

**Activism and Webs Of Meaning: Rethinking the Relationship between the
'Local' and the 'Global' in the
Central Kalahari Game Reserve**

by

Louiza Odysseos

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Louiza Odysseos is a lecturer in International Relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. She is the editor (with Hakan Seckinelgin) of *Gendering the International* (London: Palgrave, 2002) and author of articles in *Review of International Studies*, *Millennium* and *European Journal of Political Theory*. She is currently researching a monograph on conceptions of 'global civil society' and the relationship between global and local activism. She can be contacted at louiza.odysseos@soas.ac.uk

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I. Introduction

How are local activist groups engaging in particular forms of political engagement and resistance throughout the world, and how are such activist practices located in the wider notion of a ‘global civil society’? In recent years, these questions have become a matter of intense debate, provoking a deepening polarisation between liberal and critical scholarship in this area. On the one hand, it is suggested that local activism emerges organically out of local issues and concerns, and then attempts to fashion alliances with globally active movements and organisations which cohere with its sentiment and understandings of politics. In this view, there is scope for progressive politics emerging out of the interactions of ‘local’ and ‘global’ civil society. On the other hand, critical scholars suggest that ‘global civil society’ actually colonises local activism by imposing its own, Western concepts and political worldviews onto local concerns and self-understandings. It may well be the case, however, that the growing interaction between local activist groups and ‘global civil society’ cannot be captured either by the optimistic liberal account or the pessimistic critical perspectives. This paper argues that the polarisation created by these two views about the relationship between the local and the global is, in fact, counter-productive for properly theorising their interaction, and for studying particular concrete cases. Furthermore, the dichotomy obscures the presence and participation of the state and its governmental apparatus in this interaction between local activism and ‘global civil society’.

In order to move beyond this theoretical impasse, the paper utilises Martin Heidegger’s notion of the world as a ‘web of meaning’ in order to call into question some of the assumptions about the relationship between the local and the global. Re-inscribing the liberal term ‘global civil society’ as a complex and ever-evolving web of background meanings, norms and discourses, against which we orient our existence, the paper recasts the question of the relationship between the local and the global away from such polarisations. This theorisation is followed by an illustration which examines the activism surrounding the recent evictions of the Bushmen living in Botswana’s Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The paper examines the case of the actions of international Non-Governmental Organisations fighting to reverse the evictions and prevent further government actions, the government’s justifications about the evictions, and, finally, the Bushmen’s own activity within the web of meaning and discourse. Specifically, the paper shows how the government of Botswana, the London-based NGO Survival International and the Bushmen tribes all make use of norms, meanings and discourses available within the web of meaning. Moreover, the recasting of the question of the relationship between the local and the global away from the liberal/critical polarisation allows us to pose the following questions: in what ways do public actors (activists, governments, organisations) use

the web of meaning? How do they choose amongst available meanings? How do activists located within postcolonial, indigenous, and local contexts uniquely appropriate norms and meanings available within the web of meaning? How does the appropriation of meaning by local contexts and the ‘repetition’ of certain types of practices, themselves affect the web? And, finally, how does such usage of meanings produce and transform political agency and subjectivity within the web?

II. ‘Global Civil Society’: The Relationship between the Local and the Global

[C]ivil society seems to be the “big idea” on everyone’s lips—government officials, journalists, funding agencies, writers and academics, not to mention the millions of people across the globe who find it an inspiration in their struggles for a better world. (Edwards, 2004: 2)

Discussions about the historical emergence, as well as the benefits and drawbacks, of global activist politics have become increasingly commonplace in international studies and the social sciences more generally. Such discussions are frequently framed in terms of ‘global civil society’. Indeed, as the quote above makes apparent, the academic and policy circles’ attraction to the terminology of ‘global civil society’ shows little signs of waning, despite the concerns arising about the evident under-theorisation of the term.¹ There are three related and mutually reinforcing reasons for the attractiveness of global civil society within a broad *liberal* perspective of world politics.

Firstly, policymakers and academics place great hope on ‘global civil society’ because they see it as an integral part of the process of democratisation in international politics, which they are keen to promote. As Mustapha Kamal Pasha and David Blaney critically note, there is a sense in which ‘global civil society’ is seen as a constitutive part of ‘a growing worldwide democratic consciousness’ leading to increased participation of individuals and local groups in international politics (Pasha and Blaney, 1998: 417-451; Scholte, 2001; O’Brien et al., 2000). This is important because international politics is a domain traditionally understood to contain primarily interactions by and between states. The emergence of a ‘global civil society’ helps to create a democratic public sphere at the international level (see for example, Delanty, 2001), through which local activist groups and individuals can participate directly in global politics. Furthermore, the emergence of a ‘global civil society’ is cherished because it also assuages the concerns of Western liberal democracies about the decreasing interest and trust in, as well as the vibrancy of, representative democratic institutions in *domestic* politics and civil society, at least when measured in terms of voting and political party membership.

Secondly, the idea of ‘global civil society’ has proved attractive because it is assumed that it can produce and help sustain a much-needed normativity for global politics. IR discourses critical of realist inter-state accounts of international relations are attracted to the capacity of ‘global civil society’ to create and promote humanitarian and other progressive norms, such as those extending and strengthening the existing

¹ Despite the fact that “[t]he term “global civil society” is now fairly commonplace—within academia, in the mass media, and amongst a broader public...it suffers from weak description and inadequate theorization’ (Taylor, 2002: 339-347).

international human rights regime. Such increased normativity is considered to lead to a mediation of the *an-archic* nature (here understood as un-principled) of the sovereign state system (Clark, 2001 and 2003). It is now an article of faith that ‘global civil society’ is enabling, indeed leading, the construction of ‘a new political, economic and cultural order’ (Comor, 2001: 389; see also, Boli and Thomas, 1997), which can assist, along with worldwide democratic participation, in the construction of ‘a new architecture of global politics’ (Pasha and Blaney, 1998) made up of institutions of global governance and cosmopolitan legal structures, mentioned above (Baker, 2002; Held, 2004).

Finally, but most importantly for the purposes of this paper, many scholars hope that as a kind of pluralistic agent, ‘global civil society’ can help remedy the effects and excesses brought about by ‘globalisation’, a multi-faceted phenomenon, but one intimately related to market liberalisation and global economic integration (Falk, 1995 and 1998). Indeed, prominent accounts conceive of ‘global civil society’ as providing ‘a counterweight to global capitalism’ by forging a ‘global solidarity with the poor or oppressed’ that are marginalised by the processes and effects of global capitalism (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001: 3). In other words, globally organised civil society in the form of activist groups, social movements and non-governmental organisations, can form alliances and act in solidarity with local activism and local ‘civil society’. This is strongly related to the encouragement of worldwide democratic participation, but goes further, to suggest that global activism can help local activism find a voice in which to speak against exploitation and global socio-economic marginalisation.

Though variations do exist, liberal discourses of ‘global civil society’ generally tend to assume either that there is a harmonic interaction between the local and the global, or that issues of ‘power’ or hegemony between the two (where power may be understood comprehensively not only in a material sense, but including symbolic, interpretive and discursive forms) can be productively worked out. Liberal approaches tend to emphasise the common, rationally analysed interests that forge linkages, encourage solidarity and create alliances between local and global activists: the relationship between the two is seen as part of ‘transnational or global associational life’ (Pasha and Blaney, 1998).² Furthermore, local activism is seen as emerging organically out of local issues and concerns, and then attempting to fashion alliances with globally active movements and organisations which cohere with locally defined interests, sentiments and understandings of politics.

Critical and post-colonial perspectives, however, are increasingly examining the features and effects of the relationship between ‘global civil society’ and local activism.³ Such interventions have challenged many aspects of this liberal perspective on ‘global civil society’, leading to an increasingly vocal debate about the impact that global activism has on local activist politics. Critical scholars offer a very different outlook on ‘global civil society’, one that seeks to dampen the great optimism placed on the democratising and solidarity-producing interactions between global and local activists. Critical approaches tend to frame this relationship in terms of the hegemony

² Pasha and Blaney (1998: 417-451) analyse the limitations of these liberal assumptions. See also the treatment of ‘associational life’ in Edwards (2004: 19-36), (Ford, 2003: 120-134) and (Boli and Thomas, 1997: 171-190).

³ For a discussion of the problems of the term ‘postcolonial’ see Hoogvelt (2001: 166-171).

of the liberal project of 'global civil society'. 'Global civil society', they claim, colonizes local activism by imposing its own, Western concepts and political worldviews onto local concerns and self-understandings, pointing to a new form of imperialism and neo-colonialism. Such perspectives, moreover, express concerns that the liberal developmental and activist projects of 'global civil society' could, and sometimes do, amount to an 'infantilisation' of the local (Teivainen, 2002). In other words, the well-intentioned, solidarity-creating undertakings of activist organisations, such as those operating in the development field, in the promotion of local 'civil society', and in more direct activist interventions on behalf of marginalised or persecuted groups, may result in the discursive creation of 'victimhood' or 'backwardness' of local capacity.

Moreover, critical scholarship is concerned that this relationship results in cultural and political homogenisation, both in terms of reduction of diversity and distinctiveness of activist practices but also in the replication of political and social structures of the West in the non-Western, post-colonial world. John Boli and George Thomas note for example that, '[b]ecause the definitions, principles, purposes, and modes of action that constitute and motivate actors have come to comprise a global level of social reality, far-reaching *isomorphism* across actors is increasingly likely and observable' (Boli and Thomas, 1999: 4, emphasis added). Though Boli and Thomas note this 'isomorphism' as a product of interaction, they fail to be alarmed by the possibility of homogenisation as some other critical voices are (see for example, Seckinelgin, 2002: 357-376; Encarnacion, 2000: 9-18). From a critical viewpoint, such interventions *do* entail an imposition of worldviews and meanings, which colonise local political space and give expression to local issues in a language that is unrepresentative of local considerations.

This paper shares many of these concerns raised by these critical perspectives. Nonetheless, it is also concerned that critical claims about the hegemonic or neo-imperialist character of interaction between local activism and global activism fail to capture the complex nature of the relationship between the two.⁴ The paper, moreover, notes that the debate between liberal and critical perspectives on activism has reached an impasse, which is difficult to overcome, largely because the debate is framed in such a polarised manner. It suggests, therefore, that neither the suggestion that 'global civil society' and local activism base their interaction on common or converging interests, nor the accusation that their interaction is purely imperialist help move us beyond this impasse. This paper, by contrast, suggests that both liberal and critical assumptions about the nature of the relationship are problematic. Not only do they frustrate attempts to better conceptualise this interaction and its consequences, they also tend to neglect the important role of the state in this interaction. The paper, thus, suggests that it is necessary to move away from simplistic theorisations of the relationship between the local and the global and offers, instead, a distinct conception

⁴ One of the earlier reflections on this relationship, especially by activist themselves, considered the relationship between the local and the global to be largely about appropriate levels of thought and action. The initial rhetoric, summarised in the adage 'think globally, act locally' was eventually 'turn[ed] ... on its head and instead "think locally, act globally"' became prominent (Naidoo, 2000: 34-36). A number of versions then came to be considered, with the recent presidents of CIVICUS suggesting that activists needed to focus thought and action on both the local and the global levels in order to be effective. Rajesh Tandon and Kumi Naidoo suggested that 'social activists need to think both locally and globally and act both locally and globally since the realities of globalization now deprive us of the luxury of national parochialism' (Naidoo, 2000: 34-36).

of ‘global civil society’ which analyses both local and global activists, as well as governments and other official agencies, as participants in a totality of background meanings, norms, discourses, and practices. The paper refers to this totality of background meanings, norms and practices as a ‘web of meaning’. Understanding the interaction of ‘global civil society’ with local activist and governmental actors as occurring in, and being enabled by, such a ‘web of meaning’ allows us to recast the concerns about such interaction while avoiding the deep dichotomies of the current debate.

The following section briefly explores the conception of the relationship between the local and the global, as occurring and being transformed within a ‘web of meaning’, through a brief exposition of the genesis of this conception in the work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Subsequently, the paper illustrates this innovation in theorising the relationship between the local and the global by analysing the interactions of participants in the web of meaning amongst the government of Botswana, the London-based NGO Survival International and the Bushmen tribes living in Botswana’s Central Kalahari Game Reserve, surrounding the government’s recent evictions of the Bushmen from the Reserve. The case study, told in four parts, moves the debate away from the liberal denial of how Western norms and meanings structure and transform local activism. It similarly problematises the critical accusations of imperialism, in order to outline how all parties in this case have to make use of available meanings within the web, while attempting to make the ones that suit them prevalent and hegemonic; yet, such attempts at making meanings hegemonic are always open to contestation and resistance. The case study of the Bushmen evictions shows that power does not operate only as a one-sided imperialist or hegemonic imposition, but in a way that transforms participants in this web of meaning. Transformation may well affect local activists more than other participants. But it is wrong to suggest that transformation is uni-directional because the global political actors are also transformed by the interaction and, moreover, the web of meaning also changes through the interaction and participation of local participants. What happens is a much more complex structuring of activist subjectivities and of the agency of local groups, as well as a reshaping of the web itself. The mapping of the web of meaning illustrates that the idea of ‘global civil society’ is simultaneously much more complex, and much more significant, as a contemporary phenomenon of world politics than even advocates of ‘global civil society’ realise.

III. The Web of Meaning and Available Discourses

Following from the above discussion, how can one better conceptualise the interactions between ‘global civil society’ and local activism to avoid the conceptual polarisation evident in the current debate? The case study outlined below illustrates a conception of local activism, global activism, and the state as jointly (yet, not equally) participating in a totality of discourses, meanings, ideas, norms and practices, which can be called in shorthand the ‘web of meaning’. This section, however, situates this conception in Martin Heidegger’s discussion of the notion of ‘world’ and the ways in which human beings exist in it, as found in his seminal work *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962: 91-148), before examining how it could be helpful for rethinking the relationship between global and local activism.

Heidegger's analysis of human existence as Being-in-the-world provides a conception of the 'world' which is quite distinct from philosophical accounts which equate the 'world' to 'nature' or to a container of all things, entities, beings, and objects. Instead, Heidegger offers a conceptualisation of the 'world' as the totality of norms, meanings, discourses and references to entities according to which the self orients itself. The world, in other words, 'must be understood not as the totality of things present to man, but as the way in which things are actively taken up, a way which presupposes an organizing system of meanings and uses' (Fandozzi, 1982: 74-75; on 'discourse', see Howarth, 2000).

In order to come to this conception, Heidegger examined the ways in which human beings had a constant and unreflective capacity to cope with everyday actions. He observed that, as human beings, we are immersed in the world of things and meanings and are capable of making sense of our existence without reflection. There are two important aspects in this observation. The first is that we exist within a totality of entities, such as equipment, everyday objects, available things which we can use in everyday life without explicit awareness and reflection.⁵ Within this 'equipmental whole', some entities refer to other entities, they are *assigned* meanings of usage and meanings about how they relate to other entities (for example, how keyboards relate to computers, how bows relate to arrows, etc). Referred to in this manner, the 'world' can only be understood as 'an "environment" within which man dwells with the things he uses in a circumspective manner. The worldliness of this world is defined...as a meaningful totality of references' (Marx, 1971: 88-89). The references by which the self locates itself in the world of things and objects, and according to which existence becomes both possible and meaningful, are all connected in such a way that the totality is also a 'web of assignment relations' (Mulhall, 1996: 51). One assignment is related to another, and to the referential whole, in a chain or, rather, a web, such that the referential totality is also a 'relational totality' (Heidegger, 1962: 120). It is this connectedness of assignments that makes the whole meaningful. Selves operate within the web by making assignments, completing the chain, enlarging or altering the web of references and meanings, in an absorbed, immersed fashion which indicates that the world is always already familiar to the self (Dreyfus, 1991: 106).

Moreover, the self's familiarity with the web of meaning and its readiness to do what is appropriate, to cope in other words in each concrete context, is constantly active. This relationship to the world is so familiar that Heidegger 'simply calls it *being-in-the-world*' (Dreyfus, 1991: 104). 'On the face of it,' John Haugeland notes, 'this structure looks like a relation: being-amidst as a relation between self (agent, who) and world'; yet, Being-in-the-world is more properly understood 'as a single entity with two interdependent structural aspects: self and world' (Haugeland, 1989: 61).⁶

⁵ Although the understanding of 'world' as a referential totality is most clearly brought into perspective by the accidental interruption of Dasein's engaged immersion, the disclosure of the referential totality can occur in the absence of a disturbance by entities 'whose function it is to show their practical context' (Dreyfus, 1991: 100). Such entities are 'signs' which help Dasein achieve orientation in its own environment by 'explicitly rais[ing] an equipmental whole into our circumspection' (Heidegger, 1962: 110). Signs, then, are 'indicative of the ontological structure of readiness-to-hand, of referential totalities, and of worldhood' (Heidegger, 1962: 114).

⁶ In other words, the self is 'worldly' from the start and as part of the kind of being that it is. 'In clarifying Being-in-the-world,' Heidegger notes, 'we have shown that a bare subject without a world never "is" proximally, nor is it ever given' (Heidegger, 1962: 152).

The self, 'in so far as it is, has always *submitted* itself already to a "world"' (Heidegger, 1962: 20-121, emphasis added).

The second aspect is that human beings use available meanings, discourses and norms created by others and made available within communal and public space. The notion of using meanings which are already *available* and of being immersed in the web of meanings is important in both of these two aspects. The self is always already absorbed in the world and it engages in activities using meanings that are currently and historically available: the web of other-created, shared meanings, norms and references 'must therefore always be laid out...in advance of any particular encounter' (Mulhall, 1996: 51). This primarily includes references assigned and altered by other people or groups. The activities, actions, and decisions that one makes, therefore, 'presuppose the disclosure of one *shared* world' (Dreyfus, 1991: 142); in other words, '[e]xistence is thus dependent on an order of meaning' (Howarth, 2004: 232).

Without this shared 'web,' this 'common institutional framework,' which is already available to us, behaviour would not be intelligible; the web works tacitly and holistically and against this background, and the self's roles, norms, and *praxis* 'make sense in relation to one another and as a whole' (Haugeland, 1989: 58). This understanding of the world as a totality of meaning created largely by others highlights that this is not a world solely of *our* making; we are, rather, operating according to already existing meanings, rules, and norms within the referential totality, into which we have been socialised. Heidegger calls this 'averageness'. Yet, as selves, we go about our concerns by *uniquely appropriating* these shared meanings, norms and practices that make up the referential totality, whenever it is necessary. This appropriating relationship with respect to the shared web of meanings and relations is what Heidegger calls 'mineness'. The interplay between 'averageness', on the one hand, and 'mineness', on the other, indicates *both* an ontological familiarity and submission to the shared, already existing, web of references (averageness) *and* that the self's immersion and participation in the web has 'the quality of "mineness"' in the sense that it can 'have its unique appropriations' (Pippin, 1997: 383). Averageness and mineness should not be understood as being opposed to each other. Their unique connection allows us to understand that the world is a web of meanings, discourses and references already *formed by others* and, as such, it is only ever shared. Sharing the 'world' occurs through the self's unique appropriations of available meanings, discourses, norms and practices.

Orienting one's life by using available, other-created meanings, norms and discourses, helps to disclose the 'world' as the totality of such meanings, references and relations (what Heidegger called 'a referential totality'). For the purposes of this paper, this is quite significant: it suggests that both local and global activism participate in the totality of *available* meanings and discourses. Without assuming that all participants in the referential totality are equal in terms of power or resources which may enable them to make their understandings or unique appropriations prevalent, at the very least this conception of the totality allows local and global activists to be seen as jointly using available discourses, norms and meanings (i.e. immersed in averageness) but at the same time engaging in meaning- and discourse-appropriation (mineness) in order to orient their actions. Important questions can, then, be asked at the particular concrete level of each case about the implications of such unique appropriations for

local and global activists. In particular, for the purpose of this paper, questions can be posed about the transformations of subjectivity and agency that may take place when participants within the web make unique appropriations of available meanings and norms.

In sum, then, the world is a web ('our' world, but first and foremost the world of others) and contains all available meanings, discourses, norms, and references. In each concrete case, particular sets of meaning are available (and prevalent) through which selves and groups orient both their self-understanding and their actions. In the case study that is analysed below, for example, available meanings form a constellation, such as 'human rights', 'corporate social responsibility', 'indigenous peoples', *etc.* As participants in the web of meaning operate in this 'averageness', they make unique appropriations of these meanings, perhaps following the example of other actors, i.e. in a mimetic way, or quite distinctly to suit the concrete situation. The web of meaning is altered, extended, re-appropriated. In this way, certain meanings become prevalent, others become outdated or surpassed by more politically viable ones in new and changed concrete contexts (for example, the expansion of the human rights regime to include cultural rights, rather than only civil and political rights).

We next turn to the case study of the Bushmen people of Botswana, their eviction from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (henceforth, CKGR) by the government and the response to the evictions by the International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO), Survival International. The case study begins with an introduction of the Bushmen, while the following three sections map the web, and the available discourses, meanings, and norms within it, as used and appropriated by three sets of participants: the government of Botswana, the global activists (Survival International) and local activists (the Bushmen). The discourses and the meanings that the web contains are themselves contested both historically and in the present and the paper examines the possibilities of dissent available to the Bushmen by these elements of contestation. It concludes by outlining the ways in which the Bushmen's participation in the web of meaning produces distinct subjectivities through which we can address questions of power and hegemony in a nuanced and mediating way, avoiding the polarised nature of the debate over the impact of global civil society on local activism.

IV. The Bushmen and Globality

The case study at hand is limited to the recent interactions between the government of Botswana, the Bushmen evicted from the CKGR and relocated to new government-created settlements, the INGO Survival International, as well as the Western publics and other internationally active indigenous groups, which have become mobilised on behalf of the Bushmen's cause.⁷ In the 1950s, the British colonial administration of

⁷ The name of these groups of 'foragers' or 'hunter-gatherers' is a point of contention. In southern Africa, the various groups of foragers are known as 'Bushman', 'San' or 'Khoe' (also 'Khwe') peoples and these encompass numerous, distinct, linguistic and identity groupings. In Botswana, the Bushmen are also called 'Basarwa', although the latter term is often deemed to be pejorative as it means 'those who don't raise cattle', indicating a primitive way of life (Barnard and Taylor, 2002: 230-246). Also, see "BOTSWANA: Culture under threat - Special Report on the San Bushmen (II)" IRIN News, 10 March 2004. Yet all these terms are linguistically and culturally foreign to them and, indeed, all terms have problematic lineages (Hitchcock, 1996: 14; see also, Hitchcock and Biesele, 2004). *Bushman* is an English translation of a Dutch term, *San* is a Nama term, and *Basarwa* (singular, *Mosarwa*) is a Setswana term (the language of the main tribe of Botswana); what is more, there are 'no indigenous

Bechuanaland undertook a 'Bushman survey' and in 1961 created the CKGR.⁸ The CKGR, containing an area roughly 52,000 square kilometres, was primarily set up to 'protect the food supplies of the existing Bushmen population in this area which has been estimated to approximately 4,000 from the activities of the European farming community at Ghanzi...' (Government Savingram 10840 111 (25)). In other words, the 'game reserve' was, amongst other things, intended to ensure that there was sustainable numbers of game for the Bushmen to hunt. The government of Botswana, however, has in recent years restricted the hunting practices of the Bushmen, requiring licences and limiting the number of animals that can be killed annually. In 2001, for example, it has also charged some Bushmen with 'over-hunting'.⁹ The Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks 'has said that it would no longer issue hunting permits to San for use within the reserve' (Maroleng, 2002). Indeed, many of these groups have become semi-pastoral, and along with hunting and gathering, they raise cattle in small extended-family settlements (Associated Press, 2002). Since January 2002, the government has evicted (in its terms, 'relocated voluntarily'¹⁰) groups from Old Xade and Molapo within the CKGR, resettling them in permanent settlements, such as New Xade, outside the reserve. Having no land to roam for hunting and gathering, or in which to raise cattle, and limited to a small allocation of land, the Bushmen have become reliant on government rations, and many are said to have turned to alcoholism. These settlements have become for many international observers 'places of death', due to the rise in alcoholism and HIV/AIDS (Simpson, 2002a, 2002b and 2002c).

The relocation policy appears to be contrary to several agreements that the Botswana government has signed and also negates many of its own previous policies. As late as 1996, the government's own briefing documents promised that it would *not* forcibly move the Bushmen, despite encouraging 'voluntary' Bushmen resettlement since 1986 (Carte Blanche, 2002). Before proceeding with the case study, however, it is worth providing an introduction to the Bushmen, in which their interactions with global civil society can be understood. This involves a brief and critical survey of anthropological accounts about the Bushmen which reminds us that questions about 'global civil society' and Bushmen activism are the latest in a long line of (anthropological) questions about the Bushmen and the historical contact they have had with 'outsiders'.

terms which include all groups' (Barnard, 1986: 2; see also, Motzafi-Haller, 1994: 539-563). Locating the term 'Basarwa' in the symbolic order of Tswana society, which rests on a strict distinction between the 'social, public, male-centered village (motse)' exhibiting hierarchical structures and 'the wild, natural, unbounded sphere of animals and asocial beings (naga)' goes some way in illuminating the context in which the eviction of the Bushmen are even now taking place (Motzafi-Haller, 1994: 545; see also, Good, 1993: 203-230 and 1996: 53-77). In 1992 the indigenous NGO Kgeikani Kweni (First People of the Kalahari or FPK) suggested the use of '/Noakhwe' (which means 'First People'), and others promoted the use of simply 'Khwe' (people) (Hitchcock, 1996: 15). Recognising the difficulties of all terms, in the paper I use the term 'Bushmen' since this is also the term most often given to them in the international campaigns, but this usage refers to the Gwi and Gana Bushmen of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana in particular, who are the subject of recent evictions.

⁸ For an account of colonial policies and attitudes see (Hitchcock, 1996: 18-25).

⁹ There are also reports of torture and excessive force in other incidents in 2000, see (*The Ecologist*, 2003; Survival International, 2004b).

¹⁰ Major General Moeng Pheto claims that relocations are voluntary and the evidence for this is that there are still a small number remaining in CKGR 'if they were forced, then none of them would have remained... They have moved voluntarily because they have realised the need and that it is in their best interests that they have to be moved' (Andersson, 2002).

Who, when, where are the Bushmen?

It is estimated by archaeological and anthropological studies that although now resident in remote areas, the Bushmen at one time inhabited the majority of land in Southern Africa. Usually nomadic in bands consisting of a few extended families (ranging from 20 to 50 people), the Kalahari Bushmen subsisted almost entirely by hunting and gathering. 'Band territories are sometimes as large as 1,000 square kilometres' though part of the year a particular band sets up camp near a 'waterhole' (Barnard, 1986: 4). The specific territories used by the bands are based on intricate land tenure passed on either through marriage, parents or trade links with other people (Hitchcock and Biesele, 2000). It is assumed by some anthropologists that the Bushmen lack formal political organisation but have universal kinship categorisation 'in which entire societies are classed and treated as kinsmen' (Barnard, 1986: 4).

Indeed, the first thing to note is that one cannot separate the interactions and relationships of the Bushmen with the global (or 'global civil society') as a new experience; rather, these must be located in a long history of 'association and assimilation' generated by contact with other ethnic groups in Southern Africa such as the Bantu-speaker herders; with Westerners; with colonial and postcolonial governments and agencies; and with observers such as anthropologists and other scholars that have studied the Bushmen for the last 200 years (Barnard and Taylor, 2002; Kent, 2002a).

Anthropological research on the Bushmen, however, has only recently acknowledged how important it is to historically locate ethnographic observations and theorisations about 'hunter-gatherers'. Indeed, the introduction of 'historicity' in the 1990s engendered a great crisis in 'hunter-gatherer (or, forager) studies'. Until then, this was a field largely dominated by understandings of the Bushmen as 'autonomous foraging people' and implicitly or explicitly attributing to them a certain isolationism (Kent, 1992: 45). Such 'evolutionary anthropology', as it is known, often regarded them as 'people without history' or as 'people that time forgot'. There was a long-established ahistorical and functionalist view of forager groups, which argued that they lived in a condition of almost perfect equilibrium with their environment. Exemplified in the 'Man the Hunter' conference of 1966, this isolationist perspective was not challenged until the late 1970s and early 1980s when critical studies emerged, which contested the thesis of the Bushmen in harmony with their environment, of isolated survival and of the Bushmen as 'people with no history'. Critical treatments of 'evolutionary anthropology' lamented its willingness to ignore both history and context. The critique rendered against it in the last 15 years has brought on a sea-change in hunter-gatherer studies which, at minimum, argued that 'small-scale groups had to be studied in their historical and interethnic context' (Headland, 1997: 606).¹¹

Since then, the debate has largely abated, with hunter-gatherer studies having incorporated a number of insights from critical anthropological perspectives. This has enabled the flourishing of diachronic (historical, as opposed to synchronic) examination of the Bushmen and the development of an ethnographic record which

¹¹ The debate was between the Kalahari Harvard Research Group, which had historically characterized hunter-gatherer studies in static terms and their critics.

attests to the fact that hunter-gatherer groups in general still exist ‘not in spite of but *because* of contacts with the outside world’ (Bennet Bronson cited in Headland, 1997: 607). Such critical studies have worked to dispel the vision of the Bushmen (and other hunter-gatherers) as isolated and have produced research pointing to the class conditions, the marginalisation effects, and the affinities that Bushmen have with other poor and disadvantaged groups. It is worth noting at least two strands within this critical research which illuminate the case study.

The first strand of particular importance is the centrality of the nation-state for understanding the Bushmen’s interactions with outsiders. In this vein, Susan Kent argues that the interethnic and historical context, in which hunter-gatherers must be located, has to also include the impact of the Western nation-state, noting that, ‘the incursion of the Western nation-state in southern Africa changed the precontact relationship between foragers and nonforagers’ (Kent, 2002b: 150-151). As noted above, the debate about the interaction between the local and the global often neglects the central role that the state plays in this interaction, focussed as it is on global civil society and local activism. Thus, the relationship that any outside groups, including NGOs and other agencies (‘global civil society’ in the liberal sense), may have with the Bushmen today has to be contextualised within the relationships that the Bushmen have historically had with the nation-state projects in which colonial and post-colonial history has placed them. Indeed, interaction often meant persecution and domination and at other times preferential treatment (but not always with favourable results). As Robert Hitchcock observes, ‘[o]f all the people living in southern Africa, those labeled “Bushman” have been the most victimized, brutalized, and oppressed in the bloody history of the region’ (1996: 18).

The second strand, in addition to the nation-state, notes the economic changes introduced by the agropastoral groups that came to populate southern Africa, and also the parameters of the global economy in which the Bushmen are currently located. As Edwin Wilmsen notes, ‘all “Bushman foragers”, no matter how far into the center of the Kalahari they may have been found at any particular moment, were in those previous centuries – and remain now – enmeshed through kinship and material production networks in the dominant pastoralist economies of the region’ (1986: 1). Both of these strands, nation-state and local/global economies present a context of embeddedness quite distinct from visions of the Bushmen as ‘untouched’.

There was, however, a rejoinder to some of the ‘excesses’ of the historical anthropological discourse. Having produced numerous studies on the extent and effects of assimilation, on crime in foraging groups, on violence associated with aggregation, it was felt that there was a danger that the distinctiveness of such groups was being completely ignored, in the same sense in which the ‘intricate history’ of foragers had been previously neglected by ‘evolutionary anthropology’. Moreover, there was concern that historical treatment of the Bushmen could itself be problematic if it emphasised linearity of change or if it assumed that contact and interaction could only mean assimilation (Solway and Lee, 1990).

This paper surveys these anthropological debates for three reasons: firstly, because the debate has worked towards the abandonment of the idea that Bushmen society is ‘simple’. It has largely dispelled the utopian vision of Bushmen, the so-called ‘perpetual equilibrium models of simple societies’ and has forced an awareness of the

complexity of Bushmen society and interaction with outsiders. By halting the ‘fetishization’ of the Bushmen, the debate has challenged substantially the notion that ‘hunter-gatherers are successful only in isolations and are doomed to destruction by contact with other ways of life’ (Myers, 1988: 266). Not acknowledging the complexity of their society, their interactions, the effects and products of assimilation, ‘distorts their reality’ and can, and has, affected them politically (Myers, 1988: 264). Acknowledging that Bushmen are a ‘people with politics’, and yet struggling with our own terms of how to understand that politics, has also helped to question our capacity to impose our political analytics on them and the appropriateness of doing so (Myers, 1988: 270).

Therefore, the second reason for discussing the anthropological debate is because it allows us to consider what ‘baggage’ the discourse of hunter-gatherer studies and anthropology in general imposes on the Bushmen. Ethnographic work has been a form of interaction with the Bushmen but also a powerful production of knowledge about *what* we know about them. The web of meaning evolves as actors participate in it, and this includes the academy and its scholarly production of knowledge about the Bushmen. Governments and other agencies have often relied on anthropology and used its findings, as we discuss below, as the bedrock of policy formulation about the Bushmen. In other words, the anthropological debate itself reflects one particular interaction between the global and the local, between ethnographers and their subjects of study.

Finally, this anthropological debate is important because it is a struggle about ‘who saw the real Bushmen’ (and how) (Wilmsen and Denbow, 1990: 490). As such, the debate is a mirror image of the conflict between the government of Botswana and the INGOs fighting to preserve the Bushmen’s way of life, which is about ‘who sees the Bushmen’, ‘how to see the Bushmen’, and what subjectivities might be attributed to them through this conflict. We return to this last issue in the conclusion. Having provided this brief introduction, let us now turn to the usage that the government of Botswana makes of the web of meaning.

V. The ‘Drive to Modernity’: Botswana’s policies on the Bushmen

This section provides a mapping of the meanings, discourses and norms by which the Government of Botswana internationally, as well as domestically, explains and justifies the relocations of the Bushmen, the latest of which took place in 2002. The government makes use of a variety of ideational resources articulated by a number of public actors: international commentators, foreign statesmen, international organisations (that see it as a modern, democratic and economically and politically stable country), and also academics whose scholarly production provides ‘authoritative’ knowledge about the Bushmen, the economy, international law, *etc.*

As noted above, the government of Botswana is committed to relocating the Bushmen away from the CKGR to other settlements and two major efforts to do so took place in 1997, when 1,740 people were relocated to New Xade and Kaudwane, and again in 2002, when 530 people were removed after the suspension of water, food and health services provision (IRIN News, 2004e). Naturally, the government does not portray this programme of relocation as ‘eviction’ or ‘persecution’. The government justifies its relocations of Bushmen within distinct but related discourses and constellations of meaning, the primary of which being the discourse of modernisation. All the

discourses are enclosed within a larger understanding of 'Botswana' as a sovereign state, able to exercise control over meanings and references within its territory. For the most part, these meanings and discourses cohere together to promote a vision of the government and of Botswana that is progressive and modern. There are instances, however, when the explanations given do not cohere at all and these provide spaces for contestation by 'global civil society' groups, such as Survival International and by the Bushmen themselves.

The first discourse, that of modernisation, is the one which acts as a container for all the others. All sets of meanings that Botswana uses to describe and justify its policies and treatments of the Bushmen must be understood within the larger discourse of Botswana's successful modernisation, as evident in its much-praised economic and political success story. Its prudent management of its natural wealth of diamonds and other minerals, its political stability and advancement within its regional context, all these help to frame the remainder of the discourses at play in the eviction of the Bushmen from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Therefore, of all the meanings the government has available to it to justify and explain the Bushmen's relocation, it predominantly uses the discourse of modernisation, which had been prominent in sociology, development studies and political science in the last 30 years. Indeed, such is its reliance on this discourse that domestic commentators and organisations take it as an article of faith that 'the drive to modernity' motivates the government's renewed desire for the relocations.

Naturally, even this 'container' discourse invokes contestation and, in fact, Botswana has come under scrutiny recently in studies examining the impact of its reliance on resource extraction and whether the wealth and surpluses generated by the diamond industry are benefiting everyone. Such studies have found that, 'Botswana's economic boom had really benefited only a small elite' (IRIN News, 2003a; 2004f). Despite contestation about the benefits of modernisation, it still forms the paramount justification for the evictions and relies: in other words, the government relies on claims to modernity, development and advancement for the Bushmen themselves to legitimate its practices of relocation. This discourse, however, resonates better within the domestic Botswanan and regional contexts, rather than internationally, where more recently a different vision of 'multiple modernities' has been articulated (Therborn, 2003; 1995).

Denying Indigeneity

A prior discourse is necessary, however, to explain why the Bushmen cannot claim differential treatment or exemption from the government's policies of modernisation and development. If the Bushmen were able to claim that they are an 'indigenous' group with distinct historical traditions which they wish to preserve, then they could argue for special rights, protection and also exemption from the developmental agendas to which the government is committed (Thornberry, 2002: 33-60). However, the government rejects the notion that the Bushmen are 'indigenous' to the area and that this entitles them to specific rights or exemption from modernisation. The government denies that the term 'indigenous' applies to the Bushmen, because it claims that 'all residents of the country are indigenous' (Hitchcock, 1996: 15). Although secondary, denying the Bushmen's status as 'indigenous' is used to ensure that development-related policies are not *variably* applied to the Bushmen as a distinct cultural group. The government justifies the rejection of the Bushmen's indigeneity

on the grounds that it has always tried to ‘avoid ethnic identification in its programs, since in its eyes, this is reminiscent of the kinds of terminology used by those espousing *apartheid* (separate development)’ (Hitchcock, 1996: 15). In its ‘documents and policies the government consistently talks of the Basarwa, not as a distinct ethnic and indigenous group, but as poor citizens or welfare-needing Remote Area Dwellers (RADs), like any other poor rural Batswana’ (IRIN News, 2004c). Since 1978, the government of Botswana prefers to use the term ‘remote area dwellers’, ‘defined on the basis of their (1) spatial location (remote areas outside villages), (2) sociopolitical status (marginalized), and (3) socioeconomic status (impoverished and subject to discrimination)’ (Hitchcock, 2004).

The denial of ‘indigenous’ status to the Bushmen means that Botswana insists on maintaining its sovereign right to define nationhood and belonging. By rejecting the application of the ‘indigenous’ categorisation to the Bushmen, it refutes claims of particularity and the special rights which communities can claim. Such ‘collective or cultural rights’ were once considered as contestations to the universality claim of human-rights (based on the individual rights-holder) but have been rehabilitated through activism and the evolution of the human rights regime. The denial of cultural particularity allows the government to bracket the Bushmen as ‘poor’ – but not as ‘culturally distinct’ – and to devise and implement policies that are meant to target poverty. Such policies show little concern as to the ‘cultural’ or ‘identity’ erosion that result from the Bushmen’s separation from their land and traditions. Yet, analysts of ethnicity and identity suggest that this approach is problematic: ‘[i]f the San’s problems stem from poverty, that would require a distinct set of policy responses; if their problems are due to their status as a marginalised minority, a different course of actions would be required.’ As Maureen Akena, a programme officer at Ditshwanelo – the Botswana Centre for Human Rights – notes, ‘[t]he Basarwa need a place where they belong. But how do you recognise their need of a sense of belonging if you don’t recognise their right to their identity?’ (both quotes in IRIN News, 2004c).

The Prevalence of Modernisation Meanings

Let us return to the discourse of modernisation. The President of Botswana, Festus Mogae, argues that ‘[o]ver the years people have been encouraged to move out of our game parks and reserves...to give themselves and their children the benefit of development’ (IRIN News, 2003b). Indeed, since 1986 the government has encouraged the resettlement of the Bushmen, but it was not until October 2001 when the decision was taken to remove all residents from the CKGR. When Minister of Local Government, Margaret Nasha, was asked why this was now pursued so strictly, she responded as follows:

do you allow a section of the population to continue living in the manner they are doing and not accessing information, not accessing education for their children and health facilities that every other Motswana has free access to? As a government we had to say “no, that is not right” (Carte Blanche, 2002).

Therefore, we can see that the relocation policy is sometimes framed in terms of equality of ‘opportunities’ granted to the Bushmen by the state or in terms of Bushmen ‘empowerment’. As Clifford Maribe, assistant director of the research and information division in the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Botswana, stated ‘[i]nasmuch as Basarwa have to preserve their culture, they must also be granted that opportunity

to prepare for their own sustenance in the 21st century and beyond' (IRIN News, 2003b). The government's website seeks to promote this view, suggesting that 'the relocation exercise is intended to alleviate poverty within [the CKGR]' (Government of Botswana, 2003). Minister Nasha claimed in September 2002 that the relocations were 'also meant to empower and develop Basarwa because researchers and studies even by foreigners have urged governments of countries where Basarwa were found to empower them' (Government of Botswana, 2002). Suggesting that the relocations were meant to allow the Bushmen to exercise their citizenship rights on par with all other citizens: 'the issue of the Basarwa is a human rights issue' she told News-Carte Blanche of South Africa (2002).

Within the discourse of modernisation and empowerment, education is a particularly powerful move for the government: 'in the past, the children from the reserve were separated from their parents and sent to school hundreds of kilometres away'. The government claims that this was not acceptable as 'all children need parental love', justifying in this way the need for relocating *all* residents of the CKGR to prevent the separation of children from their families (Carte Blanche, 2002). Roy Sesana of the First People of the Kalahari (FPK) thinks that the government's emphasis on education is negated by the fact that years of educational programmes have had little result in the political reality of the Bushmen, who are still discriminated, not even being represented in the House of Chiefs or Parliament (Carte Blanche, 2002). Minister Nasha retorts, however, that the campaign against the evictions is that which results in keeping the Bushmen away from the mainstream, and away from politics: 'we want councillors, Basarwa councillors to represent their own people in government. For people to represent themselves and represent themselves convincingly, they have to have the right and access to education' (Carte Blanche, 2002).

Yet the Bushmen resist this notion of modernisation and its implications. A Bushman remaining in the CKGR despite the evictions asks 'if they really want us to modernise why don't they bring the schools and development to us in our ancestral lands?' (Andersson, 2002). But some challenge the 'drive to modernity' altogether: Daoxlo Xukuri of FPK argues that 'Government relief is another way of killing a person; in the Reserve we knew how to provide for ourselves'; analysts tend to agree: Alice Mogwe of Ditshwanelo explains that '[t]he government gives but does not empower. Its progress is based on dependency'. As the latest IRIN News report argues, the Bushmen have gone 'from being resourceful to being dependent' and all '[i]n one move' (IRIN News, 2004c).

Furthermore, the government claims that relocating the Bushmen is less problematic than suggested by indigenous rights groups, such as Survival International, on the grounds that their ways of life are no longer distinct and unique, and therefore they no longer need the reserve to protect their cultural distinctiveness. The denial of cultural distinctiveness by the government would make it extremely difficult to claim rights to land and its natural resources, if the Bushmen were to challenge the legality and legitimacy of current law, as the Richtersveld community has done in South Africa. Under current Botswana arrangements 'all proceeds from mining activities are *not* subject to claims of ownership of mineral rights from communities resident in the areas of explorations and mining development' (IRIN News, 2003b).

‘...land only for wildlife?’

In addition to the discourse of modernisation and empowerment, there are other meanings that the Government of Botswana uses to justify the evictions. Recently it has argued that ‘[o]ver time, it became clear that many residents of the CKGR were becoming settled agriculturists, raising crops and rearing livestock’ (Government of Botswana, 2004). Their increasingly sedentary way of life is taken by the government to mean that they have forfeited their right to live in the game reserves set up for them. The ways in which they now relate to the land ‘especially livestock husbandry, are not compatible with preserving wildlife resources’ (Government of Botswana, 2004). Minister Nasha stated in the aforementioned interview with News-Carte Blanche that the issue of the Basarwa reminded her of the issue of the elephants: ‘when we wanted to cull elephants, people said “no, they are such nice cuddly animals” – this is not about cuddliness, we are talking about the environment and the destruction’ (Carte Blanche, 2002).

The ability of the government to dictate what the game reserves are to be used for is, however, worth noting as it is important for the capacity of the Bushmen and their supporters to challenge it: the government now claims that the reason behind the creation of game reserves such as the CKGR, was to protect animals and ensure that they did not become extinct. In a speech at the London School of Economics on 11 June 2003, President Mogae insisted that ‘[the Basarwa’s] modern economic activities, be it hunting, arable and/or pastoral architecture or some other commercial activity are inconsistent with the primary purpose of the parks and the reserves.’ (IRIN News, 2003b). This statement is contrary to past designations for the CKGR and a surprise to the Bushmen themselves. Commentators have suggested that the redesignation of nature parks and reserves has generally harmed indigenous populations, leading to their further disenfranchisement, depriving them of use of ‘ancestral lands’ as seen across many cases, rather than being unique to the Bushmen. A group of Bushmen women interviewed by the Associated Press in January 2002 said, ‘this is our land, it does not belong to the wildlife department [Department of Wildlife and National Parks]. We wonder why it should only be for the wildlife now.’ Another shared the shock at this redesignation: ‘we are really surprised that this land is now only for the wildlife. Our ancestors used to live on this land and we know that this land is ours.... it is my father’s, father’s land’ (Associated Press, 2002). The discussion on the appropriate use of the CKGR marks a changing understanding of nature reserves as such, now meant for wildlife protection in order to encourage tourism rather than intended to sustain the Bushmen themselves. Like the exercise of sovereignty in determining the status of who is ‘indigenous’, the government’s exclusive determination of the purpose of the CKGR has serious repercussions for the Bushmen’s activism and international campaigns.

However, at other times, the government has used the very ‘traditional’ mobility evidenced in the Bushmen’s nomadic way of life precisely to justify their relocation from the CKGR to areas such as New Xade in Ghanzi District and Kaudwane in Kweneng District (Hitchcock, 2004). Given that the Bushmen were always mobile, the government claims, there is no reason as to why they cannot now be *moved* to government-created settlements. These two distinct justifications, the ‘Bushman as now sedentary’ *and* the ‘Bushman as always mobile’, point to an inconsistent use of the diverse meanings within the referential totality, with the government trying to

make use of both the notions of ‘sedentarism’ and ‘mobility’ without realising their incongruity.

The remoteness of the Bushmen within the CKGR and the expense of maintaining the services that the government had provided is also utilised by the government as a justification for the evictions. It now claims that the CKGR services for Bushmen are ‘too remote to sustain’ and that it is expensive to deliver water, given the distances involved and the size of the reserve (Andersson, 2002). Yet, Survival International suggests that the actual cost of water and other services is only 20 pula per person per week [about US\$3] (Corry, 2002). The government itself has estimated the cost of CKGR services to be US\$11,000 a month (IRIN News, 2004b). Given Botswana’s natural wealth and diamond-fuelled growth over the past 30 years, these sums are not prohibitive. Indeed, offers by the European Union to fund the government’s services to the Bushmen, as part of a grant designated for national parks and the people who reside in them, have been refused (Corry, 2002; Bretton Woods Project; Mogapi, 2002). The government is also spending approx. US\$ 5 million on improving the settlement of New Xade, money which could be spent on continuing the CKGR services.¹²

Finally, we need to mention the silent discourse behind the evictions: that they were undertaken so that diamonds could be mined in the CKGR. This is a discourse used by Survival International and the Bushmen themselves to explain the pace and determination behind the evictions. The government denies such claims, citing the fact there are no current plans to mine in the CKGR, although mining companies DeBeers and BHP Billiton have undertaken and renewed prospecting licenses for many sites within the Reserve. This is also denied by other think-tanks such as Ditshwanelo and other NGOs who argue instead that a broader view suggests that it is the ‘drive to modernity’ which motivates the evictions. The issue of diamonds is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

The Government’s Use of the Web of Meaning

Examining the various references and discourses within the web of meanings by which the government orients its policies towards the Bushmen, we can see the predominance of modernisation references, with all the progressivist undertones of that discourse: empowerment and poverty alleviation, access to services, human rights, etc. Also evident is the paternalistic attitude which characterises this discourse. As noted above, these meanings do not always cohere with one another, but all participate more generally to sustain state sovereignty and the state’s capacity to decide the pathways to modernity to be taken by its people. The denial that there are ‘indigenous peoples’ to whom accrue rights to land and cultural self-determination is necessary for the success of the government’s portrayal of its policies. Using the term ‘portrayal’ does not mean to suggest that the government *only* cynically makes use of the web of meanings in order to justify its decisions to evict the Bushmen. Using

¹² Defending itself against claims that the Bushmen are suffering within its new settlement areas, the Government’s website devotes numerous pages on the Basarwa, insisting that ‘the Government has devoted significant resources to assist the Basarwa in their new settlements. Funds have been allocated for infrastructural developments such as schools, health posts, water reticulation and other social amenities’ (Mogae, 2002). Indeed, a recent report by IRIN News does note that ‘[t]he government offers free education and health care, old-age pensions, drought aid, free food for AIDS orphans and free antiretrovirals for people with HIV/AIDS’ (IRIN News, 2004c).

Heidegger's notion of a 'background web' against which we make sense of our existence, one would say that these are the meanings by which the government of Botswana understands its *raison d'être*. Yet, reading Heidegger against the grain, one would also argue that there are both strategic choices that are made about which meanings to employ (and this is so for the groups opposing the government, as well) and also that there is often a disparity between the language of these meanings and the means used to carry them out. Let me give an example: when Minister Nasha states on behalf of the government that 'the issue of the Basarwa is a human rights issue', she is using a popular reference within the web of meaning and places the evictions within that meaning. However, when one examines the way in which the 2002 evictions were carried out (as opposed to some of the earlier relocations), the destruction of the Bushmen's huts and boreholes, and their 'infantilisation' through lack of proper consultation as to how they wish to live, this use of 'human rights' appears predominantly strategic.

It is striking that the government's use of the web of meanings mirrors the anthropological debates referred to above: at one level, the government is contesting the fact that the Bushmen are unique. By renaming them 'remote area dwellers' and attempting to design policies that will alleviate their poverty, it seeks to equate them with other rural poor groups. Yet, at other levels, the government re-inscribes the very thing that it claims to deny: their distinctiveness. In 1996, prior to the evictions of 2002, President Mogae described the Bushmen as 'primitive': [h]ow can you have a Stone Age creature continue to exist in an age of computers? If the Bushmen want to survive, they must change or otherwise, like the dodo, they will perish' (Index on Censorship, 2003). In Bakhtinian terms, we might say that there is a certain *heteroglossia*, or multi-vocality, in the government's proclamations (Bakhtin, 1982: 263). The government's *heteroglossia* reflects the various debates about the Bushmen that are contained within the academy.

But it is more than that: at some historical constellations academic paradigms become central to the ways in which governments frame, articulate and design policy. A historical example from the then newly independent Botswana government may illustrate this: the anthropologist George Silberbauer and his scholarly production was decisive for Botswana policy on the 'Bushman Problem'. Commissioned by the British colonial administration of Bechuanaland in the 1950s to develop a policy on the Bushmen, Silberbauer's role was central to the drafting of documents such as the Fauna Conservation Proclamation and the creation of the CKGR. He was instrumental in safeguarding the freedom of the Bushmen to hunt and forage in the CKGR 'as they had for generations'. At the same time, Silberbauer

believed that the most economic sectors of assistance were in education and economic development. He recommended that Bushmen who were successful as pupil farmers be provided with boreholes and livestock to enable them to start as agropastoral producers...[these suggestions] did serve as a rough model for subsequent development action for Bushmen (Hitchcock, 1996: 24-25).

Silberbauer's attention to the distinctiveness of the Bushmen appears to have been forgotten by 1978 and Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), when

‘villagization’ and provision of ‘social services’ became prominent.¹³ The example shows clearly, however, the ways in which academic discourse makes certain meanings available to governments. More recently, the evictions were justified in terms of ‘empowerment’, reflecting critical exploration of notions of ‘emancipation’ and ‘local capacity’ in diverse disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology, development studies, and political science. In other words, anthropological and other academic discussions shape the web, providing within it spaces of contestations and multiple voices. In the case of the government, this is most evident in the invocation of both ‘primitiveness, simplicity of society, ancient tradition’ (associated with the Harvard Kalahari Research Group) and ‘modernity/modernisation, Bushmen as marginalised rural poor’ (associated with critical historicist anthropology).

Finally, the web of meaning is ever-evolving, containing within it older meanings as well as more recent interpretations or complete changes. An example of this is the rejection of the notion of ‘indigenous peoples’ and their rights because it is suggested that claims to particularity lead to ‘apartheid’ (Survival International, 2003a: 10). As the recent IRIN News report explicitly argues,

[a]t independence in 1966, Botswana declared itself a non-racial state. At the time, for a nation emerging from colonial rule and bordering apartheid South Africa, to stress non-differentiation and non-discrimination was a progressive policy (IRIN News, 2004c).

Thus, the government’s modernisation discourse is now maintained against ‘a global trend that accepts cultural diversity as compatible with, and not in opposition to, the idea of a nation state’ (IRIN News, 2004c). Despite the fact that ‘post-development’ discourses have become quite prominent within the web of meanings, the government is still wedded to earlier assumptions about growth and modernisation. Yet these older meanings can still be used by various participants within the web even if they are considered to be ‘past their sell-by date’ (indeed, sometimes such references are ‘revived’ and re-appropriated). In this instance, the denial of indigenous rights by the government is in refutation of certain legal tendencies, and yet this is a stance still taken by a number of governments. The contestation of ‘older’ or outdated meanings is an interesting process which requires further consideration than this paper can allow. Below we turn to the uses of the web of meaning by Survival International, the most prominent of International Non-Governmental Organisations involved in opposing the government’s evictions of the Bushmen.

VI. ‘Bushman aren’t forever’: Survival International

This section examines the discourses that are available to and are used by Survival International, the INGO most vocal in opposing the government’s policy of evictions. At the time of the evictions, Survival International organised protests in front of Botswanan embassies in London, Madrid, Paris and Milan which ‘embarrassed the government’ (Carte Blanche, 2002). Since then it has mounted an advertisement and high profile signature gathering campaign, calling on the government to allow return

¹³ With all its racist connotations; it is intended not only to encourage settlement but to ‘help civilize the Basarwa’ and to ‘teach them the value of work’. Statements by officials cited in (Hitchcock, 1996: 34).

of the Bushmen to the CKGR. In February 2004 it has handed in petitions to Botswana's embassies in the United States, Belgium, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Kenya and South Africa (Survival International, 2004a).

Survival International utilises a number of related discourses in which to 'truly see' the Bushmen and describe what is happening to them. It, too, operates within the referential totality and makes use of available meanings to articulate its direction. Like the government, it seeks to make or maintain the potency of meanings which cohere with its mandate and self-conception. NGOs are generally seen as weak political actors through the statist discourses of International Relations. Yet the examination below illustrates the ways in which they have powerful interpretive and symbolic capacities within the referential totality.

The Struggles within 'Rights Talk'¹⁴

The general discourse in which Survival International's concerns with the Bushmen are articulated is the discourse of the rights and self-determination of 'indigenous peoples'. In their mission statement, Survival notes that 'Survival International is a worldwide organisation supporting tribal peoples. It stands for their right to decide their own future and helps them protect their lives, lands and human rights' (Survival International, Mission Statement). Regarding the Bushmen, Survival is concerned to ensure their 'survival as peoples' invoking their 'ethnic' and 'cultural' particularity (Survival International, 2003a: 1).

In international law, the protection of indigenous rights has not been addressed specifically. Rather, it has been subsumed in the 'general human rights standards characteristic of liberal-democratic systems'; as such, it has been 'articulated in a series of international treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination' (Richardson, 2001: 5). The meanings that are available to Survival International, therefore, descend from the evolution of international law to include the right of self-determination and collective or cultural rights in general. Yet, this is not a story of resounding success but of a continued struggle to include 'indigenous' (and minority, cultural or collective) rights within human rights law. Critics of such struggles, deny that it is necessary to create a 'specific canon of rights [for indigenous peoples], because existing international and human rights principles are presumptively sufficient for all human beings and human groups' (Thornberry, 2002: 3, brackets added; see also, Corntassell and Primaueu, 1995).

The tendency in international law has been to assume that the rights of 'indigenous peoples' are 'covered' by the right to self-determination and other human rights instruments. In particular, there was a historical reluctance by states to acknowledge the notion of indigenous peoples as distinct from 'the people' encompassed within the principle of self-determination. In the mid-1940s the United Nations General Assembly accepted 'whole colonial territories as the subjects of self-determination – the "people" – not ethnic, etc., groups within them' (Thornberry, 2002: 93). As Patrick Thornberry notes, '[t]he target was colonialism and the Charter principle [of

¹⁴ See (Merry, 2002).

self-determination, articles 1(2) and 55 of the UN charter] became a right¹⁵; yet this was a right combined with territorial integrity and, thus, not open to the cause of groups within the newly independent states (2002: 93). Furthermore, decolonising countries were wary of the terminology of ‘indigenous people’ being different from the nation or ‘the people’ of the country as a whole, as they feared that their former imperial masters could use this distinction to ‘divide and rule’ their past colonies. This had serious consequences for indigenous people as their claims and concerns ‘were sidelined in the practice of the GA [General Assembly]’ (Thornberry, 2002: 93).

The anti-colonial paradigm, as this is known, had the effect of pursuing state independence almost obsessively, to the detriment of questions of indigenous populations whose inclusion in ‘the people’ (who were seeking independent statehood) obscured their own identity claims. The faith placed on the territorial integrity of the newly independent states, despite the often arbitrary nature of the borders and population inclusions, also had the effect of discouraging further self-determination claims by indigenous or aboriginal groups. These historical circumstances and the centrality of territorial integrity meant that a distinction was upheld between *internal* self-determination, understood as ‘cultural’ self-determination, and *external* self-determination that would acknowledge the right to secession:

only the entire population of an existing state constitutes a ‘people’ with a right of self-determination, and distinct populations within a state merely have the rights to ‘internal’, as against ‘external’ self-determination, without any right of secession (Cassese, 1995: 57-62).

Moreover, the claim of universal applicability within international human rights instruments has meant that concerns of minorities or indigenous peoples have been dealt through the concept of ‘discrimination’ and its avoidance. The cause of indigenous people has not always benefited from claims of universality or by attempts to achieve universal application of rights through the eradication of ‘discrimination’: indigenous claims are located in a particularist or, at best multicultural, discourse in which group diversity is regarded as highly desirable; the emphasis on group particularity calls into question the claims of universality inherent to human rights. If we were to suggest, in other words, that the principle of self-determination be extended to indigenous groups, then this could be seen as contesting the universality of rights. Thornberry disagrees, however, and suggests that self-determination could be understood as ‘liberation from alien rule [which] guarantees human rights’ as whole, in other words, not as contradictory to the rest of the human rights instruments ((Thornberry, 2002: 94). Despite Thornberry’s statement, the reluctance to include references to minority, community or indigenous rights in, for example, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and the sole focus on universality and ‘discrimination’ cannot be wholly divorced from the concerns of (new and existing) countries with indigenous populations, which were ‘wedded to their policies of assimilation’.¹⁶

¹⁵ ‘All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.’ Paragraph 2 of Resolution 1541(XV).

¹⁶ For example, the US argued against inserting a right specific to minorities during the drafting of the UDHR in 1948 (Thornberry, 2002: 100).

Politically, the emphasis on individualism further clouds the debate: as Courtney Jung argues, '[d]emands for collective rights are in tension with the commitments of liberal democracies to individual rights' (Jung, 2003: 433) to the extent that '[t]he focus in human rights law on the individual largely excludes from consideration the rights of indigenous peoples' (Overmyer-Velázquez, 2003: 9). The analytical reason for this tension 'is the difficulty of defining discrete "peoples" entitled to collective rights' but there is also an *ideological* tension between individualism and communitarianism at play here (Overmyer-Velázquez, 2003: 9). There has been a gradual recognition in the past two decades, largely the result of indigenous activism within states but also at the international level, that

majority rule under a democratic constitution may be inadequate for protecting the interests of minority communities in a heterogeneous society, [and] achievement of the right of self-determination for indigenous peoples has been seen as requiring a form of group rights to allow for a measure of autonomy and self-government. (Richardson, 2001: 5, brackets added).

In terms of legal instruments which specifically enable the claims of indigenous rights, these are still sparse: Survival International primarily makes reference to International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169 *Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*, which came into force in 1991 (ILO, 1991). This is, of course, largely due to the fact that 'ILO usage has the longest pedigree, using the term [indigenous] in the 1930s' (Thornberry, 2002: 40, brackets added) although this lineage was far from supportive of indigenous rights as we understand them today. Since the 1950s, ILO Convention 107 on *Living and Working Conditions of Indigenous Populations* 'tended to reflect the views of the settler societies and to promote the absorption of indigenous populations into the settler societies' (Perkins, 1992). The ILO took steps to revise Convention 107 as it became increasingly aware that 'its stated aims did not comport with the desires of the emerging indigenous rights movement,' (Perkins, 1992) but also that it did not cohere with 'the developments which have taken place in international law since 1957, as well as developments in the situation of indigenous and tribal peoples in all regions of the world' (Preamble, ILO, 1991). In 1989, it adopted Convention 169 which aimed to remove 'the assimilationist orientation of the earlier standards' (Preamble, ILO, 1991).

Although several countries which have indigenous peoples and, often, a problematic history of assimilation or persecution like Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras have ratified it, Botswana has not (IRIN News 2004c), most likely because the Convention makes special stipulation about the right of indigenous people to choose their own path to development:

[t]he peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use (ILO, 1991, Art. 7).¹⁷

The Convention, moreover, requires governments to respect indigenous peoples' spiritual attachment and relationship 'with the lands or territories...which they occupy

¹⁷ Costa Rica, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Fiji and Norway have ratified the convention.

or otherwise use, and *in particular the collective aspects of this relationship*' (ILO, 1991, Art. 13).¹⁸

In addition to ILO Convention 169, there is also a 1993 United Nations *Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which is the result of a decade of consultation with indigenous peoples and governments conducted by the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (UN, 1994).¹⁹ The relationship of Survival International with the normative and legal domain of human rights law, and generally the content of the web of meaning must be understood as one of resistance and advocacy: historically, it is part of a larger movement seeking to change the prevalence of a certain kind of universality which limits claims that can be made on behalf of indigenous peoples (Chesterman, 2000).

The birth of the international indigenous movement is probably tied to the indigenous activism of the 1960s and early 1970s. In the United States, indigenous peoples were mobilizing on a national scale to stage several key events, most notable being Wounded Knee II, in 1974, and the Trail of Broken Treaties march on Washington, D.C. in 1975. These events had a diffusionary effect by heightening the awareness of indigenous populations throughout the globe that they shared a common plight in the face of the modernization process (Wilmer, 1993: 18-19, see also, 136-138).

Staging marches and other prominent, high-profile, events, the movement led to the creation of NGOs and INGOs from the 1960s onwards, such as Survival International (formed in 1969), many of which succeeded in getting consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN (Wilmer, 1993).²⁰ Furthermore, a network of researchers on indigenous peoples and human rights activists, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, was established in 1968 as such circles became increasingly aware of the persecution of Indians in Amazonia. The internationalisation of the indigenous movement has continued since.²¹ This movement and numerous INGOs associated with it, proactively promoted a particular marginalised discourse of indigenous (collective) rights within a web of meaning focused on individual (civil and political) rights, bringing about the inclusion within the web of ideas on cultural self-determination that were historically 'inconvenient' for states at the time of the creation of the UN, its charter and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Land

The Draft UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, though not an instrument of law, again recognises the paramount importance of land (Winkler, 2002; Dodds, 1998). Article 7 discusses 'the collective and individual right not to be subjected to ethnocide and cultural genocide' which includes '[a]ny action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources' (UN, 1994, Art. 7). It should also be noted, however, that the growing relevance and legal attraction of 'cultural rights' and 'indigenous rights' within the web has often come to

¹⁸ However, the Convention also states that '[t]he nature and scope of the measures to be taken to give effect to this Convention shall be determined in a flexible manner, having regard to the conditions characteristic of each country', Art. 34.

¹⁹ See also (UNHCHR, 1997).

²⁰ Survival International had consultative status in 2001 and 2002, but not since.

²¹ 'Economic and cultural globalization processes possess certain "positive" features for select indigenous peoples and their activities' (Forte, 1998-1999).

the detriment of older meanings prevalent within the web, and in particular those of 'land reform' or 'agrarian reform'. Concern with the more socialist notion of agrarian reform and peasant liminality amongst indigenous peoples is increasingly becoming articulated as 'cultural self-determination', or 'indigenous rights to culture': this is the effect of a certain hegemony of 'rights talk' within the web of meaning. The favourable political climate to 'rights talk' has meant that the web is altered and concerns are phrased in the language of rights. This does not, of course, refer only to the Bushmen but points to a more general tendency seen and experienced by other indigenous peoples, such as the Mexican Indians for example, who have gone from being 'campesinos' (roughly, agrarian workers) engaged in a struggle for agrarian reform to being 'indigenous people' fighting for rights to cultural self-determination (Speed, 2002: 217).

Survival International places great emphasis on the cultural attachment of tribal peoples to their land and notes how their greatest disenfranchisement comes from loss of land rights. In the case of the Bushmen this is quite central. In 1978 a decision by a litigation consultant to the office of the Attorney General of Botswana denied that Bushmen *had* land rights (or any rights): 'owing no allegiance to any Chief or tribe...the true nomad Masarwa can have no rights of any kind except rights to hunting'.²² While this was quickly disavowed by the government, the policy of using settlement as a means of granting land rights is not in line with the Bushmen's needs and evolving indigenous rights norms and law. More generally, the Bushmen's embeddedness in the pastoral Tswana economies of the region means that there is inherent 'conflict between their need for land on which to forage and the demands of cattle ranching' (IRIN News, 2004c; Hitchcock, 1996: 26-34). Since 'cattle rank high as a source of status and wealth' there is great demand that land be devoted to cattle-ranching, 'leading to the dispossession and forced relocation of poor rural people (not only San).' The government has intensely promoted cattle-ranching since 1975 through its Tribal Grazing Land Policy which aimed 'to allocate and regulate tribal land where cattle graze.' More recently,

The Tribal Land Act Amendment Act of 1993 allowed people to get land anywhere in the country, not just in their home districts, provided they developed the land in two years, including water and fencing. In practice, people with means, mainly the urban-based, outcompete locals for land. The losers are the poor.

The World Bank estimates that anywhere between 28,000 and 31,000 people were displaced as a result and there is danger that many more will be displaced in the Western Central District with the imposition of the Fencing Act and National Policy for Agricultural Development (all quotes in IRIN News, 2004c).

Survival International's emphasis on land, however, centres primarily on the recent evictions, which it associates with diamond prospecting and the desirability of mining in the CKGR:

Far from recognising [the Bushmen's] ownership rights over the land they have lived on for thousands of years, the Botswana government has in fact forced almost all of them off it. The harassment began in 1986, and the first forced removals were in 1997 (Survival International, "About the Bushmen").

²² Ministry of Local Government and Lands File 2/1/1, cited in (Hitchcock, 1996: 32)

Survival links the Bushmen's eviction from the CKGR to cultural genocide through the 'dispossession of lands and traditional resources', as defined by Article 7 of the Draft Declaration. In an article in the *Mmegi Reporter* (Gaborone, Botswana) at the time of the evictions in 2002, Stephen Corry, the Director of Survival, argued that if the government 'succeeds in forcing the Gana and Gwi off their land it will almost certainly ensure their final demise as a cohesive people' (Corry, 2002;).²³

This is because Survival believes that diamond extraction is crucial both to understanding the Bushmen case and opposing the evictions. Its understanding of the land issue is not geared only towards the state but also derives from a broader political economy approach. Survival locates tribal people's civil, political and land rights within the global political economy, recognising that tribal peoples are not only trying to maintain their cultural distinctiveness and ways of life but that they, at the same time, exist in global economic structures which seek to enclose them in modernist economic practices and to rescind any claims to land that they may have. In evoking tribal peoples' rights, Survival does not only address itself to the state in question, but also to the global economic actors that sustain the state. Indeed, Survival's reporting on the Bushmen does not separate between the economy and the state, assuming a continuity and complementarity between the government of Botswana and the multinational mining corporations granted exploration licenses in the CKGR. that is reminiscent of Robert W. Cox's arguments (Survival International, 2003b: 8; see Cox, 1981 on the 'internationalization of the state').²⁴

Diamonds

In its report 'Bushmen aren't forever', Survival links the evictions with the discovery of diamonds in Gope and other Bushmen communities where the government has allowed test drilling since the early 1980s. The first evictions and cessation of water provision, Survival claims, began in 1997, only a year after De Beers had completed its evaluation of the prospective mine in the Gope area (Survival International, 2003a: 2). As other explorations within CKGR took place in the late 1990s, the government set into place a schedule for the forcible resettlement of all the Bushmen from the reserve. Survival cites industry sources who claim that the diamond find within the CKGR is 'very significant' and also industry practices of hoarding mining licenses without actually extracting diamonds, as evidence that diamonds are behind the 2002 evictions. De Beers has commented that '[t]he company reserved the right to review the economic viability of the project from time to time so as to decide whether or not to proceed with full scale mining', lending weight to Survival's claims (Sheila Khama cited in Survival International, 2003a: 4).

A recent case between the Richtersveld community and mining corporations heard in the Constitutional Court of South Africa is important for the Bushmen, Botswana and for the diamond extraction industry. The Court heard a 'claim for the return of the land and mineral rights of the Richtersveld community who had been dispossessed of

²³ Mark Levene has also tied this to the recent developments with the International Criminal Court, which has entered into force in July 2002, arguing that its Statute revalidates the notion of 'cultural genocide'. (Levene, 2002).

²⁴ It could however, be similarly claimed that their self-understanding protecting tribal people from state and economic actors coheres with certain liberal conception of civil society (and global civil society) as antithetical to the state and to the economy.

such rights by a process that began with the annexation of the Richtersveld area by the British Crown in 1847' (Tong, 2003: 4) but continued with the licensing of diamond mining by the South African government. In ruling that the 'nature and the content of the rights of the Richtersveld community', including property rights, had to be 'determined by reference to indigenous law, which governed the land rights of the community, and not by reference to common law' (Tong, 2003: 5), the Court upheld the Richtersvelders' 'communal land ownership and mineral rights' (Survival International, 2003c).²⁵ This has been noted within the industry and *Minenews*, an industry information newsletter, has commented on the affinities of this case to Botswana:

[t]he ruling that indigenous people who own land under their own, unwritten, law have the right to have this upheld in spite of other legal systems which are subsequently imposed by the state has interesting implications for Botswana, which apparently operates under the same "Roman-Dutch" legal system. If the South African ruling is applied, then the bushmen own their ancestral land as well as the mineral rights over their territory (*Minenews*, 2003).²⁶

As the American NGO First Peoples Worldwide noted at the time, 'the decision will most definitely set a precedent for future aboriginal title cases throughout the world' (First Peoples Worldwide).

Romantic Primitivism or Euphemism of Development?

The *heteroglossia* available within the web of meanings is apparent in the case of Survival International's campaign as well as in the government's actions explored above. The government of Botswana claims that Survival's discourse of distinctiveness (and by extension, the discourse of cultural rights) is intended to keep the Bushmen 'away from the mainstream'. Within the academic meanings one could say that Survival's campaign has been informed by a contested anthropology which assumes an unchanging isolationist condition in which the Bushmen are deemed 'socially and culturally uninterested in and unprepared for participation in independent pastoral economies' (Wilmsen, 1986: 1-2). It could be taken to signify a 'contemporary global primitivism ... a mode of thought which, in its simplest form, juxtaposes a romantic view of indigenous peoples against an immoral and destructive world capitalist system' (Haley, 1999). Were this to be the case, one could note three difficulties arising from such a view of the Bushmen: firstly, that this is a tendency to 'idolise' their stories and voices, or rather, those stories that fit the idealised image we hold of them, marginalising those that do not. It also appeals to notions of 'authenticity' that tend to deny what Brian D. Haley calls 'contrary evidence' from indigenous people that do not fit the mold, that narrate experiences outside the expected romanticised view. Such a view does not allow for diversity within indigenous peoples experiences, but is instead hegemonic, a 'colonialism of images' (Stoll, 1999: 238; Kelly, 1995). Secondly, such a view of indigenous peoples, would present them in a stark dichotomous fashion with respect to the very modern

²⁵ "Under indigenous Nama law, as observed by the Richtersveld community, land was communally owned and members of the community had a right to occupy and use the land" (Tong, 2003: 6).

²⁶ There is another concern, however: the campaign to prohibit the sale of African 'conflict diamonds' (that is, diamonds extracted from conflict zones which are seen as fuelling wars in Africa) has successfully sought to ban such diamonds from world markets. Were Botswana diamonds to be designated as 'conflict diamonds' because of the Bushmen evictions, this could have a disastrous effect on the economy, (see Taylor and Mokhawa, 2003).

circumstances that they need to deal with. Finally, the prevalence of this view amongst human rights, environmental and indigenous rights advocacy groups is ‘creating a new global culture of indigenism’ with the result that indigenous people themselves find it difficult to live up to the romanticised, primitive image of themselves (Robbins, 2001).

Yet, it is contestable whether Survival International falls within the ‘global culture of indigenism’. On the contrary, Survival International claims that there is nothing ‘archaic’ or ‘backward’ about the Bushmen’s way of life; that it is wrong to think of them as ‘remnants of a last era’, an understanding often voiced by the government that inheres its own dangers of perceiving the Bushmen as people whose time has passed (Survival International, 1999). Survival International, on the contrary, promotes a view of the Bushmen, and of tribal people in general, as groups attuned to world while at the same time preferring to maintain their distinctiveness and traditions. Rather than suggesting that their traditions place them in a collision course with modernity, Survival argues that their way of life is rather ‘perfectly viable’ and ‘very well adapted’ to their environment and that ‘they face their lives with a confidence that many in the Western world lack’ (Channel 4 News, 2002). As Stephen Corry himself has argued at the time of the evictions, ‘[t]he Basarwa have adapted to neighbouring peoples and cultures for generations and will continue to do so. However, without their land and the ability to live how they wish, they are doomed as a *people*’ (Corry, 2002).

There are three things to note about Survival’s use of the web of meanings: the first is the already cited struggle within ‘rights talk’ between individualism and collectivism which pervades all of the indigenous peoples’ movement and affiliated organizations. Survival’s prominence over the last decade in the internationalisation of tribal concerns means that it is not only a user of available meanings, but also itself resisting the prominent individualist strand.²⁷ The second thing to note is Survival’s contestation of another discourse, that of development. What it challenges in the case of the Bushmen is the ‘euphemism’ of development in which the government hides its assimilationist policies (Corry, 2003). Third, is the familiar way in which anthropological and academic debates on ‘seeing the Bushmen’ again frame and shape the reception of Survival’s campaign, questioning its place within the web of meanings in the debate between historicism and romanticism. Below, we examine briefly the Bushmen’s own appropriations of meanings and references within the web and conclude by exploring the production of subjectivities that this entails.

VII. The Bushmen’s Unique Appropriations of the Web of Meaning

This section examines the Bushmen’s unique appropriations of discourses, meanings and activist practices of dissent/resistance that are available in the referential totality. To recap from section III, the web is the referential totality by which the self (or selves) locates itself in the world and according to which existence and in this case, activism, becomes meaningful. For Heidegger, this conception includes references primarily assigned and altered by others. The multitude of the self’s activities

²⁷ Studying the processes and dynamics by which marginal concerns become legitimate issues for consideration in world politics has been called for by many constructivist scholars of world politics and transnational activism such as (Finnemore, 1996; Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

‘presuppose the disclosure of one shared world’ (Dreyfus, 1991: 142). In other words, the self operates according to already existing meanings, rules, and norms. Without this shared ‘web,’ this ‘common institutional framework,’ our and others behaviour would not be intelligible; the web works tacitly and holistically and against this background, the self’s roles, norms, and praxis ‘make sense in relation to one another and as a whole.’ For Heidegger, the self goes about its concerns by uniquely appropriating these shared meanings, norms and practices that make up the referential totality.

In the case of the Bushmen, existing meanings are reconstituted and refashioned by them in ways that are appropriate within their specific context – that of resisting the evictions carried out by the government of Botswana. When the Bushmen call for a return to their ‘ancestral lands’ (in interviews for the BBC, Associated Press, etc.), or when they call the evictions ‘cultural genocide’, they are invoking the language of cultural rights available in legal instruments such as the ILO convention 169 or the UN Draft Declaration. This is the most obvious use of available meanings by the Bushmen and other tribal peoples. Similarly, when the Bushmen formed their own organisation, they called it ‘First People of the Kalahari’ (FPK) and in doing so they were utilising meanings available to them through the historical experience of other indigenous peoples’ struggles. In other words, the Bushmen do not only use legal instruments or ‘norms’ but also avail themselves of comparable *practices* by other indigenous groups, such as the First Nations in the context of Canada or Australian Aborigines, uniquely appropriating such utterances and practices to articulate their own resistance.

Such groups have come to the Bushmen’s defence in the past two years, lending the history of their own struggle for the Bushmen’s use. For example, the Ogiek hunter-gatherers in Kenya have issued a statement in support of the Survival petition:

the heart of the Ogiek people goes out to our brothers and sisters the Gana and Gwi Bushmen... Brothers and sisters: do not let your persecutors make you forget who you are: no matter how far away from it you have been taken, the land and life your forefathers gave you belong to you. Be strong! You will see your land again! (Survival International, 2004a).

Canadian organisations such as the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG) organised protests in support of the Bushmen outside the World Diamond Conference in June 2001. Even before the latest evictions in 2002, they sought to align the mass relocations of indigenous peoples in North America, and elsewhere, with the processes at play in the Bushmen relocations (Creative Resistance, 2002). The web of meaning makes solidarity possible, but also solidarist activities maintain the referential totality and, in certain circumstances, create new meanings.

There are several advantages in conceptualising the practices of dissent associated with the Bushmen as utilising a shared, already given, web of references and meanings. It allows us to understand both the *givenness* of meanings, through which practices are understood and justified and also the Bushmen’s *unique* appropriations which distinctly capture meanings and use them in specific ways that, in turn, work towards altering the referential totality itself. For example, the internationally existing discourse of indigenous rights, promoted by the indigenous peoples movement, the ILO and various NGOs, contests and alters the universalist discourse of the first

generation of human rights. The Bushmen's activist practices of dissent by which they communicate their experience of eviction and desire to return to the CKGR then become available for other groups to utilise.

It is easier to understand this notion of unique appropriations of shared meanings and norms when we consider that, for Heidegger, the self is an entity *thrown* (best approximated by 'immersed' and 'submitted') in the world of meanings and praxis; in such a state of thrownness (*Gerworfenheit*) the self is not explicitly aware of the web's existence. When Bushmen confront their problems in Botswana and resist, they are operating in the world in their state of thrownness: when they ask 'the High Court [of Botswana] to declare that the government should continue to provide the services that it has always provided' (Carte Blanche, 2002); when they ask the anthropologists studying them to put them in touch with international human rights NGOs (Hitchcock, 1996: 33); when they appeal to De Beers and BHP Billiton not to mine in the CKGR until the Bushmen's rights to return to it are recognised by the government, to behave, in other words, according to the companies' own corporate social responsibility norms they are orienting themselves based on the totality of claims, understandings and assignments available within the web (Survival International, 2003d).

Any unique appropriation of globally available meanings and practices by the Bushmen are not co-optations in the *normal* sense of that word; rather, they are 'repetitions'. Repetition is, of course, a sort of mimesis of others' practices and of shared meanings; but 'repetition' is not an *uncritical* praxis. It should be understood as a 'critical mimesis' as it involves the deconstruction of historically available meanings.²⁸ Some scholars suggest that the use of the language of rights by indigenous people, however, 'has strategic value for promoting their goals' but that it is not clear 'how such formulations are understood by local actors' (Speed, 2002: 205). This may be taken to mean that the repetitions are not 'authentic' to the available meanings, and that indigenous people now make declarations and analyses through the language or policy discourse of 'the global' but do not realise the implications for their own 'norms'. It may, indeed, be the case that the mimetic process is not always 'critical'; in other words, some appropriations in the early stages could be used without explicit critique. Nevertheless, it must be noted that they only need be *uniquely* appropriated according to the Bushmen's own concrete, 'factual' situation, to use Heidegger's term. This adaptation of the web to fit a factual situation is what enables the constant evolution and re-iteration that is a defining characteristic of the web and also of the notion of the 'hermeneutic circle'. Also, it is important to consider how these unique appropriations themselves affect the available meanings within the web, how in other words they contribute to the reconstitution of the referential totality. The Bushmen's activist practices about specific issues respond to the factual or specific situation. The specificity of this factual situation, however, is not only 'local'; indeed, it never was. As we have discussed above, it cannot be

²⁸ Heidegger used the term to denote the critical relationship one has to her community's historical possibilities, those possibilities one inherits from the past but the repetition involves a 'destructive retrieve'; in other words, the self's repetition involves the deconstruction of those possibilities and the retrieval of those possibilities that involved a 'more original, a more positive and hence *constructive* comportment towards one's history.' (de Beistegui, 1997: 25). This is captured by Heidegger's term *Erwidert* - the root *wider*, includes strife and in casual discourse mean 'contrary to or against' (Birmingham, 1991: 31). For a discussion of repetition and 'critical mimesis' see (Odysseos, 2001). This is not unrelated to Mikhail Bakhtin who defines heteroglossia as 'every utterance contains within it the trace of other utterances, both in the past and in the future' (Morris, 1997: 245-52).

understood without placing it within the regional and global political economies. In some sense, the factual situation was always already 'global', made so by colonialism and maintained by global economic and statist practices ever since.

To return to the theoretical discussion of 'global civil society' in section II, it is worth noting that while liberal accounts of observe connections and solidarities they fail to both theorise them and to understand their genesis. The recourse to the web of meaning highlights that the terms 'local' and 'global' make no sense as *substantive* markers, and can only be used because they are familiar and commonplace. Meanings, indeed, knowledge is always 'locally' produced (by indigenous peoples, MNCs, NGOs, activists, governments) but 'globally' available. That is not to say, however, that there are no predominant (or hegemonic) meanings or constellations of references, that is, that some 'localities' are more powerful than others in projecting or establishing meanings. Yet, within the web there is no assurance that the most powerful entities in terms of material resources, for example, are also symbolically hegemonic in terms of meaning, as we have seen with the government's insistence on refusing indigeneity according to now discredited meanings of separate development or its reliance on paternalistic and singular understandings of modernisation, which are now being contested by notions of multiple and flexible modernities.

Heteroglossia is again present within the Bushmen's appropriations, just as we have seen in the government's and Survival's use of the web. In a television interview of the few Bushmen remaining in the CKGR after the evictions a man said, 'the modern world is alien to us; moving us from our lands is a way of making us extinct' (Andersson, 2002). At the same time, the politicisation of the Bushmen, seen in their founding of the FPK or Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and other regional organisations, as well as the approach of NGOs to locally and internationally articulate their views contradicts their previous utterance, enabling both to exist.

VIII. Conclusion: The Production of Subjectivities within the Web of Meaning

This paper attempted to recast the relationship the local and the global beyond the dichotomous position of liberal and critical discourses on 'global civil society'. It has examined Heidegger's notion of the world as a referential totality as a means of rearticulating 'global civil society' beyond the liberal focus on 'associational life'. It has explored a case study about the Gana and Gwi Bushmen of Botswana in order to illustrate the operation of the referential totality. It concludes by briefly examining the production of subjectivities within the web.

The state of Botswana aims to remove the Bushmen from the CKGR articulating a discourse of modernisation, coherent with Western state projects of modernisation over the last 200 years. This is resisted by the Bushmen with the assistance of international NGOs in an attempt to deny the now increasingly contested modernising impulse and to address it as an assimilationist gesture. By way of conclusion, we ask what kinds of subjectivities might be produced when the Bushmen use the meanings available within the web, such as 'cultural rights', 'land rights', 'corporate social responsibility', 'ancestral lands', *etc.*

In some sense, one could argue that this united activism between Bushmen and INGOs has to be read as a modernising project as well: its results, such as the mobilisation of the Bushmen through indigenous organisations, through the creation of working groups (and their technological response as these are coordinated through websites) such as the Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA); the technological attitude through which the Bushmen now deal with the government, all could speak of the subversion of the core objective of the campaign which is the ‘survival’ of tribal lifestyles. Could not the mobilisation of the Bushmen speak of the production of ‘modern’ but not indigenous subjectivities? And by extension, does not the campaign for indigenous rights, in assisting in the production of such subjectivities, shore up the modernising projects of the government? At the same time, adaptability to available meanings and the unique appropriation to fit concrete situations is what characterises existence within the web – the situation of having to fight the evictions requires such appropriations and thus the rearticulation of subjectivity to cope with such requirements.

Important questions remain to be explored in future research about the ‘effects these formulations have on social and cultural norms in local contexts’ (Speed, 2002: 205). We need to explore to a much greater extent how the ‘local’, unique appropriations affect and reconstitute the web of references. The brief history of the indigenous movement provided by the paper goes some way towards providing a response but more needs to be done. Previous sections explored how all meanings are ‘locally’ produced but ‘globally’ available; what remains to be undertaken is an in-depth investigation of the differential input in the web of meanings that groups like the Bushmen have and the role of ‘power’ in this. Moreover, the noted ‘isomorphism’ amongst actors in ‘global civil society’ (critical voices call this ‘homogenisation’) needs to be further examined. While it may be tempting to agree that this is a form of imperialism, to do so would *not* disrupt the ‘infantilisation’ of the ‘local’, regarding the Bushmen as victims, in other words.

The process of the production of subjectivity deserves its own extensive treatment, but in conclusion I would argue that the Bushmen’s critical-mimetic response to the available meanings should be seen as resulting in further adaptations, as has been historically the case; their full participation in the web means that they create for themselves subjectivities that are able to *resist* their evictions. In order to critically promote perspectives that recognise the unique appropriations made to the web of meanings, analysts must move away from the simplistic view of homogenisation and investigate instead the production of subjectivities within the web of meanings more concretely.

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