

How does Commercialisation of Nature Influence people's Relational Values and Food Security in North-Eastern Namibia?

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Background

People attach diverse values to nature, including specific elements important for food security. Values are attached to ecosystem services (mainly provisioning), but also to agricultural elements and cultural practices vital in obtaining food. In north-eastern Namibia, the natural products to which values are attached are increasingly being sold. This is risking degradation of this natural resources upon which local residents depend for food, income and wellbeing. The society is now also integrated into market economy following the nearby established of a town, the only in the region. We are interested to know if commercialisation of natural and agricultural products also affects the values people attach to nature. In this context, we investigate people's values and perceptions of how commercialisation impacts their society and wellbeing. We focus on relational values (also known as socio-cultural values) which reflect shared meanings for society and cultural groups, like moral responsibilities and actions towards natural resources management.

Questions

- 1) What relational values are related to food elements and agricultural practices in the Kwangali culture?
- 2) How does commercialisation of agricultural and natural products affect these values?

Material and Methods

Study Area

- Nambi and Marema villages located in Kavango West Region, between the Okavango River and a forest area.
- Subsistence farmers, cultivating dryland crops in the forest, and vegetables on the floodplain along the river.

Data collection and analysis

- Data: Narratives provided through photovoice technique.
- Sample: 20 participants of different age and sexes.
- Content analysis was used to identify relational values.



Fig 1: Natural and agricultural products sold. Photo: E. Mutota, 2017.

Results 1

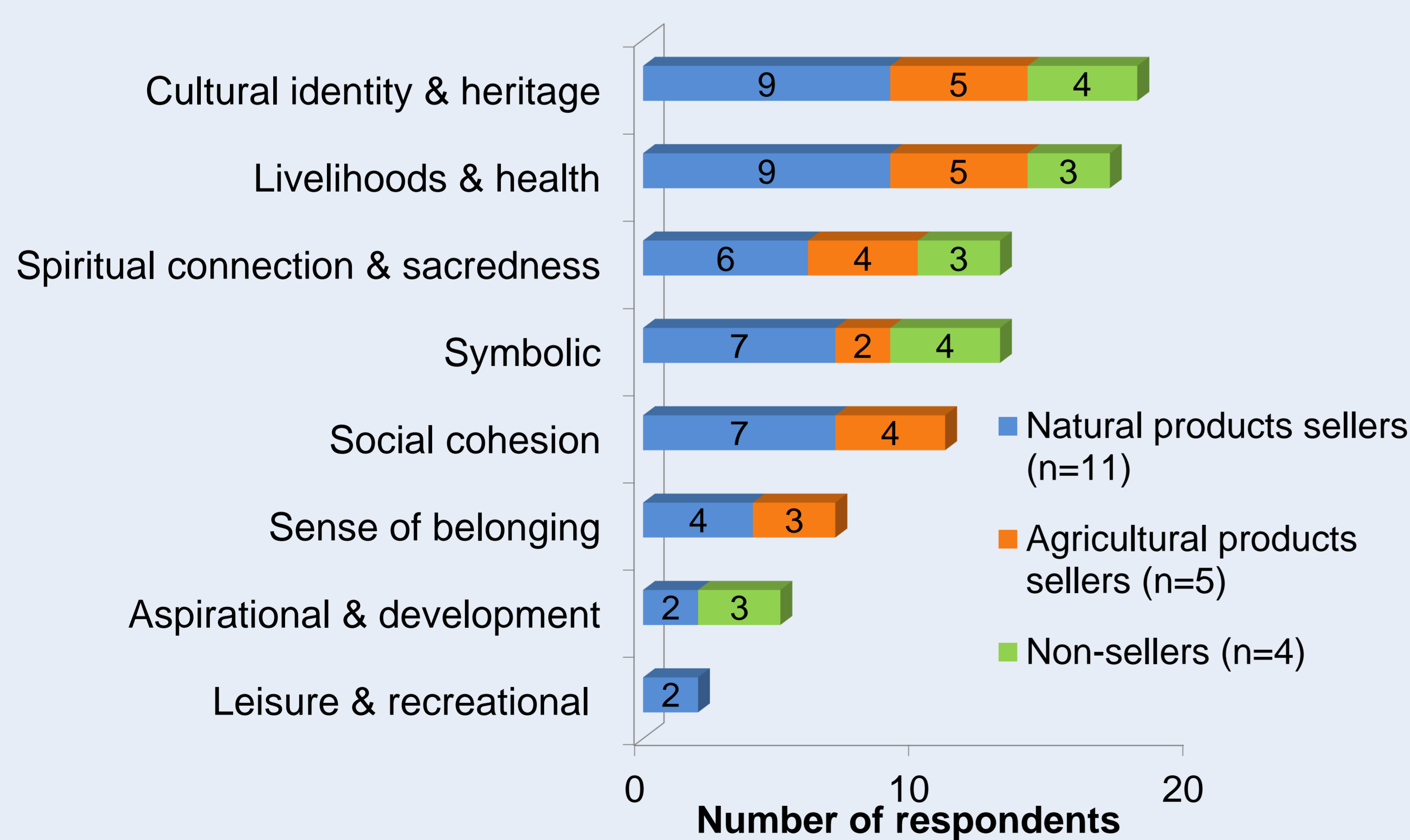
Table 1: Articulated relational values and their relation to food security

What is valued	How people value it	Types of values (adopted from IPBES, 2017)
Wild spinach (<i>Cleome gynandra</i>) Manketti (<i>Schinziophyton rautanenii</i>) nuts porridge False Mopane tree (<i>Guibourtia coleosperma</i>) relish	Dishes from plants signifying and symbolizing luck, unity and protection. They prepared for cultural rituals, e.g. initiation, child naming	Cultural identity & heritage Symbolic Livelihoods & health
Sacred landscape (<i>Makuzu ga Mutenda—burial site of first Chief</i>)	Rain ritual Landscape used for rain ritual (praying for rainfall), valued as believed to enable connection with ancestors. Ancestors are consulted prior interaction with nature (e.g. fishing, hunting).	Spiritual connection and sacred values Heritage values
Agricultural rituals (<i>Nyambi</i>)	Group cultivation and collecting natural products. Aim to increase food production, transfer agricultural knowledge and practices, and maintain peace and unity among villagers.	Social cohesion Cognitive development
Floodplain, river and forest ecosystems	The areas are said to be food baskets for food, pasture, medicinal plants, people's happiness and belonging as well as sources for societal economic development.	Social cohesion Sense of belonging Cognitive development

- Food elements and practices are valued beyond cash gains. Maintenance of cultural heritage, identity and social cohesion are important too.

Results 2

Fig 2: Expressed values among sellers and non-sellers (n=20)



Natural products sellers	Agricultural products sellers	Non-sellers
Age range: 25—78 years All unemployed, 2 traditional healers	Age range: 35—62 years 4 out of 5 own plots along the river 3 out of 5 have casual jobs	Age range: 28—55 years All formally employed

- Non-sellers shares cultural values (e.g symbolic), but not social values (e.g. social cohesion).
- Spiritual and symbolic values seems to be more important for natural products sellers than agricultural products sellers.
- Everybody is selling except those relying on formal employment for cash.

Results 3

Fig 3: Main societal problems associated with commercialisation



Summary

- Valuing food items and practices for commercial purposes does not suppress relational values. However, the involvement in formal economy seems to be the driver values changes as non-sellers do not perceive social values anymore.
- Contrary to our expectations, few people who are not engaged in selling agricultural and natural products are those out of subsistence economy and relying on formal employment for their livelihoods.
- Commercialisation of natural and agricultural products is not just affecting relational values related to food security but the whole socio-economic systems.