

Elephants are Like Our Diamonds: Recentralizing Community Based Natural Resource Management in Botswana, 1996-2012

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Abstract: When the Botswana parliament passed a Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) policy in 2007, ten years after its implementation, the formal policy rejected some of the basic precepts of community based conservation—those who face the costs of living in close proximity to wildlife should receive a major share of benefits. In the national debate over the CBNRM policy, benefits from wildlife were seen analogous to diamonds to be shared by the nation. The paper explains how and why Botswana’s CBNRM policy took this direction through an analysis of three key aspects: subnational bureaucratic and community-level decision-making, national political economy and shifting coalition dynamics in a dominant one party system, and the contestation between transnational indigenous peoples’ networks and the Botswana government. By understanding the CBNRM process as it unfolded at the national, district, and local level over an extended period of time, the paper provides a longitudinal argument about CBNRM recentralization in Botswana.

Introduction

Use rights meant different things in practice. It was not any devolution of authority or development and management capacity at the local level. Rather, it was a complicated recipe for organizing villages by establishing by-laws for some form of decision-making into community-based organizations or trusts with a boilerplate set of rules.¹

The above statement reflects the frustration that conservationists have with community based approaches in natural resource management in Botswana and indeed elsewhere in Africa. In 2007, a decade after the implementation of a donor sponsored Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program, the Botswana parliament passed a national CBNRM policy. The policy repudiated some of the core CBNRM assumptions about local ownership, resource access, and distribution of revenues. The emphasis on the nationalization of revenues was the most significant change. The new CBNRM policy represented a major shift in the distribution of benefits, for it allocated two-thirds of the income that was accruing to community trusts in a national conservation fund. In addition, the policy gave additional oversight powers to the central government and district councils.

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Nelson and Agrawal (2010) consider Botswana's CBNRM experience as "paradoxical" and peculiar. According to them, Botswana wildlife management CBNRM reforms were undertaken in what they consider "a context of transparent and technically competent—but nevertheless patrimonial—governance, relative economic prosperity and relatively low bureaucratic dependence on wildlife on community lands for revenue."² This is a valid characterization, but without much elaboration on how the recentralization process unfolded over time and what factors influenced the process.

This paper explains the actors, interests and ideas that shaped the recentralization of CBNRM in Botswana. It differentiates the CBNRM policy process by highlighting three aspects: subnational bureaucratic and community-level decision-making, national political economy and shifting coalition dynamics in a dominant one party system, and the contestation between transnational indigenous peoples' networks and the Botswana government. Each section of the paper addresses one of these three aspects and highlights contrasting claims of different actors involved in CBNRM including local community members who reside in close proximity to wildlife, urban Botswana and national politicians, local and international expatriate "expert" consultants, and mid-level government bureaucrats who were tasked to implement CBNRM. By integrating different levels of analysis, strategic action, and narratives of different actors, the paper provides what Poteete and Ribot refer to as "repertoires of domination." These include an ensemble of activities undertaken by different actors that collectively create, facilitate, and support efforts at recentralization. The actors draw on multiple sources and forms of power: political, economic, discursive, and coercive, plus symbolic and real violence, and the power to access, control, and manufacture knowledge.³ In Botswana, this was evident in the CBNRM policy of August 2007 which repudiated some of the foundational principles of community conservation. The public debate surrounding CBNRM evoked a number of questions that intersected distributional equity, that is, distribution of resource wealth between national and sub-national levels of government, urban versus rural claims, and issues of ethnicity and citizenship.

Research Design

The analysis in this paper is based on field research conducted over short periods of time (between two and three months) from 1996 to 2012, and a year of fieldwork from 2000-01. The arguments are based on in-depth interviews with government officials at the national and district level associated with CBNRM, district level politicians, NGO representatives, and members and elected representatives of community based organizations (CBOs). Many of the respondents were interviewed multiple times between 1996 and 2012. These discussions provide insights for making longitudinal claims about the changes in the CBNRM policy process and politics. In addition to in-depth interviews, the arguments are also based on participant observation at national CBNRM stakeholder meetings, the annual tourism *pitso* (gathering) organized by the Minister of Environment Wildlife, and Tourism, district level CBNRM forum meetings and minutes, and community meetings in remote rural villages located in the Okavango panhandle (Seronga, Gudigwa, Eretsha, Beetsha, and Gudigwa, Sankuyu, Kwai, and Mababe). Finally, secondary sources were consulted including CBNRM policy documents and consultancy reports, newspaper articles, and public statements by

government officials pertaining to CBNRM. In short, by understanding the CBNRM process as it unfolded at the national, district, and local level over an extended period of time, the paper is able to provide a longitudinal argument about CBNRM recentralization in Botswana.

Botswana in Comparative Perspective to Its Neighbors and CBNRM

The mid-1990s witnessed the end of apartheid in South Africa, of the minority white racial government in Namibia, and of the civil war in Mozambique. These democratic transitions were a critical political juncture that created momentum for bottom-up participatory approaches in other arenas, including natural resource governance. As the post-apartheid democratic process evolved, the “land question,” which was a key issue, threatened to derail the transition. The demands of the black majority populations for land also challenged private wildlife concessions. Should the private concessions under the minority white apartheid system be considered legitimate or expropriations?

In response, a regional network of southern (mostly white) African wildlife conservationists leveraged Western donors to support a particular model of community-based natural resource management. The southern African CBNRM model was thus based on the “sustainable use” approach for wildlife utilization that had originally been tried on private land in these apartheid systems.⁴ In the context of wildlife conservation, supporters of sustainable use CBNRM argued that the “apartheid parks” with their exclusion of local people made wildlife management especially difficult outside protected areas. Wildlife populations would not survive without providing benefits to local communities that lived adjacent to national parks and game reserves.

Essentially, the sustainable use CBNRM strategy was to address historical inequities over access to land and resources through the commercial utilization of wildlife mostly through trophy hunting and also photographic tourism in communal land areas. The southern Africa sustainable use CBNRM approach also “spoke to” global norms of sustainable development that major Western international donors and conservation organizations could relate to—the integration of poverty alleviation and wildlife conservation through participatory approaches. In Southern Africa this took the form of CBNRM.

The implementation of sustainable use CBNRM approach and the forms it took varied in different contexts. This is in part because of the different institutional trajectories of state building and post-apartheid democratization. During apartheid, wildlife utilization in Namibia was on private white-owned land and mostly through commercial hunting. After independence, these rights over wildlife on private land were not disrupted in Namibia, as they were in Zimbabwe. The conservancies were implemented on marginal communal land where wildlife had been depleted. Thus, the CBNRM sustainable use model of wildlife conservancies did not challenge the Namibian central state, nor was there high value that could be extracted by the central state (as has been the case in Kenya’s and Tanzania’s wildlife concessions). Zimbabwe and Namibia with their white settler colonial context in the short term looked similar, but the fast track land policy in Zimbabwe derailed the sustainable use model expressed through its Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE).⁵

In contrast to other Southern and East African countries that underwent a political transition in the 1990s, the sustainable use CBNRM in Botswana was implemented in a different context of state building. The management of diamonds by the state for the benefit of all has been interpreted as the fundamental reason of why Botswana has been able to avoid the resource curse that afflicts many other African countries that rely on minerals or oil. Botswana is also regarded as a success story because the state's development project has been promulgated as an ethnically neutral process whereby the state is cast as a benevolent provider of resources and services, irrespective of status.⁶ In short, instead of a critical political juncture that created the conditions for CBNRM elsewhere, the context for CBNRM in Botswana was of a stable economy with forty years of sustained economic growth, but it was also a highly centralized "authoritarian liberal" state that was reluctant to devolve or decentralize authority.⁷

Backlash against CBNRM in Botswana (2007-2012)

We cannot please everybody. We need to bite the bullet. There are areas where we can see very well that wildlife is in danger and it needs protection. It's about time that the government be able not to allow those villages to be growing as they are. The way those Gunitsogas and Etshas are growing is bad. They are in the way of elephant's path when they go to drink water.
 –Head of a major conservation NGO in Botswana.⁸

The above comment, by the manager of a local conservation NGO, reflects the position of Botswana's central government's stance toward community conservation. At the 2005 CBNRM national forum meeting, one of the delegates declared that CBNRM was dead, since the CBNRM policy remained stalled despite several years of discussion and feedback.⁹ For community trusts, after the year 2000 and especially after the CBNRM policy was passed by the Botswana parliament in 2007, the CBNRM process entered a turbulent period of severe punishment. The CBNRM policy that was passed in 2007 by the Botswana parliament was radically different from the original intent of CBNRM.¹⁰

From the perspective of central government policy makers, the actions by the central government leading up to the CBNRM policy and after the policy was passed in 2007 were designed to stop malfeasance in current projects and concentrate authority in the central government, especially to the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism (MEWT). The decisions from the central government were projected as a clean-up operation to scale back the operations of troubled CBNRM projects.

The new CBNRM policy represented a major shift in the distribution of benefits to the detriment of local community trusts. The 2007 policy focused on centralizing 65 percent of the revenues in a national conservation fund and allocated the remaining 35 percent to local community based organizations. In so doing, it allocated two-thirds of the income that otherwise was accruing to community trusts to go instead to a national conservation fund. In addition, the policy gave additional oversight powers to the central government and district councils. District level government officials, NGOs, and academics involved in CBNRM were of the view that the central government was not interested in devolving authority or resources to the districts or in building capacity at the community level but rather sought to withhold revenues and strengthen upward accountability to the central government.

Government officials with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks at the district level provided instances of dealing with “instructions” and pushing issues that would not lead to the expected results. A senior consultant and an advisor to former President Festus Mogae explained the rationale of this perceived breakdown in communication:

Where “normal” government procedures entail talking those through across different levels now [under the current government] this process is not dynamic. Sometimes ideas may need feedback [for example between the minister, permanent secretary, and mid-level bureaucrats]. However because the so-called “normal” government procedures have not been followed and decisions are made at a particular level [by a small group of people] it often becomes “instruction.” Therefore many decisions get misinterpreted. And so, at the lower levels the idea is to “please” the higher-ups and not upset the big boss.¹¹

This “breakdown in communication,” was especially evident in the CBNRM decision-making between central and district level authorities. By 2005, several aspects of decision-making for CBNRM were moved from the DWNP to the Botswana Tourism Board (BTB), a parastatal organization that was created for marketing tourism and enterprise development of ecotourism in Botswana. “[W]hat we see again is that at the urging of the Minister, who has appointed a close confidante as the CEO of the Botswana Tourism Board and a few other elements,” according to a senior government official, “their interest is to create standardized rules to establish companies once we go forward with photographic safari tourism.¹² The community extension officer at the Department of Wildlife and National Parks confirmed that the centralization of decision-making was through the Botswana Tourism Board (BTB). “Now [that] the Botswana Tourism Board is marketing and promoting tourism,” he pointed out, “we are not sure whether they will be part of the Technical Advisory Committee.”¹³ The TAC is a joint district level coordinating committee that had until then been responsible for evaluating CBNRM joint venture agreements with the private sector.

The centralization of decision was, in part, due the emphasis on establishing a tourism model of “high value, low volume,” in which marketing and branding of Botswana as a prime wilderness destination took precedence. Other aspects of ecotourism, especially the efforts at building the institutions of democratic participation at the local level, were neglected.¹⁴ “The decision to centralize the decision-making in the BTB and making it a “one-stop-shop” instead of involving the Wildlife and Land Board officials at the district level and the appointment of his former campaign manager to head the agency,” according to a senior government official in the DWNP, “was the decision of the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism.”¹⁵

The changes undertaken by the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism is illustrative of President Ian Khama’s centralized and personalized decision-making. He also played a significant role in guiding private investment in emerging economic sectors such as wildlife tourism. The growth of wildlife tourism as the second largest sector that now contributes 10 percent to the GDP also reflects the personal vested interests of President Khama toward the value of wildlife conservation and its contribution to the long-term national development. Appointments to key posts, including significant ministries, often consist of former military officers and extended family and relatives from the Bangwato, which is

indicative of patrimonial tendencies. For example, the decision to appoint a trusted former military official, businessman, and friend of President Khama's brother as the Minister of Environment Wildlife and Tourism and the support to "high end, low volume" exclusive safari companies and conservation business interests has been the *modus operandi* to transform tourism into a growth sector.

This has resulted, however, in recentralization of decision-making to the executive branch and extensive administrative changes undertaken by loyalist ministers. In this case, he appointed a former military officer and family friend to undertake extensive administrative reorganization that emphasized supporting the private sector. In addition to new regulations and administrative reorganization, the ministry established an autonomous entity, Botswana Tourism Board (BTB), led by the Minister's former campaign manager and tasked with spearheading the branding and marketing of Botswana tourism. In short, since 2005 under the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism CBNRM policy implementation is illustrative of greater centralization and personalization of decision-making.¹⁶

Diamonds, Wildlife, and Identity Politics

The animals now belong to the government, the trees, and all the land. These things burden us. Now the government sells animals...which it uses to buy cars, to pay soldiers...We are not moving. If you want to take us, you will forcibly be removing us...if we move from here, it will be the government that moves us, because it is used to doing so. That is what we told him at the *kgotla* [public meeting]. –Basarwa resident of Khwai village.¹⁷

The above statement is by a resident of Khwai village, who belongs to the minority Basarwa (San) group, the "first people of the Kalahari," about her community's marginal position. Her perspective contrasts with the national debate on the CBNRM policy to which we turn to in this section.

In mid-2007, prior to the introduction of the CBNRM policy to the Botswana parliament, then-President Festus Mogae gave a speech at the University of Botswana where he reiterated the notion that the collective ownership of natural resources is intimately linked to national unity. In this speech, Mogae made the case that the central government was the custodian of both diamonds and wildlife; as diamonds benefit the nation as a whole, so should be the case for wildlife and other natural resources:

In Botswana collective ownership of our natural resources is fundamental to our development strategy...The sharing of the benefits accruing from natural resources strengthens national unity and cohesion and moves the entire Nation forward in the development continuum...In fact, all natural resources are shared... Government is the custodian of our wildlife resources. This ensures that all our citizens have a common stake and enjoy unqualified benefits from our natural resources...When we have issues with the international community about the sale of ivory, it is a matter for the entire nation and not just for those where elephants are found.¹⁸

The national media took up this idea, and several commentators embellished the official view by referring to it as the “doctrine of collective ownership.” Making references to the ongoing parliamentary debate on a decade-long experiment with decentralized natural resource management, one of the specially elected Members of Parliament, Botsaelo Ntuane, criticized CBNRM for being divisive and a threat to national cohesiveness:

[A]ny legislation that promotes separate ownership of natural resources only serves to sow the seeds of national discord. Any semblance of separate ownership and preferential treatment, no matter how well meant, is injurious and engenders a sense of injustice. Agitators who resent having to share resources on equal terms with everyone will be provided with enough reason to preach the gospel of resource chauvinism.¹⁹

The president’s remarks and debate in the media, however, did not address the management issues of CBNRM. Rather, they equated the ownership and distribution of benefits from diamonds with wildlife.

Diamonds and elephants are central to Botswana’s image as a successful African country. The former project economic prosperity and evidence of good governance, the latter indicate that Botswana is an exemplary tourist destination and a conservation success story in contrast to many other African countries.²⁰ Subsequent generations of post-independence politicians (especially of the ruling BDP party) and most urban Batswana (especially from the dominant Tswana ethnic groups) consider that the wealth from diamonds should be used to benefit the country. To them, the management of diamonds by the state for the benefit of all Batswana is a fundamental reason why Botswana has been able to avoid civil war or the resource curse that afflict many other African countries that rely on minerals or oil. Seretse Khama, Botswana’s first president, was the chief of the Bangwato, one of the dominant Tswana ethnic groups. Yet he supported a nationalist vision of a unitary state conceptualizing the pre-colonial *merafe* as the nation.²¹ As chief of the Bangwato, Khama was able to proclaim that the diamonds on Bangwato land belonged to the nation and not to a particular ethnic group. In so doing, he set a precedent about national ownership, and equitable distribution of the revenues from diamonds provided the initial impetus of an ethnically neutral nation state.

In the construction of the ethnically neutral citizenship discursive, all citizens in Botswana are viewed as equal and therefore should benefit equally from the distribution of natural resource wealth. But in practice and experiences, the question is whether this citizenship extends to everyone. Who is included and who is excluded? As Nymanjoh (2006), Werbner (2004), and Hitchcock (1993) have argued, the dominant Tswana nationalism projects itself as ethnically neutral, but it is a constructed citizenship in which Setswana-speaking groups are recognized, while other minority groups are marginalized.²²

Historically, the dominance of the Tswana originates in the consolidation of pre-colonial Tswana states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which involved the incorporation of minority ethnic groups (for example, Basarwa/San, Bayeyi, and Humbukushu). The spatial hierarchy and its functional manifestation contributed to a “spatiality of citizenship,” which was articulated in the kgotla-ward system, a system of citizenship which was associated with residence, and minority groups and subordinate groups live away from the center of the village

where the dominant Tswana ethnic group and a chief's family.²³ The Basarwa/San were incorporated as *malate* (or serfs), and their condition did not improve during the colonial period. Instead, it laid the foundations for the contemporary dynamics of resistance and confrontation between national and local claims. Under the British protectorate, the non-Tswana groups were not recognized as having their own chiefs and hence did not have the power to allocate land on tribal land. The paramount chiefs were from one of the eight Tswana tribes who held this power (despite the presence of any minority tribes in that area).²⁴

From the perspective of many local communities who had been marginalized by the Tswana pre-colonial states, participation in CBNRM thus partly also allows them to exercise their collective rights over land and natural resources, and claims based on their local ethnic identities. This was evident when several Basarwa villages involved in CBNRM—Gudigwa, Xai Xai, Mababe, and Sankuyu—wanted to define the membership of their community trusts based on their identity as San. DWNP refused to accept an ethnic basis for the formation of community trusts and instead emphasized shared interests and geographic proximity of different communities as a basis for membership. From the perspective of the minorities, the assertion that wealth from diamonds should be viewed on a par with benefits from wildlife utilization reinforces the domination of the Tswana nation, which is projected as ethnically neutral.

The challenge to the notion of ethnic neutrality has also surfaced in the case of Basarwa (San) communities who were residing within the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). In 1997 and 2002, the Government of Botswana relocated around two thousand San who resided in the game reserve. Government officials made the case that CKGR was on state land and the people living inside the reserve had livestock and vehicles. In accordance with previous government policies such as the Remote Area Development Program (RADP) and other “development” programs relocating the San people to new settlements outside CKGR was to provide access to education, health care, and other modern services. In 2004, the people of the Central Kalahari (San and Bakgalagadi) filed a lawsuit against the Government of Botswana in the High Court. This court case that lasted over two and a half years, ended with the people of the Central Kalahari being granted the right of return to their original homes in the reserve, and the right to hunt in the Central Kalahari as long as they had licenses from the government.²⁵ In this instance, the government lost the case and had to acknowledge the group rights of the San to remain in the CKGR; however, the court also decided that the state was not obliged to provide social and health services if the San decided to stay. The Government of Botswana did not provide any services, especially water. In response, the residents of CKGR filed another lawsuit with the Botswana High Court in 2009. When the Botswana High Court rejected the case, the CKGR people approached the Appeals court and also took their case to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights. In 2010, Botswana's Court of Appeals ruled on behalf of the CKGR residents. Since then there have been additional cases filed with regard to hunting rights and keeping livestock within CKGR.²⁶

The CKGR court case has been the longest and most expensive in Botswana's history, continues to be divisive, and hurts Botswana's international reputation as an open democracy. The issue evolved into an international controversy over indigenous rights when Botswana based human rights and conservation organizations, and Survival International (SI; an

influential international NGO based in London) became involved especially from 2004 onwards. Speaking on behalf of the communities, SI argued that relocation was taking place due to the discovery of diamonds. The government denied this and maintained that there were no diamond concessions in CKGR and that there was no relationship between relocating the San and the location of diamonds. In 2007, however, the government announced licenses for mining.²⁷ Critics also point out that the government has allowed tourism companies leases, while heavy-handed treatment (including unjustified arrests and alleged torture) of local community members by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and the Special Support Group (SSG) of the Botswana police has persisted.²⁸ For many Batswana, despite the government's "mishandling" of the CKGR situation, the issue centered on how an international NGO manipulated illiterate San rather than the marginalization of a minority group by the dominant ethnic groups. A similar argument has been made with regard to CBNRM. "It was areas of minority tribes where much of the CBNRM projects were being implemented," according to a retired high-level government official who was involved in the decision-making. He further points out that "it was best [for the government] to make the claim that resources belong to the nation and therefore there would be no room for CBNRM to become a vessel for international entities, such as Survival International or other NGOs, to use this on the pretext of bias against minority groups in Botswana."²⁹

Instead of a constructive engagement with the management issues of a decade-long experiment in community conservation to reform CBNRM, the government and public statements by national politicians have asserted that wealth from diamonds, wildlife, and other natural resources are and should be shared by all Batswana. The national media took up this idea, and several commentators embellished the official view by referring to it as the "doctrine of collective ownership." Writing in *Mmegi*, the national newspaper, MP Botsalo Ntuane makes the case that the "implications [of the new CBNRM policy] are far reaching and may create a precedent that shakes the foundation of our unity as a nation."³⁰ By placing wildlife alongside diamonds, he makes the case that "the decision to nationalize mineral rights established the basic premise that as a nation bound by a common destiny we all share what we have. When viewed against this principle, therefore, the CBNRM policy negates the spirit and intent of equitable sharing of resources."³¹ Referring to the ongoing parliamentary debate on CBNRM, Ntuane argued further, as already quoted above, that legislation promoting "separate ownership of natural resources only serves to sow the seeds of national discord" and even if well meant, "is injurious and engenders a sense of injustice." Furthermore it will lead to agitators preaching "the gospel of resource chauvinism" to those who resent any sharing of resources on an equal basis with all Batswana.³²

In the discursive shift and reframing of CBNRM, community now implied "national community" and not "local community," and natural resource benefits included not just veld products and wildlife, but also diamonds. The point here is that by implicating CBNRM, with resource ownership and ethnically neutral citizenship, the claims of marginalized ethnic minorities to benefits from CBNRM projects are seen as allegedly precipitating a slippery slope of tribalism and ethnic separatism that would threaten national unity.

Privileging national interests in the CBNRM policy, however, neglects the specific costs and needs of local communities that live with wildlife. As Lapo Magole, a researcher on indigenous

rights issues in Botswana, in one of the editorials points out, “this position (perceived threat to national unity) exaggerates the threat of ethnic exclusion.”³³ This narrative reinforces the marginality of communities living with wildlife. By viewing diamonds and elephants in the same light, community use rights become national collective ownership, and little attention is paid to the specific location and needs of local communities. Furthermore, terms “ownership” and “benefits” have become rhetorical devices to privilege national claims and reject particular claims by local communities. In so doing, the CBNRM policy repudiated local claims of use rights and access, which government in its own white papers had earlier established.³⁴

According to critics of the government’s version of the CBNRM policy, the manner in which the policy was eventually passed in the parliament was also indicative of “directive” driven top-down decision-making rather than a genuine debate over reforming CBNRM.³⁵ They argued that after two years of no legislative movement, the policy was pushed through at the last minute. Senior level government advisors close to the CBNRM debate pointed out that policy that was submitted to the Permanent Secretary was not that which was tabled in Parliament. The 65/35 formula was inserted later along with additional language that strengthened the powers of the central government. Much to their surprise, the parliamentary debate instead of focusing on community management issues that were raised during CBNRM stakeholder meetings and lessons learned from project evaluations, linked CBNRM to issues of national ownership of diamonds.

CBNRM Recentralization: Coalition Dynamics and Electoral Competitiveness

The national debate on CBNRM policy was also shaped by the coalition dynamics within the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and the increasing electoral competitiveness. Since independence in 1966, the BDP has maintained its majority in the Parliament and has elected each president of Botswana. CBNRM was introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s during a period of declining electoral support from 77 percent in 1974, to 68 percent in 1984, and 55 percent in 1994. The increased competition raises the salience of CBNRM as an electoral issue and according to Poteete (2009), accounts for the partial recentralization of CBNRM.³⁶ The constituencies that are electorally competitive have either been urban areas or where non-Tswana minority ethnic groups are in a majority. The latter areas are where most of the CBNRM interventions took place. This argument could be one factor, especially if CBNRM implicated in identity politics could be seen as a divisive issue that would benefit opposition politicians in competitive electoral areas.

The electoral competitiveness at the district level also shaped the policy debate around CBNRM. Local politicians, especially the councilors, saw the chairpersons of community based organizations (CBOs) who were receiving large sums of revenues as rivals. Their issue with the CBOs was that as councilors (or members of parliament) they had made promises for local development, which had to be followed through with the District Council or parliament or both to carry out development activities. The CBOs and especially the chairpersons had much more discretion. In a few instances CBO chairpersons (or someone they supported) were from the opposition parties that challenged BDP councilors. During the debate over the CBNRM policy, these conflicts were incorporated to make a case against devolving authority or discretion to CBOs.³⁷

Implementing CBNRM Policy: Impasse (2007-2012)

Between 2008 and 2010 there was an impasse between the central government, especially the Minister of Wildlife, Environment, and Tourism, and the CBOs or community trusts represented by the National CBNRM Forum that was comprised of local NGOs, academicians, and local government officials. During this time, the Botswana Tourism Board started creating its own CBNRM strategy, while most CBOs that lacked any external efforts at capacity building collapsed. Those CBOs that had had allegations of mismanagement directed at them were restrained by withholding their revenues. This was especially the case for such CBOs as the Okavango Community Trust that had to now approach the District Commissioner and submit receipts to access funds. The community division of DWNP began to review the constitutions of CBOs to bring them in line with the CBNRM policy. Among the reforms that were implemented, the most significant were the allocation of 65 percent of the resource royalties in a national fund, the closure of elected Village Trust Committees, and limiting the elected representation to a board chairperson and secretary. In so doing, the government neutered CBOs by taking away the sources of political confrontation between the CBOs and external actors. The CBNRM forum and representatives of the CBOs raised this issue with the government because, from their perspective, only the punitive aspects of the CBNRM reform had been implemented.

The Botswana Parliament has not yet passed an act to implement the CBNRM Policy of 2007. In June 2012, the contents of such an act were discussed at the Tourism *Pitso* meeting. Once passed it would give the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism final authority in all decisions regarding CBNRM. In addition, the government would support the establishment of a permanent entity (“a vehicle”) that would include trained professionals in governance, financial management, marketing, and natural resource management to support the CBOs.³⁸ The central government, however, has yet to introduce the relevant legislation. Why? And, what are the implications? There are many reasons why the government has not passed an act (which was a proposal from an expert committee) to implement the 2007 CBNRM Policy. From the perspective of the arguments in this paper about the recentralization of CBNRM, the creation of new organizational entities such as the Botswana Tourism Corporation are interpreted as “repertoires of domination” that Poteete and Ribot discuss.³⁹ In this instance, the ambiguity of having an act that can be submitted to parliament, but for which there is no urgency, is because in the case of CBNRM such an act would (when needed) provide the central government with the authority to address some of the complicated legal issues about long term leases to safari companies. For instance, in the case of the Okavango Community Trust, the length of the fifteen-year “head lease” provided by the government, and the contract between OCT and Wilderness Holdings, which extends until 2024 and is past the expiration deadline for the head lease, has been under litigation. From the perspective of implementing agencies such as the community division of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, an Act would allow whoever is mandated as the body administering the Act lawfully to take action against CBOs, the private sector, or any government department that may violate the Act. What would follow the Act would be regulations stipulating to detail what to and what not to do.⁴⁰

Conclusions

The paper traces the policy process of a conservation and development approach in Botswana that was intended to be participatory and community-oriented, but after almost ten years of implementation drastically shifts direction when it is legislated. The paper explains this shift by illustrating sub-national (i.e. district) bureaucratic and community-level debates, discussions, and decisions, shifting political dynamics in a largely single party dominated state, and the contestation between transnational indigenous peoples networks and the Botswana government. Taken together, the result is a CBNRM policy that is punitive rather than enabling. The current version of the CBNRM policy and an act of parliament that gives the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism additional powers, has transformed what was supposed to be a bottom up and participatory approach to empower rural communities living in close proximity to wildlife, into a mechanism for the central government for managing relations between local communities and the private sector.

Notes

- 1 Resident of Kwai, quoted in Taylor 2000, p. 253.
- 2 Nelson and Agrawal 2010, p. 568.
- 3 Poteete and Ribot 2011, pp. 440-41.
- 4 Suich and Child, with Spenceley 2009.
- 5 Jones and Weaver 2009.
- 6 Acemoglu, Robinson, and Johnson 2002; Good 1996; Samatar 1999.
- 7 A process whereby the state is cast as a benevolent provider of resources and services, irrespective of status (Samatar 1999, pp. 14-15; also see Gulbrandsen 1984).
- 8 Interview with the head of local conservation non-governmental organization, Gaborone, August 2012.
- 9 Swatuk 2005.
- 10 Between 1995 and 2004, USAID contributed about \$21,000,000 toward CBNRM through Chemonics International, a USAID contractor/international consultancy company that set up the Natural Resource Management Project (NRMP) to implement CBNRM. The expectation of the donors and consultants was that NRMP would eventually be integrated within the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Community Management Division.
- 11 Anonymous Interview, Gaborone, August 2010.
- 12 Anonymous Interview, Gaborone, August 2010
- 13 Interview with community liaison officer, Department of Wildlife and National Parks, July 2010.
- 14 Magole and Magole 2012.
- 15 Anonymous Interview, Gaborone, July 2010.
- 16 Critics point out that Ian Khama's presidency has been highly personalised in its reliance on a group of trusted loyalists, often from within the family: Tshekedi Khama, (brother) has been an MP and in 2012 was appointed as the Minister of Environment Wildlife and

Tourism; Tebelo Seretse, (cousin) is the Defence Minister; Dale Ter Haar, nephew, trained at Sandhurst, engaged in mining and resource projects; Johan Ter Haar, formerly married to President Khama's sister, Jacqueline Khama, chair of the Business and Economic Advisory Council; Isaac Kgosi, DIS chief; Pelonomi Venson-Motoi, a "very close and trusted friend," Minister for Communications, in charge of the government's radio, television, and print networks with their unique nation-wide coverage; Ian Kirby, High Court judge, ex-Attorney General, confidante; Sheila Khama, cousin through marriage and head of De Beers Botswana; Tsetsele Fantan, a relative is member of the Tribunal of the DIS; the Minister of Mines and Mineral resources, Kitso Mokaila and his brother, have been childhood family friends and BDF colleagues; and Thapelo Olopeng, retired soldier, little-known figure with a long friendship with Khama. <http://www.iankhama.com/the-presidency-of-general-ian-khama-militarisation-of-the-botswana-miracle/> [last accessed November 11, 2014].

- 17 Statement by resident of Khwai village cited in Taylor 2000.
- 18 Address By His Excellency, Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of The Republic of Botswana, at The University of Botswana Graduation Arena at 16.15 Hours on 4th September 2007, Gaborone.
- 19 Ntuane 2007a.
- 20 Acemoglu et al. 2002.
- 21 Bennett n.d. *Merafe* is the plural form of the Setswana word *morafe*, which is often translated "tribe" or "nation." As Bennett notes: "Pre-colonial Batswana were organized in a number of relatively small independent kingdoms or chiefdoms, showing a definite fissiparous tendency, but also showing an ability to absorb and recombine. Refugees etc. joined as junior partners. This pattern assisted the *merafe* in the north and west to successfully integrate large numbers of non-Tswana during the 19th C. in conditions of varying levels of subordination. By the later 19th C. the largest *merafe*, such as GammaNgwato under Khama III were emerging as multi-ethnic but Tswana-dominated states. Thus as applied to the Tswana-ruled precolonial states of the Bamangwato, BaTawana etc. and their colonial-era successors 'morafe' is perhaps better rendered 'polity' since they were essentially political rather than ethnic units."
- 22 Hitchcock 2001, 2011; Nyamanjoh 2006
- 23 Taylor 2000.
- 24 Parson 1981; Werbner 2004.
- 25 Hitchcock 2013.
- 26 Sapignoli 2009; Solway 2009; Hitchcock, Sapignoli, and Babchuk 2011; Sapignoli 2012.
- 27 Hitchcock 2013.
- 28 Pienaar 2013.
- 29 Anonymous interview, senior government official, July 2010.
- 30 Ntuane 2007b.
- 31 Ntuane 2007b.
- 32 Ntuane 2007b.

- 33 Magole 2007.
- 34 Republic of Botswana 1986.
- 35 Anonymous interview, July 2010.
- 36 Poteete 2009.
- 37 Interviews, BDP district councillor and council chairperson, Maun, Botswana, July 2010.
- 38 Interviews with CBNRM forum representatives, August 2012. This negotiated agreement was also discussed at Tourism *Pitso* 2012. This annual event brings together government, private sector, and non-governmental actors who are involved in the tourism sector.
- 39 Poteete and Ribot 2011, pp. 440-41.
- 40 Personal Communication, December 23, 2014.

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