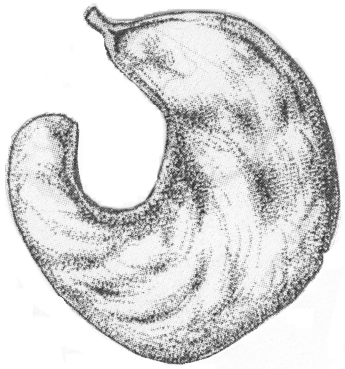

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To beg, or to pray: Makalani and the 'zula economy' in Swakopmund

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Abstract

In a Namibian context research on 'work' has mirrored the direction of much Namibian economic policy in its concentration on the formal, despite a burgeoning informal sector in which as many people find employment as in the latter. Concerned more with informal methods of earning, this paper examines the case of makalani carvers, young men who both carve and subsequently sell makalani nuts in Swakopmund, Namibia. The carvers' techniques are described ethnographically and placed in a wider 'zula economy' through which the carvers are connected to other local Africans. Re-framing makalani as gifts as opposed to commodities, the paper then describes how makalani selling, and by extension the zula economy as a whole, involves notions of entrustment. The practice of zula is divided according to local notions of 'good' and 'bad' and the implications are then discussed in two ways: firstly carvers' relationship with formal work, and secondly the interpersonal relationships among men in the wider field of Swakopmund.

November 2015. Walking from my flat in to town, I am greeted by a friend, a makalani seller, who is walking down to the beach with a group of colleagues. We stop and chat for a bit as I have not seen him around for a few days. As we are talking, one of the other men, new in town, interrupts.

'Alles ist gut, ja?' It is surprising because we are clearly talking in English. My friend pauses our conversation and addresses the interjector: 'He is English, man, we are talking!' But, this person is relentless in his pitch.

'Oh, you are from America! How long are you staying?'

My friend shouts something in Khoekhoe and then returns his attention to me.

'Ignore him Jack, he has been on the crackling today…'

These two dialogues continue, one interjecting over the other. The second man though has caught wind of my name and has proceeded to carve it in to one of

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> his makalani stock. He offers it to me and I instinctively reach out. Before I can touch it, my friend knocks it away. The second man, though, does not let the makalani go.
>
> A hushed yet intense argument proceeds in Khoekhoe and I feel a little awkward. Shortly though, with a tak-tak-tak of a makeshift blade, my friend has flicked away the brown outer of the makalani, meaning my name has been removed. Order is restored.
>
> 'Sorry, Jack, he is new. OK Mr Jack let's talk later, OK?'[1]

In Swakopmund as in other parts of Namibia, makalani and their sellers are almost as ubiquitous as German colonial architecture. Carved from the de-shelled nuts of the Real fan palm (*Hyphaene petersiana*), makalani are sold as souvenirs predominantly by young men who base themselves by the amphitheatre near the State House. Makalani are also available at the open market located near the beachfront and in the various souvenir shops. Known also as 'vegetable ivory'[2], they can also be found for sale at most tourist hotspots and indeed in other urban centres. Yet, despite their prevalence in Namibia, very little has been written about either the makalani themselves or, indeed, their producers. As Herbert Jauch states, in a Namibian context informal methods of earning – i.e. those which exist outside of state regulation – as well as subsistence agriculture, are often overlooked in favour of the formal.[3] Thus there has been little or no research on the topic despite the burgeoning literature on the informal economy in many parts of Africa, and indeed worldwide.

Makalani selling is one example of the '*zula* economy', or 'doing zula'. These form a smaller part of the much wider informal economy, which, in Namibia at least, provides as much employment as the formal.[4] Radek Nedvěd describes certain forms of zula in Grootfontein, for example collecting bottles which can be exchanged for cash.[5] In Swakopmund, I first learned the word by chance; sitting by the open market one sunny afternoon I overheard two men talking about 'going off to zula'. When I asked what it meant nobody seemed to know. One Namibian man explained that it was just a word he had picked up in Swakopmund. Another looked at me quite hesitantly before suggesting I should probably ask someone else. I am in no doubt that this reluctance was partly because, as a prime target for zula myself, my awareness of the meaning would only hinder any attempt to involve me it.

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[1] Extract from field notes, 22 November 2015.

[2] C.f. Melanie A. C. Sarantou, *Namibian Narratives: Postcolonial Identities in Craft and Design*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Adelaide, University of South Australia, 2014.

[3] See Charmaine Ngatjiheue, "Informal Labour Sector Overlooked", *The Namibian*, 12 September 2017, https://www.namibian.com.na/ 169164/archive-read/Informal-labour-sector-overlooked [accessed September 30, 2018].

[4] Ibid.

[5] Radek Nedvěd, *Urbanisation at the !Xun Bushmen in the Area of Grootfontein in Namibia*, unpubl. PhD thesis, Prague, Charles University, 2014.

Walking around Swakopmund town it is virtually impossible to avoid makalani carvers, keen as they are to make a sale. The act of begging, simply asking for money, is usually frowned upon in town and, although still an occurrence, its proponents – usually younger men, children and some women (all locally termed 'streetkids') – were often quickly moved on; makalani carvers however were always present and generally accepted even if they were monitored fairly heavily by the local police. Whilst carvers base themselves in the centre of town, they can also commonly be found along the beachfront and sometimes around the jetty. Occasionally they can also be seen on the main streets although officially they are only allowed to sell at the beach; strictly speaking, their stock must be hidden from view if, for example, they go to a supermarket to buy food. As the apartment I was staying in was positioned right in the middle of carvers' prime selling ground – roughly mid-way between the State House and the jetty – I would often encounter them as I was leaving in the morning and then throughout the day, particularly if I was working with people based on the open market. But whilst newcomers would often tentatively try their sales pitch on me, as I became a regular face in Swakopmund some of them also became collaborators in my fieldwork. Despite the common perception of these men as unruly, the time I spent with them revealed a different side to their behaviour and the ways in which they were organised.

The small amount of literature concerning makalani – mostly in related to tourism – tends to highlight their natural origins, as well as dwelling on the multiple economic uses of the Real fan palm nuts and leaves. As well as key rings, the nuts are also used to make jewellery and perfume holders, whilst the leaves can be used to weave baskets using a coiling technique. This article focuses on one particular product familiar to many visitors to Namibia – a key holder fashioned from a single makalani nut into which is inserted a short piece of leather.

Figure 1: A makalani both carved and in-shell

These items are known locally simply as 'makalani', produced and carved most often in the District Resettlement Community (DRC) of Swakopmund by the same men who then sell them in town.[6]

This paper is based on two years' fieldwork in Swakopmund, conducted between 2014 and 2016, during which time extensive participant observation, interviews and other fieldwork tasks were conducted both with makalani sellers, and indeed amongst the wider population of Swakopmund. The point of departure, or access to this group of persons was through a makalani sale – or rather an attempt at one – through which I met Daniel, 28 years old and of Damara descent.[7] Daniel had moved to Swakopmund in 2008 from Sesfontein, Kunene region; at the time of my fieldwork he had a wife (also Damara) and one child. His wife lived with him in the DRC whilst his child, a boy, lived with the parents of his wife at Sesfontein. Rather than come to Swakopmund 'on spec' in search of work like some others, he had travelled to the city several times with his father before deciding to move permanently. Daniel was, in many ways, the 'centre' of Swakopmund carvers; he was certainly well-known both for his talent as a carver and his selling and relationship building skills. This makalani-based transaction could be termed a "rich point"[8] in my fieldwork – one of many – and once we had established our relationship (and particularly my intent to learn) it was possible to sit with the wider group of carvers both in town and at Daniel's home in the DRC. I still have the makalani he carved for me on a shelf in my flat in Belgium, although the nut reads 'Jack England' due to England being my place of birth. Later in this paper I will describe the longer term bonds that 'good zula' sought to create. Whilst Daniel was my main contact, here I refer to the larger group of persons who defined themselves as 'carvers', as well as a wider body of persons on the open market and, indeed, in Swakopmund itself.

The majority of those carvers, as I mentioned, were men; most were aged between 25 and 35 with few exceptions. Of the makalani sellers in particular, lived in shacks in the DRC and all had completed at least Namibian school grade 10. The majority of carvers had also worked on short contracts at one of the local mines or other industrial facilities, although they usually returned to makalani selling on their days off. Unlike Swakopmund as a whole, which was populated by persons of many different African nationalities, makalani sellers were all Namibian although their ethnic heritage varied; the majority were Damara or Nama, with small groups from Caprivi/Kunene and Kavango, and one Bushman/Herero mix. None were of Ovambo heritage.

This paper is presented in three main sections. The first of these outlines the methods of selling makalani by dedicated carvers/sellers in Swakopmund. Here, I place carvers in a wider network of local (and not-so-local) relationships through which the notion of the 'zula economy' is introduced. This is a small body of literature concerning zula which has

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[6] Throughout the text I refer to both 'carvers' and 'sellers'. To distinguish, carvers most often are also sellers, yet sellers do not necessarily produce or carve their own stock.

[7] All names are pseudonyms.

[8] C.f. Michael Agar, "We Have Met the Other and We're All Nonlinear: Ethnography as a Nonlinear Dynamic System", *Complexity*, 10 (2), 2004: 3-10 (21).

been produced using examples taken from northern, and rural, locations; therefore in the second section of this paper I place zula in the more urban setting of Swakopmund. Here also I explore the makalani sellers' relationship with formal labour, exploring it through notions of trust and entrustment. The final section concerns 'good' and 'bad' zula, an uneasy dichotomy which was encountered in the field. In particular I examine the latter's association with *tsotsi* (crooks). This last section finishes with a brief discussion on the implications of 'bad zula' on relationships between men.

Carving and selling makalani in Swakopmund

The vignette at the start of this paper is reminiscent of many scenes involving makalani carvers throughout Namibia. In Swakopmund particularly, this relatively small group of men have a reputation for bad behaviour in town: fighting, quarrelling and excessive drinking; they are, in short, a distinctly marginalised group. Yet sitting or indeed moving about with these men revealed different layers to this story; when I joined Daniel at the top of the steps near the amphitheatre and State House, it became obvious that local Europeans (in Swakopmund predominantly Germans and South Africans) were usually much more hostile towards carvers than local Africans were, and were not afraid to make their feelings clear; shouts of 'Faulenzer!' (German tr. *layabout!*) and 'vind 'n werk!' (Afrikaans tr. *get a job!*) were often directed towards them, and on more than one occasion I saw a car accelerate rather than slow down as it approached a makalani carver crossing the road.

For the people working on the open market – a relatively small square located near the beachfront, on which local Africans sold souvenirs to tourists – the men selling makalani were also considered something of a nuisance but not because of their lower socio-economic status. They were perceived as detrimental to business on the open market itself, both directly by selling objects which were also available on the market (and indeed in the nearby souvenir shops) and also by driving customers away by breaking almost all of the established market rules. The carvers consumed a lot of alcohol; by mid-afternoon spirits would be high, coinciding with what was usually the busiest time of day. Whilst this does not necessarily lead to bad behaviour, sometimes carvers could be seen fighting by the steps of the amphitheatre, or harassing tourists in the hope of making a sale.

Yet despite this, the carvers were also embedded in a network of relationships with Europeans and Africans alike. Europeans of course formed the largest group of customers for makalani although there were increasing numbers of Asians after the opening of Chinese-owned uranium mine Husab Project. The network with local Africans was perhaps less obvious but also vital to carvers' ability to ply their trade. Bags of nuts would most often be brought from the north of Namibia by one of the local market sellers who had planned a visit to bring back stock for his or her own stall; these large sacks (containing up to 2000 raw nuts) cost approximately N$300 with the contents then being sold on for N$1 apiece. At the time of my fieldwork at least, many of the local

shops did not permit carvers to buy the blades that were required for the carving work, meaning that they often recruited market sellers to purchase on their behalf. Additionally, at the end of the working day, surplus carved makalani could be sold to market sellers for N$5-10 per item. These were either re-sold on the open market or collected and dispatched to other parts of the country for sale there.

After being purchased unprocessed, nuts are de-shelled and then boiled – usually in a large tin can – to remove excess fibres and clean the nuts themselves; at this point the nuts can also be eaten if nothing else is available. Softened nuts can then be drilled with a screwdriver to make a hole suitable for the insertion of a piece of leather to act as a holding strap. This process of shelling and boiling, and indeed the majority of the carving, occurs away from town, usually at someone's home. Most often this would be a shack in the District Resettlement Community (DRC) where all the carvers lived. It is also possible to identify a particular carver through a makalani as each person develops their own style, either through drawing a certain kind of animal, drawing in a certain way, or displaying a level of skill which might be adequate to mimic another carver's style but clearly did not demonstrate the same manual dexterity as the person they are attempting to copy. Thus while makalani carving itself was a fairly common skill at base level, those persons able to carve with any degree of deftness and possessing a good sales technique were often revered, as these skills formed the basis for zula.

Here, however, I wish to focus on the selling of makalani rather than the production. The selling of these objects by dedicated sellers or carvers differs to the way they are sold in shops and on the open market; in souvenir shops (where they remain popular gift items) makalani retail at roughly N$60 for one, and on the open market for a similar price although in the latter context the price – as for all items on the market – is not fixed. In these two cases the makalani are relatively static items, meaning there are no active attempts to sell a makalani as opposed to other items. Indeed, market sellers preferred to sell other stock (what could be considered their 'main' items) because the margins are better. Customers usually knew the retail price of makalani which makes negotiation difficult; so for market sellers, they were a fallback item to be sold as a last resort.

Among those who sold makalani as a major – or most reliable – way of making a living, there was more specific technique involved; in this context, selling was most definitely not passive, requiring the striking up of an initial conversation and then the subsequent completing of the transaction. As indicated in the opening vignette, one of the most common ways to start talking to someone was a simple greeting, 'Alles ist gut, ja?' (German tr. *It's all good, yes?*), or alternatively 'Hello my friend, how are you? I want to show you something'. Rather than sitting and waiting to be approached by tourists, most commonly the sellers would approach individuals as they were walking, usually from the front (i.e. head on) in order to avoid being accused of chasing people. Whilst it was assumed that the majority of visitors were German, sellers were also proficient in greeting in several languages, such as Italian or Mandarin (standard) Chinese.

Some carvers told elaborate stories of their origins or reasons for being in Swakopmund, and even taught a few words in their own language; this depended, of course, on being able to hold a potential customer's interest for long enough. Others preferred to demonstrate their craft, using a makalani nut still in its shell as a practical example, carving a little from a pre-cut nut and then throwing the end product forcefully to the ground to demonstrate its virtual indestructibility. In many cases, this performance would be enough to secure a sale. Almost always, before the exchange of money, the makalani would be personalised for the buyer, usually with a name, another desired word, or a date.

But whilst these were generally amicable encounters and, for all parties, desirable methods of making a sale, sometimes desperation or inexperience – or a combination of both – would lead sellers to excessive methods to complete the transaction. Again, this involved striking up a light conversation but more importantly, asking for the person's name and then carving it unsolicited into the makalani. The 'finished product' is then handed to the customer, who is supposed to hold the object with the purpose of examining it. This is a trick; if the customer then declines to purchase the makalani, the carver becomes increasingly angry until the customer pays or runs away. Often the 'victim' will pay something simply to escape an unpleasant situation. There might even be some shouting or in very extreme cases a threat might be made with a cutting blade. Although such methods rarely worked in practice – often resulting in the police arriving, either immediately or later – they highlight what were considered to be the essential elements of makalani selling, as well as some of the reasons why carvers were treated as outcasts by the population of the town. Such situations underscore the extreme financial inequality in Swakopmund and the poverty in which these men lived.

As already mentioned, makalani selling is not restricted to a single group of persons but is embedded in a much wider network of relations which covers Swakopmund and, indeed, distant parts of Namibia – even extending beyond the national borders. As will be seen in the next sections, selling makalani is just one example of what is known locally as 'doing zula', forming part of a much wider 'zula economy'.

The zula economy

The term 'zula' has multiple and sometimes contested meanings and origins. Nedvěd posits that it is of Nguni origin[9], which refers to the action of skipping, whilst it is also found in isiZulu with the meaning 'to move about' or 'to roam'.[10] It is also used in Afrikaans, from which there is no direct translation in English although it roughly correlates to the verbs 'to beg', 'to steal' or 'to borrow'. Its Afrikaans usage bears similarities in translation to other African languages spoken in Swakopmund: in Damara/Khoekhoe (also spoken by most makalani carvers themselves), */ni ta/gore re/*

[9] Ravek Nedvěd, "Outline of the Economic Strategies of the Urban Bushmen Dwellers Case Study of the !Xun Living in the Omulunga Township of Grootfontein in Namibia", *Ceský lid*, 101 (3), 2014: 299-320.

[10] Louis Molamu, *A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown*, Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2003.

corresponds to the English verbs 'to beg' or 'to borrow', as well as 'to pray'. A similar pattern is found in Shona and Lingala, both widely spoken in Swakopmund, with *kumbira* (Shona) also meaning 'to request', 'to ask', 'to solicit', and 'to pray'. In Lingala, the infinitive *kobondela* means 'to beg', 'to ask', 'to flatter' and again, 'to pray'. All of these translations, however, infer a relationship with another person; as I will elaborate shortly, the notion of 'roaming' (and indeed 'skipping') presupposes those connections which inevitably come about through this process of movement.

There has been little research into zula or makalani to date. As Herbert Jauch has explained, the focus within Namibia has tended to be on the formal economy as opposed to the informal.[11] Wider political debate has centred on the growing levels of inequality in Namibia[12] and particularly the perceived failure of SWAPO to fulfil its pre-independence promise to establish an economy based socialist principles.[13] The popular newspaper *New Era*, in an article dated 24 May 2018, posits that the Namibian Constitution does not include informal sector workers because the definitions of what it means to be an employee, or self-employed, do not adequately cover the situations and circumstances of those working informally.[14] In article in *The Namibian* of 1 June 2018 Ndumba J. Kamwanyah points out that

> the informal economy, which is also the informal private sector, is low on the priority list of our national development agenda. Largely, it is seen as unorganised, unproductive, backward, unscientific and [too] primitive to play a meaningful role in the economy.[15]

As Kamwanyah continues, "information and knowledge about the informal sector is also important for planning purposes in terms of policies and programmes". In other African contexts, the study of the informal has proven fruitful not only in providing a better understanding of how the larger economy 'works' as a whole[16] but also of the interaction between the formal and the informal.[17]

Away from the cities of Namibia, Radek Nedvěd provides a description of zula among the !Xun (!Kung) of Grootfontein.[18] In this account, Nedvěd states that zula mostly involved

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[11] Charmaine, "Informal Labour".

[12] Job Shipululo Amupanda, "Constitutionalism and Principles of Economic Order. Examining Namibia's 'Mixed Economy' and the Economic Asylum of Neoliberalism", *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 21, 2017: 7-26.

[13] Henning Melber, *Understanding Namibia*, London, Oxford University Press, 2015.

[14] New Era Reporter, "Namibian constitution does not know informal sector – study", 24 May 2018, https://neweralive.na/2018/05/24/namibian-constitution-does-not-know-informal-sector-study/ [accessed October 2, 2018].

[15] Ndumba J. Kamwanyah, "Formalising Namibias Informal Economy", *The Namibian*, 1 June 2018, https://www.namibian.com.na/177987/archive-read/Formalising-Namibias-Informal-Economy [accessed October 3, 2018].

[16] See, for example, Joost Beuving, "Playing Information Games: Démarcheurs in the Second-Hand Car Markets of Cotonou, Benin", *Social Anthropology*, 21 (1), 2013: 2-22.

[17] See, for example, Sasha Newell, *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte D'Ivoire*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012.

[18] Nedvěd, "Outline of the Economic Strategies".

scavenging for bottles, metals and clothes – which could then be sold for approximately N$10 a day – or the direct scavenging for food from dumpsites located on the periphery of local townships. In Grootfontein, the 'zula lifestyle' was led mostly by men; women would sometimes accompany them in searching for bottles, and more frequently in the search for dumpsite food.

Whilst Nedvěd points out that – similarly to in Swakopmund – people would often move between occasional work and zula, it is also indicated by Nedvěd that in Grootfontein full-time work was considered preferable to zula and that for most people long-term employment was more desirable; in Swakopmund however the situation was slightly different as most people moved between short-term contracts of varying length and zula of one kind or another. As I have mentioned, while working through these contracts men also returned to zula in the town on their days off. Thus, whilst Nedvěd places 'full time employment' at the top of a scale of preference which descends to zula at its base, preferences in Swakopmund were different. Indeed, a recent survey conducted by Technikon Pretoria indicates that street children in Windhoek preferred the zula economy to formal work;[19] similarly among young men in Swakopmund zula was seen as an equally viable source of income, even if sometimes less profitable than formal labour. This will be explored in more detail later. There is, however, a difference in the levels of earnings; in Grootfontein Nedvěd indicates zula could bring in approximately N$200/ month whilst in Swakopmund it was possible to earn a minimum of N$50 a day through just a single sale, by undercutting slightly the price of makalani in shops. Although borrowing money was possible it depended on the reputation of being able to pay these debts back – that money was sometimes borrowed was also indicative, then, of the relative stability of the zula economy in Swakopmund at least. Carvers also shared money meaning that financial resources could usually be stretched a little further.

While in Swakopmund zula certainly meant 'doing what you have to do to survive'. Nedvěd's account misses the more interpersonal aspects of zula which were perhaps more prevalent in the cities. A recent study by Megan Laws, also conducted in the north of Namibia amongst the Ju|'hoansi (!Kung), develops this a little further.[20] Laws posits that this practice is a reaction to new social conditions in which sharing is not considered normal; in that sense, for Laws, zula sits at an interface between the egalitarian (the mainstay of the !Kung)[21] and the capitalist. The practice of 'roaming' (to return briefly to the isiZulu root of the word 'zula') by Ju|'hoansi inevitably leads to encounters with other Ju|'hoansi; in that context those who have a surplus will, it is expected, inevitably give in to the requests of others to provide. Thus zula as cultural practice is designed to facilitate those transactions in newer, contemporary contexts. In

[19] Jan P. Grundling, Johan W. de Jager and Leon de W. Fourie, *Managing the Phenomenon of Street Children in an African Developing Country*, Pretoria, Technikon Pretoria, 2015.

[20] Megan Laws, "Roaming in Order to Live": Sharing, Uncertainty, and the 'Zula' Economy in Rural Namibia", Conference paper presented at ASAUK, Birmingham, 12 September 2018.

[21] Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1972.

that sense zula is also, posits Laws, situated at an interval between egalitarianism and modern capitalism.

Both Nedvěd[22] and Laws point out that the term 'zula' is also used in the larger urban centres of Namibia – and further afield – by *tsotsi* (crooks or thieves) to refer to their own ways of making money, or stealing. In Swakopmund this was indeed the case; but they existed side-by side with smaller, non-criminal forms of zula similar to those described for the north of the country. Although separated into the 'good' and the 'bad', their interrelatedness was also apparent. Here, we can see notions of entrustment, particularly in relation to bad zula.[23]

Zula 2 Zula: The Zula Economy in an Urban Setting

Keshe fimbo hatu tuma mo gata
Every day they call for us the police
Kegne elambo hatu tuma mo copa
Every time they call for us the cops
Zoba to zoba, zula to zula
Stealing to steal, zula to zula
Hai wena hatu chillinga mo ghetto
Hi there, every time we are hanging in the ghetto
Keshe fimbo hatu pulikine kwaito
Every day we listen to kwaito music
Walalakata toto
Rushing in between the shacks
Aweshi, nonona, weshishi kobinga yoknaont menjo, Everybody,
even kids they know how this
no meme, no tate, ovashishi kobinga yokoyome
life of shit is, even the fathers and mothers, they
yo mo ghetto
know the ghetto life[24]

The song *Zula II Zula* is taken from the album *Zula II Survive* by Namibian artist Gazza. This song, released in 2004, did not receive much airplay in Swakopmund at the time of my fieldwork, yet it remained well known – the words are timeless in capturing a particular way of life, that of zula. While Gazza is quite clear in his association of zula specifically with stealing, Daniel, who we met briefly in the introduction, preferred to

[22] Nedvěd, "Outline of the Economic Strategies".

[23] Parker Macdonald Shipton, *The Nature of Entrustment: Intimacy, Exchange, and the Sacred in Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007.

[24] Gazza, "Zula II Zula", *Zula II Survive*, Windhoek, GMP Records, 2004.

describe zula as "doing something with my own hands"[25], referring at that time to the makalani themselves rather the relationships built around it. Others equated zula with 'hustling', i.e. "the ability to manipulate others, to inveigle and deceive them, if need be by joining violence to chicanery and charm, in the pursuit of immediate pecuniary gain"[26]; indeed, the figure of the 'gangster' was a popular icon for many young men. Similarly to the figures in the United States gangsters were

> badman characters […] metajuridical figures whose heroic depiction subverted the validity of an evolving legal system that has historically disenfranchised large segments of the African-American community.[27]

Yet despite the common use of this moniker it was not the association with crime that was the key element but the ability to produce money outside of pre-existing paradigms such as those defined through work. This is particularly true of cities such as Windhoek and Swakopmund, where the local focus tends to be on 'getting people into work' (i.e. moving them from the informal to the formal);[28] but as Inge Tvedten points out, for many people formal routes of employment are "a matter of specialised knowledge and control of particular forms of meanings and networks", often leaving formal employment out of reach for those who simply do not have those forms of knowledge.[29]

Despite the word 'zula' being appropriated by *tsotsi* (crooks), the larger zula economy is concerned with what James Ferguson describes as the "new politics of distribution"[30]. For Ferguson, "work in the (so-called) informal sector, even at the lower, survivalist end of it, is indeed often productive in an economic sense, just as it is often integrated with (or functional to) the celebrated productivity of the (so-called) first economy"[31]. Nowhere is this clearer than in Swakopmund, where the formal and the informal sat so closely together that from an anthropological perspective, at least, the division was often rendered a moot point. Both goods and persons would move – albeit sometimes with difficulty – between the two to such an extent that the borders were often barely discernible. In that sense also zula operated a little like witchcraft in its most abstract sense, which for Comaroff and Comaroff

> is often a mode of producing new forms of consciousness; of expressing discontent with modernity and dealing with its deformities. In short, of retooling

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[25] Field interview, 8 September 2015.

[26] Loïc Wacquant, "Inside the Zone. The Social Art of the Hustler in the Black American Ghetto", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 15, 1998: 1-36 (3).

[27] Mich Nyawalo, "From 'Badman' to 'Gangsta': Double Consciousness and Authenticity, from African-American Folklore to Hip Hop", *Popular Music and Society*, 36 (4), 2013: 460-475 (460).

[28] For a northern, and rural exception see Gregor Dobler, "'Work and Rhythm' Revisited: Rhythms and Experience in Northern Nambian Peasant Work", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 22 (4), 2016: 864-883.

[29] Inge Tvedten, *"As long as they don't bury me here": Social Relations of Poverty in a Namibian Shanty Town*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2011: 146.

[30] James Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2015.

[31] Ibid.: 100.

> culturally familiar technologies as new means for new ends... It is new magic for new situations.[32]

Makalani themselves are small, robust and can be personalised – they are designed, rather consciously, as objects which will pass easily between two vastly different, unequal locales – that of the carver and that of the buyer. They are also a way – an excuse – of tapping in to a flow of wealth which in Swakopmund, as in many parts of Africa by and large, has bypassed the most vulnerable members of society but moves freely amongst the elite.[33] As my interlocutor Daniel joked "we must magic the money from their wallets". Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff also point out that this does not infer a retreat into tradition by those who are less well off financially;[34] it merely highlights the conflicting notions of egalitarianism and capitalism that Megan Laws posits form the connection on which the zula economy is based.

As I mentioned, however, makalani selling is only one form of transaction occurring in a wider zula economy. It was not Daniel but one of my other interlocutors who described for me:

> You ask yourself, are you also helping people? If you don't have money, which way can you help people? This is a strategy people are using. They ask, "can I help you?" instead of "can you help me?" Because everybody wants help. If someone offers help, most likely they will say "yes, you can help me". After that, you are feeling empathy, that you need to help this person. Once this guy has washed a car, then next time the driver is looking for him when he wants to go in the shop, and he trusts the man to look after his car. Whilst he is gone, the car is safe, and somebody is also washing his car... Free of charge, they did not talk about the money. Then the guy will have that feeling of empathy, this guy is doing the right thing. And he might even give him N$200 or N$300. That is good zula.[35]

This quote highlights two things; firstly the division between good and bad zula, the latter of which we will return to shortly. Secondly, it highlights the nature of good zula, i.e. to give something for free, even if something might be expected in return later. As an extension of this, it also makes clear the relationship-building aspect of (good) zula; the desire to form bonds which were longer lasting than the original exchange itself. In practice, these attempts often worked: in Swakopmund, for example, one carver kept in regular contact with a local German lady who often provided food and money. For another, a relationship had developed to such an extent that he had been included his contact's will. A third man kept in touch with a tourist who had returned home to the USA. After his holiday this person sent money via international transfer services. As I mentioned in the introduction, I also maintain a relationship with Daniel, the young man

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[32] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony", *American Ethnologist*, 26 (2), 1999: 279-303 (284).

[33] Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish*.

[34] Comaroff and Comaroff, "Occult Economies".

[35] Field interview, 2 October 2015.

who assisted me in the provision of responses to my questions and access within the field.

In that sense although makalani were most often given in exchange for money, when being sold by carvers makalani are *gifts* rather than commodities, designed to incorporate buyers into the local moral economy through the construction of a bond symbolised by the makalani itself. Describing the sorting of matsutake mushrooms in Japan, Anna Tsing points out that

> Gifts include all objects of exchange in which parts of the giver are embedded, extending social relations beyond the transaction. Thus teaching, even under salary, is a gift if the teacher forms a mentoring relation with the student that extends beyond the lesson. Using this definition, many commodities-in-the-making have a life as gifts. However, if they will channel profits to the propertied class – that is, become *capitalist* commodities – the gifts must be taken out of them.[36]

Returning briefly to the distinction made in the first part of this paper – between those makalani on sale at the market (and in shops) and those being sold by carvers, makalani attain commodity status not with the carvers but once they have been sold as objects-to-be-sold-again, not reaching an end-buyer but entering a slightly longer chain which distances the carver from his product. The sorting of makalani by the carvers (and their customers) is a side-effect of daily sales; it is those makalani that cannot be exchanged personally which are then passed on to be sold by someone else.

In a city such as Swakopmund with its high degree of mobility – for Africans and Europeans alike – the exchange of gifts is reduced to a single moment in time; as with all people in this city, there is no guarantee that a person will be around later the same day, let alone the following one. In that sense, makalani are gifts-in-the-moment, and as Marilyn Strathern elaborates for gift exchange in Melanesia, "if in a commodity economy things and persons assume the social form of things, then in a gift economy they assume the social form of persons".[37] Strathern continues: "in a commodity oriented economy, people thus experience their interest in commodities as a desire to appropriate goods; in a gift oriented economy, the desire is to expand social relations".[38] Yet, in Swakopmund, for makalani in particular, there is a slight deviation from Strathern's description of the gift. Although makalani are highly specific to each carver, when they are produced they are also conversely devoid of personalisation or individualisation; they take the form of the other only when in proximity to that other, through the carving of a name. Makalani very readily become part of the receiver whilst also retaining the specific identity of the carver, visible through a particular style of carving, or the relative skill involved – hence, in times of desperation, the need for some

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[36] Anna Tsing, "Sorting Out Commodities: How Capitalist Value is Made Through Gifts", *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3 (1), 2013: 21-43 (23).

[37] Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems With Women and Problems With Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988: 134.

[38] Ibid.: 144. See also Charles Piot, *Locally Global: Village Modernity in West Africa*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

sellers to force these objects onto potential buyers, particularly through the carving of a name.

While the exchange of makalani for money, with the hope that this might lead to a longer bond, was considered acceptable behaviour even if carvers could be a little pushy from time-to-time, this latter form of zula – the use of a trick or a deception in order to 'short-circuit' and therefore complete a transaction – often resulted in the isolation of that person. Although not necessarily the realm of *tsotsis* per se, it was considered to be 'bad zula' and the person behaving in such a manner would be swiftly dealt with either by being reprimanded (sometimes with violence), isolated from the other sellers in town, or simply being forced to go home. Shortly before I left Namibia one of the carvers gained national notoriety when he was caught on camera by local TV harassing a tourist for money – definitely bad zula. The man involved quickly became a social pariah. The carvers, in particular, had a vested interest in maintaining at least an image of honesty and calmness, even if that image was occasionally tarnished. This was partly because they wished to continue being seen as approachable, which obviously was important for doing business and performing their zula. Attempts by the local municipality to give sellers 'official' status by providing reflective jackets and badges had proved problematic because of the excessive alcohol consumption often associated with this group and their perceived connection with unruly behaviour and crime. In Swakopmund at least the equipment given to denote this official status can be withdrawn by municipal representatives for various reasons, not least drinking while 'on duty' or indeed fighting. Indeed, although several sellers were glad to have their position recognised, these attempts to 'formalise the informal' were perceived by some – for example those sellers who did not meet the requirements – as an underhand attempt to remove them from town and force them into formal work.

The zula economy and formal work

> I have been in zula for almost fourteen years. You know, all zula is different... But the way I am doing zula is the right way, I think, to ask someone, 'do you want this, or that...' We live hand to mouth. You cannot invest more money, you know, because it is coming in very small. If you don't find anything for a few days, you have credits to pay off here and here, and some clothes to buy... It is very small. If I am working, then on my days off I will be back doing zula, I can eat with that, no credits to pay.[39]

As I described earlier in this paper, makalani carvers were perceived as have a difficult relationship with formal labour. This can be seen, for example, in the taunting by local Germans and South Africans to 'get a job'. The relatively high alcohol consumption amongst these men was also seen by many as a barrier to formal work; indeed it was true that certain individuals either did not want to or could not enter the formal market – one young man for example suffered severe, debilitating epileptic episodes – yet most

[39] Field interview, 22 June 2016.

of the carvers had, at one point or another, taken contracts for unskilled or semi-skilled work with one of the local industrial employers. Daniel had recently finished work with a company that manufactured doors which he had left when his contract was not renewed; a second man had completed two separate construction contracts at intervals with one of the local mines. As the quote above illustrates, however, even on their days off these men would return to town to continue selling makalani.

Many young men were aware of – and wary of – the risk of exploitation arising simply by the signing of a contract that was a fundamental part of formal work; the history of the contracted labour system in Namibia, with its explicit connection to extreme exploitation of Africans undoubtedly plays a role in this.[40] In present-day Swakopmund this is, however, a double-edged sword, as one of my interlocutors describes:

> They were putting my money up and up till it was almost double what I started with […] I was employed for steel fixing but then they started to ask me for carpentry and for scaffolding […] and I was arguing with my boss that I wasn't employed for these things […] some people they only want to do what is written down on the contract, but my boss he sat with me and said "what if there are only carpentry jobs and no steel fixing, and you don't know anything else, you won't be able to work." So now I know if they give me a plan for carpentry, then I know how to lay it out.[41]

This is, of course, an offer of extra on-the-job training in order to maximise a person's employment opportunities; regardless of intention, however, it is indicative of the trust-related issues concerning contemporary contracted employment. Although it was becoming increasingly necessary for locals to find full-time work – external pressures from family and work being presented as a viable path to a better future – in practice this was not always made easy. Many jobs, particularly in the mining sector which was one of the largest employers, were still being brokered through labour hire companies which, as Herbert Jauch has described, "retained a significant part of workers' earnings as their fees and deprived them of the benefits enjoyed by permanent workers".[42] For example, shortly before being placed into care and maintenance in 2018, Langer Heinrich mine employed 600 staff, just under 50% of which were subcontracted.[43] Similarly, strike action was taken at Husab Project in 2015 over both lower pay in comparison to other mines and the apparent over-employment of subcontractors with

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[40] Allan D. Cooper, "The Institutionalization of Contract Labour in Namibia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25 (1), 1999: 121-138.

[41] Field interview, 20 June 2016.

[42] Herbert Jauch, "Between Politics and the Shop Floor: Which Way for Namibia's Labour Movement?", in: Henning Melber, (ed.), *Transitions in Namibia: Which Changes for Whom?*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007: 50-64 (59).

[43] industriall-union.org, "Namibian union declares dispute over retrenchments of 600 workers at Langer Heinrich Uranium mine", 30 May 2018, http://www.industriall-union.org/namibian-union-declares-dispute-over-retrenchments-of-600-workers-at-langer-heinrich-uranium-mine [accessed December 19, 2018].

the subsequent lack of housing allowance and health insurance.[44] Full-time, long-term jobs were available, yet zero-hour and short-term casual contracts were considered more common. As Dillon Mahoney explains in a discussion of the 'hype' of Africa Rising, which he places firmly in the context of Euro-American banking and investment, for many Africans

> connecting to the global economy has proved an insufficient pathway out of poverty. Rather, connecting to the global economy and relying on new technologies to conduct international business has come with all types of new risks.[45]

In that sense relative job insecurity certainly played a part in keeping carvers involved in the zula economy. The quote opening this section indicates, however, that young men were also returning to town to zula on their days off throughout their formal contracts. As described, the amounts of money to be made through zula were usually relatively small, enough to get by day-to-day and to manage a small amount of credit taken from individuals rather than institutions. Credit in particular – especially larger scale, often formalised forms of such – was seen as being a dangerous temptation that was inherently linked to contracted work; persons could only access credit and debt if they were in possession of a working contract; even a short-term contract would allow the provision of a loan. This mirrors the situation in neighbouring South Africa, as described by Deborah James:

> echoing what happens in many other settings where stable pay packets are subjected to less-than-stable pressures […], the fact that people earn a regular salary means that they qualify for credit, but the obligations and expenditures they incur by virtue of their position in the workforce places pressure on them to borrow at a level that is unsustainable.[46]

The sentiment is echoed by Marilyn Strathern who elaborates that is often not that the debtor is in particular need, but that the creditor finds new and exciting reasons for the debtor to borrow.[47] Yet these men, when the possibility of a larger loan (as opposed to small credit amounts with other carvers) did arise, usually did not take out loans for frivolous or 'luxury' items. Daniel, for example, had taken out a cash loan to cover necessary living expenses such as a bottle of gas for his accommodation in the DRC, whilst another had taken money simply to buy food at the start of his contract, to cover the period between starting work and his first payday. Whilst these men sometimes *looked* inept at handling their money – for example through excessive spending on

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[44] Adam Hartman, "Husab workers claim unfair practices", *The Namibian*, 26 January 2015, https://www.namibian.com.na/ 132846/archive-read/Husab-workers-claim-unfair-practices-WORKERS-of [accessed December 12, 2018].

[45] Dillon Mahoney, *The Art of Connection: Risk, Mobility, and the Crafting of Transparency in Coastal Kenya*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2017: 4.

[46] Deborah James, *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa*, Redwood City, Stanford University Press, 2015: 3.

[47] Marilyn Strathern, "Qualified Value: The Perspective of Gift Exchange", in: Caroline Humphrey and Stephen Hugh-Jones, (eds.), *Barter, Exchange, and Value: An Anthropological Approach,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 169-191.

alcohol and sometimes by being poorly dressed – in fact they managed their finances astutely.

The irregularity and unpredictability of income from zula also played its role in both financial stability and control of money. The regularity of finances from formal labour meant that both relatives and other locals could easily lay claim to payday money. As seen in other parts of Africa[48] and indeed for among the African diaspora further afield,[49] relatives especially often lay claim to part of a worker's pay. Indeed, it is a common arrangement in many African contexts that younger more able relatives are expected, and expect themselves, to send money back to families living in poorer material conditions.[50]

The zula economy, in that way, provided a way of sidestepping these issues; as no-one would know how much a person had made in a specific day – not even wives and girlfriends – financial control was more easily maintained. Additionally, as I have already described, it was possible that a person might encounter a customer through whom they could potentially access more money than through contracted work; this income could also be kept relatively secret from almost all others. In contrast to the search for jobs in newspapers and through street advertisements, in some instances these contacts could also be the persons who provided further opportunities for contracted work, again highlighting the interconnectedness of the formal and the informal. These relationships however took time and patience to cultivate and as such were not simply economic in nature but required patience, kindness and mutual respect.

In a similar manner to that described by Parker Shipton, the zula economy also inspired notions of trust, distrust and entrustment.[51] Firstly, rather than relying on a (perhaps unreliable) boss, the zula economy is seen as more secure and more reliable (more 'trustworthy') because it depends on personal guile and ingenuity, as Susana Narotzky points out for other informal methods of earning, it is both embedded in social relations and embodied in the self.[52] Additionally, seeing makalani as gift items and emblematic of a wider zula economy means that it is possible to say that zula also infers entrustment to others, and as Shipton describes

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[48] Newell, *Modernity Bluff*.

[49] Peter Geschiere, "Witchcraft: The Dangers of Intimacy and the Struggle over Trust", in: Vigdis Broch-Due and Margit Ystanes, (eds.), *Trusting and It's Tribulations: Interdisciplinary Engagements with Intimacy, Sociality and Trust*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2016: 60-83.

[50] Indeed, as Mark Doyle reports in a *BBC News* article dated 17 April 2013, remittances sent to Africa by relatives overseas exceeded the combined total of international aid, or Official Development Assistance (ODA) at $51.8bn (£34bn) and $43bn (£28bn) respectively, in 2010. See Mark Doyle, "Africans' remittances outweigh Western aid", *BBC News*, 17 April 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22169474 [accessed September 28, 2018].

[51] Shipton, *Nature of Entrustment.*

[52] Susana Narotzky, The Political Economy of Affects: Community, Friendship, and Family in the Organization of a Spanish Economic Region", in: Angela Procoli, (ed.), *Workers and Narratives of Survival in Europe*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004: 57-79.

> entrustment implies obligation, but not necessarily an obligation to repay like for like […] whether an entrustment is repayable in the same or a radically different form – be it economic, political, symbolic, or a mixture of these – is a matter of cultural context or strategy.[53]

As I described in the previous section, zula could be (and in Swakopmund often was) divided into two diametrically opposed realms: the good and the bad. While the maintenance and cultivation of relationships – and the reciprocation of gifts, or entrustments – was clearly seen as 'good zula' as it meant that both, or all, parties in a relationship were benefiting, as a perhaps necessary and binary opposite 'bad zula' would most often only benefit one party, i.e. the one who was practising it. This final section will explore the notion of bad zula in more detail, as well as its implications for male interpersonal relationships.

Good zula... bad zula?

Throughout this paper we have, of course, encountered several examples of bad zula: carving a makalani without request, or harassing a customer through sheer desperation. Zula is highly subjective. It depends very much on the context of action whether it can be labelled as zula, or not. The buying and selling of telephones to raise quick cash, as common in Swakopmund as for other parts of Africa, was 'business' for some, while for others it was necessary for survival.[54] Other examples include rummaging for food in bins (as Nedvěd also describes for Grootfontein),[55] and even contracted work itself; when a person who was working at one of the mines and then rooting in waste-bins it was not considered zula but foolishness – it was seemingly unnecessary to stoop so low when money was evidently available to put food on the table. Yet, even though carvers were sometimes considered a nuisance in town, makalani selling itself was not frowned upon when conducted as a side activity to formal labour; in other ways, then, it was also necessary to be seen to be working, looking for money, making the most of time and opportunity.

In that sense, the division between what is 'good' (Damara *!gai /ni ta/gore re/*, tr. good zula) and what is 'bad' (Damara *//gaî /ni ta/gore re/*, tr. bad zula) in practice seems rather arbitrary; indeed it was commonly known that each person had their own 'zula style', their own way of making "money from nothing".[56] In that way, zula *does* bear similarity to Wacquant's description of 'hustling', which "span[s] a continuum that goes from the relatively innocuous and inoffensive […] to the felonious".[57] In context,

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[53] Shipton, *Nature of Entrustment*: 11.

[54] Katrien Pype, "Brokers of Belonging. Kinshasa's Elders, Mobile Phones and Intermediaries", in: Winston Mano and Wendy Willems, (eds.), *Everyday Media Culture in Africa: Audiences and Users*, London, Routledge, 2017: 198-219.

[55] Nedvěd, "Outline of the Economic Strategies".

[56] Deborah James, *Money from Nothing.*

[57] Wacquant, "Inside the Zone": 3.

however, the division was certainly there: selling makalani was one example of 'good zula'; 'bad zula' was situated more in the realm of the *tsotsi* (i.e. crime). Yet as the examples already given demonstrate, bad zula was not always criminal per se; in essence, bad zula, as a polar opposite of its better counterpart, involved the possibility of an exchange but where, in fact, there is no intention of offering a return on the initial gift or entrustment. Alternatively, the return on the gift might not transpire because the respondent, for whatever reason, is unable to act; perhaps commitments to others might prevent it. Often however, because the response to a gift could be in kind this latter reason for non-response was seen as an excuse; in either situation the fact that someone had been manipulated into giving led to this been seen as 'bad zula' and it was, in itself, a self-perpetuating circle: because persons, particularly men, were wary of losing face in front of other men, or of discussing personal issues which could leave them vulnerable to bad zula themselves. This lack of transparency in turn meant that the conditions for zula were made even more conducive. Very simply, it is easy to mislead someone when information is not shared.

An example will make this a little clearer; whilst zula is very common in interactions with tourists, it was not limited to those relationships; *anyone* can become involved in zula regardless of continental heritage or social status. Two men had both been to the municipal offices to discuss the possibility of being assigned *erfen* (land) on which they would be able to build property. One of them had been informed that they needed to pay a substantial deposit in order to secure this land, whilst this was not the case for the other. In this situation, it is the consultant who is doing zula by suggesting the possibility of a deposit when in fact no such financial capital is required or necessarily beneficial to the process of land acquisition. Nevertheless, because the first man had not researched correctly and did not discuss the matter with others, he was vulnerable to zula. In this situation the gift on offer is, of course, the *erfen* in exchange for cash.

But whilst such scenarios were remarkably rare, the possibility that a person might be lying, or trying to do bad zula – to build a relationship which would ultimately fail, intentionally or otherwise – structured almost all daily interactions between persons. One young man, for example, became incredibly wary when his brother made attempts to become closer to him because he felt certain that his brother was after something – probably money. Others noted how certain persons became close to them when they were in formal labour yet distanced themselves when work ended, as one of my interlocutors – then working at one of the local mines – suggests:

> There was a time when I was retrenched, because the uranium price was very high, and those people who were very close to me, well, I discovered that when I was struggling they abandoned me, and left me alone. When my life got back to normal, those same people were drawn closer to me, and I realised they are coming to me because they want something, they want help, so many reasons. I have to be very careful with them, because I don't trust them. They want something, but they will never give something.[58]

[58] Field interview, 15 February 2015.

Suspicions about zula – and that an exchange might not be honoured or, more likely, that a person would become friendly and then simply vanish, fed into almost all male relationships in Swakopmund; as Gazza points out, *in the ghetto your best friend will be your worst enemy*. Zula, then, occupied a dualistic position – a man should be both good at its practice but simultaneously wary of its practice by others; it both brought people together and drove them apart. As such, in the urban centres at least, it not only occupies a position between the egalitarian and capitalist, it is also part of a similar process of individualisation that Filip De Boeck has noted for Kinshasa, DR Congo.[59]

In that sense, whilst not necessarily always a smooth process, the zula economy works in practice as a method of moving money and other items from those with to those without, i.e. as an egalitarian levelling process. Yet rising inequality both between local African and European populations and, indeed, within the local African community itself, has meant a rise in the practice of bad zula. In some cases this could be put down to simple avarice, itself also symptomatic of inequality. Yet for others it was simply a way of getting by. In either case, however, the definition of 'getting by' becomes relative, particularly in a location such as Swakopmund in which the poor and the rich live in such close proximity, interacting on an almost daily basis.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of 'zula', as part of a much wider informal economy, spans the whole of Namibia, from the towns and villages of the north to the urban centres of Windhoek and Swakopmund. As Nedvěd points out, and as has been described here, it reaches into neighbouring South Africa and beyond.[60] In that sense, the 'zula economy' consists of a network (or networks) of persons who are connected through the movement of objects and money. This is exemplified by the journey of makalani, from the place of cultivation in the north to the eventual point of sale on the coast at Swakopmund. There makalani, in particular, are the lynchpin of many financially beneficial relationships.

This paper has focussed primarily on makalani carvers, a relatively small group of young men who, in Swakopmund at least, are commonly associated with excessive drinking and unruly behaviour. According to ethnographic observers these men and their practices are part of the zula economy, within which 'doing zula' is connected to notions of entrustment. Makalani especially, with their symbolic link between carver and buyer, are intended as gift items which are in many ways designed to facilitate relationships intended to last much longer than the initial transaction. Sometimes these connections work, and at other times not.

Despite its association with notions of 'hustling', zula can be divided into those forms that are seen as 'good' and those that are perceived as 'bad'. In terms of gift-giving and

[59] Filip De Boeck and Sammy Baloji, *Suturing the City: Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds*, London, Autograph ABP, 2016.

[60] Nedvěd, "Outline of the Economic Strategies".

entrustment, good zula inferred a return on the gift – not necessarily in a like-for-like manner – while bad zula was designed to deceive, with no apparent return even if such was insinuated at the time of giving. Those persons performing bad zula usually quickly gained a reputation for doing so and as such their integration into wider circles suffered, even if only for a short time; yet the possibility of tricks or dishonesty influenced almost all relationships within Swakopmund.

This paper also emphasises both the importance of studying the informal economy as a whole – in contrast to the current focus, in Namibia, on the formal – as well as those persons working within it. In practice, persons often move between the formal and the informal, highlighting the interrelatedness of these apparently different realms. Indeed, in the case of the zula economy, a more urban-focussed research base – one in which employment is also seen as more readily available than rural locations, even if it is sometimes relatively scarce and often unstable – facilitates an understanding of how certain groups of people, particularly those who remain highly marginalised, perceive and relate to both 'work' and the formal sector.

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