

A Joint Understanding on the Past?

Challenges and Prospects of Reconciliation between Germany and the Ovaherero and Nama from an Emotions Perspective

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1. Introduction: It Cannot Be About Us Without Us

“It cannot be about us without us!”: this slogan has become emblematic of the struggle of the Ovaherero¹ and Nama demanding an official recognition, apology and reparations from the German government for the genocide committed by German protective forces in the colony of South West Africa, now Namibia, between 1904 and 1908. Bilateral talks between the governments of Germany and Namibia with the aim of developing a joint understanding on the past were led between 2015 and 2021 and resulted in the proposal of a fund for reconstruction and development.² This study was conducted during the negotiations against the background that many descendants of the victims were opposing the talks, criticising that they took place in secret and without authentic representatives of the victim communities.³ Not surprisingly, as a result, the agreement reached in 2021 has met critical responses as well.⁴ This contribution aims to establish the lessons learned on the conditions and obstacles for successful reconciliation from this debate.

The implications of the genocide and the modalities of the bilateral talks have been researched at length in terms of international law and strategic politics. These accounts, however, omit an important perspective; I argue that affect and emotion are as much essential to understanding the goals of the Ovaherero and Nama demanding justice for the genocide as are legal and political questions. Paying attention to the social and political character of affect and emotions may offer meaningful insights into descendants’ beliefs, relationships and action strategies and may thus engender a better comprehension of their standpoint. Particularly, I argue that using this lens can further our understanding of the relevance of redress for successive generations today. Transitional justice and reconciliation studies have already made valuable contributions on the emotional underpinnings of processing injustice. However, emotion-focused approaches to transitional justice often adopt either an individualist-psychological view or focus on group-level emotion.⁵ In contrast, I propose that conceptualising emotions as social, equally individual and collective phenomena may shed new light on justice and reconciliation processes.

Specifically, I will analyse how the emotional experience of the Ovaherero and Nama opposing the bilateral talks affects their expectations and disposition for reconciliation with Germany. With this approach, I aim to make an empirical

1 Plural form of *Herero*.

2 Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany, “Foreign Minister Maas on the Conclusion of Negotiations with Namibia,” May 25, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3wdc4yry>.

3 NGO Alliance No Amnesty on Genocide!, “Joint Resolution of the Delegates to the I. Transnational Congress on the Ovaherero and Nama Genocides, Berlin, October 14–16, 2016,” October 16, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/zej4v9em>.

4 European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, “Das „Versöhnungsabkommen“ – Eine vertane Chance,” June 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/tvd465xs>: 1-2.

5 Jonas Bens, private email to author, November 16, 2018.

contribution both to the principles of reconciliation in an affective sense and to the practice of international relations (IR). My analysis focusses on those Ovaherero and Nama who reject the bilateral talks as this allows for a conceptualisation of justice and reconciliation alternative to dominant practice. Moreover, I believe that bringing the communities' views to the forefront is crucial given the colonial amnesia that has long dominated German memory politics.

In the following section, I will revisit the rationalist paradigm in IR and subsequently present my own concept of emotions in the social sciences. To introduce the context of my study to the reader, I will then outline the history of the genocide and its political aftermath. Lastly, I will present my study design based on five problem-centred interviews and introduce three phases of emotionally living through injustice: experiencing, negotiating and overcoming. As my analysis will show, emotions significantly shaped descendants' understanding of themselves as personally affected, their angle on the bilateral talks as a parallelism to past injustices and their visions for overcoming the injustices experienced.

2. Emotion and Affect in International Politics

2.1 Towards a Social Science Understanding of Emotion

Western philosophy has long adhered to a rationalist paradigm supported by several skewed ontological and epistemological assumptions about emotions and affect, understanding emotions to be reactive, fleeting and biological and as a result unamenable to systematic analysis.⁶ Not least, the paradigm reifies sharp dichotomies of mind and body, thinking and feeling, rational and irrational et cetera⁷, whereby emotion is associated with irrationality.⁸ This understanding of emotions as psychobiological and as based within the individual has long blocked the view towards their social embeddedness.⁹ However, the psychologising take on emotion has been challenged by the *affective turn*, pointing to the cultural, social and historic influences on emotional experience.¹⁰ In IR as well, research has increasingly come to understand emotion as an intrinsic part of world politics:¹¹ many scholars now view IR as a hybrid of emotions, values, norms and power structuring the international sphere.¹² Focal points of this

6 Neta C. Crawford, "Institutionalizing Passion in World Politics: Fear and Empathy," *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (2016): 536.

7 *ibid.*

8 Catherine A. Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions. Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll & Their Challenge to Western Theory* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 59.

9 *ibid.*, 4.

10 cf. Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, and others.

11 Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics," *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (2014): 492.

12 Jean-Marc Coicaud, "Exploring the Nexus Emotions/Passions, Values and Rights in International Politics," in *Emotions in International Politics. Beyond Mainstream International Relations*, eds. Yohan

engagement include emotions' link to values, norms and organisation, their mark on dominant international cultures or their role in individual and collective identity.¹³ Interventions in IR also point to the linkages of emotions to power and mechanisms of control, as actions or discourse invoked by powerful actors may elicit or suppress emotional phenomena.¹⁴ At the same time, emotions may shape political action and eventually form part of governance structures or practices.¹⁵

Nevertheless, beyond the *emotions matter* transformation, much is still to be discussed with regards to *how* specifically emotion fits into IR research and practice.¹⁶ In order to address this question, it is necessary to take a closer look at what exactly emotion is. Understood as an umbrella term, emotion encompasses phenomena such as sentiments, passions, feelings, moods, and affect, differentiated by intensity and durability. For this study, by contrast, I will adopt a broad conceptualisation of emotion as a multidimensional capability.¹⁷ In essence, I follow an understanding of emotion as an “evaluative relation to the world directed at concrete events which can be, for the most part, captured reflexively, denominated, and communicated accordingly (and thus also portrayed performatively) by the individual.”¹⁸ It is apparent from this definition that emotions have multiple dimensions: they are evaluative in the form of appraisals, judgements or attitudes¹⁹, they are sensory, experienced as bodily change²⁰, they are relational in that they relate to something or someone²¹, they are social, that is, socio-culturally modelled²², and they are volitional, meaning that as something that “stirs, inhibits, intensifies, modulates, impedes, incites”, they stimulate behaviour.²³

I will shortly revisit some of the theoretical distinctions made in the literature in order to trace how emotions may manifest in reconciliation processes. Firstly, research

Affrin, Jean-Marc Coicaud, and Vesselin Popovski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 137.

13 Jean-Marc Coicaud, “Conclusion: A Few Suggestions for a Future Research Program on Emotions and Passions in International Politics,” in *Emotions in International Politics. Beyond Mainstream International Relations*, eds. Yohan Affrin, Jean-Marc Coicaud, and Vesselin Popovski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 399-403.

14 Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar, “Introduction: Methodological Challenges and Opportunities for the Study of Emotions,” in *Researching Emotions in International Relations. Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn*, eds. Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 16.

15 Yohan Ariffin, “Introduction: How Emotions Can Explain Outcomes in International Relations,” in *Emotions in International Politics. Beyond Mainstream International Relations*, eds. Yohan Affrin, Jean-Marc Coicaud and Vesselin Popovski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 7.

16 Simon Koschut, “Introduction to Forum: Discourse and Emotions in International Relations,” in *International Studies Review* 19, no. 3 (2017): 482.

17 cf. Andrew A. G. Ross, *Mixed Emotions. Beyond Fear and Hatred in International Conflict* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), *Mixed Emotions*, 20.

18 Collaborative Research Center 1171, *Affective Societies. Dynamiken des Zusammenlebens in bewegten Welten*, own translation (Freie Universität Berlin: DFG Finanzierungsantrag, 2015), 17.

19 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 5.

20 *ibid.*, 5-6.

21 *ibid.*, 7-8.

22 Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, 209.

23 Deborah Bejosa Gould, *Moving Politics. Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 439.

commonly differentiates between emotion and affect. Contrary to clearly identifiable emotions, affect designates the non-cognitive, non-conscious and non-linguistic aspects of emotionality and is comprised of “unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body.”²⁴ In addition, the concept of affective relationality stresses that affect is based on dynamic processes between actors.²⁵ Thusly understood, affect materialises as interactions *between* affecting and affected bodies. Its movement between different bodies is described as a circulation which sticks to individual bodies²⁶ and may eventually materialise into affective attachments.²⁷

A second distinction concerns the conceptualisation of emotion in terms of cognition or bodily change.²⁸ The cognitivist perspective holds that emotions are evaluative orientations people assign to beliefs, norms and identities associated with actors, symbols and institutions.²⁹ Moral emotions, in particular, may arise in response to breaches of such norms.³⁰ I will use the term moral emotions to describe the affective responses to events that (mis)match beliefs or ideas of desirable behaviour. In addition, I will adopt the concept of sentiments, understood as affective and emotional dynamics “which govern, structure and regulate how people make sense of the world.”³¹ Sentiments are characterised by an element of durability as they evolve into stable regimes and transport meaning-making structures through time and space, inscribing themselves in the lives of individuals and institutional arrangements.³²

Thirdly, emotions are often described as either individual or collective. In fact, much of IR’s debate has evolved around how to reconcile an emotions’ approach with its focus on collective actors – the question of “whether one can (and whether people do) feel like a state.”³³ I will adopt a different strategy by focusing on the emotional experience of those communities affected by international politics, in line with Ross³⁴, Ahmed³⁵, Hutchison³⁶ and others calling for moving away from states onto communities in IR. Mercer lists four ways of how individual emotion may transform

24 *ibid.*, 19.

25 Jan Slaby and Christian van Scheve, “Introduction. Affective Societies – Key Concepts,” in *Affective Societies – Key Concepts*, eds. Jan Slaby and Christian van Scheve (London: Routledge, 2019), 14.

26 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.

27 Slaby and van Scheve, “Introduction. Affective Societies – Key Concepts,” 14.

28 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 5.

29 Ross, *Mixed Emotions*, 33.

30 Jonas Bens and Olaf Zenker, *Gerechtigkeitsgefühle: Zur affektiven und emotionalen Legitimität von Normen* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017), 21-22.

31 Jonas Bens and Olaf Zenker, “Sentiment,” in *Affective Societies – Key Concepts*, eds. Jan Slaby and Christian van Scheve (London: Routledge, 2019), 97.

32 *ibid.*

33 Jonathan Mercer, “Feeling Like a State: Social Emotion and Identity,” *International Theory* 6, no. 3 (2014): 517.

34 Ross, *Mixed Emotions*.

35 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

36 Emma Hutchison, *Affective Communities in World Politics. Collective Emotions after Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

into group emotion: firstly, via the cultural regulation of emotion³⁷, also referred to as “emotion repertoires”, meaning “rules of expression linked to concepts of distinct emotions [...] as well as modi of emotional experience structured by rules, practices and medial forms.”³⁸ Secondly, as people in a group are likely to interact most with each other, they influence each other.³⁹ Thirdly emotion is contagious⁴⁰, or rather circulates between individuals.⁴¹ Lastly, group-level events may elicit shared group-level reactions evoked by the common experience.⁴² By linking individuals to groups, emotion also shapes identifications and collective identities.⁴³ Belonging exemplifies one such sentiment based on attachment to a social formation.⁴⁴

The nexus between individual and collective emotions shows that rather than distinct, both are highly mutually dependent. I will therefore adopt a model of the sociality of emotion which characterises emotion by a concurrence of individuality and sociality.⁴⁵ In sum, rather than focussing on individual *or* social emotions, their cognitive *or* affective facet, I will understand emotions as multidimensional phenomena varying in durability, intensity and sharedness which shape how individuals relate to themselves, others and the world around them. I translated these considerations into my analysis by asking how emotions impact judgements and beliefs, how they shape people’s relations to others, how they are shared and what they make people do. Not least, adopting such a broad approach towards emotion facilitated the explorative openness of my study.

2.2 Emotions in Justice and Reconciliation Processes

After having outlined the relevance of emotions to social and political life in general, I will now proceed onto their role in justice and reconciliation processes specifically. Justice is typically understood as a settling of accounts where those culpable are punished and victims are repaired in order to balance the moral books.⁴⁶ Restorative justice, in particular, focusses on meeting victims’ needs for repairing the harm caused, including material, moral and emotional needs, rather than on punishment.⁴⁷ Reconciliation, on the other hand, entails measures to “repair ruptured and damaged social and political relationships in order to return to or establish some normatively

37 Mercer, “Feeling Like a State: Social Emotion and Identity,” 523.

38 Collaborative Research Center 1171, *Affective Societies*, 21.

39 Mercer, “Feeling Like a State: Social Emotion and Identity,” 523-524.

40 *ibid.*, 524.

41 *cf.* Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.

42 Mercer, “Feeling Like a State: Social Emotion and Identity,” 524-525.

43 Slaby and van Scheve, “Introduction. Affective Societies – Key Concepts,” 2–3.

44 *ibid.*, 21.

45 *cf.* Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, and Collaborative Research Center 1171, *Affective Societies*.

46 Catherine Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 16.

47 Jeffrey M. Blustein, *Forgiveness and Remembrance. Remembering Wrongdoing in Personal and Public Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 157.

ideal model of social unity.”⁴⁸ There are different layers to reconciliation: structural reconciliation, addressing the institutions, practices and material conditions causal of injustice; interactional reconciliation, the settling of accounts between agents; and existential reconciliation, the dis-alienation of agents affected by injustice.⁴⁹

Transitional justice studies show that conflicts do not only evolve around competing interests, but also intense emotions.⁵⁰ The “emotional psychology approach” in particular examines individuals' emotional responses to transitional justice processes and events.⁵¹ It centres on survivors and victors and typically holds that an emotional catharsis within the victims and an acceptance of blame within perpetrators constitute prerequisites for reconciliation.⁵² The approach argues that negative emotions prevailing in transitional societies, such as anger, grief or fear, must be transformed into more desirable emotions, such as respect and shared trust.⁵³ It maintains that as a result, transitional justice mechanisms need to find ways to meaningfully incorporate emotional responses to injustice.⁵⁴ As a seeming model example, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has been credited with “therapeutic and psychosocial healing processes” through which the crimes of Apartheid could be represented.⁵⁵ However, the TRC also illustrates the weaknesses of an approach of national reconciliation, as it allowed for only a limited spectrum of emotional responses, thus partly clashing with the needs of victims.⁵⁶ This underlines the complex interplay of the micro and macro levels of reconciliation and shows that political reconstruction might differ significantly from interpersonal forgiveness and reconciliation.⁵⁷

Emotion approaches to transitional justice also address how emotions are negotiated collectively, including through practices of public apologies and commemoration. Public apologies may establish relations of respect and trust among perpetrators and victims.⁵⁸ A condition frequently specified for an apology is that it needs to be truthful and read by the receiver *as* an apology.⁵⁹ Similarly, reparations may signal respect and substantiate an acknowledgement of wrongdoing.⁶⁰ Denial or whitewashing of crimes, by contrast, may signal contempt for the victims.⁶¹ All in all, the sentiments of remorse

48 Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics*, 16 .

49 Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics*, 19–20.

50 Ross, *Mixed Emotions*, 123–124.

51 Leslie Vinjamuri and Jack Snyder, “Advocacy and Scholarship in the Study of International War Crime Tribunals and Transitional Justice,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004): 357.

52 *ibid.*

53 Michael Ure, “Post-Traumatic Societies: On Reconciliation, Justice and the Emotions,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 3 (2008): 284–285.

54 *ibid.*, 285.

55 Hutchison, *Affective Communities in World Politics*, 213.

56 Ross, *Mixed Emotions*, 128–135.

57 cf. Blustein, *Forgiveness and Remembrance*, 153–154.

58 Blustein, *Forgiveness and Remembrance*, 160–161.

59 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 115.

60 Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States* (London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 13.

61 *ibid.*

and forgiveness are pivotal in the literature and point to the emotional change necessary for reconciliation. Blustein argues that whether forgiveness works as a practice of justice depends on the relative power of victims and perpetrators, the reasons for which the perpetrators are forgiven and the participation of the communities involved in formulating the terms.⁶² This also gives rise to the question of whether “public officials [...] have the standing or authority to forgive”⁶³, or, who may legitimately reconcile with whom.

It is useful to think about those public practices in terms of affective circulation. Bens describes transitional justice atmospheres as impressions produced by the co-presence of bodies in a transitional justice setting. As they stick to individual bodies, the “spatial and affective micro-politics of transitional justice” have a significant effect on people's sense of justice.⁶⁴ The concept of trauma points to further ways in which emotional experiences of injustice may become shared within communities. Hutchison argues that trauma, as “events or historic periods so extreme that they shatter identities and debase a wider sense of public meaning or cohesion”⁶⁵, is inherently emotional and that those emotions create shared understandings in post-trauma communities.⁶⁶ When shared amongst a community, feelings of discomfort, shock, incomprehension and pain become woven into the social fabric⁶⁷ and engender collective forms of meaning that create a distinct affective community.⁶⁸ Emotional legacies develop long-term intergenerational effects as they are passed on by a re-enactment of the collective suffering.⁶⁹ All in all, the concept of affective communities demonstrates the need to look beyond the individualistic emotional psychology approach.

As this short overview has shown, emotion may point to how a sense of injustice arises, moves across time and space, and how it can be addressed. All in all, emotional change both within and between actors transpired to be an important underpinning of reconciliation. Accordingly, in my analysis, I will ask how injustice is emotionally experienced, how a sense of injustice is transmitted and which practices of justice may cause it to change.

3. Mapping the Conflict: The Genocide in German-Namibian Relations

South West Africa was the first protectorate acquired by the German Empire in 1884 and constituted the empire's main settler colony. The genocide of the Ovaherero and

62 Blustein, *Forgiveness and Remembrance*, 172.

63 *ibid.*, 154.

64 Jonas Bens, “Transitional Justice Atmospheres. The Role of Space and Affect in the International Criminal Court's Outreach Efforts in Northern Uganda,” in *Normative Spaces and Legal Dynamics in Africa*, eds. Katrin Seidel and Hatem Elliesie (London: Routledge, 2020), 52–53.

65 Hutchison, *Affective Communities in World Politics*, 3.

66 *ibid.*, 12.

67 *ibid.*, 10.

68 *ibid.*, 3.

69 *ibid.*, 221.

Nama, aimed initially at repressing Ovaherero resistance, is probably the most significant event of German colonial history. The uprising of the Ovaherero in 1904 was triggered, amongst others, by a loss of power of traditional leaders, sexualised violence suffered by women, loss of land to German settlers and a cattle plague causing the loss of livelihoods.⁷⁰ While first Herero attacks were successful, German protective troops ended up encircling the Ovaherero and forced them to retreat into the arid Omaheke region.⁷¹ The Nama later joined the struggle, reacting to German threats of extending their persecution.⁷² The commander of the German protective forces interpreted this conflict as a “race war”.⁷³ As a result, German warfare aimed not only at military victory, but at a complete erasure of the enemy.⁷⁴ Today, it is generally accepted that this warfare as well as the extermination order given by commander von Trotha is consistent with the UN definition of genocide.⁷⁵ As a result of water deficiency, a scorched earth policy⁷⁶ and internment camps characterised by forced labour and disease⁷⁷ up to 80 % of the 60 – 80,000 Ovaherero and around half of the circa 20,000 Nama perished.⁷⁸

The aggressive post-war order and the profound ruptures caused within the communities, including their displacement to neighbouring colonies, significantly shaped Namibian history. In addition to the loss of political structures, it helped establish a system of forced labour and strict racial segregation.⁷⁹ Some of the long-term consequences still remain to be tackled today, such as land reform and a re-settlement of Ovaherero and Nama in the diaspora.⁸⁰ In the aftermath of the genocide, land distribution and deprivation vis-à-vis German settlers became important markers of identity for the communities.⁸¹

After the end of the German colonial empire in 1918, Namibia came under South African rule.⁸² A window of opportunity for the Ovaherero and Nama to articulate their grievances towards Germany opened only after Namibian independence in 1990.⁸³ Since then, the two communities have been demanding justice for the genocide. The

70 Jürgen Zimmerer, “Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika. Der erste deutsche Genozid,” in *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen*, eds. Jürgen Zimmerer and Joachim Zeller (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2004), 46.

71 Horst Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018), 130.

72 *ibid.*, 131.

73 Zimmerer, “Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika,” 60.

74 *ibid.*, 45.

75 Kößler, *Namibia and Germany. Negotiating the Past* (Windhoek: University of Namibia Press, 2015), 117–119.

76 Zimmerer, “Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika,” 50–52.

77 *ibid.*, 55–57.

78 Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, 131.

79 Zimmerer, “Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika,” 60.

80 Kößler, *Namibia and Germany*, 117–118.

81 *ibid.*, 118.

82 *ibid.*, 19–22.

83 *ibid.*, 234.

genocide has been on the agenda of German politics not least since its centenary in 2004.⁸⁴ In addition, the restitution of human remains in 2011 unified the Namibian position over discontent with the treatment of their delegation and led to further polarisation between the two states.⁸⁵ Intergovernmental consultations with the aim of “developing future bilateral relations on the basis of a joint understanding on the past” between Germany and Namibia were finally taken up in 2015.⁸⁶ In Namibia, they evoked controversy around the modalities of including victims’ groups who partook only in advisory committees to the government.⁸⁷ A further point of criticism was that the positions of both governments and the state of the negotiations were confidential.⁸⁸ Out of discontent, Ovaherero and Nama representatives submitted several complaints to the UN.

The German position towards recognition of the genocide had changed substantially up to this point. Following Namibian independence, a notion of a “special responsibility for Namibia and its citizens” expressed itself in focalised development cooperation.⁸⁹ However, this notion was substantiated by the German speaking minority in Namibia and not the colonial crimes.⁹⁰ This begun to shake with the centenary of the genocide in 2004, when German Minister Wieczorek-Zeul apologised for the crimes and conceded that they implied an ethical responsibility carried by Germany.⁹¹ Her statement, however, did not reflect official policy at the time, which continued to be marked by a “tabooisation” of the term genocide.⁹² This was closely linked to the aim of avoiding reparation claims⁹³ and largely justified by the view that the UN convention on genocide cannot be applied retrospectively⁹⁴ as well as by the singularity of the Holocaust and according reconciliation efforts.⁹⁵ The German government has been using the term genocide since 2015, however in a historic rather than a legal sense.⁹⁶ While Germany is now willing to ask for forgiveness based on the brokered text, its

84 *ibid.*, 243.

85 *ibid.*, 291–298.

86 Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany, “Addressing Germany and Namibia’s Past and Looking to the Future,” July 1, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/4u44k84m>.

87 Reinhart Kößler and Henning Melber, *Völkermord – und was dann? Die Politik deutsch-namibischer Vergangenheitsbearbeitung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel, 2017), 74.

88 Daniel Pelz, “Genozid an den Herero und Nama: Heiße Debatte in Namibia, kein Thema in Deutschland,” *Deutsche Welle*, May 8, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/4dcjeftm>.

89 Deutscher Bundestag, “Drucksache 11/3934. Die besondere Verantwortung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für Namibia und alle seine Bürger,” January 30, 1989, <https://tinyurl.com/88r4de4v>, 1–2.

90 Kößler and Melber, *Völkermord – und was dann?*, 46–48.

91 Kößler, *Namibia and Germany*, 251–257.

92 Kößler and Melber, *Völkermord – und was dann?*, 58.

93 *ibid.*, 60–62.

94 Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany, “Addressing Germany and Namibia’s Past and Looking to the Future.”

95 Kößler and Melber, *Völkermord – und was dann?*, 41–43.

96 Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany, “Addressing Germany and Namibia’s Past and Looking to the Future.”

language, continuing to avoid the term reparations, still reflects this viewpoint.⁹⁷ Kößler characterises Germany's engagement with their counterparts as "less than forthcoming"⁹⁸ which not seldom caused confrontations. In dealing with Ovaherero and Nama and Namibian representatives, German officials have often adopted bureaucratic language manufactured to deflect any demands as well as a cool distance.⁹⁹

In Namibia, the conflict over ownership in the negotiations with Germany is also linked to conflicts between government and opposition.¹⁰⁰ SWAPO, the party dominant since independence, maintains that all groups suffered under colonialism and therefore rejects reparations to specific groups with a view to national peace.¹⁰¹ Inversely, it has been criticised for monopolising the memory of the colonial crimes in a way that does not accommodate memory cultures of individual communities.¹⁰² While the Namibian government installed advisory committees to consult with traditional leaders, those did not participate in the talks themselves.¹⁰³ Still, its position is largely coincident with the demands made by victims' groups, namely "a) That Germany acknowledges that what happened in Namibia during 1904-08 is genocide [...]; renders unconditional apology for the genocide; and [...] pays reparations to the Namibian people for the genocide committed."¹⁰⁴ The disagreement on the bilateral talks within the affected communities further reflects internal disputes. The Namibian state recognises six royal Herero houses as traditional administrations and integrated their chiefs into the negotiation process.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, Paramount Chief Vekuii Rukoro, appointed by the Ovaherero Traditional Authority, also claims to represent a majority of Ovaherero.¹⁰⁶ This group is affiliated with the opposition and against a consultation status in the negotiations. Notably, apart from Rukoro, even out of those traditional authorities integrated into the negotiations, three have declared that they do not endorse the agreement reached.¹⁰⁷

Members of the affected communities close to Rukoro are organised in a number of

97 European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, "Das „Versöhnungsabkommen“,“ 2.

98 Kößler, *Namibia and Germany*, 292 and 327.

99 Kößler and Melber, *Völkermord – und was dann?*, 65.

100 Jürgen Zimmerer, cited in Benjamin Breitegger, "Völkermord an den Herero: Mit wem sprechen, ein Jahrhundert nach dem Genozid," *Zeit Online*, November 19, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/476sck8u>.

101 Stefan Engert, "Germany – Namibia: The Belated Apology to the Herero," in *Apology and Reconciliation in International Relations. The Importance of Being Sorry*, eds. Christopher Daase et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 137–138.

102 Joachim Zeller, "Kolonialkrieg und Denkmal. 100 Jahre Politik mit der Erinnerung," in *Namibia-Deutschland. Eine geteilte Geschichte: Widerstand, Gewalt, Erinnerung*, eds. Larissa Förster, Dag Henrichsen and Michael Bollig (Köln: Ed. Minerva, 2004), 137.

103 Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany, "Addressing Germany and Namibia's Past and Looking to the Future."

104 Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhil, "National Assembly Statement by Right Honourable Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia," June 22, 2017, <http://www.opm.gov.na/>.

105 Breitegger, "Völkermord an den Herero".

106 *ibid.*

107 Kuzeeko Tjitemisa, "Chiefs Reject Genocide Reparations Deal," *New Era*, May 27, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/wa7wsy5j>.

non-governmental organisations: Ovaherero/Ovambanderu Genocide Foundation (Namibia), Nama Genocide Technical Committee (Namibia, associated with the Nama Traditional Leaders Association), OvaHerero/Mbänderu and Nama Genocides Institute (USA) and Association of the Ovaherero/Ovambänderu Genocide in the USA. In Germany, they are supported by the alliance of post-colonial NGOs “No Amnesty for Genocide!”.¹⁰⁸ These organisations act closely together and regularly engage in joint political activities, for example in a class action complaint filed against Germany with a New York court during the negotiations as an expression of discontent. I maintain that they represent important actors in the reconciliation process as they continuously network with politicians and traditional leaders and receive significant coverage by German and Namibian media. Their members constitute an interesting focus of research, not least as they have over time developed shared identities, positions and interpretations of political events.

4. Methodology

It is a widespread belief in IR that emotions as a research object are tricky, since they are hard to define, operationalise and measure.¹⁰⁹ Researchers may identify emotions in utterances, bodily expressions or images.¹¹⁰ As they are sensed within the body, however, determining somebody else’s emotions poses a challenge.¹¹¹ My research is based on the opinion that the best source of information on people’s emotions is their own accounts.¹¹² Furthermore, studying such a sensitive phenomenon requires safeguarding interviewees’ ownership of the research process. My study thus applies an open, interpretative research approach in that it aims to reconstruct the structures of meaning in social actions through interpretation and allows for concepts to emerge from the data.¹¹³

Based on these considerations, I collected my data in the form of five problem-centred interviews, a method aimed at translating the subjective experience of social reality into theoretical statements about human action.¹¹⁴ I gained field access to the base population, the Ovaherero and Nama in opposition to the bilateral talks, on the “2nd Transnational Ovaherero and Nama Congress – Colonial Amnesia: Quo vadis,

108 NGO Alliance No Amnesty on Genocide, “NGO Alliance | Bündnis,” accessed June 30, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5ppncn4>.

109 cf. Clément and Sangar, “Introduction: Methodological Challenges and Opportunities for the Study of Emotions,” 7.

110 Helena Flam, “Introduction: Methods of Exploring Emotions,” in *Methods of Exploring Emotions*, eds. Helena Flam and Jochen Kleres (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 4.

111 *ibid.*

112 cf. Barbara Czarniawska, “The Rhetoric of Emotions,” in *Methods of Exploring Emotions*, eds. Helena Flam and Jochen Kleres (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 67-68.

113 cf. Aglaja Przyborski and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Ein Arbeitsbuch* (Muenchen: Oldenburg Verlag, 2014), 12–21.

114 cf. Andreas Witzel, “The Problem-Centered Interview,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1, no. 1 (2000), article no. 22.

Hamburg?” from 6 to 8 April 2018 in Hamburg.¹¹⁵ It was attended by German post-colonial activists and a delegation of 30 Ovaherero and Nama, featuring panel discussions on memory culture and restorative justice, a demonstration along Hamburg’s post-colonial sites as well as meetings with the city’s Senator for Culture and Media, who apologised for Hamburg’s role in the genocide on this occasion and with the Dean of the Medical Faculty, which holds a Namibian skull in its collection. Another interview was conducted in the context of a repatriation of human remains from Berlin to Namibia. For my sampling, I assumed that the attendants shared similar ideas and strategies, as proposed by the principle of minimising differences.¹¹⁶ At the same time, conforming to the principle of maximising differences¹¹⁷, I spoke to members of the different civil society organisations introduced in chapter three.¹¹⁸ Using quota and snowball sampling, I achieved a variation in gender, age, ethnic identity and place of residence within my sample.¹¹⁹ In addition, I included data from the panels as well as pre-existing sources like media reports and public statements into my theory development in order to assess its theoretical saturation.¹²⁰

Name	Date	Language	Duration	Age	Gender	First language	Residence
Amuzembi	07/04/2018	English	49 mins	52	Female	Otjiherero	USA
Karijeja	07/04/2018	English	52 mins.	54	Male	Otjiherero	USA
Hilde	08/04/2018	English	54 mins.	57	Female	Otjiherero	Namibia
Johannes	09/04/2018	English	45 mins.	29	Male	Nama	Namibia
Samuel	07/09/2018	German	56 mins.	71	Male	Otjiherero	Germany

I combined narrative-generating questions with semi-structured questions to account for the fact that asking directly about emotions might throw participants off their guard, while asking about episodes evoking an emotion might more easily trigger a response.¹²¹ Questions covered respondents’ reasons for participating in the event and

115 NGO Alliance No Amnesty on Genocide, “06.04.-08.04.2018, Hamburg | 2. Transnationaler Herero & Nama Kongress,” accessed June 30, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/w38j4psu>.

116 Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research* (London: Aldine Transaction, 1967), 55-57.

117 *ibid.*

118 In order to guarantee anonymity, interview partners were assigned pseudonyms and will not be linked to individual organisations in the analysis.

119 cf. Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr, *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Ein Arbeitsbuch*, 183-184.

120 cf. Jörg Strübing, *Grounded Theory. Zur sozialtheoretischen und epistemologischen Fundierung des Verfahrens der empirisch begründeten Theoriebildung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 33.

121 Åsa Wettergren, “How Do We Know What They Feel?,” in *Methods of Exploring Emotions*, eds. Helena Flam and Jochen Kleres (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 116.

their engagement, their view of the two governments, their concept of the central demands and the significance of specific emotions as identified through index cards. The interviews were further shaped by the framework of the congress, for instance in the episodes recounted and its dynamics between German and OvaHerero>Nama activists: on occasion, I was addressed in the interviews specifically as a member of the perpetrating collective. A second interesting observation is that speakers' positions fluctuated throughout all interviews between individual and collective. This points to a complex interplay of identifications as an affected individual, community member and NGO member, embedded in collectively negotiated goals, strategies and discourses. It is also indicative of the communities' sense of shared experience.

In my analysis, based on a transcription of the interviews into text, I approached the data by studying emotions as speech acts¹²², using insights from linguistics to identify emotion markers in spoken language.¹²³ Mostly, I could rely on emotions directly denominated by my interview partners or verify my interpretation via the index cards laid out in the final part of the interview. I used the techniques of grounded theory to process my data, an interpretative approach based on "procedures [...] designed to develop a well integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study."¹²⁴ The goal of grounded theory is to develop theoretical statements about a "substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry"¹²⁵ through theory-oriented coding of empirical material. In a first open coding¹²⁶ directed by my guiding questions and using MAXQDA, I identified emotions connecting different actors, goals and contentious issues in my data. A further axial coding¹²⁷ allowed me to order my data around the causal trigger of my phenomenon, its context, intervening conditions, action and interaction strategies, and consequences.¹²⁸ Hereby, I identified a (collective) struggle for recognition and self-determination as a core phenomenon. Lastly, I focussed on emotional processes as an axis category in order to identify the main mechanisms on the level of emotional experience around this as explanatory factors. As a result, I identified three fundamental stages of the transitional justice process: experience, negotiation and overcoming, laying out the main mechanisms on the level of emotion for each of the stages. The first part of my analysis presents how descendants of the victims emotionally experienced the genocide and its aftermath. Secondly, I specify their emotional experience of the current political setting. Finally, I focus on how the injuries of the genocide may be overcome.

122 Koschut, "Introduction to Forum: Discourse and Emotions in International Relations," 485–486.

123 Monika Schwarz-Friesel, *Sprache und Emotion* (Tübingen: Franke, 2013).

124 Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm Strauss, "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria," *Qualitative Sociology* 13, no. 1 (1990): 5.

125 Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 32–33.

126 cf. Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr, *Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 210.

127 *ibid.*, 210–211.

128 Strübing, *Grounded Theory*, 26–28.

5. Case Study

5.1 Experiencing the Aftermath of Genocide: “Because It’s in My Being”

Amuzembi explains: “People think that, it's a 114 years ago, is so far away, but they forget that the trauma didn't stop when the war ended in 1908.” This implies that the genocide still impacts people’s lives today. Accordingly, the first part of my analysis describes how descendants came to view the genocide as something personally relevant to them. I argue that this was conveyed by two core mechanisms on the level of emotion, namely *affection* (becoming affected) and a *transgenerational transmission* of emotions.

Notably, the genocide did not always play a central role in descendants’ lives but was actively explored in a confrontation with personal and communal history. Descendants attribute this to structural factors restricting options for action in previous generations. Hilde further lays out that Namibia lived a long period of imperialism marked by German colonialism and South African rule, making the liberation struggle a more pressing issue. In addition, previous generations adopted silence as a survival strategy. Descendants interpret the fact that the genocide had not been present in Namibian public memory through a frame of marginalisation. However, they generally had a diffuse notion of the genocide as being important. Narration by family members and community oral history informed several of the descendants. Amuzembi, for instance, learned about the war from a relative she observed grieving and started to wonder about the event’s significance. For Karijeja, this meant having an implicit knowledge of a horrible event as a child which grew more concrete as he became older. As a result, descendants adopted strategies of autonomous knowledge acquisition which often marked an eye-opening moment and generated an immersion into the realities of the genocide. Through an engagement with historical literature, they began to position themselves vis-à-vis the crimes. Via narrations, books and images, emotions were conveyed onto the descendants and left a lasting imprint. Strong emotions such as anger, horror, sorrow and pain were elicited by these readings, leading descendants to re-live the pain of their ancestors. By personalising the victims and establishing a relationship to them, the genocide became tangible and personal.

From this affection, descendants developed an urge to become active, which they experience not as a choice, but as an imperative, giving rise to their political activism. Karijeja explains this as an existential matter: “Once happen that to you, you are in it, for life.” The affection also evoked a strong sense of responsibility. Karijeja describes this on several social layers: to the ancestors who were unable to bring about justice for themselves, to future generations who should be free from the burden of seeking justice, and lastly towards humanity as a whole. Other emotions triggered by the discoveries are feelings of incomprehension and disbelief about these horrors. Those are often underpinned by moral norms, marking the crimes as inhumane. In addition, the

discoveries elicited frustration over being unable to receive answers from the victims or perpetrators of the crimes.

The engagement with the history of the genocide further engendered a confrontation with descendants' own sense of identity and made being a direct descendant of the victims of the genocide an important point of identification. Family fate is one of the factors leading descendants to understand themselves as directly affected by the genocide, mediated by strong emotional responses. This concerns experiences of displacement and expropriation as well as sexualised violence committed in the context of the genocide. Amuzembi, for instance, explored her grandmother's descent and realised that her grandmother might very well have been born as a result of rape. This causes her strong emotional distress in the form of anger, humiliation and incomprehension. In addition to the painful knowledge of the ancestors' suffering, the disruptive effect on families is very clear. Amuzembi describes the relevance of lineage in Herero culture and the sense of fracture inflicted on her identity by not having this knowledge. Moreover, the sense of being personally affected is constructed around kinship: firstly, a link to Germany is constructed around German ancestors in the lineage. Secondly, it is based on belonging to the Herero and Nama communities. Emotional distress is therefore also rooted in experiences made by the community as a whole. For Hilde in particular, growing up in the racist Apartheid regime made the ideological impact of the genocide very tangible.

The term intergenerational trauma was adopted by my interview partners themselves and may be helpful to understand the processes through which emotions were transmitted over time. For Amuzembi, the trauma concerns her disrupted family history transmitted through the experience of growing up without a father and with a brother in the diaspora. Karijeja, on the other hand, explains how immersing himself in the realities of the genocide and re-living them leads to him being traumatised, mediated by pain, angst and denial. Similarly, Johannes argues that the long-term effects of the genocide on today's generation, such as the socio-economic marginalisation caused by the genocide and its effect on land distribution, constitute a form of trauma. These often trigger strong emotional and bodily reactions such as crying. One of the emotions most commonly associated with intergenerational trauma is pain. Johannes phrases this as follows:

“The pain is still here. We still feel the pain, after so many years, there's still pain. When you read some of the stories, you ask yourself, but why did the German Reich all this what they did to our ancestors.”

Similarly, Amuzembi describes that she inherited “the deep sorrow of my ancestors”:

“Why is it important? How did it affect you? Because even in Namibia today, some people from Ovamboland, they said, but it was 100 and something years ago, why do you still feel pain? But they have no idea. Because, it's really transgenerational. It's the social foundation of who we are ... the guilt. The pain. The suffering.”

These experiences deeply entrenched in descendants' lives and identities make the genocide still tangible today.

Overall, it has become apparent that the descendants understand themselves to be victims in their own right. I have outlined two main mechanisms presupposing this: *affection* describes the process through which descendants unravelled the genocide and became impacted by it. By a *transgenerational transmission of emotions*, the trauma-related emotions of the genocide were passed onto the descendants so that they persist until today. Both mechanisms were conveyed by re-living their ancestors' suffering, alongside the emotions caused by long-term consequences of the genocide. They were significantly shaped by affective bonds with attachment figures and the community which foster empathy with the pain of past generations. Consequently, questions of identity and belonging were very present in the stories told and point to the intertwined operation of emotions on the individual, family and community levels.

5.2 Negotiating Genocide: “They are Enabling this Genocide to Continue”

In the following segment of my analysis, I will shift the view to the present political context, taking up the notions of continuity and personal relevance in order to grasp descendants' emotional experience of the negotiations. Descendants interpret this socio-political setting in parallelism to the lived realities during colonialism and Apartheid characterised by limited agency and a marginalised position vis-à-vis state actors. This systematically elicits feelings of humiliation, frustration, anger and betrayal, amongst others. I argue that these can be subsumed into the core sentiment of a *continued sense of degradation and heteronomy*. I further propose that those emotions are ultimately *institutionalised* in the political context and practices of negotiating the genocide.

In general, descendants view the negotiations very negatively, expressed through strongly connoted descriptions, and affirm their rejection of the negotiations since they are not at the table. Samuel, for instance, calls them non-sense negotiations, secretive, superficial and a mere “circus”. Johannes argues that Namibia is working as a “puppet government” to protect the interests of the German minority in Namibia. This interpretation of government action as continued imperialist practice, to the point of being read as a continuation of the genocide, is central to my analysis. Karijeja explains that “the Namibian government is enabling this genocide to continue”, allowing Germany to get away with it. By not being heard, the communities feel victimised again: Hilde argues that the two governments are “genociding” their communities right now, by denying their right to self-determination and respect as human beings.

Consequently, descendants share the perception that the governments are working together against the interests of their communities. The Namibian government in particular is described as corrupt and paternalistic in that it speaks over victims' heads and takes illegitimate charge. The communities, on the other hand, have limited

resources and access to power. Their experience of marginalisation within Namibia is personified in the recurring trope of the German landowner. As a result, descendants' feelings towards the Namibian government include disregard, disappointment, disrespect and mistrust. By the Namibian government, conversely, they feel marginalised, disregarded, diminished and betrayed. The descendants' relationship with the German government is similarly characterised by negative terms. Its politics are described as imperialistic, racist, immoral and arrogant. The most prominent description of Germany's attitude towards the communities, however, is a sense of superiority. Descendants concur that Germany, or at least its older generation, still feels superior to the African population: Samuel, for instance, argues that Germany is behaving like a colonial power, with a mentality of Africans as "Untermenschen" (sic). This interpretation of an imperialist mindset is strongly intertwined with descendants' view of the current politics as racist and linked to a comparison with other victims' groups. Johannes explains:

"If this were White people, [...] Germany would have been quick into buy into the demands. They have done with the Jewish people. They have admitted and they have paid reparations, they have give apology and they have did it, but because this are Black natives from Africa, they just feel, ach scheiße, this are just Eingeboren [sic]."

Similarly, Samuel interprets the German insistence on paying development aid rather than reparations as an infantilisation of Africans. He also emphasises the unequal treatment of the Ovaherero and Nama and the solidarity he receives from the Jewish community. As a result, descendants characterise the German government's attitude as disrespectful, indifferent and prideful, while lacking appreciation and empathy. Descendants, on the other hand, describe emotions of frustration, humiliation, disappointment, pain, anger and rejection.

This rejection is supported by moral emotions against which descendants measure the legitimacy of their struggle as well as the politics pursued by both governments. As intervening conditions, those norms provide an interpretative framework and have significantly altered the action context of generations today from that of previous generations. Government action is marked as immoral as it infringes on the communities' chartered rights, ignoring the rule of law, the duty of states to protect their citizens, non-discrimination, human dignity, self-determination and respect for traditional practices. Such infringements cause responses of anger and outrage. They are also linked to socially bound feeling rules, for instance feeling remorse after having caused someone pain. From action tendencies shown by the government officials, descendants deduct that those do not feel remorse. These emotions are, while embedded into the political set-up, also tied to, and re-elicited through, instances of disrespect lived by descendants during their political engagement. Significant episodes include the court case in New York as well as encounters with representatives. Johannes, for instance, recounts a meeting with the German ambassador he perceived was

disregarding Black lives, causing him strong bodily responses to the point of wanting to enter into a physical confrontation with the ambassador.

In sum, affected communities see themselves positioned in a number of hierarchies vis-à-vis the actors they are addressing, such as inter-state, social and racial hierarchies. This leads to a *continued sense of degradation and heteronomy* resonating with the experiences made by others under colonialism and Apartheid. All in all, there is a strong discrepancy between the expectations of descendants towards reconciliation and the framework established by the bilateral talks. As a result, rather than dispersing the negative emotions transmitted over the generations, the negotiations appear to reinforce and perpetuate these sentiments. Consequently, I understand this sentiment and its underlying emotions to be *institutionalised* in the socio-political set-up.

5.3 Overcoming Genocide: “You Repair Something in Me”

In the last part of my analysis, I will trace the role that the practices envisioned by descendants have for emotional change. As descendants not only formulate their demands in political, but also in affective terms, I will outline descendants’ understanding of reconciliation as a process of *emotional healing* and point to the role of affective relationality in producing the *dis-alienation* requisite for reconciliation.

Resulting from the discontent with the political solutions offered, descendants have developed strategies directed both at coping with the emotions triggered by this framework and at transforming it, such as lobbying, legal action and dialogue with German civil society. Karijeja, for instance, describes writing letters, giving presentations and organising demonstrations as a strategy of channelling his emotions, including his frustration over German politics. These represent collective practices of self-empowerment aimed at overcoming the shared sense of marginalisation and heteronomy and point to the affective meaning of being able to negotiate for oneself in terms of feeling respected and recognised. A further aspect of bringing about justice is truth-telling in the form of awareness-raising and educational work: Samuel stresses the importance of memorialisation, documenting the history of the genocide for future generations. Achieving such power of definition constitutes a form of overcoming in itself. Similarly, other demands such as reparations also transcend monetary concerns and encompass a deeper meaning: in Johannes’ concept of justice, restoring descendants’ dignity and economic status are closely connected, as they undo the marginalisation resulting from the genocide. This exemplifies the link between the material and affective dimensions of descendants’ goals.

Importantly, for descendants feeling recognised encompasses explicitly being recognised in their emotional experience as well. Karijeja puts this in a nutshell when he states that “genocide is personal.” Since the issue directly affects him, he explains, it needs to be addressed in a personal way, otherwise his feelings of injustice will persist:

“You could have a political resolution, but human or humane real justice, you have to talk to the people, you have to speak to their pain.” Similarly, Hilde wants others to empathise with the communities and understand how they feel. She wishes to be respected in her capacity as a human being with feelings and with what she calls natural human reactions to the injustice suffered.

Ultimately, what descendants hope to accomplish is finding closure. While most episodes portrayed so far were dominated by negative emotions, descendants also experience determination, hope and joy. Hilde, for instance, recounts the strength and pride derived from being part of the Namibian delegation in the repatriation of human remains in 2011. The apology offered by the senator of Hamburg, too, has given Johannes and Amuzembi hope and “a positive thought”. In addition, the support, empathy and solidarity extended to descendants by German NGOs induce positive responses and stand in strong contrast to the emotions evoked by government actors. These examples demonstrate that receiving recognition highly influences the emotional outlook of victims and thus bears significant potential for reconciliation. Descendants envision that finding justice in its various forms would allow them to free themselves from their emotional distress. In alignment with the language of trauma, they describe this as “healing”, initiated through acknowledgment as expressed in an apology. Receiving recognition would also relieve descendants from the burden of continuously fighting for justice, something that according to Karijeja constitutes a trauma in itself. Johannes explains:

“The frustration is that, when will we have an end? When will we close this chapter, this dark chapter. We don't want to spend the whole of our lives talking about this chapter. That is the frustration that we have. We want this chapter to be closed.”

Similarly, Hilde states what closure could achieve for the communities:

“We can now take hands, and go through, and have a peace of mind. We must also have a closure of what happened, also, it will be so that we can focus on other things also. And we'll live in harmony with one another. It will be really a very good thing, we are not going to scream and jump over the board and say we have defeated or what that is, is just a metaphor, justice has taken its course. And now we're going to a new chapter in our live.”

It is clear that the circulation of affect is significant for transforming the emotions related to the genocide. Such a transmission is exemplified by the encounters of descendants with officials in Hamburg. Amuzembi describes that when meeting with the senator of Hamburg, “you could feel his emotions”, and that it could be instinctively felt that his apology was sincere. Similarly, Karijeja calls his encounter with the Dean of the Medical Faculty “one of the most profound moments”; it is clear that this encounter left an affective imprint on him. When encountering the skull held by the University of Hamburg, many members of the delegation experienced bodily change. In addition, Samuel mentions the affective impact that visiting the Namibian concentration camps have on a person. These instances highlight the significance of affective

transmission in producing the changes in individuals conducive to reconciliation.

Ultimately, the circulation of affect may establish bonds between actors. This assessment is very much in line with descendants' vision on building bridges. Hilde addresses the significance of building relationships with Germans as the society of perpetrators: "Love, oh yes, that is what we want, we love you, as I say, let's sit together as brothers and sisters." For her, the affective dynamics of acknowledging and forgiving engender healing not only for the victims, but in fact *between* the two collectives. Amuzembi states:

"And trust, without trust, nothing can be done. Apology without trust, meaningless. So trust will be the foundation, before we get to apology. How do we develop trust? By having those dialogues. Looking each other in the eye and sitting and talking to each other so we could develop the trust to go to the next level."

This substantiates the importance of affective relationality in reconciliation and demonstrates that seeking direct exchange with the German government has a meaning beyond voicing one's demands.

By focussing on descendants' framework of reconciliation, I have re-conceptualised recognition as a sentiment of being valued in one's personhood and outlined its link to emotional change. Notably, this makes recognising descendants' emotional experience *as such* a prerequisite for reconciliation. Reconciliation itself encompasses, on the one hand, *emotional healing*, meaning a transformation of the trauma-related emotions into more desirable ones and freeing oneself from emotional distress. On the other hand, *disalienation* forms part of affective reconciliation in building bonds between actors. Rather than a political agreement, reconciliation then becomes a comprehensive intersocietal task, based on building connecting emotions like empathy and trust.

6. Conclusion: Genocide is Personal

This contribution has shown that many of the contentious issues between the Ovaherero and Nama and Germany, and indeed many of the core concepts in reconciliation and justice research, are better understood if analysed from an emotions perspective. In particular, it has outlined how the emotions and affect associated with experiencing injustice are interlinked with communities and identities. I have demonstrated that through processes of affection and transgenerational transmission, the genocide against the Ovaherero and Nama came to be lived as an existential issue, even for today's generation. To use Karijeja's words, "genocide is personal" and as such must be addressed on a personal level. This finding underlines that understanding injustice, and the crime of genocide specifically, solely in a legal sense does not sufficiently account for the trauma it engenders. Rather, injustice is experienced as a highly disruptive event and as such inscribes itself into victims' lives. Finding justice, then, constitutes a multifaceted process of addressing this emotional distress as well as

undoing the structural factors perpetuating it. In addition, it has become clear that an emotions perspective contributes significantly to a more complex understanding of the communities' key demands, in particular their affective content in the sense of being respected, heard and valued in one's personhood. Importantly, such recognition has to entail the recognition of these emotions as a legitimate response to the injustice experienced as well. Practices such as truth-telling, apologies and reparations may evoke a sense of recognition and help restore victims' dignity. Therefore, they represent a counterproject to the continued sense of degradation and heteronomy lived by descendants throughout their engagement and its underlying negative emotions institutionalised into political practices and sociocultural structures. Reconciliation, then, comes to signify emotional healing and dis-alienation in the form of processing the emotional distress transmitted onto individuals and of allowing victims and perpetrators to establish affective bonds supported by empathy and trust. All in all, and very much in line with the notions of existential reconciliation and restorative justice, emotion constitutes a key element of both living through and overcoming injustice which instruments of reconciliation need to address adequately.

Over and above, my study has yielded valuable intervention points for research in IR in general. Strong interlinkages between emotions and power relations became apparent in descendants' narratives of their experiences of racism, socio-political and economic marginalisation and foreign rule. These structures have been determinative of people's lives from the colonial era over Apartheid until the present, where they continue to elicit sentiments such as degradation, frustration and others. In addition, they impacted the emotional responses and action strategies available to different generations, leaving affected communities with limited options of successfully overcoming their emotional distress and producing new frustrations. For IR researchers as well as practitioners, this calls for a heightened sensitivity to the weight of post-colonial hierarchies in transnational reconciliation processes. This is especially so in post-colonial settings where political representation is not necessarily aligned with prevalent modes of political organisation. My study underlines the need for new approaches beyond IR's classical categories in order to account for such forms of feeling that escape and extend national borders. In short, IR could gain much from addressing the question as to how far states are able to act as a broker for the emotions of individuals and communities.

Finally, this suggests that the limitations of a national approach to reconciliation, as laid out in part two, persist within Namibia. Regardless of the contentious nature of the agreement, the governments' joint declaration states that "the Namibian Government and people accept Germany's apology and believe that it paves the way to a lasting mutual understanding and the consolidation of a special relationship between the two nations."¹²⁹ I would like to approach this statement by recapitulating the question of

129 Reinhart Kößler and Henning Melber, "Namibian Genocide: Why Germany's Bid to Make Amends

who may apologise or forgive on behalf of whom. This question points to both the importance of actual emotional change for reconciliation and the limits of political representation in affective reconciliation. In its current form, effectively, the national approach to reconciliation represents a way of someone feeling on behalf of somebody else, as there is little space in the mechanisms in place for descendants' emotional expressions. As a result, their rejection of the bilateral talks and their insistence on speaking for themselves can be understood as a claim to *feel* for themselves as well.

With a view towards reconciliation with Germany, I argue that, accordingly, the political solutions offered at present are not apt to dissolve the emotional distress associated with the genocide experienced by descendants in the form of anger, frustration or humiliation and transform them into aspired emotions such as trust, respect and empathy. Rather, they are working to reproduce and reinforce them. There is a clear mismatch between what descendants live through and what they envision, expressed not least in the divergent notions of genocide: as personal experience on the one hand, as a historical category on the other. By contrast, reconciliation with Germany presupposes change on three levels: the structural level, meaning the emotions institutionalised into political structures; the group level, that is, a change in the relationality of actors with one another; and the individual level, that is, the emotional change within actors. As a result, it seems unlikely that reconciliation in an affective sense will be realised through the agreement produced by the German and Namibian governments and in fact, victims' groups' discontent has not been dispersed by the outcomes of the bilateral talks. If reconciliation is to be achieved, future procedures need to take a different path and find ways to meaningfully engage both collectives, allowing for expressions of injury and respecting descendants' needs.

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