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May 2007

How National Political Competition Affects Natural Resource Policy:
The Case of Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Botswana

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Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) has been adopted throughout the developing world. Although Botswana's version is more decentralized than many and has been portrayed internationally as relatively successful, it is politically beleaguered. Suggestions that diamond revenues should be decentralized like wildlife revenues challenge the national government's main source of revenues. Such discourse also pits CBNRM against a founding principle of nation-building in Botswana, that natural resources should be resources for the nation. Depiction of CBNRM as a threat to nation-building threatens its survival. Informed by fieldwork in 2004 and 2005, the paper draws out the link between political competition, rhetorical appeals to alternative political identities, and policies affecting CBNRM.

Paper presented at the 2007 Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Saskatoon, SK, Canada, 30 May – 1 June 2007.

How National Political Competition Affects Natural Resource Management: The Case of Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Botswana

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International trends in natural resource policy reflect technical debates about alternative institutional arrangements. The conventional wisdom in the 1960s and 1970s offered a choice between state or private management regimes (Hardin 1968). Concerns about land degradation and low levels of investment contributed to campaigns to privatize and/or title land. Externalities and economies of scale justified state management. New appreciation for the different management challenges presented by non-subtractible public goods and highly subtractible common pool resources prompted a shift to community-based management of forests, wildlife, and other natural resources (Ostrom 1990).

Policies that (re)define property rights have clear political impetus as well. Especially for politicians in nascent states or new regimes, or governments facing significant challenges, redefinition of property rights may represent an attack on rivals. In Africa, access to agricultural land and other natural resources often depends on and reinforces membership in local communities (Berry 1993; Peters 1984). Politicians transform rights to land and other natural resources to redefine political identities, redirect political loyalties, and consolidate power (Boone 1998, 2003; Hyden 1983; Migdal 1988; Scott 1976).

Many defenses of common property project a strongly anti-state orientation: common property should be defended because local autonomy should be defended (Friedmann and Rangan 1993; Guha 1989; Ostrom 1990; Scott 1976). The prevalence of authoritarian regimes in developing countries and numerous examples of state interventions that dispossessed rural residents or destroyed their livelihoods provided good cause for wariness. As community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) spread in the 1990s, it presented a possible defense against state predation. Decentralization has been associated with democratization (Crook and Manor 1994), such that effective decentralization of natural resource management is virtually equated with empowerment of local resource users (Agrawal and Ribot 1999; Thomas-Slayter 1994). In the absence of effective empowerment, however, decentralization of natural resource management – or other policy areas – reinforces central control (Agrawal 2001; Li 2002; Ribot et al. 2006; cf. Mamdani 1996).

As international policies shifted from state control to decentralization, debates about the management of renewable and especially common pool natural resources were

¹ I am very grateful for permission to conduct research in the Botswana from the Government of Botswana for permission, financial support from the University of New Orleans, institutional support from the University of Botswana, comments from Sandra Joireman, and help from respondents and friends in Botswana.

reframed. Where normative doubts about the desirability of state-building featured prominently in the defense of the commons, the promotion of democratic decentralization of natural resource management suggests that state- and nation-building has either been accomplished or is irrelevant. In fact, decentralization programs can bolster state building by gaining local acceptance for national regulation (Agrawal 2001). Perhaps state-building lost some of its negative connotations as electoral democracy and, more ominously, state collapse became more common since the late-1980s. The desirability of political order should not obscure choices among alternative definitions of political community around which political order can be organized or how rights to natural resources influence political identity.

If efficiency is the primary concern, management strategies and property rights should vary with the characteristics of each resource. Indeed, individual or family rights to some resources coexist with communal and nationally based rights to others. Because rights to resources depend on and reinforce membership in particular political communities, the coexistence of state, community, and individual/household rights implies the coexistence of alternative political identities. Politicians may draw connections between policies for seemingly unrelated natural resources precisely because those policies base distribution on alternative political identities. When links between policies and identities become a political focal point, the politics of identity constrain policy-making. This paper explicates this phenomenon in Botswana, where debates about mineral and wildlife policy have been linked to competition between nation-builders and defenders of sub-national autonomy.

Politics and Natural Resources in Botswana

At independence in 1966, Botswana was a poor country dependent upon livestock, remittances, and foreign aid. Diamond mines developed in the 1970s generated booming government revenues through the mid-1980s. Cross-nationally, natural resource booms are associated with political instability (Collier and Hoeffler 2005), authoritarian rule (Karl 1997; Ross 1999), and slow long-term economic growth (Auty 2001; Sachs and Warner 2001). Botswana bucked these trends by maintaining political stability, uninterrupted electoral democracy, and strong economic growth. Most observe attribute these successes at least partly to government policy (Acemoglu et al. 2003; Leith 2005).

An emphasis on natural resources as national resources helped the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) build and maintain its electoral coalition. The BDP pledged to use mineral revenues to develop all parts of the country. Likewise, rights to land depend on national citizenship rather than traditional or residential status (Republic of Botswana 1993). Arguably, these policies helped the BDP gain and retain broad electoral support, at least until the 1990s. Its electoral dominance meant that the BDP could reasonably expect to enjoy the benefits of pro-growth policies and institutions (Leith 2005; Poteete and Marroquin 2006). The emphasis on membership in a *local* community as the basis for rights within CBNRM sits uneasily with the emphasis on *national* citizenship as the basis for sharing the benefits of nationalized mineral resources and gaining individual usufruct or leasehold rights to national land resources. The next section elaborates on interactions between political competition and policies governing mineral resources, land, and

wildlife. I then examine CBNRM and the political controversy surrounding it more closely.

Resources for the Nation – and for Nation-Building

Although the BDP's political dominance may seem inevitable after several decades in government, its success was not guaranteed. A broad political coalition initially formed behind the BDP to block the more radical Bechuanaland (later Botswana) People's Party (BPP). Where the BPP stood for racial nationalism and a complete dismantling of traditional authority, the BDP advocated racial neutrality and modification rather than elimination of traditional institutions (Tlou and Campbell 1997). The BDP's more conservative platform earned 80% of the vote in the 1965 founding election. The BPP continued to contest elections but never improved on its 14% vote share in 1965. The Botswana National Front emerged as a leftist party with ANC connections in 1969. Until the 1980s, however, it consistently attracted less than 20% of the vote. Given South African destabilization in the region, many voters agreed with the BDP that election of the BNF would threaten the country's security. Effective early marginalization of radicals could have prompted competition within the BDP leading to the emergence of rival moderate parties. Instead, the BDP maintained broad support despite the presence of potentially significant divisions.

The Tswana ethno-linguistic category encompasses a plurality of Botswana's population, but also includes several organisationally distinct *merafe*² with a history of leadership struggles, division, and competition (Peters 1984; Schapera, 2004 [1938]; Tlou 1985). The BPP's frontal attack on traditional authority pushed traditional elites into the BDP camp. The BDP's success in sustaining a relatively broad cross-*morafe* coalition beyond the first election was neither foreordained nor complete (Ramsay and Parsons 2000). A pledge to nationalize mineral resources in the 1965 campaign helped the BDP build and maintain support across ethnic and regional divisions (Leith 2005; Interviews 72PO, 73PO).

Significant copper-nickel deposits had been discovered in Central district before independence, but the extent of mineral resources and their spatial distribution were unknown. Before independence, each chief controlled access to and use of land and subsoil resources on behalf of the *morafe*. This arrangement would have allowed the BamaNgwato to reap the proceeds of known mineral deposits for the benefit of Central district. Seretse Khama, leader of the BDP as well as hereditary chief of the BamaNgwato, campaigned on a promise to use minerals resources for national development:

When they discovered copper-nickel, Seretse Khama went around and said: we are very poor. We can use this to develop our nation. It is on tribal land and so it belongs to a specific tribe, but as government we want resources to be shared equally for all people in Botswana. If we discover

² In Setswana, *morafe* is the singular and *merafe* the plural. Generally translated as "tribe," a *morafe* refers to a chieftom or pre-colonial polity, and can be understood as a nation (cf., Peters 1984). Membership in a *morafe* depends on allegiance to its chief, not one's bloodline, language, or ethnicity.

copper-nickel or gold, it will be used for the whole nation. ... [Interview 72PO]

The BDP's promise to nationalize mineral resources³ contributed to coalition building in at least three ways. First, it offered the *merafe* a share of known resources in exchange for control over potential resources. Second, it usurped authority over a valuable natural resource from traditional chiefs who might have challenged the primacy of the national state. And, third, it projected Botswana as a new larger-scale *morafe*, with President Seretse Khama as its "chief." The significance of this decision increased sharply after diamond revenues began to flow in the 1970s. The BDP government kept its promise to use these resources for national development. It cast networks of roads, schools, and clinics across the country that fostered development and provided visible evidence of its presence. These physical developments made the benefits of membership in the nation of Botswana concrete.

An increasing emphasis on national citizenship as the basis for rights also appears in successive changes to land policy. Before independence, the chiefs controlled access to and use of land. Rights to land depended on status within the *morafe*. The Tribal Land Act of 1968 transferred control over land allocation and administration from traditional authorities to Land Boards that were established in 1970. The Land Boards initially included chiefs as non-voting members and depended heavily on traditional authorities for information about past allocations. Amendments to the Tribal Land Act in 1993 completed the transfer of formal authority over land by disqualifying members of the House of Chiefs from serving as Land Board members (Republic of Botswana 1993). The 1993 amendments also made rights to land contingent on national citizenship rather than status as a "tribesman." Legally at least, rights to land no longer depend on gender, ethno-linguistic identity, residence, or loyalty to local authorities. As with mineral policy, land policies project the primacy of national over local and especially traditional political identities.

Mineral and land policies asserted equal status of all citizens within the nation and diverted attention from competition among sub-national political identities. The BDP's designation of natural resources as national resources encouraged identification with the nation rather than less inclusive territorial or traditional communities, especially because diamonds and land were so valuable. The primacy given to citizenship in the modern state over ascriptive characteristics - whether race, ethnicity, or gender - supported liberal democratic principles. These policies and principles contributed to Botswana's economic success and its democratic reputation. They also supported a strategy of electoral coalition-building through nation-building.

The Promise and Challenge of Community-Based Management

Wildlife is highly valuable, but also preys on livestock, consumes crops and destroys lives and property. In the absence of significant benefits associated with wildlife, residents have little interest in conservation and may actively seek to reduce or eliminate

³ Nationalization affects sub-soil resources, not the mining companies. Private firms and public-private partnerships pay concessionary fees to prospect and royalties on mineral earnings.

wildlife populations and habitat (Alexander and McGregor 2000; cf., Li 2002). Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programs encourage conservation by redirecting tangible wildlife-related benefits to communities. Botswana adopted CBNRM in the early 1990s with support from USAID.

Problems of institutional design and local capacity afflict many CBNRM programs. In Botswana, institutional and managerial problems provide justification for redistributing wildlife benefits. Critics also ask whether natural resources should belong primarily to localities, districts, or the nation as a whole. Parliamentarians and the media regularly note that recognition of *community*-based rights deviates from the treatment of other natural resources as *national* resources (e.g., *Botswana Daily News* 2005a; Interviews 72PO, 73PO, 74PO, 76PO). Either all natural resources are national resources and CBNRM should be dismantled, or community rights to local resources should be extended to land and especially minerals (Rozemeijer 2003).

Botswana adopted CBNRM during a period of increasing political competition. The BDP's electoral support declined gradually but seemingly inexorably, from 77% in 1974, to 68% in 1984 and 55% in 1994. Meanwhile, the opposition consolidated behind the BNF, resulting in a surge in electoral support to 37% in 1994. Despite an ugly opposition split just before the 1999 elections, BDP electoral support continued to decline, to 54% in 1999 and 50% in 2004. The first-past-the-post electoral system has amplified the BDP's parliamentary representation. The last few years have featured repeated opposition efforts to coordinate their efforts and avoid vote-splitting, as well as open factional competition within the BDP. Appeals to highly concentrated and active voters can make the difference in tightly contested three- or four-way elections. Yet the BDP must defend its image as the party of the nation; doubts about its commitment to the nation as a whole rather than its regional strongholds work to narrow its support. Even when CBNRM was introduced, at least some BDP politicians raised concerns about deviating from the principle of treating natural resources as national resources (Interview 73PO). Heightened competition, however, raises the salience of this issue and influences debate about CBNRM. The next section analyzes these dynamics, drawing upon interviews from 2005 related to CBNRM.⁴

A Closer Look at CBNRM

CBNRM assumes that (1) conservation can be improved by increasing the level of local benefits derived from natural resources; (2) commercial management is the best way to generate tangible benefits (Ribot et al. 2006; Thakadu 2005; Twyman 2001); and (3) local benefits should take the form of community benefits. Community-based programs around the world define "community" in various ways. In Botswana, a legally registered community based organization (CBO), usually a trust, must be established to represent the community's interests. Representatives from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) and other departments facilitate the formation of CBOs and attempt to prevent biased representation through a series of community meetings

⁴ See note on interview methods and coding in works cited.

(Cassidy 2000; Thakadu 2005). CBOs can encompass one or several villages within or adjacent to designated wildlife areas, but are of substantially smaller scale than the traditional *merafe* and modern districts.

Once legally registered, a CBO may lease land from the Land Board and gain legal rights over particular wildlife resources from DWNP (e.g., photo safaris, hunting quotas for particular species). The community may choose to manage those resources directly, sell or auction access rights to members or non-members, or subcontract with a joint venture partner to manage and market its wildlife resources. Before it can enter a joint venture partnership (JVP), the CBO must develop a management plan in collaboration with various government departments (Cassidy 2000; Twyman 2001). Revenues flow directly to the CBOs and are expected to support operations, allow reinvestment in the resource base and tourism infrastructure, and provide direct benefits for members.

CBOs are concentrated in Botswana's north and northwest, where the Okavango Delta and Chobe River support the highest concentration of wildlife and attract the most tourists. Since the early 1990s, wildlife-based tourism has expanded dramatically in this region, as have CBO revenues. In 2000, estimated direct benefits for several CBOs exceeded a million Botswana Pula (Arntzen et al. 2003; Rozemeijer 2000).⁵ In 2006, at least one CBO reportedly earned more than two million Pula (*Botswana Daily News* 2007b). These are substantial sums for communities with few other commercial activities. In addition, CBNRM generates some local employment and non-market benefits (e.g., harvesting for self consumption).

In other parts of the country, CBOs lack any source of revenues comparable to wildlife-oriented tourism and struggle with problems of financial self-sufficiency (Twyman 2001; Interviews 43DW, 52EN, 61DA). Villages excluded from CBOs, district-level authorities, and districts with less valuable natural resources view the revenues of wildlife rich CBOs jealously. They emphasize problems that afflict community-based programs around the world: failure to manage benefits in ways that encourage sustainability, definitions of communities that exacerbate conflict rather than enhance cooperation, and responsibilities that far exceed local capacity. Charges of mismanagement have gained considerable attention (e.g., *Botswana Daily News Online* 2000, 2001, 2005b, 2007a, 2007b; Jansen et al. 2000) and justified proposals for reform (Interviews 05WL1, 11AC1, 20CB; Konopo 2005). These charges are often paired with criticism of CBNRM's divergence from the principle of natural resources as national resources. While the government promotes reform of CBNRM as a response to mismanagement, its proposals do more to transform wildlife into a national resource, and thus redistribute wildlife benefits, than they do to solve problems of institutional design or local capacity.

Problems with Institutional Design and Local Capacity

⁵ One Botswana Pula traded for 0.198 US Dollars on average in 2000 and 0.176 US Dollars in 2006 (Oanda Corporation 2007)

As experience with CBNRM has accumulated, so have doubts about both its underlying premises and common approaches to implementation. In many places, including most of Botswana, tangible benefits from sustainable management do not outweigh the costs of conservation (Campbell et al. 1999; Emerton 2001). Regardless of their value, community benefits do not create individual incentives for conservation (Gibson and Marks 1995). Many advocates of CBNRM promote community mobilization for its own sake. Unfortunately, rural communities rarely have the skills or organizational capacity required to meet bureaucratic requirements (Jütting et al. 2005; Ribot 2003) or effectively exploit market opportunities (Rozemeijer 2000). Successful devolution requires new local authorities with the capacity to make and implement sound decisions. To the extent that local capacity is initially inadequate, communities are expected to learn through experience. Indeed, it is impossible to build capacity except by taking on new challenges (Crook and Manor 1998; Hirschmann 1967). Even so, many skills must be developed incrementally. A policy that expects a huge leap in ability in a very short time sets itself up for failure.

There is considerable concern about the mismatch between local capacity and the demands of CBNRM in Botswana (Arntzen et al. 2003; Jansen et al. 2000; Rozemeijer 2000; Thakadu 2005). Most participants reside in relatively small and remote villages and have less education and fewer economic opportunities than other Botswana. CBOs must adhere to particular legal forms and procedures, develop and implement technically sophisticated management plans, and evaluate the technical and market viability of alternative partners for commercial wildlife management. Community members are also expected to understand and adhere to the legal provisions of their leases and partnerships, provide adequate supervision of their partners, and develop and implement adequate systems for oversight of their own internal operations. In other words, CBNRM demands that people with limited formal education and little prior work experience perform a series of tasks that require literacy, math and accounting skills, legal know-how, technical knowledge, and management skills. To meet these expectations, CBOs must make a huge leap in capacity within the span of a relatively short-term lease.

CBOs receive some support from NGOs, donor organizations, and government officials. Where NGOs and donors work intensively with a few CBOs, government officials extend intermittent assistance to all CBOs. NGO and donors have addressed capacity issues with training programs and sponsorship of community-based facilitators (Thakadu 2005; Rozemeijer 2000). Unfortunately, NGOs and donors work with only a few communities and operate on short time horizons. Even three to five years of intensive support cannot compensate for limited general education or nonexistent specialized training in accounting, management, and marketing. Each district has a technical advisory committee (TAC) with representation from the various departments involved in or affected by CBNRM. TAC members, however, have a number of competing responsibilities. One official asserted that once there are four CBOs in a district the capacity of the TAC becomes overtaxed (Interview 61DA). There are at least three times that many CBOs in Northwest district (Rozemeijer 2003). Because the TACs offer CBO only intermittent attention and contradictory messages, CBOs see them as unreliable and unresponsive (Thakadu 2005).

No comprehensive system exists to provide the sort of long-term support CBOs require to gradually build up their capacity. Meanwhile, CBOs are still expected to develop and implement constitutions, management plans, and complex business contracts. Many have run into serious problems such as inertia related to organizational problems and internal conflicts; problems of wasteful, inefficient, and potentially corrupt management; and legal conflicts with JVPs over contractual issues (Arntzen et al. 2003; Boggs 2004; *Botswana Daily News* 2007a, 2007b; Jansen et al. 2000; Rozemeijer 2000; Thakadu 2005). While CBOs learn from each other's mistakes (Interview 16AC), improvements in organizational skills probably occur more rapidly than acquisition of the technical skills. Technical capacity-building requires a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy. Building that foundation depends on a strong government commitment to the provision of rural education ... and time. Meanwhile, problems of capacity and allegations of mismanagement reinforce calls for substantial reductions in the autonomy CBOs exercise over wildlife revenues. Will CBNRM survive long enough for wildlife communities to develop capacity?

Distributional Struggles over Wildlife Revenues

Organizational and managerial problems are not unique to CBOs. Problems of mismanagement and suspicions of corruption attract more attention in the case of CBNRM because of the amount of money involved. For years, proposals circulated that would redirect wildlife revenues to either District Councils, other districts, or the national government. These options diverged in their relative prioritization of local and national political communities and their interpretation of the implications for policy design. Critics suggested that problems of mismanagement could be addressed if revenues from concessions were paid into a fund, which would then make and oversee grants to CBOs for specific purposes (Interviews 05WL1, 22DC). Although the Councils argued for district funds that they would control (Interview 22DC), others favored a national fund with centralized oversight (Interview 05WL1). By 2006, the government had drafted a policy to split wildlife revenues into two streams: CBOs would continue to receive 35% of revenues directly, but 65% would go into a new National Environment Fund (Ndlovu 2007). The National Environment Fund would disburse money for development projects to CBOs throughout the country on an application base. The proposal does not address managerial problems so much as it refers to management problems as a politically neutral justification to redistribute revenues from wildlife. Centralization would also raise administrative costs and slow the flow of resources into communities (Interview 05WL1). Furthermore, centralized collection and redistribution of wildlife revenues contradicts the logic of CBNRM, weakening incentives for conservation.

If the proposal makes little sense from a management perspective, it reflects predictable distributional conflicts with powerful political resonance. Competing claims to wildlife resources appeal to alternative definitions of the primary community as national, district, or local. Although District Councils emphasize superior capacity to manage large sums of money and develop technical management plans, they also see the autonomy of CBOs as a challenge to their authority. Resource poor areas question decentralized control over natural resources, whether by local or district communities.

They appeal to the principle of an integrated and centralized nation in which all citizens have a right to natural resources because they are national resources. On the other hand, the examples of CBNRM and local control of platinum mines in South Africa have prompted calls for local control of mining revenues (Interview 76PO). Local control over mineral resources would deprive the national government of its main revenue source and reverse the BDP's strategy of building national unity by converting mineral resources into broadly distributed national infrastructure. Although conflicts within CBOs also tap alternative ethno-political allegiances, these conflicts have less resonance in national politics than the claims by District Councils, other districts, and mining communities. To the extent that internal conflicts undermine the legitimacy of CBOs, they reduce the likelihood of effective mobilization to defend CBNRM against rival claimants.⁶ Here, however, I focus on conflicts among local authorities as well as conflicts between different parts of the country and over the extension of CBNRM to mining.

Central governments and donors often avoid working with local authorities because they are seen as inefficient, conflict-ridden, inequitable, non-cooperative, or potential rivals (Gibson 1999; Manor 2004; Ribot et al. 2006). When "non-cooperative" local authorities challenge national politicians, national politicians may create special-purpose committees precisely *because* the new committees undermine existing local authorities and conflicts between local authorities fragment challenges to the center. Regardless of intent, new single-purpose authorities such as Botswana's CBOs appear as rivals to local authorities (Manor 2004).

In Botswana, competition with CBOs fuels the District Councils' complaints about CBNRM. The Councils argue that tourism revenues should be used to supplement their own development efforts (Interview 22DC). They view any allocation that does not match their vision of development as mismanagement - even if the CBOs pursued their goals in cost-effective ways and avoided suspicions of corruption (Interview 22DC). If the CBOs have any autonomy, the District Councils believe it should be within a framework that they have designed, so that the authority of the CBOs becomes subordinate to that of the District Councils.

Earlier struggles over power echo through district-level reactions to CBNRM. During the 1800s, the Tswana *merafe* sought to consolidate authority over various ethno-linguistic communities. Although British colonial rule reinforced Tswana authorities in some parts of the country,⁷ it interrupted the process of consolidation by the BaTswana in the northwest (Mgadla and Campbell 1989; Morton 1996; Tlou 1985). Incomplete pre-colonial political consolidation contributed to a more dispersed settlement pattern and more fragmented political competition in the northwest. The decentralization of natural resources and partial devolution of management responsibilities through CBNRM undermine long-standing efforts at political consolidation by district-level political authorities.

⁶ For incisive analyses of internal conflicts see e.g., Boggs (2004) and Thakadu (2005).

⁷ For example, the British generally reinforced the authority of the BamaNgwato in Central district (Mgadla and Campbell 1989).

CBNRM in Botswana diverts resources and authority away from local government institutions, as it does wherever special user groups are established to manage natural resources (Manor 2004; Ribot 2003; Ribot et al. 2006). Critics argue that accountability to local resource users would be enhanced if authority over natural resources were instead decentralized to general purpose local governments (Ribot 2003). Whatever its merits in other countries, it is not clear that redirecting authority over wildlife resources and associated revenues to the District Councils would more effectively empower local resource users in Botswana. After all, Councilors explicitly criticize CBOs for setting priorities that differ from those of the Councils. Under the current electoral system, the Councils are more accountable to residents of larger villages than to the people who live most closely with wildlife (cf., Larson 2002). Should CBNRM be designed to enable political consolidation by district authorities or the empowerment of local communities that often have distinct cultural identities and development goals? The answer is not obvious.

CBNRM is a national program and Botswana consider wildlife a national resource. People with less commercially valuable wildlife resources ask why, if wildlife is a national resource, the benefits of wildlife are not shared by the nation as a whole. Shouldn't the revenues from all areas be pooled and then redistributed? At the very least, shouldn't a share of the revenues from resource rich areas be transferred to CBOs in resource poor areas to help them obtain fiscal solvency? Proponents of national redistribution of revenues from wildlife-based activities note that revenues for minerals have been treated as a national resource and that many infrastructure developments and social services depended on the utilization of mineral revenues for national development (*Botswana Daily Nation* 2005a; Interviews 72PO, 73PO, 74PO). Shouldn't wildlife resources be managed for national benefit as well?

Others agree that mineral and wildlife resources should be treated in a parallel fashion, but would like to see CBNRM as the model. Rather than nationalize wildlife, the government should decentralize control over minerals. Why shouldn't residents in mining areas benefit disproportionately from mineral resources in their areas? Local authorities currently have few independent revenues sources, which limits their policy autonomy. If local authorities were allowed to raise revenues from local resources, whether wildlife or minerals, those resources might foster the development of local democracy (cf., Crook and Manor 1998).

Of course, wildlife and minerals present different management challenges. The difficulty of preventing people from using wildlife and other natural resources makes it next to impossible to manage those resources in a sustainable manner unless local residents cooperate with management efforts.⁸ Wildlife is mobile. People can hunt with relatively inexpensive equipment. Even non-hunters can cause significant damage to habitat by harvesting plants, digging up sands, or littering. None of these activities require expensive equipment and all are difficult to monitor. Major mineral resources in Botswana, on the other hand, take the form of diamond pipes, coal seams, and pools of

⁸ The alternative of ramping up enforcement efforts can be very costly.

gas. Access to these resources can be controlled at reasonable cost.⁹ Expensive equipment is required to access some of these minerals and achieve economies of scale in extraction. Local control is not necessary for efficient management of mineral resources in the same way that it is for wildlife resources.

The difference between *wanting* decentralization of mineral management to enhance local democracy and *needing* decentralization of wildlife resources to prevent their destruction is critical from a management perspective. Politically, differences in management challenges are beside the point. Local claims to mineral resources challenge the national government in general and the BDP in particular. The national government can be expected to defend its most important source of revenue even if the party in government changes. For the BDP, the discrepancy in the treatment of mineral and wildlife resources calls into question its coalition-building strategy.

Different Natural Resources, Different Primary Communities

In drawing parallels between the value of wildlife and mineral resources and highlighting divergence in their management, the opposition raises embarrassing questions about the BDP's sincerity in claiming equal status for all Batswana. When asked about CBNRM, BDP politicians made the connection with mineral policy without prompting. Although they sometimes referred to problems of mismanagement, several representatives – all from wildlife-scarce constituencies - emphasized the importance of consistency with the principle of natural resources as resources for the nation:

It is an unfair policy. You give people rights in wildlife, you might as well give rights in diamonds. It is unfair and it is inconsistent with important policies in this country. ... With wildlife areas, you see a negation of this [mineral] policy. Are we creating a precedent? Are we suggesting to diamond areas and gold areas that you can start agitating for a bigger share of the resources found on your land? [Interview 72PO]

Our stand has always been, when we get resources, we will centralize those resources so we can develop the nation. Just like with mining. It goes into a common kitty and so we can divide from this. We did that again with land. That is why we have this Land Policy where land belongs to all. When we introduced this thing [CBNRM], it looked like it contradicted that because when you are close to resources you benefit from that instead of putting it into a central pool for the country. [Interview 73PO]

It's a contradiction of terms. We are mining diamonds. What we do with diamonds is for the national benefit. We don't have people in Jwaneng [a diamond-mining town], benefiting from diamonds. The level of mismanagement [in CBNRM] is vexing, irritating. I would stand with those who say if you are going to go that way, why not go with diamonds? ... What about people in Gaborone, Ramotswa, and Tlokweng who don't

⁹ Alluvial deposits of diamonds and other gemstones can be very difficult to control.

have those natural resources because they are close to Gaborone [the capitol]? ... I think natural resources should be for all Batswana.
[Interview 74PO]

These politicians feel that the government should maintain consistency across policies in a manner that clearly prioritizes national over regional or local political identity. This concern gains intensity as uncertainty about the BDP's hold on power increases. The BDP's electoral dominance has eroded steadily over the past two decades and its members are well aware that they may be in the opposition one day. The opposition has taken up the issue, arguing that mining communities should receive at least a share of mineral revenues (Interview 72PO). The idea of decentralizing mineral revenues appeals to the opposition's base of support among miners. The BDP cannot easily co-opt this proposal, since it would mean forfeiting the main source of government revenue. Influential members of the BDP, including current and former cabinet ministers, prefer to treat wildlife resources as national resources, even if it means undermining CBNRM.

And yet, once rights and resources are given to people, those people can be expected to complain bitterly if benefits are withdrawn. Opponents of CBNRM within the BDP suggest that the beneficiaries of CBNRM could be convinced that the changes are made for their own good (Interview 73PO). Rural residents might be receptive to changes that circumvent CBOs discredited by mismanagement and conflict. Even if persuasion fails, the CBOs are so few in number, geographically concentrated, and organizationally weak that the BDP can afford to antagonize them (Interview 72PO). The relative paucity of wildlife resources outside the northwest means only a concentrated set of communities in the north and northwest would face direct losses from the redistribution of benefits associated with wildlife. Yet, the northwest has long been a region with tight, three-way elections. Considering the BDP's narrow national electoral margin, policies that antagonize voters in the northwest pose a big electoral risk (Interview 71PO). Meanwhile, at least some BDP politicians recognize that the two resources present different management challenges and argue for improving capacity building rather than dismantling the program (Interview 77PO1).

In various ways, the government has drawn attention to problems of mismanagement to undermine support for the current arrangement and justify the move to a more centralized arrangement. For instance, organization of a workshop on CBNRM in northwestern Botswana in December 2006 under the auspices of the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime highlighted economic crimes associated with CBNRM (Ramsden 2006). This negative image was reinforced by coverage in the *Botswana Daily News* of a negative audit of Khwai Development Trust in early 2007 (2007a, b). Private media attention to the likely termination of development projects in other communities if the reforms go through (e.g., Ndlovu 2007) partially balances these negative reports. The government was expected to table its draft policy during the session of parliament that opened on 5 February 2007 (Ndlovu 2007), but had not done so by the end of April. If tabled, the BDP's majority ensures that the policy will be approved. Regardless of what

happens with the current proposal, unless the BDP directly and effectively counters the rhetorical linkage between wildlife and mineral policies, the future of CBNRM will stay on the political agenda.

Conclusion

Politicians in Botswana link mineral and wildlife policies precisely because they present opposing systems of rights, and because the inconsistency calls into question the ruling party's prioritization of the national over sub-national political communities. The BDP has maintained a broad electoral coalition since 1965 in part by using valuable natural resources like minerals as resources for national development and allocating divisible resources like land based on national citizenship. CBNRM, introduced in the early 1990s, deviated from this principle. As tourism expanded and the BDP's electoral majority narrowed, the opposition jumped on the inconsistency between diamonds and wildlife. Calls for mineral royalties to be paid to mining communities just as wildlife revenues are paid to wildlife communities challenges the government's main source of revenues, raises questions about the sincerity of the BDP's prioritization of the nation over sub-national communities, and threatens the survival of CBNRM. At least some BDP politicians would rather dismantle CBNRM than compromise on mineral policy, despite the risk of antagonizing wildlife communities.

CBNRM in Botswana does not link participation in conservation efforts to benefits from wildlife resources strongly enough to fully realize its potential for improving conservation (Blaikie 2006; cf., Gibson and Marks 1995). Its effectiveness has been limited further by the creation of multi-village CBOs with little connection to historical patterns of cooperation and low local capacity (Thakadu 2005). Despite CBNRM's shortcomings, however, poaching levels have fallen. Supporters believe that CBNRM has planted the seeds for enhanced democracy at the local level and for stronger rural development. Any reform that recentralizes control over wildlife revenues would no longer be community-based and may result in increased poaching (of game but also other products). Moreover, withdrawal of benefits associated with CBNRM would provoke alienation and anger towards government in a region with a history of close elections.

The current draft CBNRM policy attempts to strike a compromise, centralizing control over most but not all of the tourism revenues associated with CBNRM. This proposal rejects claims by District Councils that they, rather than the CBOs, have a more legitimate claim to represent the local community in community-based management. It is not surprising that the BDP rejected redefinition of the local community as the district, especially since the districts correspond closely with the pre-colonial *merafe*. The decision to treat wildlife resources as resources for the nation is more consistent with past BDP policies and political strategies. Although the proposed changes address the political challenges associated with CBNRM, it is not clear that they effectively redress the design problems that have limited CBNRM's effectiveness. In principle, the National Environment Fund might provide the sort of consistent support required to build local capacity. In practice, the creation of an extra administrative layer increases administrative costs and offers new opportunities to create or entrench patronage relationships.

Political rhetoric that compares policies for different natural resources with divergent systems of rights should be a general phenomenon. For politicians, natural resource policies signal commitment to particular political communities and serve as mechanisms for building stronger attachments to those communities. Politicians take considerable interest in policies that create divergent rights to different natural resources because they suggest alternative political identities. Policies based on divergent systems of rights might be interpreted as evidence of a lack of firm government commitment to a particular political identity. Further, divergent systems of rights increase the scope for political competition over the prioritization of various identities and their interpretation. The framing of debate over CBNRM in Botswana as involving a choice between national or sub-national rights to all natural resources illustrates this dynamics. An assessment of the prevalence of these sorts of cross-natural resource currents and their association with changing patterns of political competition awaits future research.

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Interviews

In 2004 – 2005, I interviewed 92 politicians, civil servants, representatives of civil society, and academics/consultants regarding a variety of natural resource policies in Botswana. All interviews cited here were conducted in 2005. The number assigned to each respondent (according to sequence) is followed by a code indicating the type of respondent (e.g., politician, civil servant in a particular ministry).

05WL1. One of two interviews with a DWNP official based at headquarters conducted on 25 May 2005 in Gaborone, Botswana.

11AC1. One of two interviews with a researcher with expertise of land and wildlife issues conducted on 30 May 2005 in Maun, Botswana.

16AC. Interview with an academic with expertise on land and wildlife issues conducted on 1 June 2005 in Maun, Botswana.

20CB. Interview with a representative of a trust and former government official conducted on 2 June 2005 in Maun, Botswana.

22DC. Interview with a representative of the Northwest District Council on 3 June 2005 in Maun, Botswana.

43DW. Interview with a district-level officer and member of a technical advisory committee conducted on 13 June 2005 in Serowe, Botswana.

52EN. Interview with a district-level officer and member of a technical advisory committee conducted on 16 June 2005 in Serowe, Botswana.

61DA. Interview with a district-level officer and member of a technical advisory committee conducted on 21 June 2005 in Palapye, Botswana.

71PO. Interview with an opposition MP conducted on 5 July 2005 in Gaborone, Botswana.

72PO. Interview with a BDP MP conducted on 5 July 2005 in Gaborone, Botswana.

73PO. Interview with a BDP MP and former cabinet minister conducted on 5 July 2005 in Gaborone, Botswana.

74PO. Telephone interview with a BDP cabinet minister conducted on 5 July 2005 from Gaborone, Botswana.

76PO. Interview with an opposition MP conducted on 7 July 2005 in Gaborone, Botswana.

77PO1. One of two telephone interviews with a BDP cabinet minister conducted on 14 July 2005.