource and who would be involved in the development?

The group of four women chose to develop !nara. Their idea was to sell !nara pips in small quantities to local people and buyers. A percentage of their earned revenue would be saved to acquire, at a later stage, cooking equipment and machines that would separate the pip’s shell from the nut. With this added input, they could sell !nara pips in larger quantities and hire more people to help, creating job opportunities for the Topnaar. They would make direct contacts with buyers to promote fair prices and they would seek material assistance from NGOs and government. A percentage of the money earned would be place in a community trust fund, providing bursaries for disadvantaged children and assistance to unemployed Topnaar.
The women commented that a weakness in their project might be that !nara harvesting provides only seasonal rather than permanent work, and some participants unable to partake in the project year round might be discouraged. They noted also that a possible spin-off to their project might be the motivation of outsiders to conduct further research on the !nara and to regenerate the dying !nara fields. After their presentation, one man expressed, "It is a good idea, but you will never do it. None of us ever do these good ideas."

This last comment sparked discussion around Eduseb’s community garden, a real project chosen by Group 2 for evaluation. A community garden was established at Eduseb in the beginning of 1993. The garden was proposed to the Namibian Development Trust (NDT), a NGO based in Windhoek, by Eduseb’s primary school teachers. Funds and assistance were provided by NDT and the garden was established for the Topnaar community. Its upstart coincided with the commencement of the government’s "Food for Work" programme. Topnaar participants involved with the community garden were eligible to receive donated food for their work. When the "Food for Work" programme ceased six months later, participation in the garden decreased as community workers no longer received pay in the form food aid.

Today, the garden is desolate with the exception of few vegetable patches. Group participants now were asking themselves why has the community garden failed? It was surmised that lack of community involvement and management was to blame. While seeds, fencing, and good soil was available, as well as a local market, few were willing to work in the garden and most were unclear about management roles and work responsibilities. Unemployed workers, most who were travelling from other settlements, were discouraged when they no longer received "Food for Work" and when the fruits of their efforts were not immediate. Whereas, employed participants, mostly teachers and labourers from the primary school, who worked on the garden were guaranteed a salary at the month’s end. Resentment between the unemployed and employed resulted in resignation from both sides. Most agreed it was difficult to work without pay, but others argued that patience was required for benefits cannot be accrued immediately. All agreed that the community was inexperienced with management and business skills, such as pricing produce, forming and running a committee, and understanding work responsibilities.

The last group’s idea for a project was the improvement of stock farming since most Topnaar were without jobs and therefore depended on stock. They would seek assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development to provide medicines and fodder for their stock, as well as to help establish an auction house where the community could sell their stock on a regular basis and at better prices. Most Topnaar families today are dependent on the demand of buyers from Walvis Bay who drive to settlements along the Kuisebo offering low prices. "Since there are no other buyers, unless you can transport your stock to Walvis Bay for selling, you are forced to accept these low prices."

A discussion followed about the availability of water and grazing. With the promotion of stock farming, herds may increase. Could the the Kuiseb’s environment sustain increased farming? The group suggested that a fixed quota could be placed on cattle since they "graze all night and day", and that the Department of Water Affairs could stop pumping water from the Kuiseb river.
But could the government stop pumping water to the large and growing populations of Walvis Bay and Swakopmund for a few 350 to 450 Topnaar living along the Kuiseb? One participant then asked, "Nature Conservation’s wildlife must be suffering from the water problem; why can’t Nature Conservation ask Water Affairs to manage the water better, otherwise their wildlife also will die out?"

All the groups agreed that the community may suffer further in the future from the pumping and damming of the Kuiseb river. More poignantly, they felt powerless against water consumers in the urban areas and unable to approach and persuade government to consider better water management strategies. Perhaps Nature Conservation, the Topnaar, and nearby urban dwellers have a similar need, the conservation of the Kuiseb’s ecosystem?

The group workshop ended with one woman mentioning that she had heard of communities in South Africa that lived in national parks and worked alongside park officials, and asked could a similar situation occur in the Kuiseb region with the Topnaar working with officials from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism?
CHAPTER 4

DECISION-MAKING IN THE LOWER KUISEB RIVER VALLEY

History points to a Topnaar people—smaller in number and more nomadic—exploiting from a range of resources in the lower Kuiseb catchment area. Today, resource use amongst the Topnaar is similar to past use, but has been altered due to a developing modern political economy. Methods of stock farming and !nara harvesting have changed and sea resources are exploited on a national and international scale. The question remains how will the current economic and political situation in Namibia continue to affect the remaining 350 to 450 rural Topnaar living in the lower Kuiseb?

National policy regarding resource use is uncoordinated, and in worse cases, conflicting. The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) installs dams without taking into account their potential effects on the catchment environment, while the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) attempts to preserve plant and wildlife that cannot always survive altered river systems. The government wishes to promote tourism, which profits from Namibia’s wildlife and unspoiled, mostly desert landscapes, yet it provides communities living in these same relatively un-arable regions with donor funded boreholes and drought relief fodder, a land use decision in favour of farming. If such conflicting policies regarding resource development remain in effect, then land use planning in Namibia will be difficult.

Like in many areas of Namibia, uncoordinated development occurs in the lower Kuiseb. The MET hopes to establish ties with the Topnaar community in order to jointly promote conservation, tourism and rural development. Meanwhile, the DWA has proposed to build the Donkersan Dam in the Kuiseb’s headwaters to provide Namibia’s growing capital, Windhoek, with additional water. The expectant result of such a plan is a diversion of 70% of the river’s flow and the potential collapse of the Kuiseb’s entire ecosystem further downstream. (Dausab, 1994; Seely, per comm, 1994; Jacobson, et al, 1995) If providing for consumer demands in Windhoek is a priority on the government’s development agenda, then it will be difficult and perhaps impossible for the MET to carry out community conservation schemes in the lower Kuiseb, whose ecological integrity will be jeopardised by the construction of the dam.

Moreover, land use planners are forced to work in a legal vacuum. While the Constitution and current government policy promotes sustainable development according to the needs and aspirations of communities, there is no legislation in place concerning the rights and responsibilities of people living in national game parks. It is unknown whether the Communal Land Reform Bill, set to be passed by Parliament in 1995, will address this issue. Currently, all benefits from conservation and tourism are paid to the State, and Topnaar residents are excluded from any involvement or profits generated within the Namib-Naukluft Game Park.

Topnaar Chief Kooitiie explains that a history of exclusion from Park management has left the Topnaar feeling insecure and confused over their rights concerning future developments:

"In the early 1960’s, the South Africans took over South West Africa. They took the whole Topnaar nation and declared it an ecological and wildlife
reserve. All decisions were made without the community's consent. All we heard was that we should move from the Kuiseb to land declared by the Odendaal Commission. They bought land near Gibeon, and the law says that is the Topnaar land. There is no law which says the Kuiseb is the rightful land of the Topnaar." (Kooitjie, 1994)

Besides feeling insecure with regards to their land rights, the Topnaar must operate under park laws which were enacted without their consideration. Many Topnaar are unaware which of these park regulations applies to them. This current uncertainty is compounded by the fact that until Independence in 1990, all park rules were rigorously enforced by local nature conservators; however, today enforcement is inconsistent, some laws are still upheld while others are ignored. For example, the law states that no person shall, "drive a vehicle between 21h00 and 05h00 on any road in the Namib Desert Park which is not a proclaimed thoroughfare." (Government Gazette, 1976). Yet as of today Topnaar residents are no longer fined for driving their vehicles after dark. On the other hand, another law states that no person shall "wilfully or negligently injure, capture or disturb any animal..." (Nature Conservation Ordinance, 1975) The hunting and trapping of wildlife remains illegal and since Independence the MET have fined Topnaar offenders.

No park rules have formally been repealed (Jones, pers comm, 1994) and this leaves the Topnaar unsure as to which rules apply to them and what they are actually allowed to do in the Game Park today. In January 1994, the Topnaar Chief and some of his Councillors invited a private tourist operator, Olympia Reisen, to the lower Kuiseb to investigate the potential for a joint tourist venture in the area. While at the Chief's home in Homeb, some of the group took a balloon ride which landed on the gravel plains. The balloon was retrieved using a 4x4 which had to drive off the designated road. MET staff promptly charged the group with illegal off-road driving. After the Ministry realised the Topnaar were prepared to test this case in court, the Minister of the MET personally intervened and withdrew the charges. (Dausab, 1994; Bamm film interview, 1994) In addition, this case reveals confusion over park laws within the MET itself. Game rangers are expected to enforce park regulations and yet their counterparts in Windhoek waiver certain rules, saying they do not apply to the Topnaar today.

The Topnaar have been subject to many policies and regulations regarding the use of the land on which they live and bury their dead. The lack of consultation, coupled with a lack of thorough understanding on their part of park ordinances and government policies, has left them vulnerable to the whims of politicians and development planners. As a result, ignorance and anger pervades throughout the community. Trust is rare to find.

It is not uncommon to meet a Topnaar that regards an outsider with scepticism and even contempt. One elderly, outspoken women commented to this researcher, "You ask your questions so you can go and collect your pay, but where is my pay if I answer you?" (Visser, F. 1994) One angry, young man explained, "We haven't seen any changes here; people just come and make empty promises, so now we are a little bit tired of waiting for the changes." (Kham, Lesotho film interview, 1994) Most Topnaar have witnessed an influx of outsiders who either forge ahead in their development plans without consulting the community or who attempt to speak with the Topnaar suggesting projects but never following through with discussed ideas.
One woman pleaded, "We are forwarding our problems many times and the people have come always asking the same questions. Yet we haven't seen any change, so we are still in that pool of confusion whether we will get help from outside or whether we will survive as we have all along." (Herero, Lesotho film interview, 1994) The Topnaar are not only sceptical of outsiders but confused about who these outsiders are and how, if at all, they can help.

The Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), a non-government organization, and a research branch of the MET are both located at Gobabeb. Most Topnaar are well-acquainted with Gobabeb and a few staff members working there, yet some do not know that Gobabeb houses two separate organizations. Both organizations have visiting researchers from time to time and there is further confusion among the Topnaar as to who are permanent versus temporary staff. Most importantly, many Topnaar are unclear as to what the work objectives are for the two organizations—the MET branch is primarily concerned with scientific research for park conservation and management and is funded by government, while the DRFN, funded by donors, conducts scientific research for education, conservation, and development. While a few Topnaar are familiar with MET's and DRFN's research and education activities, they do not know the roles or objectives, if any, either organization has with respect to working with the Topnaar community.

Currently, DRFN has implemented a pilot environmental education project at Eduseb's primary school. Teachers are provided with curriculum and training in an effort to create environmental awareness in the classroom. As well, the DRFN employed a community liaison officer, Patricia Skyer, to foster channels of communication between the DRFN, the MET and Topnaar residents. Many Topnaar appreciated how the liaison officer spent time with community members discussing environmental and development issues; yet unfortunately, when the liaison officer left to study overseas, her position was never replaced.

While the DRFN has attempted to create better links with Topnaar residents, their endeavours have been curtailed by the MET. The "Gobabeb 2000 Project", a proposal requested by the MET and written by Gobabeb staff, intended to establish environmental education and tourism enterprises in the Namib-Naukluft Game Park and employ Topnaar residents as guides, informants, crafts-makers, and maintenance workers. International donors expressed interest in the proposed project, yet it was never followed up by Ministry officials for reasons unknown.

Over the years, cooperation between the DRFN and the MET has been strained, and their tenuous relationship has jeopardized potential developments with the Topnaar. As Councillor Rudolph Dausab pointed out, "What goes on at Gobabeb between the MET and the DRFN really affects us Topnaar." Questions remain as to why the Gobabeb 2000 Project never occurred and why another community liaison officer was never re-appointed. Some Topnaar residents sense a power struggle between the MET and the DRFN. One Topnaar man mentioned, "The people at Gobabeb came whilst our forefathers were here. They didn't even communicate with the people here. They just did their own things. Now today, the people in the Nature Conservation [MET] group are blocking all our communication with the other researchers there." (Animab, Lesotho film interview, 1994) Another elderly woman described in her own way how she perceived Gobabeb staff pursuing their individual projects and having difficulty cooperating with each other, "I hear that if the people at Gobabeb are
there for conferences and they are having tea break, Mary [Seely, Director of DRFN,] will not eat what the other people are eating. She will just have her own food. So I hear that everyone at Gobabeb is on his or her own, doing his or her own project." (Visser, F. Lesotho film interview, 1994) While Dr. Seely has never been singled out for turning down communal food or not sharing her own food, the Topnaar woman was explaining in story-like fashion the rifts the Topnaar perceive between Gobabeb staff members.

More recent developments, however, have pointed to greater cooperation among Gobabeb staff. Since Independence, the head offices of MET based in Windhoek have re-directed Ministry policy to include communities in its conservation and environmental management schemes. The initiation of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programmes and the Ministry’s support of NGO-sponsored community game guard systems in other parts of Namibia suggests their interest in involving communities in land use planning schemes. This variation in policy has meant greater cooperation between the MET and NGOs attempting to involve rural communities in conservation and environmental awareness projects.

The DRFN’s success at creating community awareness of environmental issues in other parts of Namibia has led to the MET developing closer ties with DRFN. Government and NGO cooperation is seen more and more as constructive, particularly with regards to involving frustrated and often disjointed communities in land use planning schemes. If Topnaar residents sense that the two organizations are working closely together, then they will be more inclined to affiliate with projects proposed by either. As Topnaar Chief Kooitjie explains, "If there is no means whereby the Topnaar, the DRFN and the MET can plan together, then there will be separate development, there will be no land use plan. We must work together. There must be absolute joint administration of the Game Park between the three groups."

Without creating a genuine partnership, the three groups recognise that developments may take place which are not in their interests. Although Government and NGOs are keen to work with private business to develop tourism, there is concern as to whether private tourist operators will take into account their impact on fragile environments and vulnerable communities. A recent example was a proposal by private tourist operator, Olympia Reisen, with Topnaar leaders "to secure a concession which will allow Namib Naukluft Holiday Resorts (Pty) Ltd to act as sole tourist operator in the Namib Naukluft Park." (Olympia Reisen and Kooitjie, 1993) This proposal could potentially exclude the MET, the DRFN and Topnaar groups from living and working in the area. As the Director of DRFN pointed out, "Olympia Reisen appears to have a interest in Gobabeb and its infrastructure, and I am worried that they will try to exclude us." (Seely, pers comm, 1994)

While Topnaar leaders Chief Seth Kooitjie, Ms. Fredrika Kasper, Mr. Rudolph Dausab, and Ms. Lischen Haoses signed the tourist proposal in December of 1993 on behalf of the Topnaar community, today it appears that they are wary of Olympia Reisen controlling the type and pace of tourist developments. Topnaar Chief Kooitjie expressed this concern: "We

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1 All of the above Topnaar representatives live in Walvis Bay, although Chief Kooitjie and Councillor Dausab also have a home in Homeb and Osswater respectively.
studied Olympia Reisen’s tourist proposal, and we saw that they wanted the same thing that they have in the north, which is not a good idea. The way Olympia Reisen works is by nepotism and they saw Gobabeb as a tourist attraction. I knew I could get a concession with Olympia Reisen but it is not the right way, selling people’s land rights.” Rudolph Dausab agrees: "We couldn’t agree on a shareholder situation. The Topnaar wanted sole, clear-cut name and ownership of the company. But Olympia Reisen wanted to have majority ownership.”

The Topnaar Chief explained that without the support and cooperation from the MET and the DRFN, the Topnaar were prepared to look for business opportunities and project partnerships elsewhere. "The tourist concession was designed to catch the government sleeping on the government’s own plans for development. It’s a backdoor way for Topnaar to gain the rights to develop their own land. The government will not discuss with us the claims for ancestral lands. The government policy on land reform doesn’t agree or coincide with the needs of this community. We know that a private company must always come through us, and in this way we can control development in our own area." (Kooitjie, 1994)

While Topnaar leaders turned down the tourist proposal with Olympia Reisen, they have established a fishing company, =Aonin Fishing, and secured a fishing concession potentially worth millions of Namibian dollars. (Kooitjie and Dausab, 1994) The company’s Board of Directors is comprised of three Topnaar representatives and an unknown number of non-Topnaar businessmen. A trust fund, held in Chief Kooitjie’s name, was proposed whereby 10% of all fishing profits would be shared amongst the rest of the Topnaar community. Heads of households in Topnaar settlements were nominated to receive a share of the fishing profits, and these individuals would then be expected to distribute their share equally among families in their settlement. (Kooitjie, 1994)

Researchers found that only a few Topnaar residents were aware that a fishing company had been established on their behalf, and these same residents were unsure as to whom would benefit, how trust fund monies would be distributed and when they would receive their share of the profits. As Rudolph Dausab commented, "We need clarity on who will benefit from the fishing concession. Seth [Kooitjie] says it’s a community project. I say, it’s not a community project, although there is a trust fund established on behalf of the community. Hermanus [Kasper]² says it’s nothing to do with the community. And the community believes that the fishing concession is theirs." When researchers asked Chief Kooitjie for details of the trust fund, he referred us to Hermanus Kasper in Windhoek, revealing his own uncertainty as to whom the beneficiaries of the fishing company really are.

After asking a group of Topnaar farmers what they thought about the Olympia Reisen proposal and the fishing concession, researchers were told, "We are embarrassed. How can an outsider like you be the first to tell us of these things? How can we make any decisions when development goes in this way? We don’t know about these things. We are not informed." (Engelbrechthousehold, 1994)

² Hermanus Kasper has recently become involved in Topnaar development issues, acting as a representative for the community. Raised in Walvis Bay, he currently resides in Windhoek working for the Ministry of Finance as Deputy Permanent Secretary
While Topnaar leaders make deals with politicians and private companies concerning the use of resources, Topnaar residents living in the lower Kuiseb are unaware of or excluded from the proposals and projects established in their name. Ironically, the setting up of "community projects" has widened the gap between community members and their leaders. As one of the Chief's Councillors explained, "The fishing concession is too important to the Chief and he neglects his leadership role."

Today, most Topnaar residents feel that their leaders do not represent the community but rather they represent "themselves and their families". One farmer explained, "It's not that I'm against the leaders; it's just that they do not sit with us and represent us. We get no feed back from meetings." (Animab, 1994) An elderly woman stated emphatically, "I have become crazy! Our Chief doesn't inform us about what is going on. He is doing things on behalf of the Topnaar, but he doesn't talk to us...If he goes to meetings, he doesn't even take along his Councillors. We just hear that we have discussed this and that matter, yet we don't know the other side." (Visser, F. Lesotho film interview, 1994)

Today, the Chief and his Council are recognised as the official Topnaar leadership, acting as the contact point between outside organisations and the Topnaar community. In 1980, Seth Kooitjie replaced his father, "Old Man" Kooijie as Chief of the Topnaar. While Chief Seth Kooitjie states that he was elected by the community, many Topnaar say that he and his father were nominated by the previous government. "The people from Walvis Bay told us that they had chosen 'Old Man' Kooijie as our leader, and the community accepted." (Skryver, M. 1994) "The new Chief was elected by unknown people because 'Old Man' Kooitjie could not speak Afrikaans or English and he was getting old. These people asked us if we agreed, and we did." (Animab, 1994)

Elections for Topnaar Councillors have occurred on two occasions, in 1990 and 1994, although elections are supposed to take place every three years. According to Councillor Dausab, there were four Councillors elected in 1990, three of whom live in Walvis Bay. When residents were asked who their leaders were, many could not name their Councillors. "Kooitjie, Rudolph and the others, but really I don't know." (Animab, 1994) "Chief Kooijie and his two Councillors." (Engelbrecht household, 1994)

Researchers attended a community meeting to elect new Council members in June of 1994. Virtually the entire meeting was taken up with a debate on whether the election should take place given the low number of Topnaar participants. With only 32 residents in attendance, it is not surprising that few community members are clear as to who their Councillors are and what responsibilities they must fulfil. One woman explained how apathy in the community has weakened local leadership structures. "Everyone has got notice of this meeting...We must come up with constructive ideas and build up our community. We cannot postpone for the people who did not come. We are not going forwards, only backwards by postponing all the time". (Swarthooi, L. film interview, 1994)

Despite the woman's comments, the majority of the meeting's participants voted to postpone the elections. The low turnout at the meeting and its deferment reveals how the community gives little recognition to the Chief's Council. Little recognition, coupled with a lack of funds and any clear definition of Councillor's roles and responsibilities, has rendered the Council inactive and powerless in most instances. During our six months in the lower Kuiseb,
researchers encountered only Councillor Dausab actively participating in community politics³.

One Topnaar man explains the weakening of leadership structures and the current apathy amongst community members toward decision-making:

"In the past The Topnaar had leaders and preachers and they were very strict. They took care of the people. They would meet and discuss what to do. With their leadership, they ruled the Topnaar. The people worked together, helped and visited each other and made decisions amongst themselves. Life was very good. But when the whites came with their rules, everything changed. The leaders and preachers died. As the Topnaar had no one to represent them, we lost our tradition." (Bamm film interview, 1994)

In the absence of an effective leadership structure, a few key individuals, notably Chief Kooitjie and Councillor Rudolph Dausab, have emerged as leaders in their own right, making decisions on behalf of the community. During a series of interviews in 1994, Chief Kooitjie described the problems he faces as a leader and spokesperson for the community.

"In the past, the South Africans used the chiefs as administrators and advisors. We had duties, for example, siting boreholes, and in return, we were paid. After Independence, this stopped. Now as Chief, I get N$ 70 a month. This isn't enough for anything. My people want me to help them, organise meetings, and report back to the government. The government always says, 'that Chief is not fulfilling his role'. But how can I?

"If they want to empower me, they must help me do my job. I can then work freely for my people. If I do it with my own money, coming from my stock, which is the money of my children, then I am resentful. I have meetings again, and again, on the same issues. It is frustrating and expensive: petrol, food, all these things...With a community like the Topnaar, you have to spend all your time to make any change. I get nothing back from the community, it just frustrates me.

"Regional Government⁴ takes away the powers of the Chief. The Erongo Region [local planning region] is a huge area and there are no links between them and us. South of Usakos and Otjimbingwe [regional centres about 200 kilometres away], I am the only Chief. The Regional Councillors have transport to drive where they wish, why not the chiefs also? I have completed courses on administration and agriculture. I can be used by the government to do their work, our work. Regional Councillors listen to me but they don't have the power to

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³ The "People’s Land Conference" and a visit to the Kuiseb by Namibia’s Prime Minister drew other Topnaar into the political scene

⁴ Regional Councillors were elected to Regional Government offices for the first time in November 1992. More than two years after their inception, Regional Councils remain under-funded and under-staffed and Regional Councillors are unable to discuss local issues or address the pressing needs of local residents. In terms of land use planning, therefore, Regional and Local Authorities are too far removed from Topnaar residents in the lower Kuiseb, active in name rather than practice

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make decisions. They have to send our problems to Windhoek and this takes months and even years before we get a response. So what's the use?"

"The government must take responsibility to assist traditional leaders. We can then assist the government and do their job to administrate affairs in the communal areas.

"If I go to Achim [Lensusen, head game ranger for the Namib Game Park] and say 'you received N$ 5,000 this year from the [MET] campsite at Homeb, and I have a problem with water. Can you help?' He will say 'no, go to Windhoek.' When I go there, they don't even know who the Topnaar are. They say 'you don't pay taxes, so no, we can't help.'

"I think it is time for us to stand up and fight for our own rights. This is what we have proposed for ourselves. It is up to government to decide whether we have the right to develop this land as we want, to start tourism and fishing or other projects. With our plans for the future we can bring back the young people. That will bring back pride in our culture."

"My future role to allocate land will depend on the new legislation, the Communal Land Reform Bill, and the Traditional Leaders Act. We have to have the legal right and support to make decisions here, to say, 'yes' or 'no'. This is the only way to ensure the rights of the people in the future."

"Brian Jones [MET planner] and I are in the same position. We both have responsibility to do what makes sense. But our duties are different, that is the problem. We need to discuss this issue and have overlapping duties. We need strong links to bring Government to the people and people to the Government."

With a leadership that has become incapacitated, the Topnaar community suffers from internal conflict. "Because we have no leadership, our personal grievances become confused with real leadership problems...Our community is bickering amongst themselves."

Topnaar leaders and residents are becoming increasingly disillusioned with their inability to deal with decisions on behalf of the community.

Instead, Topnaar men and women make decisions and carry out important social and economic activities as individuals or as family groups, rather than as a community. Households determine the day-to-day use of natural resources and continue with land use activities that they know best. Access to resources is negotiated informally between family members and neighbouring households. Because most immediate decisions are made at the household level, many Topnaar target the household as the most effective institution through which to involve people in projects and equitably distribute any profits.

With their knowledge of community dynamics, Chief Kooitjie and Councillor Dausab were united in their ideas concerning community-based initiatives as well as the possibilities for future decision-making and project implementation.

Chief Kooitjie gave his views: "Identify people who are responsible, it will not work if you want all the people involved. Assist people with the right type of development, specific to the needs of our group, which is not the same all over Namibia. The Topnaar community is too big and too different to say they are all the same. Identify people who can take it
seriously, not those who are waiting for help. Identify the people who will say, 'I will do it'.

"From a settlement of 50, only 2 will be willing. The other 48 will wait to see if they succeed. Therefore, identify the strong, the motivated, take them to one side, and say, 'OK, let's do something.' Let the gap develop between these two groups, then others from the unwilling group will join in. In this way, people will use their own minds."

Councillor Dausab added: "There is no involvement and no benefit for the Topnaar at the moment, but they [the MET] must let the community benefit. Give people the right to start projects, whether its gardening or ostrich farming or any other. Once people recognise they can benefit from projects, then they will join in.

"People must be involved and benefit from community-based tourism, not spoon-fed. In the past, we were always spoon-fed. When it comes to traditional activities, virtually all have died out. There are few craftsmen in the Kuiseb. What could we sell to tourists? Even though people might want to do something, or they have an idea, there is a lack of knowledge. People must have 1) information to learn how to start projects, 2) projects must be sustainable, and 3) start simple."

"Community-based tourism is not real. Most community tourist projects are actually run by families and individuals. Community participation and community projects are not viable. A husband and wife, two people from different backgrounds, they will work out their differences to work out the best way forward. But take Eduseb, it has more than 70 people, each with their own idea. Drunks come [to the Eduseb garden project] and do nothing but fall about, but they are still participating. Others disagree with this. Only four or five people are genuinely committed to the project, although it is called a community project. Obviously it will fail...People misunderstood what the community garden project was about. The NGO had their idea and their approach, the government had their own approach, and the local people had another. Everyone was confused."

"There has been too many false starts, Gobabeb 2000, the Socio-ecological Survey, and others. There should be specific guidelines and criteria for donors. They must accept that we are the ones responsible."

Decisions made at the regional and national level affect how the Topnaar use and develop resources in the lower Kuiseb. Only at the household level do residents have decision-making power over resource use. If there continues to be no structures whereby Topnaar can affect decisions as a community or at regional or national levels, then the apathy, poverty, mistrust and opportunism which pervades throughout the community will remain.

Over the years, the Topnaar have had closest contact with government's Ministry of Environment and Tourism albeit their relationship has been characterised by mistrust and conflict. Despite their contentious relationship, most Topnaar residents wish to develop a partnership with the MET in order to manage the Game Park jointly. Many Topnaar residents have stated that they alone could not manage the park and that a partnership with private business may not be in their interest.
The Socio-ecological Survey of 1992 was designed to bring the two groups closer together, to discuss and agree upon principles of land and water management in the Game Park, and devise a land use plan to ensure that all groups living and working in the area benefit from future developments.

During the survey, the MET recognised that immediate action had to be taken to prove their commitment to an equal partnership with the Topnaar. The MET said at the time, "The community meetings with local people appeared to be the first such contact between Topnaars and Ministry officials...However, it was also made clear that many Government officials had come to speak to people, promising to write thick reports and they had disappeared with nothing heard of them or their reports since. It is important therefore that some action be taken in the near future to prove the Ministry’s sincerity in its new approach." (Jones, 1992)

Despite these assurances made by the MET nearly three years ago, no further negotiations have taken place. In fact, the Socio-ecological Survey has only served to entrench the Topnaar view that the Ministry was never serious about generating a genuine partnership. "We were looking for trust. In the report [Socio-ecological Survey], they wrote that there were many problems. The Ministry was wrong to expect the community to solve them. The problems were generated by Nature Conservation, by the DWA, and others. The MET must be open and they must facilitate. The only way forward is to trust each other. That is not the case now." (Kooitjie, 1994)

Conclusion

Based on this research, it appears all groups in the lower Kuiseb make land use decisions independent of each other. The use of resources by the MET, the DWA and other government departments is based upon broad decisions made at national and regional levels. While the government owns all resources in the Game Park, they lack the staff, the time and the knowledge to make informed decisions specific to the area. The DRFN and other NGOs assist both government and Topnaar residents but cannot instigate land use change without either group’s cooperation and popular support. And the Topnaar are too far removed from government, NGOs and their own leaders to make informed decisions on behalf of the entire community. In the absence of any mediating body, each group feels powerless to determine developments, each perceiving the other as a threat.

The only way to change people’s perceptions is to develop lines of communication whereby individuals and organisations can discuss and negotiate the different land use options proposed for the region. As the controlling organisation, the MET must facilitate this communication not only through discussion but by changing its policy and management style. Currently, the Game Park is managed by the MET strictly for conservation purposes, and excludes other groups in its park management decisions.

As proposed in the 1992 Socio-ecological Survey, a Joint Management Committee could be established to improve communication among the various groups living and working in the Game Park and guide collective park planning and management. The Joint Management Committee could bring together representatives from the MET, the Topnaar, the DRFN, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development’s Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Department of Water Affairs, and secondary ministries and
departments related to roads, health and education.

It is imperative that the MET involve as many Topnaar residents in park decisions and planning. Such involvement is possible given that the majority of Topnaar interviewed were keen to work closely with the MET in all aspects of the Game Park and were prepared to negotiate how they can assist with plans to manage resources sustainably. With just 350 to 450 rural residents in the lower Kuiseb it will be relatively easy to target motivated individuals and groups for direct involvement in planning and projects. At the same time, the MET could continue discussing ideas with wary and unmotivated residents to work out ways for fuller community participation in park management activities.

Today, Topnaar residents are excluded from park management decisions and have no ownership rights over the resources they use. As a result, residents are unclear as to where they stand in the eyes of the MET. As Chief Kooitjie pointed out, "I know if I have the right, I can use a resource which we can develop for the future of the people and take responsibility off the government. Take Homeb, it is my land traditionally, yet according to the government and the Ministry, they have the right. So in fact, we don't know where we stand." In order to clear up this confusion, the MET must not only address the issue of land rights, but also spell out the rules and conditions that apply to the Topnaar community living and working in the Game Park. Ensuring Topnaar land rights and establishing criteria for the use and ownership of resources in the Game Park is prerequisite to discussions between the MET and the Topnaar.

Only with this legal framework in place will the MET have an opportunity to create a partnership between themselves and the Topnaar. However, before an equal partnership can be realised, it will be necessary for the MET to commit themselves to a long term strategy designed to empower Topnaar residents. The Topnaar themselves have stated that without basic educational and managerial skills they will have difficulty participating in decision-making and management with regards to the Game Park.

The MET must therefore provide long term education programmes to raise awareness amongst the Topnaar of environmental and political issues within the Game Park. For example, the Ministry could initiate public discussion to ensure that the Topnaar understand why the Game Park has been established or how the Ministry would like to see the community involved in plans for eco-tourism. Along with awareness campaigns, residents must have access to training in order to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as equal partners in the management and running of the Game Park.

In order to raise awareness and provide skills training, the MET must appoint qualified, full-time community liaison officers sensitive to the needs of all groups working in the area. In addition, the MET could request assistance from Namibian NGOs, such as the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), the Namibian Development Trust (NDT) and the DRFN. The LAC could work closely with the Topnaar and MET to explain and promulgate the legal rights of different user groups in the lower Kuiseb. The NDT could expand their role to improve participation and managerial skills among Topnaar residents in all aspects of park management.

As a world-renowned research institute established more than 30 years ago, the DRFN has
already developed links with the MET, the LAC and Topnaar residents and leaders. They have a wealth of knowledge related to desert ecology, and since Independence have diversified their activities to include research, education and awareness projects directly related to land use planning in arid environments. With the consent of all concerned, the infrastructure, staff and expertise at Gobabeb could be used as a focal point for future developments and discussions.

Currently, targeting Topnaar residents for participation in project planning and implementation would be relatively easy as there is a clear distinction between Topnaar residents and outsiders (government employees, NGO staff, and private individuals). Because the Topnaar are situated in the Namib Desert and are protected by park regulations and boundaries, the influx of settlers has been kept to a minimum and there is little competition between indigenous and settler populations over the day-to-day use of natural resources. However, if positive developments do take place and new sources of income are generated, then outsiders may be attracted to the lower Kuiseb to seek benefits from community and park management projects. This potential influx may create conflict in terms of who should be involved and who should benefit from developments in the lower Kuiseb.

Introducing new approaches to resource management and development is made easier as the Topnaar already practice a mixed economy, utilising a wide range of natural resources. Not driven by one economic activity, the Topnaar may be more open to alternative income-generating projects, such as eco-tourism, in order to develop a mix of different land uses. However, most households are so poor that they will continue to rely on existing land use activities and may be sceptical of alternative means of livelihood, particularly if benefits are slow to materialise. Therefore, existing land use practices should also be developed and improved.

There is considerable potential for real benefits to be gained from a partnership approach to conservation and development in the lower Kuiseb. By creating new approaches to resource management, the Topnaar can potentially improve their standard of living while the MET can maintain conservation of the Namib’s fragile environment. Moreover, the MET and Topnaar residents are in a privileged position given there is much interest in the area from NGOs, private businesses and other government departments. Collectively they could make informed decisions to ensure the productive use of the land whilst conserving the regions unique desert environment. For the Topnaar, this will mean that for the first time ever, they will be able to guide developments in their region and actively partake in decisions regarding the land they live on.
1. **Film Interviews**

   a) Film Interviews from *Living on the Edge* documentary, June/July 1994. Topnaar quoted:

   - Bamm, Daniel (Osswater)
   - Dausab, Rudolph (Councillor, Osswater)
   - Herero, Sophia, Lorraine and Ritchie (Swarthbank)
   - Khurisam, Jacobus (Soutrivier)
   - Kooitjie, Seth (Chief, Walvis Bay)
   - Maasdorp, Nicholas (Kuiseb delta)
   - Skryver, Reuben (Kuiseb delta)
   - Swartbooi, Lydia (Eduseb election meeting)

   b) Lesotho Film Interviews, May 1994. Topnaar quoted:

   - Animab, Josias (Natab)
   - Herero, Sophia (Swarthbank)
   - Kham, Ernst (Swarthbank)
   - Visser, Fredricka (Swarthbank)

2. **Community Workshops**

   a) Eduseb Group Workshop participants, September 1994

   **Name (Age, Employment, and Place of Birth)**

   **Group 1:** Nohurga Andreas (39, teacher, Karasburg), Annalisa Bees (20, unemployed, Walvis Bay), Ernestina Engelbrecht (57, Eduseb), and Maria Witbooi (41, teacher, Karasburg)

   **Group 2:** Stoffel Animab (33, Soutrivier), Boris Casper (18, Eduseb), Julius Coramub (19, Armstraat), Ugos Kham (18, Soutrivier)

   **Group 3:** Lydia Animas (26, Soutrivier), Willemina Animas (27, Walvis Bay), Thusnelda Kham (24, Walvis Bay)

   **Group 4:** Daniel Bamm (49, labourer, Rooibank), Bartholomeus Coramub (21, Rooibank), Simon Khurisam (57, Eduseb), Albretheus Skryver (20, Walvis Bay)
b) Swartbank Group Workshop participants, September 1994

Name (Age and Place of Birth)

1944 Group: Moses Animab (70, Walvis Bay), Staffel Animab (33, Soutrivier), Maria Koolman (67, Walvis Bay), Stephanus Namab (68, Klipneus), Maria Skryver (60, Usakos), Katrina Swartbooi (57, Gamsberg region), and Frans Swartbooi (77, Soutrivier)

1994 Group: Willemina Animas (27, Walvis Bay), Sophia Herero(52, Swartbank), George Kham (34, Walvis Bay), Thusnelda Kham (24, Walvis Bay), and Sebethus Swartbooi (56, Khomas)

2044 Group: Hendrik Herero (31, Swartbank), Lorraine Herero (24, Swartbank), Ritchie Herero (26, Swartbank), Ernst Kham (33, Ururas), and Rudolph Swartbooi (25, Swartbank)

3) Interviews

Formal and Informal Interviews with Topnaar Residents, May to September, 1994. Topnaar quoted:

Andreas, Benjamin (Eduseb)
Animab, Josias (Natab)
Araeb, Immanuel (Ururas)
Bamm, Daniel (Osswater)
Dausab, Rudolph (Councillor, Walvis Bay and Osswater)
Engelbrecht household (Eduseb)
Herero, Lorraine, Ritchie and Sophia (Swarthbank)
Kolmann, Maria (Swarthbank)
Kooitjie, Seth (Chief, Walvis Bay and Homeb)
Skryver, Maria (Klipneus)
Swartbooi, Rudolph (Swarthbank)
Visser, Joanna (Soutrivier)
Visser, Fredricka (Swarthbank)
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