Company Hegemony and Social Relations in Oranjemund: The Paterson Job Grading System and the 1970s Town Transformations

Tim Rüdiger

Introduction

In his 2001 study, Peter Carstens describes Kleinzee as a 'near archetypical company town'.[1] The diamond mining town in Namaqualand, South Africa, combines almost all the criteria proposed in the long-running academic discussion on the definition of company towns. Carstens describes one particularly notable factor in his analysis – the far-reaching control of the inhabitants and employees, including the white workers, by the company, De Beers Consolidated Mines. He shows that since the beginning of the 1920s, the company in Kleinzee used various practices to control workers for the ideal operation of the mine. An implicit thesis of Carstens' study is that the perfection of control in Kleinzee was only achieved upon the introduction of the Paterson Job Grading System in the 1970s. The system assigned each resident a defined position within the town's society, according to their salary level in the company.

This chapter looks at the nearby Namibian town of Oranjemund, on the opposite bank of the Orange River. Many of the considerations about Kleinzee also apply to Oranjemund. Before 2011, when Oranjemund was proclaimed as a municipality, only people employed by the mine were allowed to live in the town. The land and houses were all owned by Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa (CDM), and NAMDEB after 1994.[2] Until 1975, Black and white residents could only leave Oranjemund with prior permission and after passing through an X-ray. With the opening of Oranjemund for its residents in 1975, the mining company moved the compulsory X-ray from the entrance of the town to the entrance of the mine. In the same year, the CDM management introduced the Paterson system to its employees. Carstens suggests that the introduction of the Paterson system was the product of a philosophy based on profit maximization

1 Carstens 2001: p. 6

2 CDM was a full subsidiary of De Beers. NAMDEB stands for the government of Namibia & De Beers, with both partners owning fifty per cent of the company.

and apartheid differentiation. He places particular emphasis on profit maximisation and questions the notion that the Paterson system was meant 'to improve the lot of all the employees, eliminate racism, and ameliorate the problems of inequality and social differentiation in general.'[3] Thereby Carstens shows that the Paterson system was also used by De Beers in its public relations campaigns, in an attempt to draw a picture of the company as a non-racial oasis.

In this chapter, I will discuss the introduction of the Paterson system in Oranjemund in the 1970s. Within this, my focus is on the time after the large nationwide strikes that took place from late 1971 to early 1972. The strike had less immediate effects on Oranjemund than it had on other towns and mines in Namibia, nevertheless the introduction of the Paterson scheme, and other changes in labour conditions in the 1970s need to be understood as falling within the framework of the aftermath of the strikes.[4] Alison 'Ali' Corbett, the author of a book on the history of Oranjemund and CDM published by NAMDEB, writes of the 1970s as a 'Time of Transition' within the town.[5] Not only was the town opened up and the Paterson system introduced, but working conditions at CDM also improved. Similarly, a process of desegregation took place in Oranjemund. Several Black employees were allowed to settle in Oranjemund permanently with their families. All races were allowed to attend the town's primary school by 1977, relatively early in comparison to other schools in Namibia and South Africa.[6] In the following I will first introduce the idea of Oranjemund as a single company town, where the Paterson system meant a modification of the relationship between the mining company CDM and the different groups of employees. Secondly, I explore the history of the Paterson system, which had its roots in political and pragmatic discussions within the South African mining sector. I will then contrast the anti-discriminatory claims of the system's inventor, Thomas Paterson, with the experiences of the – mainly white – permanent inhabitants of Oranjemund.

Most of the people who have worked and lived in Oranjemund have long left the town and retired to northern Namibia, Cape Town or other places all over the world. This made it difficult to collect the stories of former residents. While some of the memories of the small, white permanent resident community are still cultivated on an Internet forum, I had limited personal access to people who had left the town due to the limiting framework of my research.[7] Academic literature on Oranjemund focuses on diamondiferous soil and there is hardly any work done on Oranjemund's social history.[8] Additionally, many of the non-academic publications on Oranjemund were produced by CDM and NAMDEB. For archival sources, such as a 1978 memorandum from the African Studies Library of the University of Cape Town, or a file found in Peter Katjavivi's archive at the

3 Carstens 2001: p. 148

4 Bauer 1998

5 Corbett 2002: p. 80

6 Douwes 1986

7 Oranjemundonline, http://www.oranjemundonline.com (accessed 20. January 2020). I conducted eight (recorded) interviews during my stays at Oranjemund in 2018. I assured that the names of the interviewees would be anonymised.

8 Of particular importance for my writing was Bauer 1998.

University of Namibia, the context and authorship were often unclear, which made examination more difficult. [9]

Controlling employees, shaping identities: transforming Oranjemund

In a memorandum dated 6 February 1978, CDM stated that 'the terrain would not in any case support a rural community, and Oranjemund, as a town, has no raison d'etre other than the mine.'[10] CDM referred to Oranjemund as the

> fourth largest town in the country with a population of 8000, almost all of them employees of the company. This thriving community is largely self-supporting and self-sufficient, for despite its isolation it enjoys the amenities and services of a modern town, on a scale and of a standard quite disproportionate to its size.[11]

On the other hand, Oranjemund was presented as an 'oasis of many races and faces'.[12] The projected image of a lively community with an 'Oranjemunder' identity, and the total subordination of the town for the purposes of the mining company in reality, indicate the poles between which Oranjemund has found itself until this day. This Oranjemunder identity was at least until around 1975 promoted as a 'white only' identity and later – at least on paper – included some Black workers with permanent residence in Oranjemund.

As early as 1956, in a brochure published on the history of Oranjemund, CDM promoted Oranjemund as a self-created oasis:

> It is one thing to discover an oasis and to make a home there. It is another to create an oasis. But that is what the diamond mining company at the mouth of the Orange River has done. When diamonds were discovered near the river in 1927, the area was one of the most desolate spots to be found anywhere. It was more than 180 miles from the nearest accessible point of civilisation and sea transport could not be used since boats could not survive the rough breakers on the steep beaches.[13]

As a result of the first diamonds found, a precarious desert camp was initially built on the site of what is today Oranjemund, which was expanded with supplies from Kolmanskoppe. In 1940, the mining headquarters of CDM was moved from Lüderitz to Oranjemund. The brochure continues:

> Today, in 1956, the town at the river's mouth accommodates 1,600 Europeans and nearly 5,000 Africans. Of these Africans some four-fifths are housed in compounds

9 The document titled 'Memorandum' is signed by 'GMR/RMC/WJS' on the 6th February 1978 in Johannesburg. Following the main document, there are a number of appendixes without page numbers.

10 CDM, Memorandum, 6 February 1978: p. 6

11 CDM, Memorandum, 6 February 1978: [Consolidated Diamond Mines: An Oasis of many Races and Faces] (Appendix).

12 CDM, Memorandum, 6 February 1978: [Consolidated Diamond Mines: An Oasis of many Races and Faces] (Appendix).

13 Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa 1956: p. 17

> at a considerable distance from the township proper. Virtually all these people are employees of the company. There are 440 houses for European families and single quarters for 250 men and women. The streets are tarred, and lit at night by fluorescent lighting. There are shops, a superb social club, swimming bath, post office and hospitals. Where once there was nothing but sand and scrub and poor succulents, there are, today, trees and hedges and gardens. Truly the desert has [been] made to blossom like the rose – for the roses of Oranjemund are famous.[14]

But why did CDM make the effort to promote Oranjemund as an oasis with its own pioneer narrative, when on the other hand making it clear that even from the company's perspective, the town was a mere means for exploiting the diamondiferous soil?

Carstens argues that in a closed company town, the power of the company must include – in addition to a system of comprehensive order and control – a 'hegemonic ingredient' that is typically characterised by paternalism.[15] Paternalism in this case means an asymmetrical but interdependent relationship between the company and its employees. Both sides held the view that the needs and interests of the employees were met by the company in the best possible manner, or at least in an acceptable manner. In Kleinzee, like in Oranjemund, white employees enjoyed a system of far-reaching care by the company in the style of a planned economy. Carstens provides an example from Kleinzee:

> [W]hen people were informed in the early 1990s that in future they would have to buy their own lightbulbs and green garbage bags, people were upset: they felt that the company was letting them down. A year or two earlier, they experienced similar 'trauma' when home deliveries of bread and milk were abruptly discontinued. In both these trivial occurrences, it was not the cost of these items and services that upset people, but the rebuff they felt they had received from their patron and nurturer.[16]

I argue that alongside the provision of material care for the employees, the nurturing of an Oranjemunder 'history and identity' also contributed to the perpetuation of hegemony, at least in the case of the permanently settled white population. For a long time, it was not possible to retire in Oranjemund, and losing your job at the mining company also meant losing your residence permit.[17] Nevertheless, many skilled employees lived in the

---

14 Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa 1956: p. 18. However, the brochure further explains that the oasis only really became possible after the Ernest Oppenheimer Bridge over the Orange River to South Africa was opened in 1951. It is also noteworthy that CDM describes the climate in Southwest Namibia differently in its glossy brochures, depending on time and management strategy.

15 Carstens 2001: p. 4

16 Carstens 2001: p. 234, n. 3

17 The decisive factor was the man's job. Whole families had to leave the town when the man lost his job – even when the woman was employed in the town. This is an issue that is addressed several times on the Oranjemundonline platform. A user writes: 'De beers had decreed that each individual house was designated to a specific position, or job description on the mine, so 17/12th Avenue (my home) was designated to the Electrical department. At the time of my father's untimely death in 1972, after 21 years service, my mother, who worked in the admin department, knew her time was up. So after packing up her personal belongings, sans furniture of course, and with my 11 year old sister in tow, she moved to Kimberley, and

town for several decades. Carstens argues that living in a closed single company town, many hours and administrative permissions away from the neighbouring towns, had a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the residents. He argues, that 'people subjected to a life (voluntarily or not) in incomplete communities are placed at high risk of falling victim to a number of "pathological" conditions that include high alcohol-consumption rates, depression, a variety of neuroses and psychosomatic illnesses and anxiety states, adjustment problems, cabin fever (…), domestic violence, and especially suicide.'[18] When entering a closed town or, as Carstens calls it, an incomplete community, a 'psychosocial vacuum' is created that 'is never filled.'[19]

Distinguishing recreation clubs and associations alongside a common identity as 'Oranjemunders' served the white residents as incomplete, racially defined substitutes for an identity that could be freely chosen. It is hardly surprising that Corbett writes that after the opening of the town in 1975, the clubs were never again as active as before.[20] Previously, however, they were central for the permanent residents in Oranjemund. There were clubs and societies for activities as different as fishing, chess, theatre, football, model building, shooting, golf, athletics, scouting, sailing, war veterans, gardening, or freemasonry.

Particularly by way of the monthly *Oranjemund Newsletter,* these clubs created an identity for all 'Oranjemunders'. The *Oranjemund Newsletter* was a monthly magazine, produced by CDM from 1956, and delivered for free to all permanent residents. In addition to a small number of entertaining reports and a forum for complaints to the CDM management, the publication mainly included reports from and about the activities of the recreation clubs. Particular emphasis was placed on sports competitions in which a selection of Oranjemund athletes or players competed against a team from another company. The *Newsletter* furthermore ensured that newcomers were quickly integrated into the leisure structures in Oranjemund. In each issue, there was a column titled 'New Arrivals at C.D.M.', where a list of new employees was published. These new hires were wished a 'happy association with C.D.M.' In addition to their names, readers were also informed about the place of birth and hobbies of the new employees: 'Club secretaries and fellow employees with similar interests are invited to contact them. Their addresses can be obtained from the Editor by phoning 752.'[21] However, only skilled labourers, who were allowed to reside permanently, were listed in the "New Arrivals" section. As a result, only one Black employee was listed in the cited edition of the *Newsletter*. In other words, only

---

my father's replacement moved in. No emotion, "rules is rules".' Oranjemundonline, http://www.oranjemundonline.com/Forum/index.php?topic=1913.msg47389#msg47389 (accessed 20 January 2020). Exceptions were possible for women whose husbands had died, but only if accommodation was available. They had to move out of the former house anyway.

18 Carstens 2001: p. 193. For Kleinzee, Carstens also proves this with studies on increased alcohol consumption.

19 Carstens 2001: p. 192

20 Corbett 1989: pp. 55f.

21 Consolidated Diamond Mines of South-West Africa, Oranjemund Newsletter, February 1978: p. 21

an exclusive – in the most cases white – minority of the people coming to Oranjemund was acknowledged by name and thus given access to the 'Oranjemunder' identity.[22]

There was also a paternalistic relationship between the company and the workers from the north, i.e., from the former Ovamboland and to a lesser extent the Kavango region. Unfortunately, there are not enough sources available to allow for the reconstruction of the particular forms of this relationship from the perspective of the workers. In CDM's publications there are some references to the ideological basis of this relationship. An entire chapter from the 1956 CDM brochure is devoted to the 'Ovambos'. One statement is highlighted: 'Oranjemund has had an enormous influence in changing and civilising a whole people. The Ovambos today are no longer a backward tribe.'[23] Typically for an apartheid setting, CDM shows that the company presented itself as knowing exactly what the so-called 'Ovambos' needed in order to develop:

> While at Oranjemund and up the coast, they are accommodated in compounds as bachelors, since their women do not accompany them. They are given a good balanced healthy diet, and they are provided with opportunities for varied kinds of sport and several types of tribal dancing. Cinema shows are given at least once a week. Their taste in this direction runs to cowboy films in which the villain always gets liquidated and virtue is invariably triumphant.[24]

The brochure also reports that a 'Chief of Ovambo' was flown to the town on a 'goodwill mission'.[25] Carstens writes that such friendly contacts with the villages from which large parts of the workforce originate are typical of entrepreneurial paternalism in South Africa.[26] Additionally, it is clear that the headmen and chiefs of the sending communities were often collaborators and their roles in controlling migrant labour has been central to upholding the apartheid system. While in 1956 it was still the pure experience of the work in Oranjemund itself that was suggested as 'civilising', CDM later boasted that it had provided the Ovambo people with access to education. In *Optima*, a De Beers magazine, a 1978 article on Oranjemund claimed:

> In recent years many new opportunities have been opened through a planned promotional programme in which industrial training and education of blacks have a vital part. CDM, in fact, could be regarded as one of the best schools of Ovamboland, although it is so far from its borders. Recognising in the lack of education a serious bar to meaningful job advancement, CDM employs a permanent staff of teachers at Oranjemund to provide adult education, with tutorial coaching, from primary school level up to university entrance. Some ten to 12 percent of Ovambo employees are currently taking advantage of these programmes. As a further step in CDM's contribution to education for the future, and in itself a tribute to the long, helpful association with Ovamboland, the

22 It also makes it clear how membership in the community was gendered; by default, no gender is specified in the list. For women, however, 'Miss' is also shown in brackets.
23 Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa 1956: p. 23
24 Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa 1956: p. 25
25 Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa 1956: p. 25
26 Carstens 2001: p. 4

> company is spending R1 500 000 on a technical institute at Ongwediva, the proposed future capital of the Ovambos."[27]

The fact that within 22 years, from 1956 to 1978, CDM had downgraded itself from the place of Ovambo's civilisation to merely being 'one of the best schools of Ovamboland', is partially due to the fact that the so-called Odendaal Plan had been adopted, which entailed a change in South African apartheid policy for Namibia and aimed to establish de jure independent homelands.[28] In the same article, the Ovambo-speaking people are characterised, according to the homeland idea, as '*self-sufficient* men from the great plains a thousand kilometres to the north'.[29] At CDM, the Black migrant labourers also had their own sports clubs – but for a long time, the white and Black leagues were separate.

Until the mid-1970s, CDM was able to separate the two forms of paternalistic relationships, with the white permanent residents and the Black migrant workers, respectively. The relationships not only differed in terms of care, but also in spatial terms, until long after the first Black families moved into Oranjemund. The isolated hostels in the mine and 'Ovamboland' in northern Namibia were the nodal points in the relationship between the CDM and the Black workers, and not the closed town of Oranjemund, as might have been supposed. On the Oranjemundonline forum, a user remembers the separation:

> With reference to the 'separate development/class structure' discussed in the previous 'lesson', and the stringent policies instituted by the powers that be, I believe it would be interesting for the present generation to know a bit about the unique 'Apartheid' that was practiced in the village from its inception in the mid-thirties. It was only when I was in high school that I realized how complete and controlled the different lifestyles of the 'European' and the Owambo (migrant) workers were.[30]

It must be noted that the exclusion of Black workers from the sphere of permanent residents was for a long time a precondition for the stable identity of white residents. But the two spheres also had points of intersection. All permanent residents were entitled to a domestic worker. These were traditionally Ovambo men.[31] The relationship between tenants and domestic workers is another instance of paternalism. Corbett, in her history of Oranjemund, condescendingly writes, 'Credit must be given to many of the domestic workers who have become involved with Oranjemund families. Their caring attitude towards the children can hardly go unnoticed and many families "adopt" their domestic as one of the family and look forward to his return when he has gone on repatriation.'[32]

---

27 Williams 1978: p. 105

28 Wallace 2011: pp. 261ff. Under the transitional government under the DTA, Bantustan policy was reinvented and continued, cf. p. 287.

29 Williams 1978: p. 105, emphasis by me.

30 http://www.oranjemundonline.com/Forum/index.php?topic=1913.msg48677;topicseen#msg48677 (accessed 20 January 2020).

31 In 1988, the inhabitants were given the opportunity to employ 'coloured' women. Corbett 1989: p. 75.

32 Corbett 1989: p. 75

The Paterson job grading system

The core of the structural changes in Oranjemund in the 1970s was the introduction of the Paterson job grading system. CDM writes in an appendix to the 1978 memorandum:

> All jobs are graded according to the Paterson method of job evaluation by a job-grading committee. This method, developed by Professor Paterson of Strathclyde University, Scotland, is in operation in many parts of the world and is acclaimed for its simplicity and ease of implementation. Because it is based on decision-making, a factor that is common to all jobs, it ensures a fair and unbiased comparison of jobs, and therefore makes it possible to relate one job with another, objectively, along a common curve. Once a new job is graded, it is slotted into one of eight pay groups, of which each has its own incremental stages or notches. Every six months the employee can move up these notches – and increase his earnings – if his performance appraisal is satisfactory.[33]

Formally, the Paterson system includes six major grades (A to F) with three to five subgrades each (A1, C3, E5, etc.), where A1 is the lowest grade ('Unskilled Work') and F5 is the highest grade ('Top Management'). What the memorandum fails to mention about the Paterson system, is that the grades were not only decisive for remuneration, but also brought with them a number of other privileges and restrictions. This was particularly drastic for the social order among the Oranjemunder permanent residents.

Job grading systems have their own history. After the Second World War, they had been developed in various countries and had existed in an immature form in the South African mining sector since 1946, when the first formal system was introduced at the Anglo American Corporation (AAC) – the parent company of De Beers and CDM – in 1961, and served primarily to differentiate the jobs of Black underground workers.[34] AAC simultaneously experimented with other systems and came to the conclusion that a unifying, so-called '26-factor system' was better, and introduced this system in all its mines between 1971 and 1973. This refined system was favoured because it promised, in alia, to deal with upward pressure on wage scales due to an increase in inflation and growing concern about the very low levels of Black wages.[35] In addition, there were also foreign policy reasons for rising wages, as Jade Davenport explains:

> During the mid-1970s, the South Africa mining house became increasingly worried about the extent of their dependence on foreign labour from countries to the north, especially in the context of growing diplomatic and military hostility between the apartheid state and black-governed countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Angola and Mozambique. (…) It was in that context that the Chamber of Mines considered it essential to increase recruitment from within South Africa (…). In order to attract an increased ratio of local labour, especially in the context of stiff competition for workers from the industrial sector, the mines were compelled to substantially increase the rates of wages. A surge of 36 per cent in the cash pay of black mineworkers in 1973 was

33 CDM, Memorandum, 6 February 1978: [Recruitment and Employment] (Appendix).

34 Perold 1985: p. 72

35 Perold 1985: pp. 72ff

> followed by even greater advances of 61 per cent and 68 per cent in the two following years.[36]

Furthermore, in the mining sector, Anglo American Corporation (AAC) was considered to be a company that 'tended to corner their own supply of labour by paying approximately 10% above the market rate.'[37] A new job grading system was therefore seen as a solution to the efforts to unify the wage structure for the whole industry. In 1975, AAC introduced the Paterson system and was able to assert itself against its competitors. By 1982, the Paterson system prevailed throughout the mining industry.[38] The new system mitigated the conflicts between industry players and created greater efficiency in employee transfers between companies. The introduction of a unifying system was rigorously opposed by the white South African Mine Workers Union (MWU), whose members benefited from an internal classification by race. After their discontent had been ignored, the MWU saw itself as the big loser. Perold writes:

> According to the personnel manager of the Gold Division of AAC, the MWU 'hates Paterson's guts' because black jobs were sometimes graded higher than white jobs, and also because the MWU often did not agree with the wages that were generated by the Paterson system.[39]

Nevertheless, AAC first introduced the Paterson system only for African workers. It was not until the early 1980s that the system was used for white workers.[40] The Paterson system is still in use today, mainly in Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.[41]

Thomas Paterson[42] explicitly saw his job grading system as a means of combating discrimination:

> The fundamental soundness of this approach is that the method is concerned with the job and its tasks only, and not, in any way, with the aptitudes, attitudes, and motives of the job-holder, whoever he or she may be, of whatever colour, race, creed, size, shape, you name it.[43]

He explicitly took mine workers in Namibia as evidence that the introduction of his system could close the gap between unskilled Black and skilled white employees: '[A] reversed dog-leg and steep curve has been eradicated in Namibia, and is being eradicated

36 Davenport 2013: p. 346
37 Perold 1985: p. 73
38 Perold 1985: p. 74
39 Perold 1985: p. 74
40 James 1992: p. 134
41 According to the 2010 study 'Remuneration trends Report: Southern Africa', conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers, the Paterson system is used in about 50% of the companies surveyed in Namibia. https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/remuneration-trends-report.pdf (accessed 22 January 2020). At NAMDEB, the Human Resources Department was just about to leave the Paterson system at the end of 2018 and introduce a different system at the higher pay grades.
42 In an obituary by his son Erik, Thomas Paterson is remembered as 'Archaeologist, Paleontologist, Geologist, Glaciologist, Geographer, Anthropologist, Ethnologist, Sociologist and world authority on Administration'. See Paterson 1996.
43 Paterson 1972: p. 72

in South Africa.'[44] However, an interviewee in Oranjemund told me that the Paterson system did not make much difference. In his words, it was just another way to 'discriminate the Black workers and keep them down.'[45] Even if Black and white employees were equally qualified, reasons had been found to privilege white employees. He stated that there was still an obvious 'Black payroll' and a 'white payroll'.[46] In the case of expats hired from Europe, 'sand allowances' had been created, which were declared as a compensation for the inclement weather.[47] According to the interviewee, the ultimately effective step against discriminatory wages was not made by the Paterson system, but by the admission of the MUN (Mine Workers Union of Namibia) as a negotiating partner for Black workers. Some Black former employees of the mine feel differently about the Paterson system and an interviewee told me the system was 'very nice', because it was organised like a 'ladder'.[48] He himself had started as a recreation officer with a B1 grading in 1979, and trained the company's sports teams. Over the years he was promoted to human resources assistant (C4) and was one of the first Black employees to move to the 'white part' of the town.

A cartoon from the *Oranjemund Newsletter* suggests that during the introduction of the Paterson system in 1975, the widespread view was that the losers were ultimately the white workers. The sexist and racist cartoon shows a room with seven employees. The first one says, 'The Patterson [sic] system has been introduced and we have to get rid of a lot of deadwood around here!' The remaining employees, who each represent a certain group within the company, respond in turn why they of all people cannot be dismissed. An older man has been working for very long and is therefore 'part of the company', a man in a suit says 'Can't be me, I'm in the golf team!', the woman is 'the only one who can arrange the flowers', the African employee defends himself by pointing out that he is needed to make it 'a multiracial scene', and another employee is needed to keep the books in order. It is the white worker who declares, 'Then it must be me cos I'm only a miner and we got nothing going for us except a good production record.'[49] The cartoon also shows, however, that the introduction of the Paterson system meant that an already existing, broad system of categorisations and demarcations was renegotiated. The cartoon raises the question of to what extent CDM management used the Paterson system to reorganise wages, or whether it was also aimed at rationalising the workforce ('get rid of deadwood').

In the system of social categorisations that existed before the introduction of the Paterson system, class affiliation had been an important category. According to Corbett, in the first issues of the *Oranjemund Newsletter* after 1956, there were already complaints about social hierarchising in Oranjemund.[50] At that time there were only two clashing

44 Paterson 1981: p. 143

45 I.K., Oranjemund, 27 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.

46 I.K., Oranjemund, 27 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.

47 I.K., Oranjemund, 27 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger. The magazine *Frontline* also confirms this: 'There is a "common wage curve", but there is also an "inducement allowance" for "skills unavailable in the territory", which in essence means for whites.' *Frontline* 1980: p. 25.

48 L.K., Oranjemund, 23 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.

49 Corbett 1989: p. 44

50 Corbett 1989: pp. 36f.

groups of permanent white inhabitants in Oranjemund – the 'daily paids' and staff members. The Paterson system, in contrast, introduced a much more complex hierarchy. Even today, white interviewees I spoke to, who were previously not among the higher-grade employees of CDM and NAMDEB, independently associate the Paterson system with 'discrimination'. One interviewee called it evil, while another said that the introduction of the Paterson system was the moment when 'discrimination was extended to whites.'[51] This statement, which includes a trivialisation of apartheid and living conditions under the migrant labour system, is particularly remarkable. In today's context, it is also used to deny racial inequalities in post-apartheid Namibia.

Nevertheless, three of the white interviewees did not describe 'discrimination' as a formal discrimination by the company. They felt it had been much more about snobbism, i.e., social differentiation between employees in lower and higher grades. However, the phenomenon occurred mainly within the higher grades of the Paterson system. Thus, those who were able to enter a higher position directly, generally after graduating from a university, 'did not have to work their way up in Oranjemund'.[52] It is particularly remarkable, however, that three interviewees agreed that those who were the worst of all were not the direct employees of the company, but their wives, 'Women were the ones who asked first about job and grade of somebody else's husband'. [53] Among the Black employees there were similar phenomena of people who were avoided because of having a higher or lower position. One interviewee, however, said that more relevant than the abstract Paterson grade was whether someone could *actually* exercise power over you. However, tensions could then be defrayed outside of working hours (e.g., through soccer). An interviewee stated that, 'only if someone secluded himself to his room after work it was irritating.'[54]

In the interviews, present-day Oranjemund residents liked to talk about their past experiences in everyday life, linking them to the Paterson system. It was said, for example, that it was common for a 'Mrs. Engineer' to receive a thicker cut of meat at the butcher's shop than, for example, a 'Mrs. Foreman'.[55] Another relevant aspect for more recent times is that access to the fitness centre has been regulated through Paterson grading.[56]

Carstens writes that the Paterson system in Kleinzee caused the most envy through the link between employee grades and the distribution of houses:

> People are, in fact, labeled as much by their houses as they are by their occupations. It is not so much the obvious differences such as the addition of a swimming pool or the services of a company-paid gardener that rile people; it is more the size of a neighbor's carpets or the presence or absence of a braaihok (barbecue hut). Such small items highlight minor status differences that many people are reluctant to accept.[57]

51 M.A., A1 and A2, Oranjemund, 22 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.
52 M.A., A1 and A2, Oranjemund, 22 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.
53 M.A., A1 and A2, Oranjemund, 22 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.
54 I.K., Oranjemund, 27 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.
55 R.N. and P.A., Oranjemund, 23 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.
56 L.P., Oranjemund, 23 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.
57 Carstens 2001: p. 150

It can be assumed that the situation was not completely different in Oranjemund. However, an interviewee who had lived and worked both in Kleinzee and in Oranjemund pointed out that the white part of Oranjemund was socio-economically much more mixed than that of other mining towns: 'In contrast to Kleinzee, there were no luxury houses with trees in particularly central locations in Oranjemund.'[58] The better houses just 'happen to be' in certain roads. It was not until 2016 that the principle of allocating houses according to Paterson grading was abandoned in Oranjemund, allegedly due to pressure from the trade union MUN. Before, not only the type of house, but also the right to a house of one's own in the town was strictly linked to the grading system.[59] This was perceived as an injustice by Black workers in particular. One recalled that there had been many cases where Black family fathers had to live in single accommodation, while white higher-level workers who were single were given four room houses to share 'just with their dog'.[60] A white resident made an opposing assertion. As soon as acquiring a larger house was no longer dependent on an employee's grade, Black men from the north had brought their children to Oranjemund 'only to be able to live in a larger house'. [61] According to the interviewee, because the mothers remained in the north and the children were without supervision, social problems occurred. After NAMDEB had started to demand higher rents from its employees, the fathers in question sent their children back north.

It seems as if the authority necessary for maintaining social peace in Oranjemund was held by the well-respected general manager of CDM. After 1966, according to a user on Oranjemundonline, a new general manager had said:

> 'tot hier toe en nie verder nie' [up until this point, and no further] (…), and let it be known that everybody in the town was to be treated equally! Chesterfield suites and fridges for all (to be replaced after a certain service period)! A victory for democracy and equality…The natives were vindicated…and peace returned to the village![62]

Another interviewee said it was again a general manager with exceptionally little social reservations who had softened the worst social hierarchies after the introduction of the Paterson system. However, CDM's hegemony over its employees in Oranjemund and in the hostels was not one directional and could not be arbitrarily instituted in a top-down manner, in accordance with the prevailing company ideology. The adjustments made in the 1970s were partially due to pressure from below.

---

58 R.N. and P.A., Oranjemund, 23 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.

59 According to an interview statement, however, not since the beginning of the Paterson system, but only in the late 1980s. L.K., Oranjemund, 23 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.

60 M.U.O., Oranjemund, 27 November 2018.

61 R.N. and P.A., Oranjemund, 23 November 2018, interview done by Tim Rüdiger.

62 The user adds that he is not sure whether the general manager really spoke Afrikaans. This is remarkable because in Oranjemund there was another separation between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking inhabitants. Oranjemundonline, http://www.oranjemundonline.com/Forum/index.php?topic=1913.msg46032#msg46032 (accessed 20 January 2020). On the social ranking of Africans and Englishmen, see Carstens 2001: pp. 165–171.

Conclusion

Following the strikes of 1971 and 1972, formal working conditions for Black workers in the mine improved. This included higher wages, access to more diverse jobs and career opportunities, training schemes, new negotiation channels, improvements at the hostels, and a pension system. A critical study on working conditions in Namibia, published in 1979, stresses that the conditions at CDM after the general strike were not good *per se.* [63] Nevertheless, the study admits that the conditions were comparatively good, not least was CDM regarded as offering the best wages and conditions in the whole mining industry. Pressure from outside Southern Africa certainly further contributed to CDM and other large multinational companies making a special effort to establish and publicly highlight relatively good working conditions. In the 1970s, there were international campaigns targeting multinational corporations that benefited from the South African occupation of Namibia, and the apartheid exercised there. It is clear that in the 1970s, CDM was trying 'to keep its nose clean in the eyes of whatever government finally takes over in Windhoek.'[64] Again and again, the Paterson system is cited as proof of the supposedly non-racial normality at CDM: 'The internationally recognised Paterson system of job evaluation and wage setting was recently introduced at CDM. This means inter alia that all employees of whatever colour are now on an integrated system of job evaluation.'[65]

The Paterson job grading system is a clear example that changes in corporate policies in a closed single company town affected social balances and relationships within and beyond the town boundaries. The Paterson scheme has been promoted by the company as evidence of overcoming racial discrimination, and while this was of course not the case, it was nevertheless a system to equalise racial privilege enough for the white people to see it as the epitome of discrimination for the white workers.

Bibliography

Bauer, G. (1998), *Labor and Democracy in Namibia, 1971–1996*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Beauvallon Farm Reunion 2017 Facebook Page, https://www.facebook.com/Beauvallon-Farm-Reunion-2017-158911634635856. Accessed 17 June 2022.

Bertoni, M. (2008), *Diamonds and Dust. Stories of a Place in the Desert.* Affenrücken Equilibrium Books.

Carstens, P. (2001), *In the Company of Diamonds. De Beers, Kleinzee, and the Control of a Town*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa (eds.) (1956), *Diamonds from the Desert*.

Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa (Pty) Limited (CDM) (1978), Memorandum (and appendixes).

Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa (ed.), *Oranjemund Newsletter.*

63 Cronjé and Cronjé 1979: pp. 54ff. See also CDM, Memorandum, 6 February 1978: pp. 5f. and Appendixes.

64 See *Frontline* 1980: p. 26.

65 CDM, Memorandum, 6 February 1978: p. 5.

Corbett, A. (1989), *Diamond Beaches. A History of Oranjemund 1928–1989*. Published by NAMDEB

Corbett, A. (2002), *Diamond Beaches: A History of Oranjemund*. 2nd ed. Published by NAMDEB.

Cronjé, G. and S. Cronjé (1979), *The workers of Namibia*. London: International Defence and Aid Fund.

Davenport, J. (2013), *Digging Deep: A History of Mining in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.

Douwes, J. (1986), Desegregation Policy in Practice in a Namibian Mining Village, (B.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town).

Frontline, *In search of Southern Africa: Oasis of Joint Living*. February 1980.

James, W. G. (1992), *Our Precious Metal: African Labour in South Africa's Gold Industry, 1970–1990*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Katjiuanjo, V. (1991), The Impact of Unionisation in the Mining Industry (CDM): The Case of MUN, 1986–1990, (BSocSc Thesis, University of Cape Town).

Liberation Support Movement Information Center (eds.) (1978), *Namibia: SWAPO Fights for Freedom*.

Oranjemundonline, http://www.oranjemundonline.com. Accessed 17 June 2022.

Paterson, E. T. (1996), Thomas Thomson Paterson (obit.), *Yearbook of the Royal Society of Edinburgh 1289*.

Paterson, T. T. (1972), *Job Evaluation, Volume 2: A Manual for the Paterson Method*. London: Business Books.

Paterson, T. T. (1981), *Pay for Making Decisions*. Vancouver: Tantalus Research.

Perold, J. (1985), The Historical and Contemporary Use of Job Evaluation in South Africa, *South African Labour Bulletin*, 10(4): 72–92.

Price Waterhouse Coopers (2010), Remuneration Trends Report: Southern Africa, https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/remuneration-trends-report.pdf. Accessed 17 June 2022.

Report of the United Nations Council for Namibia, Volume 1, 1972.

Wallace, M. (2011), *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990*. London: Hurst.

Williams, E. L. (1978), Diamond Harvest of the Namib Surf: The Story of CDM, *Optima*, 27(4).