Postapartheid livelihoods

FARMING WITH A VISION

> I want to become a farmer with a vision. Then I know that I am on my own now, that I have separated from my mother. That I am farming here. Everybody will see that, even my mother will see it. And she thinks: "For him, now, there is no need to assist him, he is farming for himself".
> *Robert/fieldwork interview August 15th, 2005*

The morning Robert tells me about his life vision has been a busy one for him. He traveled for an hour by donkey cart from his family's farm on Sukkle Pos to Fransfontein. Sukkle Pos is one of the smaller settlements surrounding Fransfontein. On arrival, he went to one of the little Fransfontein shops where he bought a bag of maize flour, the main staple food consumed in the area, four sacs of Knorr spicy soup, and some sugar, black tea, candles and matches. With these goods Robert has purchased the main consumer products that the average Fransfontein resident is able to afford (Schnegg 2006a, 2015, 2016a; Schnegg/Bolten 2007). At the family farm, his grandparents, an unemployed uncle, two of his sisters and half a dozen of Robert's young nieces and nephews are waiting for his return and the goods he has bought. Robert's shopping tour is mainly financed by his grandparents' pension money and the cash that Robert's mother is occasionally able to put aside from the revenue of her Khorixas shop. Normally he stays overnight with one of his aunts; employed at the state-run primary school and hostel, they have all been able to build brick houses with electricity and running water for themselves in Fransfontein. Today, however, he only briefly visits one of his aunts to catch up on news and gossip.

Before returning to the farm, he visits us. While sipping black tea and sugar, Robert dreams of what his life could be like. It is mid-August 2005. In April, Robert turned 34. He has two sons, one 10 and the other 7 years old, who are both growing

up at their mother's farm settlement Sorris Sorris, approximately 2 hours by car from Fransfontein. More than a year ago Robert returned from the industrial port city of Walvis Bay to his parental home in Khorixas and then to the family's farm at Sukkle Pos. For three years he had tried to make a living in Walvis Bay. He took numerous jobs, as security guard, filling station attendant, cleaner and worker in a fish factory. But none of these forms of employment offered a reasonable salary and at least tolerable working conditions. Robert is still waiting for payment from his last job as a security guard. Frustrated, he left Walvis Bay. Back home, his mother assisted him with food and money. At that time, Robert began developing the idea of becoming truly independent. He wants to achieve this through what he calls "farming with a vision". He has some livestock of his own and is also taking care of some of his mother's livestock. For his service, he is paid in kind with offspring from his mother's flock. Robert wants to dedicate himself to farming small livestock, thus sheep and goats. This dedication, he hopes, will finally bring him autonomy and peace. He does not want to be a drain on his mother's meagre income and is fed up with being chased around by employers who treat him without respect.

This brief description of some of Robert's life experiences and dreams tackles central dimensions of livelihoods in contemporary Fransfontein: inequality/scarcity, mobility/flexibility, autonomy/freedom and networks/support. The majority of the population has to be flexible and mobile in order to survive. The "flexible Fransfonteiner" is not a recent phenomenon; flexibility has been a recurrent theme in research on Damara pastoralists (Barnard 1992; Botha n.d.; Fuller 1993; Gordon 1972; Rohde 1997; Rohde/Hoffman/Cousins 2000; Sullivan 2000) and Nama pastoralists (Klocke-Daffa 2001). Flexibility in economic, social and political domains can be described as a central cultural asset: "This mobility and inter-connectedness reveals an essential facet of social and economic relations implicit to Damara pastoral practice: conceptualizations of property, rights to natural resources and flexible notions of kinship are defined as inherently fluid and contested areas of communal life". (Rohde 1997: 290) Yet, pre-colonial patterns of flexibility and mobility of Damara and Nama pastoralists were severely undermined by colonialism (ibid: 261). Land dispossession and restrictions on mobility crucially constrained and limited people's ability to cope with crises like droughts (ibid: 258). Thus experiences of scarcity and inequality, including chronic hunger, are closely linked to colonialism and apartheid and continue in postcolonial times.

Today, many people in Fransfontein still own at least some livestock. Yet most of the time the revenues from animal farming are not sufficient to ensure survival. Thus, individuals, families and households combine a range of economic strategies to make ends meet (Schnegg 2009). Autonomy, defined as the freedom from the control of others (Rao 1998; Schlegel 1977: 8-9), is a very central topic in everyday

Fransfontein discourse. As experiences of scarcity, the central importance of autonomy is closely linked to the pains and injustices people experienced under colonialism and apartheid. Additionally, many Fransfontein people are disappointed by the slow pace at which postcolonial changes are taking place (see Melber 2014). They realize that their life chances have not increased as much as they had envisaged at independence. Many communal Fransfontein farmers still hope for more and better land (Schnegg 2007a). The Fransfontein communal area is overstocked and grazing conditions are bad when compared with the commercial farms. The communal Fransfontein area directly borders on white commercial farms and Fransfontein people can see the injustice in land distribution on a daily basis. Although everybody knows that pastoralism is a challenging business, many Fransfonteiners like Robert dream of becoming a full-time farmers even under postapartheid conditions. In August 2004, Silvia, then 54 years old and recently retired, explained that "all I want to do is to get a farm – not a farm on my own, but a place on a farm where I can go and start farming with goats and cows". Even Fransfonteiners with good salaries and secure employment perceive the pastoral way of life as their ultimate goal and source of autonomy. One reason for the overstocking of the communal Fransfontein area lies in the growing herds of the elite, such as teachers and administrators (Schnegg/Pauli/Greiner 2013). Thus, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid is still very present.

My ethnographic description of contemporary Fransfontein livelihoods begins with some of the main ethnographic characteristics of Fransfontein: ethnicity, religion, politics and migration. This leads into an examination of local class structures and the economic legacy of apartheid. In a final section I discuss the importance of kinship and other networks for surviving in insecure postapartheid times.

LIVING IN FRANSFONTEIN

Multiethnic Fransfontein

In the first chapter of the book on culture and shared traditions in Fransfontein that Michael Schnegg and I published in collaboration with local researchers (see "Fransfontein Fieldwork"), Otto /Uirab reflects on his ethnic belonging and his multiethnic family history that includes Damara, Nama, German and British ancestors. He concludes: "Although I regard myself as a Nama (Swartbooi-clan), I am a multiethnic human being". (/Uirab 2007: 19) Otto thus clearly expresses the importance of both dimensions of belonging: his particular ethnic identity as Nama and his multiethnic being. Ethnic belonging can be a central aspect of identity formation. It can create stability and security for an individual. But ethnic belonging does not necessarily

have automatic priority over other affiliations such as class, gender, language and many other connections (Sen 2006). Indeed, in many situations it is not ethnicity that guides Otto /Uirab's behaviour and perceptions. Often, other social affiliations are more important to him, for instance belonging to a specific generation, his religious denomination, his political affiliation or being part of a specific work crew.

Many cultural practices are de facto shared by the multiethnic people of Fransfontein. Khoekhoegowab is the mother language of 74 per cent of the population; the remaining 26 per cent are fluent in both Khoekhoegowab and what they consider their mother tongue, mainly Otjiherero or Otjivambo. Common marriage rituals, shared healing knowledge and similar food customs also transgress ethnic boundaries (Dawids et al. 2007). Yet despite these cultural similarities, the political discourses in Fransfontein all too often stress differences between ethnic groups.

In postapartheid Namibia, formulating and asking questions on ethnicity is very tricky. Following other countries with multiethnic populations and a colonial past (Kertzer/Arel 2002), the government even went so far as not to include a question on ethnicity in its 2000 census, but only one on the language(s) that citizens speak. And yet, despite this, Michael and I decided to include an open question on ethnicity in our ethnographic census (see "Fransfontein Fieldwork"), for two reasons: ethnic groups and ethnic discourses continue to be central for the understanding of current political and power structures; and, as Otto's quote above shows, ethnic belonging continues to be an important aspect of identity formation in present-day Fransfontein. The ambivalence around ethnicity in postindependence Namibia is captured by Reinhart Kössler (2005: 9) who argues the following: "The issues of tradition and ethnicity in southern Africa, particularly in Namibia and in South Africa, while closely linked with the bitter and difficult heritage of apartheid, exhibit a dynamic that goes well beyond the vestiges of institutionalised racism".

Grouping people by ethnicity was a widespread and violent technique of domination in colonial Africa and was a central aim of the apartheid state in Namibia. Yet, despite various postcolonial attempts of nation building in Namibia, the impact of apartheid's "politicized ethnicity" continues. Contemporary lived ethnicity is complex, contradictory and difficult to pin down to just one category (i.e. racism), as Kössler (2005) reminds us. Further, several ethnic groups formed by colonial administrators have successfully appropriated the colonial concepts, as have the Damara (Fuller 1993; Rohde 1997).

In our ethnographic census (see "Fransfontein Fieldwork"), we asked what ethnic group(s) people feel they belong to. The question is thus an open one with no prefixed categories on offer. People were able to answer whatever they felt most appropriate. Out of the 750 individuals interviewed, 88 per cent (656 persons) answered with just one term, for example Damara or Herero. The remaining 12 per cent gave a

paired answer, mainly Damara/Nama (in 54 cases) or Nama/Damara (in 15 cases). Only one person offered three ethnic affiliations (Damara, Nama and Herero). The majority (63 per cent) of the interviewees considered themselves Damara, followed by Herero (13 per cent) and Nama (9 per cent). A few people classified themselves as San. The Fransfontein area is thus clearly multiethnic. The high number of Herero and Owambo people can be explained by migration waves into the area dating back to the 1930s (Greiner 2008; Miescher 2006; Schnegg 2007a).

What effects, then, does this ethnic distribution have on reproduction, kinship and marriage? Do people have children with partners from the same or from different ethnic groups? Do they marry within or outside their groups? Through our census, we have information on the ethnic affiliation of both mother and father for 398 births (see "Fransfontien Fieldwork"). Remarkably, almost half of all births (44 per cent) were multiethnic where mother and father belonged to different groups. Fifty-six per cent of the births were intraethnic with mother and father belonging to the same ethnic group. A closer look at marriages further underscores the relevance of multiethnic connections. For 209 marriages captured in our census, we know the ethnic identification of both bride and groom. Although this number is not as high as for the births, the results do give a good indication of multiethnic relationships: where 40 per cent of these marriages are multiethnic in nature, 60 per cent were between partners from the same ethnic background. Kinship relations through joint children and marriages thus overcome ethnic boundaries in a significant number of cases.

Multireligious Fransfontein

Christianity preceded colonialism in Namibia (Silvester/Wallace/Hayes 1998: 39-43). The Comaroffs analyze how Western missionaries communicated ideologies of individualism, Western capitalism, importance of work, and domesticity through religious symbols (Comaroff/Comaroff 1991). In 1844 the German Evangelical Lutheran Rhenish Mission commenced its work in Namibia, first in the southern parts of the country but rapidly spreading also into central Namibia. In December 1891, the German Rhenish Mission sent its first missionary named Heinrich Riechmann to Fransfontein. Riechmann built a Protestant church and stayed in Fransfontein until his death in 1904. He described his life and work in Fransfontein in two booklets (Riechmann 1899, 1900). Since then, the Protestant church has been one of the most important social institutions in the Fransfontein area.

The long-term influence of the Protestant church can also be seen in the census data we collected. Information on religious beliefs is available for 738 Fransfonteiners. Seventy-nine per cent stated that they are Protestants and ELCRN members;

15 per cent indicated Roman Catholicism as their religious denomination; and 5 per cent answered that they belonged to a Pentecostal church, mainly the "Moria" (temple mountain) church or the "Eben-Ezer" church (drawing on 1 Sam. 4:1). Only 1 per cent stated that they did not belong to any religious group. When analysed in terms of gender, more men (19 per cent) than women (11 per cent) indicated Roman Catholicism as their religion, while more women (83 per cent) than men (74 per cent) were Protestants. Regarding Pentecostal believers, there was no difference by gender.

Unlike other Namibian regions, as for example the town of Outjo where Sonja Gierse-Arsten examines Pentecostal reactions to the spread of HIV/Aids (Gierse-Arsten 2005), Pentecostalism is not (yet) common in Fransfontein. The resident Pentecostals tried to proselytize fellow Fransfontein community members, but the vast majority of the population remained skeptical. Silvia, an elder in the local Protestant church, actively discouraged fellow Protestants from joining Pentecostal churches. With verve she told her neighbors that the Pentecostal churches had stolen the bible from the Protestants and that it would thus make more sense to go for the "real thing" (Protestantism) rather than the imitation (Pentecostal beliefs).

While our census data attest to how widespread Christianity is in the area, only a closer look at religious practices reveals how central it is in the lives of the Fransfontein population (Pauli 2012). Protestant church services are among the most important social gatherings in Fransfontein. Every Sunday the church fills up with believers, often right to the last seat. People wear their Sunday best: it is very clear that no matter how poor someone may be, he or she will try to do everything possible to attend church in an appropriate outfit. Services can last up to three hours. When we arrived in Fransfontein in June 2003, the Protestant church still had a resident pastor living next to the church, though he was transferred elsewhere a few months later. Because of a very active church council of elders who de facto organized the Sunday services, the loss of the pastor hardly made a difference in terms of religious activity. Only for sacraments like weddings and baptisms would a pastor from Khorixas, a town approximately 20 kilometers from Fransfontein, be called in.

One reason for the importance and success of the local Protestant church has been its ability to attract people across gender, class, ethnic and generational lines. Two institutions in particular fostered this inclusivity: religious choirs and the council of elders. Most of the religious choirs have an inclusive character. Even people who are not members of the congregation are allowed to participate. Religious choirs are extremely popular in Fransfontein. The majority of the local youth is active in one of the choirs. They rehearse during the week and perform on Sundays. The active participation of a number of choirs (several youth choirs, a women's choir, a mixed choir of senior villagers) during Sunday mass significantly lengthened church services.

People are nervous and proud when they stand in front of the congregation to sing. The centrality of choirs and church services within the community is also due to the fact that besides soccer, which is played solely by boys and men, singing in a choir and performing during Sunday mass is the only organized leisure activity in Fransfontein. By and large, thus, the Protestant church is perceived as the church of the whole community. During our field stay in 2006, however, Catholic Fransfonteiners began building their own church.

ELCRN church elders are elected by the congregation and serve for a six-year term. In August 2006, I collected information on the thirteen elders active at that time. All language groups (indicators for "ethnic" categories) are represented on the council. Wealthier Fransfonteiners were more dominant on the council, though it includes several unmarried and less-affluent villagers. Almost half (6) of the elders are women. Although most (8) of the elders are of an advanced age (55 years or older), some are only in their thirties. Two female elders, one the daughter of a Protestant pastor, are especially active, influential and visible, often preaching during Sunday services. While men dominate other local fields of influence and power, especially traditional political authority, the religious field is very much shaped by these two women and their preaching. Both have an above-average level of education, having finished secondary education, and are very eloquent. They used to work as domestic workers in government institutions but are now retired and spend most of their time with church activities. They are rather outspoken regarding moral issues. One of the female elders told me that she is very harsh toward women "stealing" married men and having children with them out of wedlock.

While the overwhelming majority of Damara and Nama people indicated Protestantism as their religious denomination, more than one third of the Herero and Ovambo people answered that they belonged to the Roman Catholic church. Together with several Damara families they were pushing for the building of a Catholic church in Fransfontein. One elderly Catholic told us that she could not attend the Protestant church anymore (as she had done for many years) because party politics had taken over there. The trigger for this assessment was the renovation of the Protestant church around 2000. A plaque displayed at the entrance of the church pronounces that a big sponsor of the renovations had been Dr. Libertine Appolus Amathila. Dr. Amathila is not only an engaged Protestant but also an influential and highly respected SWAPO leader and a supporter of the Swartbooi Traditional Authority. This appropriation of the church by a very prominent affiliate of the Swartbooi Traditional Authority was not accepted quietly by members of the Damara fraction of the community. In 2005, the #Aodaman, a subgroup of the Damara, inaugurated a monument at Fransfontein's public cemetery remembering their "fallen heroes". Like the plaque at church, this monument caused both anger and public debate in Fransfontein. The conflict between

the Nama Swartbooi and the Damara mentioned in the previous chapter continues to the present. Contrary to apartheid times, religious spaces like the Protestant church and the cemetery have become contested terrains.

Multiparty Fransfontein

Unlike religious and ethnic affiliation, we did not ask for political party affiliation in our census. Participant observation indicates that the majority of the population favors the UDF, led by Justus //Garoeb, former head of the Damara Council. Until today, many Damara people perceive this party as defined on ethnic terms and as "their" party. In contrast stands the new political leadership represented by the Swartbooi Traditional Authority. The Swartbooi Traditional Authority is mainly (though not completely) affiliated with SWAPO. Other political parties, like the DTA, are also present but not as important as the UDF and SWAPO.

Several of the Swartbooi traditional leaders stress that political party affiliation does not influence their performance as traditional authorities. Indeed, when we asked a traditional leader at the Swartbooi Traditional Authority's office in Fransfontein in 2003 whether there were any connections between the Swartbooi Traditional Authority and SWAPO, he stood up and, pointing to the door, declared: "Party politics? Oh, no! No party politics here. Party politics, out of that door!" The rhetoric strategy to separate (party) politics from traditional authority is similarly witnessed elsewhere in Namibia. In Kaokoland, a traditional authority representative proclaimed: "But that is another issue, that is politics. We do not want to discuss politics in this office. Politics and the Traditional Authority are two separate issues, two totally different things". (Friedman 2005: 43) Like Friedman (2005: 47), we were astonished by the intensity with which the traditional leader denied what to us was an obvious political nature of the traditional authority. To understand this rhetoric strategy, a brief look at the legitimization of traditional authorities in postapartheid Namibia is instructive.[1]

Simplified, traditional authorities are either viewed critically as a problematic colonial legacy and a central hindrance to democratization (Mamdani 1996) or as a flexible institution complementing modernizing process like democratization (Bollig 2008; Krämer 2011). Whatever stance one takes, in order to justify the existence of

1 There is a range of different terms used in the literature to describe the institution classified here as "traditional authority". Some researchers prefer terms like "chief" (Bollig 2008) or "neo-traditional chief" (Krämer 2011), others use the Afrikaans *hoofman* (headman) or king, or even extensions of these terms such as paramount chief. Despite the various classifications, the positions they name are all connected to colonial rule.

traditional authorities in postcolonial Namibia, one has to separate them from party politics, even if there are multiple overlaps between the different institutions. Such a discourse highlights "custom" and "culture" and differentiates them from "politics" and the "state" (see Friedman 2005 for a detailed analysis of such discursive strategies). Without such a rhetoric, the role and relevance of traditional authorities in postcolonial Namibia would be even more contested.

What was remarkable, however, was how detached these political conflicts were from the everyday lived experiences of most people in Fransfontein. This was one of the incentives for our joint ethnographic project on the culture of everyday sharing and joined traditions (Dawids et al. 2007). Comparable to our ethnographic research and writing project, both Kössler (2005: 12) and Fuller (1998: 212) find that in the everyday life ethnic categories are often blurred. In their everyday lives, people in Fransfontein often ignore ethnic, religious and political differences. So far, multiple collective identities in Fransfontein have been described. The next section provides information on different territorial belongings and movements.

Moving to and staying in Fransfontein

The Fransfontein region consists of three intertwined livelihoods: the community Fransfontein, 25 surrounding settlements in the communal area and four worker's locations on white commercial farms bordering the Fransfontein communal area. All three livelihoods are interconnected through multiple relations, especially kinship ties. In July 2004, the point of reference for our census, we counted 1257 people living in this area, 634 men and 623 women. Half of the population (637 persons or 51 per cent) lived in Fransfontein itself, 43 per cent (538 persons) lived on the settlements, and 6 per cent (82 persons) were employed as workers on one of the commercial farms bordering the communal area. The 1257 residents lived in 329 households, of which 137 were located in Fransfontein itself, 161 in settlements and 29 in the locations of the commercial farms. Households in Fransfontein itself were thus larger (with on average 4,6 household members) than households in the settlements (on average 3,3 members) and households of the commercial farms (on average 2,8 members). There are several reasons for these variations. Herders in the communal area are often not related to their employer's household and stay there without their own families. We have thus counted them as single households. This explains why the number of households was larger in the settlements than in Fransfontein. The small household size on commercial farms is largely due to the fact that workers were generally not allowed to bring relatives such as parents or siblings to live with them on the farms. Further, when a worker retires, he or she has to leave the commercial farm so that households do not grow in size intergenerationally. In contrast, Fransfontein households are relatively large.

Migration is a central feature of Fransfontein livelihoods. It is determined first of all by the avenues of education that people pursue for their children. It is very common for parents, for example, to work in one of Namibia's urban centers, such as Windhoek or Walvis Bay, and to leave their toddlers and young children in the care of family members in the Fransfontein area (Greiner 2008, 2011). Once children reach school-going age, wealthier parents prefer to send them to primary and secondary schools in urban areas such as Windhoek, as state-run schools in rural areas, like in Fransfontein, do not have a good reputation. Nevertheless, the building of schools in the homelands during the 1970s and 1980s has substantially enhanced educational opportunities. While the older generation received little or no education, from the birth cohort 1955-1964 onwards more than 50 per cent of the pupils irrespective of gender completed primary school.

If parents are financially unable to send their children for schooling to Windhoek or another urban center, their children will attend primary school in Fransfontein. There is no secondary school in Fransfontein. Thus, for their secondary education most of these children then move to Khorixas or Braunfels and stay in school hostels. If their families can afford it, they will remain in secondary school for six years and complete their education with the matriculation certificate. The majority of teenagers from Fransfontein, however, never finishes Grade 12 (Pauli 2017b). Similar to other rural areas, most scholars fail Grade 10 and drop out of school. For them this means returning to their parental homes in Fransfontein and searching for a job. This is a development quite common elsewhere in Namibia too, as Richard Rohde (1997: 278) observes for Okombahe: "The majority of school leavers have few options and unemployment levels in Okombahe village were at least as high as fifty percent".

The few Fransfontein pupils who manage to complete their secondary education are almost always children of the elite (Pauli 2009, 2017a, 2018). As the postapartheid education system has undergone few reforms since independence and still retains its roots in apartheid education, it continues to deepen existing class divisions (Pauli 2017b). Without Grade 12 and the matric certificate, entry into university and college is impossible. Well-paid jobs, as those offered by government and NGOs, are very often out of reach for school dropouts. What remains is either unemployment or unskilled, low-paying occupations. Robert's job experiences in Walvis Bay, recounted above, capture the indignity und frustration associated with such occupations.

For adults, the decision to move or to stay in Fransfontein is thus connected to age and employment. As soon as someone receives a permanent income, either through a pension or a regular wage, they are likely to stay. Women and men of the older generation all receive a monthly pension payment. They have lived in the area

for a long time. Most of them also run extended households and take care of grandchildren and the family's livestock (Greiner 2008). For the middle generation, the number of years they have permanently lived in the area decreases. An exception is formed by the women from the middle generation employed at the school and hostel who have also lived in Fransfontein for a long time. The younger generation has lived in the area for only brief periods of time. Its members are constantly searching for new income opportunities and take jobs whenever and wherever they are available. This often implies personal hardship, like leaving behind a baby or a sick relative. During our fieldwork it was common that someone we had chatted to in the evening had left town by the next day. This happened one day with Barbara, a twenty-two-year old who was staying at her mother's one-room house with her boyfriend, their two small children, her mother and her stepfather. One morning one of Barbara's relatives (MZDH), an influential traditional authority, received a call from a friend from Rehoboth in central Namibia. The caller was urgently searching for a nanny for his toddler son. Barbara's mother instructed Barbara to take the job. But Barbara was reluctant; she wanted to stay with her own small children. Yet her bargaining power was minimal: she had no permanent income and was dependent on her mother who worked as a temporary cook on a safari farm. So Barbara packed her few belongings, a blanket, a few clothes and some cosmetics. Within the hour she was gone.

Occupation thus strongly structures the length of time someone lives in Fransfontein. Teachers and nurses, pensioners, hostel workers and traditional authorities have all lived in the area for approximately 20 years: all of these occupations are government-financed and secure. Every Namibian who reaches the age of 60 is entitled to a monthly pension. During our fieldwork in 2003 and 2004, the amount was 250 Namibian dollars (NAD) per month. Compared to the wages of traditional authorities and teachers, this seems little. The majority of the population, however, does not receive any permanent income. Because of widespread poverty, NAD250 can mean a lot for a household. Wages of teachers, nurses or traditional authorities start at roughly NAD700 for hostel workers, and rise to more than NAD4000 for the headmaster of the local primary school. In addition to their salary, government employees receive health insurance, low cost housing and old age pensions. For most of these jobs, initial employment took place in the late 1970s until the mid-1980s. The people occupying these positions have lived in the Fransfontein area since that time. Again, class formation and social stratification that commenced with apartheid is clearly visible in the links between occupation and sedentariness or mobility.

A number of families have been able to stay in the area as communal farmers and pastoralists. Given the harsh climatic and ecological conditions of the region, diversification is crucial: "The single most important climatic feature of this area is its absolutely

low rainfall and the associated unpredictability of the rainfall through time and space". (Sullivan 1996: 25) A complete reliance on pastoralism is thus risky and many communal farmers attempt to diversify their income, in particular through remittances (Greiner 2008; Schnegg 2009). As Schnegg (2009) has shown, most pastoral households in Fransfontein mix different economic strategies; only some pastoralists are unable not do so because they are too poor and do not have sufficient start-up resources.

The migrants I have described so far all have limited bargaining power to decide where they want to live. They leave Fransfontein because they have to. Their migration is triggered by their economic desperation (for similar observations for Malawi, see Englund 2002). At the opposite end is a group of migrants that has comfortably resettled in the urban areas as part of a middle class that emerged with independence when the politico-economic landscape of Namibia became more diverse and fluid. Urban and "black", these successful migrants are largely located in the national capital of Windhoek and in other larger urban agglomerations (Melber 2014; Pauli 2018). Most hold white collar employment in one of Namibia's industries, government institutions or in the service sector, or else they are successful entrepreneurs. For most, they are part of the urban Namibian middle class, characterized by an intermediate position between the upper and the working class. Yet they retain strong links with the rural areas from which they originated, "commuting" between the urban middle class when in town and an elite livelihood when in the rural area for holidays or extended weekends. In Fransfontein, this group of migrants tends to blend into the local elite of pastoralists when visiting the town. The mobility between different localities and varying structures of stratification makes a simple classification of the class status of these successful migrants difficult.

This group of successful migrants impacts village affairs and livelihoods in different ways. They own a disproportionately large share of the livestock grazing on Fransfontein's communal land (Schnegg/Pauli/Greiner 2013). This can lead to conflicts with pastoralists who live in the region and rely on grazing livestock for their livelihoods and see the livestock of the absent "class commuter" migrants as only a "hobby" or investment. The "class commuters", on the other hand, see themselves as part of village life. They celebrate their weddings in Fransfontein and they want to be buried in the village. Some of them build a rural house, to supplement the house they have in the urban area where they work. These practices – owning livestock and a house and celebrating important rituals – are a way in which these migrants stay connected with their "homelands" (Appadurai 1996: 196). They are also ways of securing themselves against possible economic crisis and ensuring a place for retirement (Ferguson 1999).

In Part II, I show that, for both the "class commuters" and the local elite, celebrating splendid weddings in the village is an important way of creating belonging

and cultural identity. Weddings of wealthy middle class migrants returning to the village form a significant proportion of the few weddings that take place in Fransfontein today. Of the eight weddings Michael and I followed in depth between June 2003 and October 2004 (half of all weddings in these two years), three were celebrated by migrants. They came to the village solely for their wedding and left immediately again after its completion. While I discuss these weddings in greater detail in Part II, here this short introduction suffices to examine how these urban migrant elites are embedded in the local rural class structure and relate to the permanent rural elite.

FRANSFONTEIN CLASS STRUCTURES

The permanent local elite in Fransfontein consists of regional politicians, traditional authorities, teachers and administrators. If one takes the national level as a frame of reference, this local elite can be defined as part of the middle class. However, in the local context of Fransfontein, it is not middle class but clearly part of the upper class strata.

To better understand Fransfontein class structures, I take a closer look at occupation and consumption patterns. In Table 5, only households in Fransfontein itself are included. For the economic stratification in the settlements in the communal area, I draw on Schnegg (2009). Contrary to the diversity of occupations one finds in Fransfontein, people living in the communal area all share one livelihood, namely livestock farming. Many of these households attempt to diversify their income strategies, mixing pastoralism with pensions or remittances (ibid.). Only very few farmers are wealthy. The colonial system has also transformed the lives of these communal pastoralists. But class formation is less pronounced in the settlements than in Fransfontein. As indicators for economic stratification, Table 5 presents the occupations of Fransfontein household heads, their gender and the distribution of several selected consumption items. Information is incomplete for eight households, reducing the number of households included in the total to 129.

On the basis of the occupations of the Fransfontein household heads presented in Table 5, it is possible to categorize the 129 Fransfontein households into three groups: wealthy elite households, middle class households and low to no permanent income households.[2] The first three rows of the table, representing teachers and nurses, rep-

2 One might argue that the occupation of only the household head is not enough to classify the households. Other household members might have additional sources of income that could change the picture. However, additional information on other household members –

Table 5: Occupation, gender and consumption

Occupation of the household head	Proportion of households		Proportion headed by women (Per cent)	Consumption items per household (in per cent)			
	N	Per cent		Electricity	TV	Fridge	Car
Teacher/nurse	5	3,9	20	100,0	80,0	100,0	60,0
Trad. authorities	6	4,6	17	83,3	83,3	83,3	67,7
Local govt*/ police	9	7,0	0	88,9	55,6	77,8	22,2
Hostel worker	16	12,4	88	62,5	31,3	25,0	12,5
Penny economy	68	52,7	44	22,1	11,8	13,2	17,7
Pensioner	25	19,4	76	12,0	16,0	16,0	16,0
Total	**129**	**100**	**50**	**35,7**	**24,0**	**26,4**	**20,9**

*Govt = government

resentatives of traditional authorities and employees of local government offices and the police, all have relatively high and permanent incomes, though the salaries of traditional authorities deviate slightly from this pattern. At approximately NAD1000 per month, they are not much higher than the salaries earned by hostel workers. However, most traditional authorities can count on further income sources, especially through their ownership of livestock. That traditional authorities form part of the economic elite is also clearly underscored by their consumption patterns, as shown in Table 5. Like teachers and other government employees, the overwhelming majority of traditional authorities have electricity in their homes and own a TV, a fridge and

especially conjugal partners and adult children – only underscore the results presented here. For instance, most teachers are married to other teachers and their children receive excellent education opportunities qualifying them for equally well-paying occupations, while the economic activities of household members from households with heads living on penny economic activities are comparable to those of the head.

at least one car (many owning more).[3] In sum, only 16 per cent of all households fall into the category of wealthy elite households.

The middle-class category consists of the households of the hostel workers. This is also the category with by far the highest proportion of female heads: 88 per cent of these households (14 of 16) are headed by unmarried women. With approximately NAD700 income per month, ownership of commodity goods among these 12 per cent of the total of 129 Fransfontein households is much more limited than among the wealthy elite households. Yet, as shown in Table 5, ownership of commodity goods is like possessing a fridge or even having a TV is more common for hostel workers than among the majority of all households. Hostel workers rarely, however, own vehicles. The majority of hostel worker households occupy houses with electricity (these houses have often been constructed by the government and not the workers themselves). However, in the overall scheme, this group forms a very small *local* middle class (in contrast to the urban middle class mentioned above).

The last group consists of households with a low or no regular income. Seventy-two per cent of all Fransfontein households fall into this category. As Table 5 shows, this group contains households headed by pensioners and those that have to live on penny economic activities. The overwhelming majority of these households (88 per cent) do not have access to electricity. Almost all of them occupy houses constructed of wooden beams and cow dung plastering rather than made of bricks. Only very few of these households own a fridge or a TV (powered by solar energy). Although the number of car owners is relatively high in this group, most cars are very old and rusty or not in use at all. This stands in stark contrast to the luxurious and expensive Toyotas and Nissans owned by the wealthy elite.

This class structure is also inscribed into the landscape and the housing structures that people occupy, the focus of the next sub-section.

Gender, class and housing

The colonial and later the postcolonial state have both played a crucial role in providing, or not, groups of people with living space and housing. In Fransfontein, gender, occupation and marital status strongly influence where one lives (Pauli 2007a). Depending on the geographic location of a house, access to water, sanitation, transport or electricity infrastructure can vary tremendously. During the 1960s and 1970s, several streets and brick houses were constructed in Fransfontein to provide housing to government employees. Up to today, these houses are highly valued. Only 12 per cent

3 The relatively low percentages of car ownership for police and local government officials stem from the fact that some of these household heads have access to government vehicles.

Figure 4: Government house of a wealthy couple

of the village houses fall into this category. The rent is very low and the houses have running water, electricity and several rooms. Figure 4 shows a photograph of a government-built house of a wealthy married couple.

Both partners of the couple that lived in this house worked as teachers and as such had access to government housing. With three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom, their house is at the upper end of government housing. There are also much smaller government houses with four small, equal sized rooms and an outside toilet. This type, also called the "matchbox" house, is very common in apartheid-initiated urban townships. Most Fransfonteiners, however, lived in houses that are locally called "traditional". They are made of cow dung, sand and mopani sticks, called *tsaura-haigu ǂhaui ǂoab* in Khoekhoegowab, sometimes with a corrugated iron sheet roof (see Figure 5)

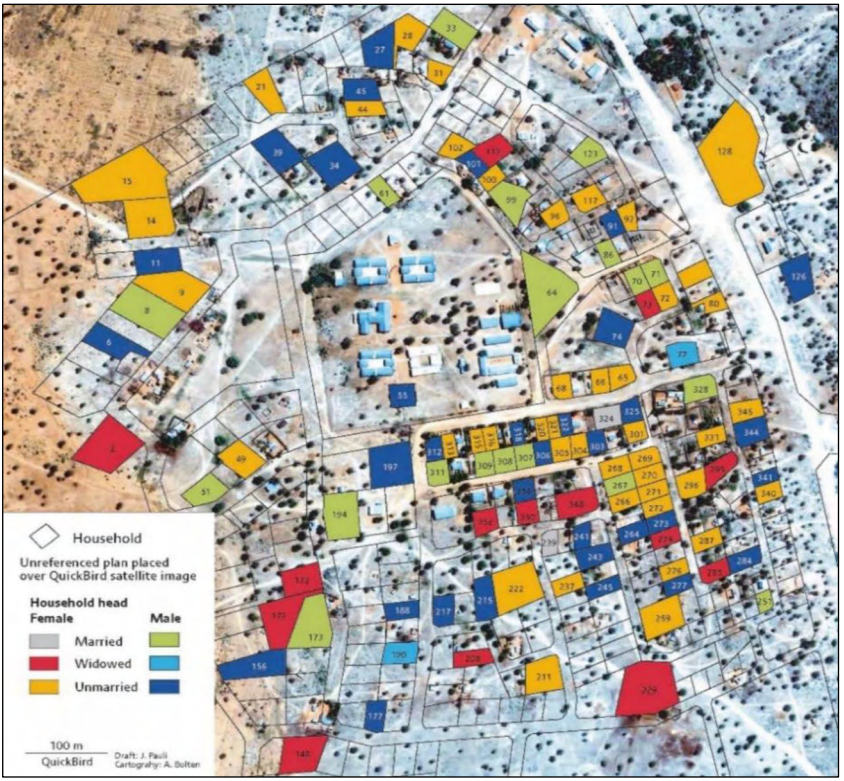
Some, but not all, plots on which government houses were built are equipped with piped water, and some have electricity. The plots are allocated by the local government; everybody may apply for one and will, eventually, get one. Of the 137 Fransfontein households, 49 per cent are female headed. A female-headed household is defined as a residential, economic and social unit where the major decision-maker is female (Iken 1999). Male-headed households significantly differ from female-headed ones with respect to the civil status of the household head. Almost all male household heads live with a female partner, either the wife or a long-term girlfriend. The opposite is true for female-headed households. More than two thirds of all female heads are single. They have no male partner, either because they are widows or because they are not in any kind of long-term relationship. The community is thus split into

Figure 5: House built with local materials

households of male heads with their partners, especially wives, and households of single women. This divide is also manifest in the spatial distribution of households: as Figure 6 shows, households are not randomly distributed in space but form spatial clusters of male- and female-headed households (Pauli 2007a). Figure 6 shows the distribution of different combinations of gender and civil status of household heads. Five groups can be distinguished: households headed by married men (marked in mint green); unmarried men (dark blue); widows (red); single mothers with no permanent income (yellow); and hostel workers (also yellow).

Households headed by married men are mainly located in two areas: one cluster includes numbers 173, 194, 307, 308, 309 and 311 and the other numbers 64, 70, 71, 86 and 99. The house of the married wealthy couple shown in Figure 4 is part of the first cluster. Both clusters are located in the center of the village. In these houses the elite resided. The two clusters differ insofar as the houses in the first cluster are rented from government whereas the houses in the second cluster are privately owned and built, albeit heavily subsidized by government funds. Four of the women for whom I collected life stories belong to this group. Claudia and Mona from the middle generation are both teachers and live in beautiful, well-kept and rather large government houses. Claudia has three children, Mona two. Claudia is married to a fellow teacher; Mona's husband does not have a permanent job. Vanessa (from the younger generation), the third woman interviewed from this group, is Claudia's daughter. She finished matric. When she became pregnant with her son, she returned to Fransfontein. She is unemployed and stays in her parent's house. Lisa, also of the younger generation, is the

Figure 6: Location of male- and female-headed households in Fransfontein



daughter of an influential traditional authority. Like Vanessa, she is unemployed and stays in her parent's large house. Because of her unplanned pregnancy, Lisa did not finish Grade 12.

Households headed by unmarried men, the second group identified above, hardly form clusters and are rather spread all over the map. These heads are a very heterogeneous group, ranging from the unmarried and relatively wealthy extension officers employed by the agricultural company AGRA with ample money and girlfriends, to the long-term couple which is unable to afford a wedding, and the lonesome male pensioner who has no family left in the community. The nature of this group might explain why it does not form a spatial cluster. None of the women from whom I collected a life story belongs to this group.

On average, widowed household heads, the third group identified above, are 71 years old and receive the monthly government pension that all Namibians aged 60 or older are entitled to. In general, widows live together with some of their children and

especially with their grandchildren. Contrary to the large government brick houses of the elite, all widows live in "traditional houses" with only one or two rooms and an outside fire for cooking. The widow Tama from the elder generation, whom I have also interviewed, belongs to this group. Because of their secure, albeit low, monthly pensions, households headed by widows are in general not as vulnerable as households headed, for example, by single mothers with no permanent income. Households headed by widows are geographically dispersed. One part of the explanation for this is linked to the history of the village. When the primary school was built in 1964, some of the residents who had lived in the center of the village had to move to the periphery. This move affected several of the households headed by widows in the mid-2000s.

The area around household numbers 266, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272 and 296 is called *ǂoabatere* (go out). This area is mostly occupied by single mothers. Most of the houses have only one or two bedrooms and lack electricity. Only some have a water tap on the plot. All of the women living in *ǂoabatere* have children with different men but none of them is living together with a man (Pauli 2007b, 2010b), often because of quarrels relating to alcohol abuse, cheating and domestic violence. The women survive by having diverse economic strategies. Some take in washing from wealthier, married women, though the pay earned is very low. Others have older children who support them temporarily. From time to time most women receive assistance from the fathers of their children, in the form of food, a goat, clothes or cash. Often, the women share these sporadic resources with neighbouring female household heads that have similar difficulties in making ends meet. Indeed, the women rely on each other for support on a daily basis forming networks that are locally called *augu* (Schnegg 2015, 2016a; Schnegg/Bolten 2007).[4] Four women with whom I conducted life story interviews were living in *ǂoabatere*. Tanja from the younger generation has five children and survives by taking in washing and sharing food with her neighbours. Molly, also from the younger generation, has four children and sells hand-made handicrafts. Dina from the older generation has eight children and worked as domestic worker and cook on several commercial farms. Finally, Isabel, Dina's daughter and also from the younger generation, has one daughter and takes on temporary jobs on commercial farms.

For the hostel workers, these *augu* sharing networks are far less important. Two main clusters of this group of female-headed households are indicated can be seen on the map in Figure 6. One cluster consists of the household numbers 313, 315, 316,

4 Rita Schäfer stresses the importance of female networks within and beyond the household for the survival of Ovambo-speaking female-headed households in northern Namibia and Zimbabwe (Schäfer 2004).

320, 321, 68, 66, 65, 304 and 305. The second cluster is much smaller and encompasses household numbers 222, 237 and 211. Although several hostel workers live in houses built in what is considered a "traditional way" and mainly made from local materials, these houses have more rooms and are better maintained than is the case for the "traditional" houses inhabited by widows and single mothers with no permanent income. Four middle-aged and three younger women from whom I collected life stories are part of the hostel worker group: Ofelia, Hertha and Jana (all middle generation) are all hostel workers who received their jobs in the 1970s and 1980s. Each of them have four living children. Ofelia is already retired and receives a monthly pension. Silvia (also middle generation, with four children) worked as a receptionist for a health clinic, though the security and income levels of this job are comparable to hostel work. Two of the women of the younger generation are daughters of hostel workers: Petra (one daughter), whose mother worked at the hostel, but passed away in 2005; and Anna (one child), whose mother still works at the Fransfontein hostel and who is the only married woman in this group.[5] The third younger woman is Silvia's daughter Mara who has no children.

The effects of apartheid and the class dynamics that started in the 1970s still permeate Fransfontein everyday life. The continuous negotiations and conflicts about ethnicity, religion and politics can only be understood when taking the long-term effects of colonialism and apartheid into account. Contemporary migration patterns are closely linked to occupation and education, themselves direct outcomes of the homeland system. After independence, educational reforms have been minimal. The current Fransfontein settlement pattern is also a legacy of homeland policies: the distribution of plots and the quality of housing are the result of class structures that emerged with the homeland, leading to class divisions and different forms of exclusion.

I want to conclude this chapter with a discussion of the practices that help overcome the divisions and mechanisms of exclusion. Sharing and caring, especially but not only within kin relations, present a counterbalance to the harshness of Fransfontein class structures.

SHARING AND CARING

Sharing and caring are central concepts in the so-called new kinship studies, a rather broad terminological umbrella for a number of contemporary approaches in the study of kinship (Alber et al. 2010; Alber/Coe/Thelen 2013; Alber/Drotbohm 2015; Böck/Rao 2000; Carsten 2004; Thelen 2015). Sharing and caring create relatedness, to use

5 Not all women with whom I conducted life stories fit into these five categories.

Janet Carsten's term (2004). She defines relatedness broadly as "the ways in which people create similarity or difference between themselves and others" (ibid: 82). Relatedness is not the only term that has been suggested to replace or supplement kinship. Janet Edwards and Marilyn Strathern (2000: 152) use other "connective terms", such as belonging and association. Edward Lowe (2002), arguing from a cognitive anthropological perspective, works with yet another set of concepts. In his analysis of Chuuk social life, attachment is what binds people together. Attachment, like relatedness or belonging, is based on sharing, giving, caring and supporting. As Lowe stresses: "The point here is not that 'real' kin relationships are genealogical whereas 'created' kin relationships are based on interpersonal histories of reciprocal acts of assistance and nurturance. *All social relationships in Chuuk are defined, in part, by the quality of mutual acts of nurturance and support*". (ibid: 128, emphasis in original). What exactly creates the ties that bind varies and depends on the cultural context. It can be the sharing of food and milk in Malaysia (Carsten 1997) and the Andes (Weismantel 1995), the sharing of space in Asian and Latin American house societies (Carsten/Hugh-Jones 1995) or the sharing of time and emotionally charged experiences in California (Weston 1991).

Common forms of sharing in Fransfontein include the sharing of food, shelter and experiences like violence and hunger (Pauli 2013, 2015; Schnegg 2015, 2016a; Schnegg/Pauli 2010). The sharing of a (social or biological) parent not only creates relatedness between the parent and the child but also among children. This is the case for the numerous *groot maak kinders* (Afrikaans for "the children one raises" or children fostered on an informal basis) but also for the high number of children growing up in "patchwork" families (Pauli 2007b, 2015). To understand social relations in Fransfontein, one thus has to ask how much and what forms of sharing lead to what kind of relations.

In 2004, Michael and I collected personal network data by asking 750 men and women about the people they trust most and would ask for emotional and material support. In addition to information on kinship terminologies that I collected through genealogies and situational vignettes elicited through ethnographic observations, these network data provide systematic information on the perceptions and practices of relatedness. Neighbors, friends and relatives are most often mentioned (Schnegg/Pauli 2010). Kin from the mother's side is much more important than paternal kin. Female-headed households are widespread in Fransfontein. This residential pattern has also been described for southern Namibia and South Africa (Iken 1999; Kuper 1987; Preston-Whyte 1978; van der Vliet 1984). Adam Kuper (1987: 147) compares the South African situation with Caribbean matrifocal patterns. Felicia I. Ekejiuba's (2005) concept of the "hearth-hold", developed for the West African context and focusing on the mother-child bond as the most central unit of the household (and also

as a substitute for the concept of the household), grasps the situation of many Fransfontein households quite well. But for a substantial number of these households, sisterly ties are as important as mother-daughter links (Pauli 2013). An extension of the concept of matrifocality is thus needed to better understand these household patterns. I propose the term *femifocality* to highlight the centrality of women within these household networks and to overcome the matrifocal bias of perceiving central women in these households as only mothers or daughters (ibid: 32).

Most Fransfontein children are raised by female relatives from their mother's kin group. Later in life those people one grew up with often remain very central. Here, sibling relations are especially important. It is common that women (and men) have children with four, five or even more consecutive partners. As a result, many people have a large number of half-siblings. Further, male and female parallel cousins (children of the MZ or the FB) are also classified as brothers and sisters. They are addressed in the same way as siblings or half-siblings: younger brothers are called *!gasab*; elder brothers *abutib*; younger sisters *!guisas*; and elder sisters *ausis*. Terminologically, parallel cousins, half-siblings and siblings are all of one kind – brothers and sisters. In everyday practice, the naming might be simplified. The kin term *!gasab* (for a man) or *!gasas* (for a woman) may be applied to indicate a brother/sister relation. On the other hand, cross cousins (children of the MB or the FZ) have their own kin terms: */gamareb* and */aisas*. Here, no age differentiation is used. Unlike the sibling relations, relations with cross cousins are often joking relationships and might have sexual connotations. People still comment that marriage between cross cousins used to be preferential. By the 2000s, this type of marriage has become rare. Contrary to the cross cousin relation and in line with the classification of parallel cousins as siblings, sexual relations with parallel cousins are perceived as incestuous.

The same logic just described for siblings also applies to the ego's parental generation. The MZ is also a mother. Mother's younger sisters are small mothers (*maros*) and mother's elder sisters are big mothers (*makeis*). Father's brothers are small fathers (*darob*) or big fathers (*dakeib*). Mother's and father's cross siblings are again termed differently (FZ is *mikis*, MB *omeb*).[6]

Out of a rather large pool of potential siblings, only a relatively small number of relations are actually perceived to be close. Shared experiences, especially during childhood, are very important for the creation of these relations. Contrary to this, levels of consanguinity (e.g. a B compared to a MZS) are not central in order to

6 For additional information on Khoekhoegowab kinship terminology (including discussions of variations between Damara, Nama and Hai//om), see Barnard (1992) and Widlok (1999).

estimate the closeness of a brother (*!gasab*) or a sister (*!gasas*). John's narration provides some insights into these dynamics of sibling relatedness. Thirty-eight years of age at the time of our research, John was born in one of the communal settlements. He finished high school and after independence worked for a number of years as a teacher. John's mother, Ofelia, was one of the women I interviewed for her life story. She had been a hostel worker and was now retired. Her household is a typical example of a Fransfontein matrifocal household: she owns a brick house where she lives together with several grandchildren, a number of *groot maak kinders* (mainly those of her sister), and her youngest son with his child and his girlfriend. John, her oldest son, and his family inhabit his mother's former house that stands adjacent to her new house. The old house is much smaller and is made of local materials.

John's mother has four children with three different men. John himself has no full siblings. On his mother's side, there are 19 people John considers as his siblings, 12 sisters and 7 brothers. His two half-sisters are not living in the village but in Windhoek and Walvis Bay respectively. John gets along well with them. Both have been supportive during his marriage, sending money and buying different goods. With his half-brother, however, relations are tenser and there have been fights and quarrels. So who are John's close siblings? In terms of trust, reciprocity and sympathy, the person John considers his closest brother is Robert, a MBS. In Damara kinship terminology, Robert is a */gamareb*, a cross cousin (MBS), and not a brother. John nevertheless calls and considers him his elder brother, *abutib*, and not a */gamareb*. What binds the two together are shared (negative and positive) experiences, shared food and shared time. Both spent significant parts of their childhood together at their grandparent's farm. When I interviewed them on their relationship, they explained their brotherhood and closeness with the local concept *kai//are,* growing up together (Pauli 2015). These types of important and long-lasting relationships are formed during childhood. Even smaller children are not supervised by parents or guardians as much as I was used to from Germany. Many Fransfontein children are left by themselves for considerable stretches of time. It was indeed common to observe two or three children of pre-school ages walking around and even leaving the village or the settlement. Food, often only maize flour, is served to children in one bowl and all children eat together. Many children share their beds or sleeping places. Corporal punishment is very common. If children are abused, they do not search for relief from their parents or other caretakers but from other children, the ones they grow up with. This is captured by 41-year-old Mona when she explained why Christina, her MZ who was of the same aged as she, is her most important sister: "We ate together, we slept together, she helped me when I was beaten, I helped her, when she was beaten. She feels the same pains as I do; she washes me when I am sick, she makes food for me when I am sick".

Kai//are, growing up together in Fransfontein means sharing the pains of hunger, beating, coldness and excessive heat; but also the joys of meat eating, rain dancing and nightly plays. Out of a pool of possible brothers and sisters, this experience most strongly shapes whom one feels close to. The opposite applies as well. At various occasions Michael and I observed Petra hardly greeting Henry, her half-brother. When we asked her whether she did not consider Henry her brother, she replied: "No, not really. You see we are not close. We didn't grow up together [*tama kai// are*]". Not growing up together means not sharing. And not sharing means no relatedness.

Clearly, the relations resulting from *kai//are* are long-term, often lifelong relations. Because of the complexity of these long-term bonds, only few such ties are maintained, often not more than three or four relations per person. Remarkably, the two *kai//are* relations discussed above are both not genealogical sibling relations. However, they are presented, perceived and lived as sibling relations. Why do John and Mona not simply use the "correct" kin terms, thus in the case of John and Robert */gamareb* for cross cousin, and in the case of Mona and Christina *maros* for small mother? Such a flexible use of kin terminology has also been observed in the Okombahe settlement: "Flexible notions of kinship are defined as inherently fluid and contested areas of communal life". (Rohde 1997: 290) John and Mona have chosen sibling terms because the meaning of sibling relations best expresses the content of their *kai//are* relations. The use of kin terms is a way to express social bonding and to establish new bonds. This central aspect of lived Khoekhoe kinship is also described for Hai//om social and economic relations: "Hai//om kinship can rightly be called an idiom not simply because it frequently manipulates genealogical links, but above all because it serves as a communicative aid for establishing common ground". (Widlok 1999: 188)

Contrary to these long-term relations, social interactions on the level of neighborhoods are more short-term oriented. *Augu* or demand sharing, based on explicitly asking for goods, is widespread. The items exchanged on a daily basis include sugar, fire wood, maize flour and matches. Mainly women are involved in *augu* networks. Female-headed households living in *ǂoabatere* (*as* described above) are a good example of such a female sharing network. All of the households in *ǂoabatere* have an eye on their neighbors' activities. If someone from a household buys sugar in one of the little stores, for example after having received some financial support from a child's father living in a distant town, children and other members from adjacent households will quickly visit the household and ask for a share. This sharing of goods is complemented by emotional support. Often neighbors are considered as friends. Barbara, one of the women living in *ǂoabatere*, said that a friend is someone with whom she can share food and stories. If relatives live nearby, *augu* networks include them. The underlying structure of *augu*, though, is not kinship but locality.

Augu is also a local form of risk minimization. The female networks buffer the many injustices women, and especially single mothers, have to endure in Fransfontein. In contrast to the hierarchical and gendered patron-client relations maintained by big men since the 1970s, *augu* networks are formed among equals. This characterstic can also have disadvantages. The solidarity expressed in *augu* relations can turn into distance, mistrust and even conflict if one of the parties feels that the other is not being honest about the resources she has available and does not want to share. But sometimes the demands from neighbors and kin are so great that hardly anything is left to the original owner (Klocke-Daffa 2001; Kuper 1995; Rohde 1997: 293). Then one has been "eaten up", as a local expression states.

Sharing not only structures everyday life but is also an essential part of life cycle rituals (Pauli 2018; Pauli/Dawids 2017). Weddings and funerals (and the subsequent */umis* family negotiation to deal with the inheritance of the deceased) are the two most important social occasions for kin groups to share and perform collectively. An especially impressive demonstration of kin collectivity can be observed during the engagement ritual, locally called the "asking ritual" (*!game-#gans*). The following chapter provides a detailed description of the different stages in contemporary Fransfontein marriage rituals. Here we need to know that, during the *!game-#gans*, the bride's and the groom's kin groups debate the pro and cons of the potential marriage over the course of several nights. In extensive, partly standardized monologues, representatives of the two kin groups question each other's sincerity and pertinacity. These collective performances of kin persist despite a widespread increase of individualism that can also be traced in marriage celebrations (Solway 1990, 2016) (examined in Part II). The process of individualization is countered by the collective, kin-based enactment of local ("traditional")[7] marriages. Even wealthy grooms who could easily afford and choose a wedding without kin do not want to marry without their relatives. The great majority of couples opt for local marriages, which include the asking ritual and elaborate ritual slaughtering for which an extended kin group is required. Marriages are thus based on sharing relations.

While historic processes of class formation have resulted in high levels of stratification and inequality, social and economic institutions like *kai//are* relations and *augu* networks counter these developments by expressing equality, trust and sharing.

This chapter has discussed in particular how class dynamics have shaped and reconfigured educational, residential, occupational, ethnic, religious and political patterns of affiliation in Fransfontein. The following two chapters focus on marriage and

7 The term "traditional" marriage is widely used in Fransfontein to differentiate Fransfontein marriages from "modern" ("white") marriages. In fact, however, Fransfontein marriage celebrations are complex hybrids merging an array of cultural practices.

analyze how this institution has been thoroughly transformed by class formation processes and has changed from a universal rite of passage into a celebration of class distinction.