Femke Brandt paper Ethnography Symposium London 2010
Stream: legitimacy of ethnographic research practices

WORK IN PROGRESS.

Reflections on Interactional Power:

Analyzing and interpreting interactions on trophy-hunting farms in South Africa

Femke Brandt – f.brandt@vu.nl

PhD Candidate Faculty of Social Sciences VU University Amsterdam

Introduction

In February 2010 I have returned from South Africa where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork on trophy-hunting farms in the Eastern Cape. When I had access to such farms, (participant) observations were an important method to generate data. Now it is time for deskwork and writing. What do I do with these observations and the field notes brought from South Africa? What do I do with fieldwork experiences in general? In this paper I explore and illustrate how data is generated through reflections and analysis of my interactions (and observations of them) in the field. The point I want to make is that it is productive and meaningful to reflect on the researcher-subject relationships in the field as it reveals dynamics and meanings of interactions between others in the field too.

Writing this paper was partly motivated by feelings of awkwardness about my relationships with game farmers and game-farm workers in South Africa. This had to do with inherent problematic to ethnography, namely the need to establish meaningful relationships with respondents and pursue research aims at the same time. 'Friendly' ethnographers are not too explicit about their intentions in order to be liked by informants; they hide their frustrations when feeling bored, intimidated or distressed and present 'successful emotional labour and play-acting' (2009: 181). These 'situated dilemma's (Ferdinand, 2007) and 'lies of ethnography' (Fine & Schulman, 2009) are part of our interactions in the field and I think we should study them closely. What are the implications of uneasy encounters for ethnographic representations? And how can reflexivity be used to get a better understanding of the power relations and dynamics among the subjects we study?

These questions are addressed by a presentation of 'reflective' stories of my fieldwork experience. One convention on ethnographic writing well articulated by John Van Maanen in his book *Tales of the Field* (1988: 140) is that 'by producing a cultural representation one perhaps earns the right to confess and tell how the representation came into being.' In other words, first produce a convincing monograph about a particular subject, *before* going into the question what the fieldwork experience was like for the researcher. This strict separation between methodological reflections and data analysis is increasingly questioned and suggestions are made how to make reflections on fieldwork experiences productive *during* the process of data analysis. This paper aims therefore to contribute to the practice of reflexivity in analyzing relations on commercial trophy-hunting farms in South Africa.

The first section provides a brief background of the research questions and some context information on debates around labour relations on commercial farms in South Africa. After that the use of reflexivity and analyzing interactional power is discussed through some examples in literature written by interpretive, reflective or qualitative (organizational) researchers. The second part of the paper presents two 'reflective' empirical stories to open up the discussion on what we learn about the field through analyzing the ethnographer's experiences in there.

Background of the research

In South Africa commercial farms are increasingly being converted from conventional agricultural types of land-use, such as livestock husbandry or crop production, to different forms of wildlife-based production; for instance for wildlife (meat) trade, (trophy) hunting and eco-tourism (see AFRA, 2003; DoA, 2006; NAMC, 2006). In the Eastern Cape Province, where fieldwork was conducted, game farms are mainly associated with trophy-hunting operations (Luck & Vena, 2003). South Africa's history of land dispossession and unfree black labour on white-owned commercial farms (see for example Atkinson, 2007; Ntsebeza & Hall, 2007; Ross, 1999; Terreblanche, 2002) has left at least three million farm dwellers[1] living and working in remote areas dispersed over the country (Hall, 2007:95). The trend of conversions to private game farming has raised discussion on land reform, poverty alleviation and employment in South-Africa's rural economy. A survey among private eco-tourism game farms from the Eastern Cape (Langholz & Kerley, 2006) holds that both wages and demand for labour increases after conversion. Other studies indicate that large surfaces of land are now destined for wild animals, enclosed by high fences and cleared of cattle and people (Connor, 2005; Luck, 2005). Therefore, rural advocacy NGOs in the region express worries concerning the landless and rural poor and they report an increasing number of evictions and loss of livelihoods for farm dwellers and workers as a result of these conversions and farm incorporations (AFRA, 2003; Luck, 2005; Nkuzi, 2005; SAHRC, 2003).

Central in this research are the perceptions of farm workers and the meanings they attach to their work and lives on commercial wildlife farms. One of the concepts used in the debate to discuss the nature of farm relations in South Africa is 'paternalism'. It is defined by Du Toit (1993: 320) as an institution that constitutes a specific understanding of economic relations and a particular interpretation of dependency. It implies a 'deeply organic and hierarchical conceptualisation of the relationship between farmer and worker.....at its most explicit, it sees the farmer as the father of the workers' and the farm community as a 'family' (Du Toit, 1993: 320). The system of paternalism on farms has been described by others as 'micro-welfare system' (Atkinson, 2007: 94), focusing on the often informally negotiated private welfare contributions farmers provide for their workers and families. Atkinson (2007:91-92) argues that paternalism might be regarded an offensive moral ethos, yet some benign aspects of paternalism are still present and perceived on farms today. Moreover, though farmers are often conceived as to control every aspect of farm life (Du Toit, 1993: 316) and farm workers social lives, this does not mean that South-African farm workers never resisted or developed their own 'rules' to deal with these power differences. Farm workers have been known to impose sanctions on farmers who clearly overstepped the implicit 'understandings' between them (Atkinson, 2007:43; Steinberg, 2002; see Van Onselen, 1996).

In addition to the historically developed paternalistic institutions and relations on commercial farms studies indicate a '*management revolution'* on agricultural commercial farms (Du Toit, 1993; Rutherford, 2001). The farm is no longer seen as a 'way of life', but as a 'business'. Decision-making processes are formalised and the relation between the farmer and the farm workers is depersonalised (Du Toit, 1993:325). Through legislation the democratic government increased its influence on labour relations (introduction minimum wage, tenure security policies). The agricultural crisis and the decline of the apartheid state have resulted in commercial farmers deciding to reduce their permanent

[1] With 'farm dwellers' I mean here people who live, and sometimes also work, on commercial farms without having ownership of the land. This group consists of labourers, (former) labour and rent-paying tenants and their families.

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labour force to more flexible, outsourced and casualized labour. How does this affect the historical interdependencies and relationships between farmers and workers?

Analyzing interactional power through researcher reflexivity

Interpretative research departs from the assumption that 'data' and 'meanings' are not just out there" to be collected by scientists. Empirical data is coproduced in and through interactions between the researcher and the research subjects (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006:xvii). Reflecting on these research interactions gives insight on how sources of data are accessed; on the role of the researcher in conversations and participatory observations through which data is created; and the way it is accordingly interpreted (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). The practice of reflexivity is important for critically assessing the researcher-researched relationship and the researcher's 'positionality' in the field (Ybema et al., 2009: 9). Reflexivity further strengthens ethnography as scrutinizing and analyzing interactions with research subjects ultimately reveal their social worlds (Shehata, 2006: 260).

Mentioning reflexivity as researcher has become so common, or even institutionalized (Koning & Ooi, 2010: 14), that scholars have started reflecting on the practice of reflexivity itself (Down et al., 2006; Lerum, 2001; Pillow, 2003). What does it mean to be reflective and how do you do it?

When applied badly, the construction of so-called 'confessional tales' only sucks both author and reader into a 'black hole of introspection' (Van Maanen, 1988: 92; 2010). Unproductive reflective research reveals a lot about the researcher, but little about the researched. Lerum (2001) argues that employment of self-reflexivity is not enough to provide critical analysis or to create politically effective knowledge. Self-reflexivity and interpretation need to be reintegrated with the concept of 'objectivity' (Lerum, 2001: 467). Comparative checks (what do informants think of the researcher's interpretations) and contextualizing interpretations in a larger theoretical framework are important to verify empirical claims (2001: 479) and produce critical knowledge 'which is both self-reflexive and able to critique the power relations between people, institutions and culture (2001: 481). Another critique on the use of reflexivity is the practice of familiar and comfortable reflexivity (Pillow, 2003) whereby researchers obscure uneasy and unfamiliar situations that challenge their representations. Showing awkward encounters in the field and exposing social ambiguities and emotional ambivalence might increase the trustworthiness of ethnography (Koning & Ooi, 2010: 17). The message of the critics on reflexivity is that it should not simply be used as a methodological power (where we learn about the position and assumptions of the researcher), but used as a methodological tool (Pillow, 2003: 192) that ultimately gives us a better understanding of the object of study.

Being reflective on researcher complicity through ethnographic practices (Ghorashi & Wels, 2009) is another interesting aspect of reflexivity that I would like to explore further. Traditionally, engaged anthropologists studied marginalized groups producing texts, with an emancipating subtext, that explained their oppression. This was based on the modern understanding of power that divided the field into powerful actors that should be resisted and powerless actors to sympathize with. The postmodern notion of power assumes that power works through all human (inter)actions, lacking a single source or direction; leaving the engaged ethnographer without a powerful actor to legitimately resent. In other words, everyone is complicit in power structures and discourse, and 'subjects are left alone to reflect on their own roles and positions of complicity' (2009: 236). Ghorashi and Wels claim that ethnographic researchers in organizational studies have to accept and move 'beyond complicity' as they might be ideally positioned to do so as relative outsiders able to leave the field again. Ethnographers should reject the arrogance of moral high ground close to the less-powerful alone, and reflect upon their positions through and within discursive practices (2009: 244).

If power runs through every interaction, it can be reflected upon and analyzed. With interactional power I mean that interactions with researchers, and the way the researcher experiences power, can be

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compared to other interactions and power dynamics in the field. There are some interesting examples where authors explore how valuable insights on (workplace) relationships are generated through reflecting the researcher's interactions and emotions in the field (Blee, 1998; Down et al., 2006).

Blee (1998) analyzed the emotional dynamics of her field relationships with racist activists in the United States. She identified 'fear' during her research as a prominent emotion during interactions with interview respondents. Blee's analysis on how fear, as a medium of interaction, was present and strategically used during the fieldwork period eventually gave her a better understanding of the ways in which fear operates within racist groups themselves. Her reflections on her personal experiences of fear during her fieldwork allowed her to probe beyond her emotional relationships in the field and use the emotional dynamics as analytical tool to get a better understanding of the nature of racist social movements (1998: 393). It is quite easy to imagine the emotional turmoil of doing fieldwork among racists and the researcher's desire to handle or manage these emotions. Also in more 'ordinary' research settings Down et al (2006: 104) argue that 'emotions are part of everyday life and should be part of everyday ethnography'. Inherent covertness of ethnography produces emotional dissonance to which researchers respond in different ways (2006: 95). The authors reflect on their feelings of disgust, anger and embarrassment during research into the steel works in Australia and elaborate on how they substitute or merged their emotional issues with 'traditional gender stereotypes and/or the inherent power, authority and distance of the researcher role' (2006: 102). The idea is that what the field (or interactions with particular respondents) 'does' to you emotionally, generates information about the field when you eventually look beyond the personal experience.

A final example of reflection on interactional power between researcher and respondent is Lerum's (2001) fieldwork experience with sex workers. In one of her interactions with a sex worker she felt confused and flattered after the woman observed her intimately and remarked that she is 'in the wrong line of business' (2001: 467/476). Lerum notes she felt sexually 'objectified'. She experienced the woman had emotional power over her and analysis of the incident gave the researcher insight into the sex worker-client power dynamic which is often based on sexual objectification as well (2001: 477). Important to note is that the 'interactional power' displayed between the researcher and the informant, and reflecting on the feelings of the researcher, generated clues on the power dynamics in the world of sex work. Since the woman could be dominant over the researcher in that moment, it is likely she can also have this power over others.

The main point taken from these examples is that experiences of 'interactional power' between researcher and subject can inform on power dynamics between others in the field. I present a number of my own field experiences in the next part of this paper. Two 'reflective stories' show how researcher-subject field relations reveal relational dynamics in South Africa's wildlife industry.

Reflective tales of the field[2]

An important aspect of the research design and methodological strategy to access workers on wildlife farms was that I had to get permission from game-farm owners, referred to in the rest of the paper as game farmers. Private game farms are predominantly owned by white commercial farmers, wealthy South Africans and (foreign) investors. Before I could focus on the perceptions of workers, I decided I had to develop meaningful relations with their employers. The game farmers through which I had to negotiate access to workers were mostly men and I am a woman. Generally, game farmers welcomed me kindly and showed serious interest in the research project. I was allowed to 'hang around',

[2] This subtitle refers to 'Tales of the Field' (1988) by John Van Maanen.

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interview them on their game farm histories, and I was invited to visits into the 'veld' for maintenance jobs or hunting trips like in the example below. As farm labour is a sensitive and highly politicized topic in South Africa I initially didn't announce explicitly that I wanted to research the perspectives of workers in particular. Instead, I focused on farmer's experiences in enquiring after the history of their conversion to wildlife in the context of changes in the agricultural economy. In that process I hoped to find a moment to address labour issues and carefully explore the room for discussing my research interest in workers experiences. Farmers would respond seemingly indifferent saying they would allow that or stating that "you won't talk to them that long any way" or simply stop communicating with me from that point onwards.

In my interactions with game farmers I was aware of ideological disparities (on politics, race, gender, capitalism) and mostly avoided confrontations based on these differences. I actively strived to be open to their ideas and stories. Of course, I was dependent on farmers for access to a field site where I could observe interactions between them and farm workers, so I thought I had better be nice to them. The fact that farmers and hunters turned out to be likable people, only makes it harder (especially now in the phase of data analysis) to grasp some of their practices and statements as landowners, employers and managers. Uneasy encounters were those where I observed employers and workers interacting with each other, because power relations were most visible and explicit.

An example of this is presented in the following story in which I reflect on awkward interactions in the field during a trophy hunt. The text is based on field notes and initial reflections on the experience while I was still in the field. I later created this particular telling to open up discussion on some uncomfortable aspects of field relations in the trophy hunting sector.

Tale of a Trophy Hunt

I am with five people in the back of a green 'bakkie' (pick-up truck); the American client-hunter and I have excellent views of the vast plains and bushes of the farm while we bump up and down on the black uncomfortable bench. The sun is out on this early morning and I notice the client-hunter holds on tight to his .338 rifle especially imported for this trip. Three black farm workers stand behind us and look out for potential animals the client-hunter wants to shoot today. The 'trackers' converse in isiXhosa. Their facial expressions are concealed by the shade of caps. The American names one of the workers 'Click-Click' after the unfamiliar sounds (to him) that characterize the African language of this region. The trackers signal their Afrikaans-speaking employer behind the steering wheel when they detect movements or hear animal sounds. The professional hunter (PH) instructs the client accordingly, in English, to 'get ready' and the hunter begins to look around tensed and uncertain. I also feel anxiety now as I am trying to fully capture the hunting experience (what is it like to know you are going to kill?) and observe the interactions between all present as well. Suddenly the PH stops the car, leaves the vehicle and tells the by now over-excited American to follow him immediately. One of the trackers hands the PH the shooting sticks from the back and I pass on the rifle when asked to. The two men walk a little distance, put up the sticks and position their bodies behind each other. I wonder if the trackers see the animal, where is it? I see the client raise his elbow with his finger is on the trigger; he aims as his guide whispers in his ear where to locate the destined target. Then he shoots. His body recoils slightly. I hear an echoing sound of the bullet hitting the wildebeest's shoulder at high-speed. Then I breathe out.

There is a congratulatory handshake between client and guide. Two trackers jump from the vehicle and start walking towards the dead animal. One tracker takes place at the driver's seat and we enter the 'veld' to collect the trophy. I climb down the car to get a better look at the wildebeest lying, and bleeding, in the grass. The PH explains to the American that he has caught a nice animal "look at the horns, they are wider than the ears and that is what counts!" One of the trackers is washing the blood from the wounded skin and another is pulling grass away around the dead animal's body. A neat stage is prepared for the trophy picture; a rock under the nose of the wildebeest elevates the

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head just enough to have it looking straight into the camera. To my amazement, one of the workers lies down behind the animal to hold it in the preferred position. From the front of the scene, you wouldn't guess he was squatting there. Behind the worker's body, the hunter kneels with his rifle on the worker's behind, making a comment that causes laughter among the men. I find it embarrassing to look at, but interesting enough to take some snaps of the situation to take home as empirical 'evidence' of this situation, of this hunting 'ritual'. I walk around inconspicuously and I notice the other trackers observing the scene from a distance as well. What are they thinking? I wonder. When a satisfactory photograph is taken the American announces a wild idea. He wants to have a picture of ME with his trophy, and his rifle! Hesitantly, I kneel down behind the worker, apologizing in isiXhosa for what I am about to do, and place the rifle on his body. I smile and it is over. The client got two trophies in one shot.

What do the interactions in this story (and the pictures) represent?[3] I want to focus on the instance where the trophy pictures are taken. In this 'ethnographic moment' I found myself guilty, as participant observer, of performing a similar act as to what I was appalled by a moment earlier. Firstly, I witnessed the degrading positioning of the farm worker behind the animal and secondly I experienced being placed in the position of the hunter while acting as a kind of model for him. Reflecting on the portrayal of interactional power over both me and the worker informed me about the position of the worker in this situation. In adjusting to what is perceived as 'normal' practices, I experienced the inequalities and power relations in the field. How do I 'go beyond complicity' as proposed by Ghorashi and Wels (2009), in my research? How do I legitimize my choices in the field?

If I accept the fact that I was complicit I can analyze the interaction and draw meaning from it. What did this interaction mean? The hunter didn't mind photographing me with his trophy however it made me feel more uneasy being made so *visibly* complicit in the present power structures. On the other hand, the worker remained *invisible* in all pictures (with me and the hunter). He is not acknowledged as part of the hunting expedition or even present in the hunter's image of an African landscape. That seems to belong to the one with the rifle. The hunter has access to game and is allowed to consume on the land. The point is not that the worker would want to be in the trophy picture, or even care about it. The point is what it means that the worker is removed from the image of South Africa. South-African writer Njabulo Ndebele might give an indication as he reflected on his experience of visiting a game farm in South Africa. He writes that game lodges represent a 'colonial culture' that 'celebrate a particular kind of cultural power: the enjoyment of colonial leisure' (Ndebele, 1997). Could the invisibility of workers in the trophy-hunting industry perhaps represent a deepening of land dispossession?

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[3] I am focussing mainly on the interactions between humans here. It would perhaps be possible and interesting to also analyse interactions between humans and animals or humans and landscapes.

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On days like the 'tale of a trophy hunt' it was difficult to freely speak to workers, especially when the farmer was around as well. First of all workers were busy working so there was little time and space for 'formal' life-history interviews. Secondly, I experienced meetings with workers differently outside the farm in their churches or family homes. The following reflective tale illustrates how I could access these off-farm situations partly as result of the worker's interest in my ability to transport them for instance.

The Instrumental Researcher

It is Saturday morning and I call some of the workers from the case-study hunting farm to find out who of them are in town over the weekend and whether there are possibilities to meet up for an interview. uPhinde, who assured me during the week he would be in town this particular weekend, now tells me he will only be in town at the end of the month. Too bad, I can wait. The outcome of the next phone call is similarly disappointing. Zola suddenly has to report to work, something to do with a rhino, and our appointment to visit a church elder tomorrow is canceled. Shame, but that it how it goes. Then I tried to get a hold of Marcus whose cell phone is off. Clearly, I have to come up with something else occupy myself with for the day. At noon I get a hold of Marcus who indeed turns out to be around. He is caught up in a church meeting and asks if he can phone me later? Sure, no problem. Around 6 pm he reports the church meeting is still on and that he is not returning to the farm today, contrary to what I counted on. Could I perhaps come and fetch him tomorrow morning when he is planning to go back? We agree I will meet him at his family's house at 10 am. When I arrive at the bright pink matchbox house on Sunday morning I see Marcus in the garden, together with three other elderly men. They are seated around an object that presumably contains liquor, judging Marcus' 'jolly' behavior and odor when he greets me. He asks if I can make pictures of him and his children? He looks smart in his toe-pointed shoes and neat shirt; quite a contrast to the usually blue worker's clothes. After we took the picture he invites me inside the house and puts on the kettle for tea. Then he disappears around the corner of the house again leaving me inside with the mother of the house. I give her the tomatoes I brought from my garden. Together with her I draw up a family tree to make sense of who is attached to this place and I listen to various fragmented stories of people walking in and out the house. Sam is also present and to my surprise greets me warmly. At the farm he usually hardly seems to notice me, and certainly not to want to talk to me. Marcus asks me if I want to meet his parents, if I have time. By now, I realize it is not his intention to make use of my transport service to the farm any time soon and we head to his parental home on the other side of the township with Sam drowsy in the backseat. Marcus exclaims "you are so nice; no white person would ever drink tea at our house!" Personally, I am wondering if I should be driving around with two drunken men who skillfully have taken charge of my mobility and schedule for the day. Interviewing is obviously impossible in these circumstances and even observing their private behavior feels awkward. Marcus even sheds a couple of tears when he shares a memory of a dear family member who passed away. When they finally announce they are ready to go back to the farm we first have to pass by another place again to fetch his skin cream. As soon as we enter the national road Sam falls asleep and Marcus starts spilling out his concerns and frustrations with the work. "I just want to take care of my children, but I have been thinking that if I don't get an increase, I am going to leave, that is better for me. The trainee knows nothing and he gets more money than me! Just because of this," and he touches his face with his hand while he looks at me, indicating that it's his black skin that makes him less worthy. "Ten years I have worked! I am tired. I am going to ask for a pay rise... Now, that is why I drink, then I can forget. I have a lot of stress, but I can't work for the neighbouring farmer, he is bad".

Several reflections on interactions with Marcus give insight in the complex relationship between game farmers and workers. Striking were the emotions expressed by Marcus in his interaction with me. He cried when he shared the story of his relative who passed away and he was frustrated and angry when he told me about the working conditions on the game farm. Presumably the alcohol made him more willing to talk. On the farm I had observed him as quiet, and reserved. Now I found him enthusiastic about my visit and dominant in our interactions. What does this observation mean? In the literature discussed earlier relationships on farms are said to be 'depersonalized' as a result of formal labour regulations and changes in the agricultural labour market. The question I would like to investigate is: were these relations ever really personal? As Marcus exclaimed that no white person would ever drink tea at their house, it makes me wonder how 'personal' relations between him and the game farmer could possibly be.

During fieldwork it was indeed not uncommon to hear farmers say that "workers are like children". In a seminal study about domestic work and the relationships between 'maids and madams' in South Africa it was reported that madams also described 'their' maids as part of the family. However, none of the maids perceived herself as part of the family too since no power or resource sharing was involved in the relationship (Cock, 1980: 132). According to Ross (1995) this 'family' terminology to describe social relations on farms is dubious since the ideological separation of white and black people is clearly expressed in the Afrikaans language widely spoken on commercial farms. 'The linguistic elaboration around the domination of black men and women has provided white South Afrikaners with a richness of vocabulary in this field to approach that of the Zulu on cattle or the Inuit on snow' (1995:47). Some examples of ideological revelations in language use are the way in which farmers are addressed by workers as 'sir' or 'baas' or even 'master', and farmers address workers by their (Christian) names or function; for example 'skinner', garden boy' or 'nanny'. A 'skinner' can never become a 'seun' (Afrikaans word for 'son' for young white bachelors) nor can a 'nanny' become a 'tannie' (Afrikaans word for 'aunt' for white mothers). Clear boundaries still exist today in who belongs to the farm family and who doesn't as it is already linguistically impossible to be included in a white family when you have a black skin.

Another reflection on the interaction with Marcus is that I partly felt uneasy about the encounter because he was drunk. The persistent discourse on alcohol (ab)use by farm workers is a dominant narrative among farmers to depict their labour force as 'useless' and unreliable. During my interactions with farmers they often complained that after weekends staff would return (if turning up at all) to the farm drunk or sick. In this case Marcus confirmed the expectation of the farmer reproducing a paradox. Marcus drinks 'to forget' the lack of prospects on the farm or possibilities to better his situation and the farmer reasons that drinking indicates workers simply don't want to work. In the end nobody is content with the established relations, so why do they actually persist? Marcus does not resign from a job where he feels he is being disproportionally exploited and the farmer hasn't fired him even though he complains constantly about workers drinking too much and not being serious about work. What are both actor's interests or motivations to stay in the position they're in? Marcus seems to indicate he doesn't have good looking employment alternatives as the neighbouring farmer is 'bad'. The farmer could easily pick and choose from a gigantic pool of available farm labourers, but he doesn't. Both farmer and worker are pursuing this awkward relationship for some or other reason.

A final on the interaction with farm workers has to do with mutual interest that could be established in the research process. Driving Marcus around the whole Sunday, and being 'in communication' about his whereabouts throughout the weekend, showed me aspects of his life beyond the farm gates. His activities mainly seemed to revolve around church meetings and drinking with relatives at the family homes. I had asked and planned to interview Marcus at his family home (because on the farm this was not really working) and now it was impossible due to the state he was in

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and so initially I felt disappointed I could not rely on him. Since I had promised to take Marcus back to the farm I decided to adjust to his plans and see when he would be ready to go.

A key aspect of the interaction between researcher and farm workers was that subjects made instrumental use of the researcher's resources like a car to transport people. I could drive them to church, bring cake and drinks, lend money, transport people between farms and homes in town. This was (partly) their interest in interacting with me and this is how I entered their churches, families and homes. A mutual interest developed that, after closer examination, might resemble some of the institutionalized dependencies between farmers and workers. Over time, I accepted certain responsibilities towards farm workers in order to construct meaningful relations with them. In a similar way responsibilities have developed between farmers and workers. Farmers still provide, as they are expected to, transport, goods, money and food for farm workers. The difference between the researcher-subject interactions and farmer-worker interactions should be further investigated against the historical background of farm relations in commercial farming areas and the different positions of farmers and workers in South-African society.

Conclusion

In this paper it is illustrated how data is generated through reflections and analysis of my interactions with game farmers and game-farm workers in South Africa. I tried to explore my complicity in the field beyond the question whether interactions were legitimate, right or wrong, and reveal through reflections on uneasy encounters some of the power dynamics present on trophy-hunting farms. The kind of data generated through practicing reflexivity initiated interesting insights on themes as (in)visibility, (inter)dependency, power relations and mobility of game-farm workers.

This is merely the start of producing a representation of the current practices and social relations on (game) farms in South Africa. The empirical data presented here needs to be compared and integrated into 'bigger' theoretical frameworks on agrarian change, land reform and industrial relations. The stories and ideas presented are the beginning of an understanding how farmers and workers create 'meaningful' relations within a changing agricultural economy based on legacies of a painful past and a history of extreme inequality.

Acknowledgement

This study is part of an Integrated Programme funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO)WOTRO, titled: 'Farm Dwellers, the Forgotten People? Consequences of Conversions to Private Wildlife Production in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape' (file number W 01.65.306.00). The author would like to thank the project coördinator Marja Spierenburg and all other Dutch and South African project members for their input. This paper was also inspired by the participants of the 'Organizational Ethnography' panel convened by Heidi Dahles and Simon Down during the 26th EGOS Colloquium 2010 in Lisbon.

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