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Participatory Conservation? Community-based Natural Resource Management in Botswana

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This paper examines the complexities of participatory conservation through a case study of the process of participation in a government funded community-based natural resource management programme in Western Botswana. The paper argues that different stakeholders have very different views on the levels of participation taking place in particular projects. Furthermore local people find it difficult to voice their concerns about the environment and issues of sustainability given the power relations involved in this 'participatory' process. The paper questions the accountability and motivation of the different stakeholders involved in participatory projects and suggests that implicit in the policy implementation process are mechanisms which constrain empowerment and dictate the forms of participatory conservation which can emerge. The paper concludes by reviewing the case study in the light of new policy developments in Botswana.

KEY WORDS: Botswana, participation, conservation, community-based natural resource management

In an era of community development fused with natural resource management, pressure is being exerted on 'policy implementers' to involve local people, 'policy receivers', in decision-making and planning about the natural resources in their environments. Such 'participatory' and 'community-based' approaches are often heralded as the panacea to natural resource management initiatives world-wide. However, there has been a marked lack of recognition of the diversity of local resource use and resource users, and of the complexity of livelihood strategies based on natural resources in local environments which are highly variable. This paper sets out to question the direction of participatory conservation in Southern Africa through the detailed examination of a case study from Western Botswana. Misconceptions from both 'policy implementers' and 'policy receivers' can jeopardize resource management initiatives resulting in either (and sometimes both) poor or inappropriate natural resource policies and practices.

This paper begins with an introduction to the complexities of participatory conservation through a presentation of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and participatory frameworks from the literature. Here the reference to 'policy implementers' and 'policy receivers' is also

expanded upon. The next section introduces the case study and highlights the key, social, political and environmental contexts in which the analysis is placed. The main body of the paper returns to the concepts of 'implementers' and 'receivers' and examines the different perspectives of participation that these stakeholders embrace. The case study illustrates how power relations on both sides are manipulated in the process of consultation and reveals the ways in which differing priorities are articulated in the public and private spheres. The conclusion draws together these experiences and examines how some of the very recent policy changes could influence the participatory conservation process.

Community-based natural resource management and participatory frameworks

Community-based natural resource management programmes are based on the premise that local populations have a greater interest in the sustainable use of natural resources around them than more centralized or distant government or private management institutions (Tsing *et al.*, 1999). (In this paper the term 'communities' is used, but it is recognized that not all communities are alike and mem-

bership of communities is often negotiated and contested. For further work on differentiating 'the community' see Twyman [1998], Agrawal and Gibson [1999], and Rozemeijer and van der Jagt [2000].) These local communities are credited with having a greater understanding of, as well as vested interest in, their local environment and are thus seen as more able to effectively manage natural resources through local or 'traditional' practices (Leach *et al.*, 1999; Tsing *et al.*, 1999). This move in global and local development discourse is part of a wider reassessment of the goals of conservation by international bodies such as the UN (for example, the *Convention to Combat Desertification and Convention on Biodiversity* both advocate community-based approaches), national governments North and South (for example, indicated by the number of countries signed up to the sustainable development goals of *Agenda 21*), and, NGOs and 'community-based' organizations across the world (UN, 1995; Forsyth and Leach, 1998). There is now increasing recognition that effective resource management must be linked with issues of equitable access to natural resources, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and the alleviation of poverty through participatory and empowering processes of development (Forsyth and Leach, 1998).

Community-based natural resource management frameworks have at times been seen as solely conservation projects, and as such have rarely been critically evaluated in terms of development theory, which would acknowledge the power and positionality of the different stakeholders. There is a need to examine these programmes in terms of local understandings and opinions of community-based natural resource management initiatives, and local relationships with the environment. The extent to which these programmes have been shaped by local priorities or government agendas will reflect the power relationships involved and the balance between conservation and development objectives within the programmes. Central to the ethos of community-based natural resource management is the 'participation' of local people and their 'empowerment' through the development process.

The discourse surrounding 'participation' and 'empowerment' has received increasingly critical reflections (Michener, 1998; White, 1996; IIED, 1994; Cernea, 1994; Egger and Majeres, 1992). Michener (1998) reviews different participatory frameworks identifying the labels and positions which situate this discourse within contemporary development theory. She differentiates between *planner-centred* and *people-centred* benefits from participation. In the former, outcomes focus on administrative and financial efficiency. Participation is seen as facilitating local people's acceptance of new technologies promoted by outsiders; indigenous knowledge and local labour can be exploited and in-kind contributions to programmes can lower imple-

mentation costs. Between planner- and people-centred benefits is the belief that participation rescues the development industry from being top-down, paternalistic and dependency-creating. In the people-centred perspective, it is the process which empowers poor people by enhancing local management capacity, increasing confidence in indigenous potential and raising collective consciousness, as well as meeting local needs and priorities. Others have developed different typologies of participation, for example: White's (1996) continuum between nominal and transformative participation; and IIED's (1994) continuum between passive and active participation. All suggest that genuine, people-centred, active or transformative participation leads to development which is truly empowering, whilst planner-centred participation tends to be nominal with local people acting as the passive recipients of development. Linking these concepts to community-based natural resource management initiatives is helpful in assessing the different motivations for, as well as participation in, such projects by different stakeholders.

Making the distinction between policy or programme 'implementers' and 'receivers' aims to highlight the power relationships involved in the 'participatory' process of development. This view stems from Arce *et al.* (1994) who consider that understanding rural development involves both serious empirical work at the local level and a wider framework of analysis capable of dealing with the complexities of administrative practices and ways in which policies and programmes are 'internalized' by the various people connected with them. In this context 'internalized' is taken to mean the way in which local people receive and understand policies themselves, which may be very different from the meaning intended by policy-makers or implementers, and the power relations embedded in these interactions. Thus, distinguishing between 'implementers' and 'receivers' creates space for the analysis of power at the interface of development interventions.

The following analysis of participation, in a community-based natural resource management project in Botswana, refers to the frameworks described here and in particular draws on Michener's (1998) differentiation between people- and planner-centred participation.

Background to the case study

This study analyses the process of participation in a government-funded community development and conservation programme in western Botswana. The case study illustrates three important observations about participatory conservation projects:

- 1 different stakeholders have very different views on the level of participation taking place in particular projects;
- 2 local people find it difficult to voice their con-

- cerns about the environment and sustainability given the power relations in the (planner-centred) participation process; and
- 3 the discourses of accountability and motivation by the different stakeholders are critically linked to the type of participation perceived as in operation.

A mixed methods approach was adopted for this research combining both social and environmental research techniques drawn from a range of disciplines. Informal, semi-structured and repeat interviews, group discussions and informal conversations provided the main sources of data. These were complemented by observations, participation on trips (e.g. gathering wild foods) and the use of secondary sources. Lists of species used by local populations were compiled in accordance with the Economic Botany Data Collection Standard (Cook, 1995) and qualitative assessments of vegetation and rangeland condition were made in and around the settlements (Perkins, 1991; Twyman, 1997). Fieldwork was conducted over a two-year period incorporating a range of seasons as well as a 'good' and 'bad' year in terms of rainfall. During the fieldwork a community-based natural resource management programme was initiated in the field area and the author was able to observe and discuss the process with the different stakeholders involved. This paper focuses on the results of these discussions.

Policy context

Linking community development to wildlife management is increasingly being seen as the way forward both for the establishment of self-sustaining economies in remote areas and to fulfil the objectives of wildlife conservationists. Countries such as Zimbabwe have approached this through their community development project CAMPFIRE (Child and Peterson, 1991; Adams, 1994, 1994a; Zimbabwe Trust, 1991) while other countries such as Namibia and South Africa are establishing similar initiatives (Cummings, 1990; May, 1998). In an attempt to bring conservation and development together the Government of Botswana proposed that 20 per cent of the land in Botswana should be zoned for this dual purpose. Thus, in 1986 Wildlife Management Areas were established. Botswana now has a natural resource management system comprising National Parks, Game Reserves, Forest Reserves and, the more recently-created Wildlife Management Areas (Fig. 1).

The mid-1970s saw the rapid expansion of the commercial livestock industry in Botswana through the *Tribal Grazing Lands Policy* (TGLP) (Republic of Botswana, 1975). This was followed by a national land assessment and zoning exercise in the 1980s which highlighted some of the problems associated with the TGLP (see Morapedi, 1987; Abel and Blaikie, 1989; Jansen and van der Hoof, 1990;

Thomas and Sporton, 1997). This led to dispensing with the original reserve category of land and in its place a new land category was introduced, the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) (Hitchcock, 1999). WMAs were designated as areas in which natural resource use (both consumptive and non-consumptive) would be the primary economic activity. Regulations for land and resource use were developed and existing settlements and livestock grazing were accommodated in the WMAs, in consultation with the appropriate local authorities.

Since wildlife is a state resource in Botswana, citizens may only hunt if they have licences obtained from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, the government body with overall responsibility for wildlife resources. Portions of the country are divided into a number of Controlled Hunting Areas (CHAs), which are designated for a variety of uses including:

- community-controlled (for hunting, tourism, commercial or subsistence natural resource use);
- commercial hunting safari; and
- photographic safari.

As commercial hunting and photographic safaris are carried out almost entirely by private companies (many with headquarters outside the country) a number of CHAs were designated for community-controlled natural resource activities to promote the participation of local people in wildlife management and tourism (Hitchcock, 1999). Many, but not all, of these community-controlled areas fall within the boundaries of WMAs.

Local communities, NGOs and development agencies have already begun planning and implementing a number of projects in some of the community-controlled hunting areas, principally through the Natural Resource Management Programme (NRMP). The NRMP was initiated in 1990 as part of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to promote community-based natural resource management (Rihoy, 1995; NRMP, 1996; Reynolds, 1997). NRMP has close links with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP). Some communities have obtained wildlife quotas from DWNP after forming a Quota Management Committee with the aid of NRMP. Through the Quota Management Committees, communities are then able to either utilize the quota directly themselves, or lease all or part of it to a safari company (for consumptive or non-consumptive uses). Community involvement with a safari company would be in the form of a joint venture, and the community would have to establish a legal entity such as a 'trust' or company for their group. The committee should display representativeness (in terms of ethnicity, gender, age etc. within

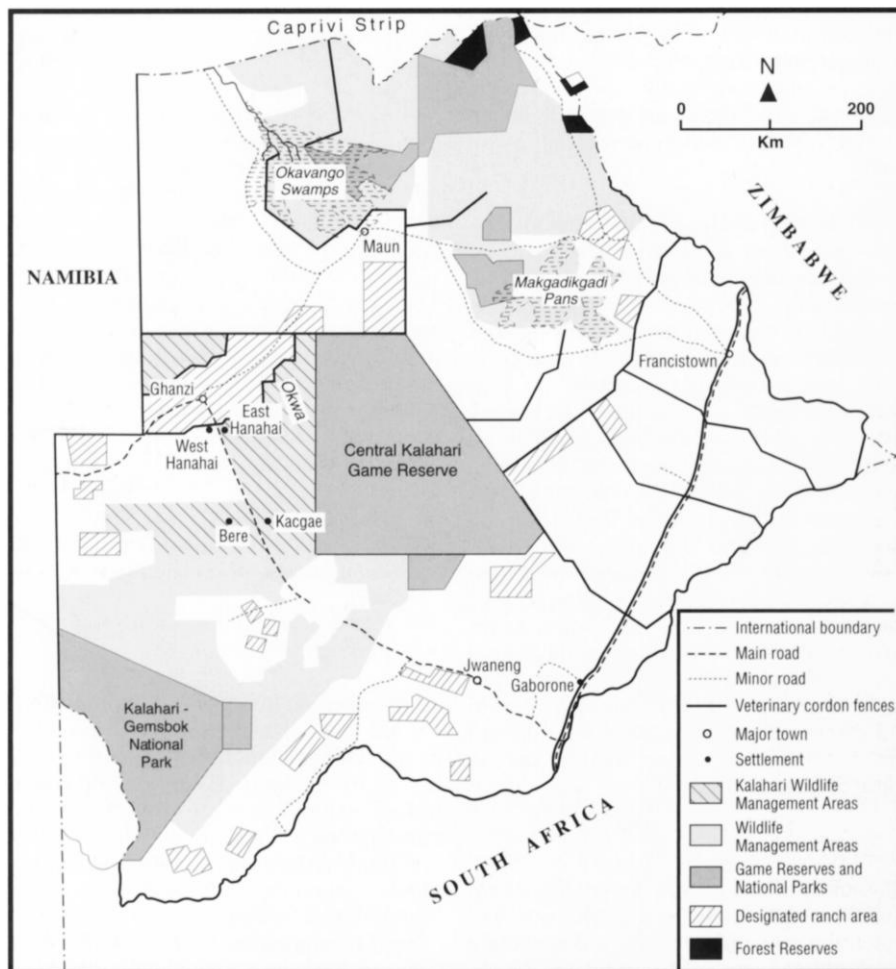


Figure 1 Kalahari wildlife management areas in Botswana.

the community) and accountability to DWNP. Once communities have gained proprietorship over the wildlife resources in this way, they can establish enterprises that can provide benefits such as employment and markets for their products, thus enhancing their livelihood options (Hitchcock, 1999).

This move to involve local people more directly with the management of wildlife and other natural resources is being crystallized in the proposed community-based natural resource management policy. The government has highlighted a 'policy gap' in their existing natural resource policies: they did not define the objectives of community-based natural resource management or provide firm guidance for its implementation, despite it being the guiding principle for many of the recent government initiatives (NRMP, 1999). However, the government recognizes the

vital importance of conservation strategies that are national and ecosystem in perspective and yet local in approach.

NRMP, 1999: 9

The policy, drafted in 1999, lays out a set of objectives and guidelines for community-based natural resource management. In the conclusion the proposed community-based natural resource management policy is re-examined and suggestions made on how the case study experience might have differed had the 'policy gap' been closed earlier.

Social and historical context

Ghanzi District lies in the west of Botswana. Figure 2 identifies the current land use zones in the district as well as the location of the Wildlife Management Areas and settlements in the district. Two-thirds of

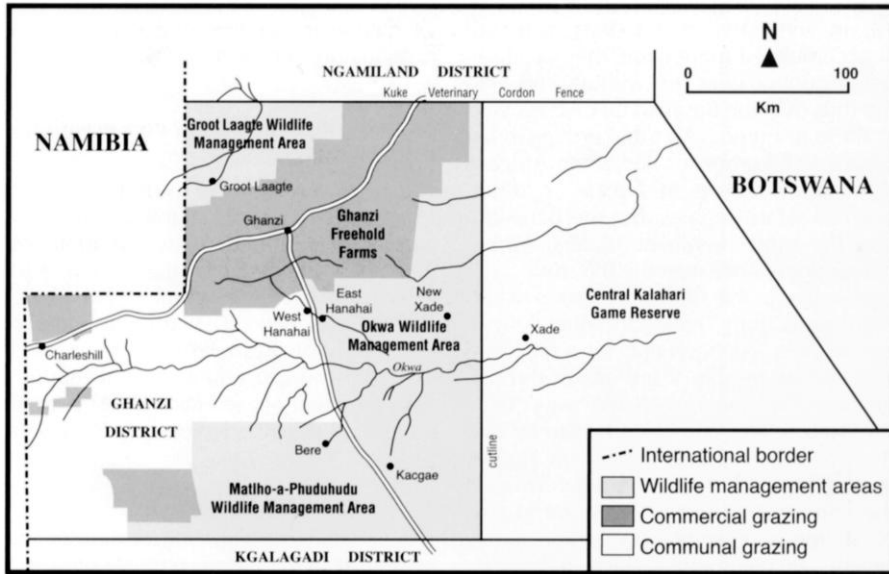


Figure 2 Okwa Wildlife Management Area, Ghanzi District, Botswana.

the district (67%) is zoned for wildlife conservation or management (DLUPU, 1995). Ghanzi District is the most remote district in Botswana and poor infrastructure has perpetuated its image in the past as isolated and backward. Now it is linked to the rest of Botswana by the Trans Kalahari Highway and economic opportunities in the town and district are expanding. It has a diverse population comprising Batswana, Bakgalagadi, Basarwa, European and Afrikaner groups and an economy based on the cattle industry (Molamu, 1987; Adams *et al.*, 1989). The vegetation of the area is classified as northern tree and bush savanna (and central Kalahari bush savanna in the south of the district) according to the scheme established by Weare and Yalala (1971) and has low species diversity. Across part of the north-east of the district lies a limestone ridge, the Ghanzi ridge, which is the centre for the commercial cattle industry in this region. The surrounding area has low relief except where incised with fossil river valleys. The water-table is more accessible along these drainage lines and this has influenced settlement distribution. This is further enhanced by plant and vegetation preferences for the valley areas.

This area of Botswana has a complex history of overlapping and competing claims for environmental resources. This history has transformed the resource relationships in the region influencing people's contemporary interactions with the environment and its resources. It also underpins the emergence of unequal access to and effective use of the resources necessary for the livelihoods of the indigenous rural populations. The people residing in western Botswana come from a range of different

ethnic groups. The majority of the rural population living in the field area of this study are Basarwa, also known as 'the first people' or 'aboriginal people'. The Basarwa of Botswana have also variously been known as Bushmen, San or Khwe and Remote Area Dwellers (Mogwe, 1992; Good, 1993; Campbell and Main, 1991; Hitchcock, 1996), and there are a number of sub-groups, each with a separate language (Naro, G/wi, !Xo, Kaukau and G//ana were the principal sub-groups encountered in this research). These terms all have different connotations to both the users of the terms and to the people themselves, and as Sanders points out

a derogatory association is often the fate of any appellation of a marginal group, even when in its original form it was merely descriptive and meant no harm

Sanders, 1989: 174

However, underlying most of these appellations are complex historical, social and political contexts which preclude any general agreement on which should be adopted (Wilmsen, 1995). This study uses the term Basarwa as it is the most widely used in Botswana by Batswana and Basarwa alike. The other principal groups in the area are Batswana, Bakgalagadi, Nama and Herero and all have a differing and complex history of resource relations in the area.

The first inhabitants of the Kalahari region of western Botswana were Basarwa, Bakgalagadi and some Batswana. There are continuing debates as to the nature of the relationship between the Basarwa and Batswana populations (see Wilmsen, 1989; Solway

and Lee, 1990 and ensuing discussions from these publications). In summary, as the Batswana and Bakgalagadi accumulated more cattle they began to exert increasing control over the wildlife and veld resources and thus over the Basarwa themselves who subsisted on these resources. All tribal groups in the area had contact with Europeans and South Africans travelling through the desert in search of 'desert products', such as safari trophies, but the Batswana tended to be the most dominant traders, further establishing their dominance over the Basarwa.

The area was settled in the 1890s by a group of cattle-owning Afrikaners from Transvaal (South Africa). The changes in the environment (i.e. the veld resources and the water-table) came about through the cattle grazing. The lowering of the water table meant that wells and later boreholes had to be dug and thus the Basarwa became dependent on the White farmers who had the technology to gain access to the underground water (Solway and Lee, 1990). Water shifted from being a common resource to becoming a private commodity. Through the grazing of cattle the vegetation also changed and many wild foods upon which the Basarwa subsisted were no longer available in such abundance. By increasing the human and animal populations, the ecological equilibria were shifted in such a way that the hunting and gathering economy of the Basarwa was no longer fully viable. Thus, people began to become more dependent on the food they received through working for the White farmers and their access to water through this relationship.

A radical shift in resource relationships came in the 1960s when the White farmers had the chance to change the tenure of their farms from leasehold to freehold. With this change in tenure came the compulsory fencing of the farms (Russell, 1976). Until then no farm had been fenced and boundaries were vague. To the Basarwa their traditional lands had been shared with the cattle owners with little conflict. With the fencing of the farms the Basarwa became 'squatters' on what they regarded as their traditional territory. The farmers put pressure on the government to find alternative sites for these 'squatters' to live, and thus the Land and Water Development Scheme for Ghanzi Farm Basarwa (LG 32(v) 1976) was established (Childers *et al.*, 1982; Mogalakwe, 1986). Through this scheme settlements were established outside the farms and Basarwa and other 'squatters' had access to free water and veld resources and thus the necessary rights to keep their own livestock. One of the ideas behind this scheme was to encourage the traditional 'nomadic' Basarwa to settle and become livestock owners, i.e. to become assimilated into Batswana culture (Hitchcock, 1985). In the settlements the government provided services such as schools and clinics which had previously been difficult to provide for such dispersed and fragmented communities. Some of these settlements were established in areas later designated as WMAs and thus

plans developed to set up community-based projects for natural resources management, in particular for participatory conservation.

Analysis of participatory conservation in the western Kalahari

The paper now turns to examine the introduction of a community-based natural resource management programme into the Okwa Wildlife Management Area in western Botswana. The programme was introduced by the regional Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) staff under the national-level Natural Resource Management Programme (NRMP). The procedures and scenarios set out for this community-based natural resource management project are described more fully in Twyman (1998).

The programme 'implementers'

The initial implementation of the community-based natural resource management project in Ghanzi District's WMAs in western Botswana followed a similar format to that seen in other areas of the country (full details are given in Twyman, 1997, 1998; Taylor, 1998). In brief, it involved community consultations by district-level DWNP staff through village-level public meetings; workshops; committee elections and fieldtrips. At the first round of consultations a series of speeches were given, including the use of posters, and most having to be translated into a local language by a village member. Both the language and images used in these meetings emphasized empowerment and participation but there were strong undertones of subordination and manipulation. Although an element of choice was implied in the projects being presented to the communities, it became clear that only certain avenues were supported by the government and these were the ones most likely to be successful (Twyman, 1998). A planner-centred form of participation was evident (cf. Michener, 1998), suggesting participation was desirable because involvement of local people would lead to the success of the project, rather than participation being a means of empowerment in itself.

In the following quotation the Principal Game Warden outlines how communities in the Okwa WMA can set up joint venture partnerships with safari companies for hunting or photographic tourism. Here the Principal Game Warden trivializes the importance of hunting to encourage the acceptance of the project: 'nowadays they are not that important to us'. By bracketing herself with the people, referring collectively to 'us', she covertly creates a false consensus between the Department and the community, advocating both parties' wishes as one. Elsewhere, she refers to the community as the settlers, emphasizing their marginality, but then she refers to them as Batswana, emphasizing their

assimilation into the dominant culture in Botswana's society. All present the community with a confusing image of their own identity and the power relationships between community, government and society. Again this has paternalistic overtones and jeopardizes the essential freedom of decision-making. The final incentive is that one day the community may be knowledgeable enough to run this type of project reaffirming their incapacity to undertake such an option now.

There is a system which has been started whereby *the settlers [the Basarwa] themselves have to decide* how they themselves can deal with their wildlife. In this way the Batswana can see the importance of their animals. We who are staying in the settlements are the ones who are supposed to see the importance of the animals because *nowadays they are not that important to us* in the sense that sometimes they cause damage to us for example they destroy our fields some even kill our livestock..... As I have said before we as the settlers have the animals but the problem is that *we don't have the technology to deal with our wildlife so we should bring in the safari people to do the hunting for us because they have the knowledge* and so they will pay to use our land and our animals. This means that they will hire us and we will also learn from them how to do this so that in the future it will be possible for us to do the same. (Emphasis added)

Principal Game Warden, 1996

The next two quotes from the same speech by the Principal Game Warden show the shift from overtones of empowerment to dictation in the consultation process. While the first quote illustrates clearly the 'correct' use of 'participatory' and 'empowering' language, in the second quote the Principal Game Warden goes on to imply a lack of knowledge and capability among the community to manage their own resources.

So it's upon the people to decide whether they want the safari to hire their animals or whether they want to run them themselves. I know that when the safari is being mentioned people start to become afraid because long back they came and hunted then they would take everything without paying. But now *if the villagers agree that they want to work together with the safari they should agree upon this in the kgotla (public meeting)*. Then you as the settlers will have to decide what you want them to do. We as the Wildlife Department are not the ones who say you should accept the safari. *The villagers themselves are the ones who are supposed to decide.*

Rather than running the wildlife ourselves whereby we cannot pay ourselves for using your own animals and also *we don't have the money and knowledge to do this*. And also *we shouldn't worry about where we will hunt because the safari would have already paid us a lot of money*. The most important thing we have to concentrate on is whether we will get a reward from our animals so *it might be better if the safari hunt for us*. (Emphasis added)

Principal Game Warden, 1996

The Principal Game Warden deliberately identifies herself with the 'settlers' again and in doing so is able to direct or dictate the conclusions she expects

them to make. Such images are disempowering and subordinating and can be easily internalized. People later reiterated these images when they asked questions, stating themselves that they were ignorant and lacking knowledge about wildlife, reaffirming in a public space their subordinate position to the government workers, contributing to what Scott calls the 'public transcript' (1990: 33). However, the people are also strongly suspicious of government programmes and were tough in their questioning, as illustrated in the next section. Inevitably much of this questioning was deemed 'irrelevant' and 'straying from the subject' (by DWNP staff officiating at the meeting) as people addressed deep questions concerning responsibility, control, rights and power over resources and livelihoods. The programme 'implementers' displayed a clear agenda of what they expected to achieve through this project. Though the aim of the project was laudable, the way in which the 'implementers' engaged with the communities was nominal, primarily informing people about what could happen, rather than empowering them to take action themselves. It is a planner-centred form of participation with little empowerment or active transformative participation.

The programme 'receivers'

The above experience is echoed by Taylor's (1998) research into the same consultation process in the Okavango Delta in northern Botswana. She suggests that while there is a wide range of understanding about the projects, even when this is high, distrust of government initiatives makes people highly sceptical about the projects. The scepticism is certainly warranted, and acutely felt and expressed in one settlement in the Kalahari, where a very similar project was curtailed a few years ago because 'sustainable' off-takes of wildlife necessary for the continuation of the project could not be maintained during 'poor' rainfall years (GDC, 1989; Twyman, 1997). This raises a concern about whether generalized models of community-based natural resource management can be inserted into specific contexts without attention to the history and politics of implementation, as well as the differing characteristics of local environments (Tsing *et al.*, 1999).

The issue of sustainability is perhaps the most acute problem facing the Kalahari communities and potential community-based natural resource management projects. This issue is articulated as one of the principal concerns by the various communities themselves. It is a complex narrative and involves social and political as well as ecological issues and has potential implications for dryland regions across the world. Communities in the Kalahari have experienced a decline in wildlife numbers and changes in vegetation over their lifetime, and in part attribute these changes to increased intervention from the government in the 'management' of these natural

resources, as well as to the history of dispossession which they have experienced. This has fostered an acute distrust of government initiatives and an ethos of apathy towards development initiatives unless tangible benefits can be seen by participants (cf. Taylor, 1998). Following the notion of public and private transcripts, the next quotation, made in a public meeting is a good illustration of the deliberate under-statement and affirmation of the speaker's subordinate position, yet the direct questioning of the sustainability of the proposed project.

The other thing which the government has left out is that *I don't know whether they have realised that the animals are no longer there....* So we would like the government to introduce this system but I don't know whether it is true or whether it will happen. Because we as the Basarwa, when we work with the government, *we don't know what happens to the work we have done.* So I would like the government to do these things which they promise us. And also nowadays, because we are mixed up with the Batswana, we don't know what the importance of the government is to us.... What I was trying to say is that when we go around hunting we don't see the animals *and if they are going to be hunted they will get finished.* (Emphasis added)

Cixa, 1996

Here Cixa, a middle-aged Naro man, questions whether the government have taken into account the lack of animals in the area. He points out that if hunting is expanded, in his view the animals 'will get finished'. Again he has misgivings about working with the government, stressing that in the past they have received no feedback or remuneration for the labour and time they have put into projects. He expresses his anxiety about the sustainability of the project: '...and if they are going to be hunted they will get finished'.

The communities have an acute concern over the sustainability of the project. Yet, when this is voiced they are told that they should not be concerned because;

- 1 the animals at present are of little use to them;
- 2 the safari company will be dependent on the animals not the community; and
- 3 the community will receive the money from the safari company in advance, thus if there are any problems with the sustainability of the project the community will already have money.

This is a crude summary of the sustainability issue but this is the principal tenet that people themselves have understood from the consultation process. This is illustrated in the following quote from the Deputy Game Warden:

Animals are no longer there so if we start this new system you won't have any problems because you won't be the ones who are going to hunt. So if this thing comes in we won't be the ones who go out hunting.....It will be the safari people. The safaris will be responsible for hunting and then they will pay you for using your land.....So it's up to them whether they find

animals or not. You would have already taken the money to develop your settlement.....In this system you won't be the ones who are hunting, the safari will be the ones who are hunting.....If they find animals or they don't find them that will be up to them as long as you have taken the money to develop your settlement.

Deputy Game Warden, 1996

In response, the communities reaffirm their past concerns about outsiders coming in to the area to use the wildlife resources on an unsustainable basis. Moses, an older Herero man, emphasizes his concern over the sustainability of the project.

My name is Moses. The animals are finished. The animals are not many. *If people [the safari] hunt they want to kill everything, they don't leave some.* If I hunt with my horse *I kill only one animal* so there are some bad points about the safari. They will finish all the animals.

Moses, 1996

There are clear ambiguities in relation to the proposed projects in terms of seasonal off-takes, year-round subsistence use and drought-year strategies. These have not been adequately thought out before being presented to the communities and as such lead to anxieties over the long-term viability of resource-based livelihoods in the settlements. Furthermore, the ecological understanding of these dryland environments depends on long runs of data and recognition of the variability and patchiness of the environment (Thomas and Shaw, 1991; Behnke *et al.*, 1993). Incorporating such diversity into projects and plans is difficult and warrants close attention. Detailed consultation with the community and appreciation of *their* understanding of the natural resource systems around them could ensure that these anxieties are addressed. Again, the critical issue of whether community-based natural resource management can reconcile goals of social justice and environmental sustainability needs to be questioned (Tsing *et al.*, 1999), and perhaps a more people-centred approach to participation in the project might allow these legitimate concerns to be more openly expressed.

Discussion: accountability and motivation

The experiences of the 'communities' in western Botswana have shown that newly-promoted participatory community projects have aimed to be inclusive rather than exclusive. However, the power relations manifested in such situations reveal the dominant ways in which local government officers assert their power through 'participatory' projects which essentially bestow new natural resource rights upon resident rural populations. This has created a situation where people are reluctant to question or refute government help for fear of losing any benefits that they may accrue, yet are powerless to actually change the way in which that help is directed (and thus perhaps be more appropriate and relevant to

their own needs). This in turn raises critical questions of accountability and suggests that the motivations for interventions are not always straightforward.

In line with Michener's (1998) typology of participation, the above analysis falls neatly into those who follow a planner-centred form of participation (the programme implementers) and those who are dissatisfied with this process and would prefer a more people-centred participation (the programme receivers or the 'settlers'). The former promote this directed form of participation to ease implementation and ensure the success of the project. The latter stakeholders are mistrustful of the government programme, based on past experiences, and do not feel valued or empowered by the process. However, this division conceals some of the deeper complexities in arguments surrounding participatory conservation.

The DWNP are attempting to implement a programme which will enhance rural livelihoods, give greater long-term control over natural resources to rural populations but at the same time meet the needs of conservation and biodiversity in the region. DWNP staff were all trained in participatory methods of extension and spent many weeks engaged in community consultations in the district. In their view, for them to work effectively, and for the programme to be implemented, they have to abide by certain project objectives and designs. Thus, from the start they were following a planner-centred form of participation. This need not be a bad thing in itself, but if this is the form of participation desired by these 'implementers' they should be transparent and explicit about their views of participation and empowerment. However, this also suggests that implicit in the policy process are mechanisms which constrain empowerment and dictate the forms of participatory conservation which can emerge.

At the community level, individuals and households are acutely aware of the power dynamics in operation. The quotations give an insight into how individuals articulated their concerns through the initial consultation process. Their perception of the project was shaped by past experiences of both natural resource dispossession (historical) and failed government development programmes (contemporary). However, despite these anxieties they also see this project as a means of gaining access to new resources. They are also not entirely without power as they could withhold their participation in the project as a form of control, either overtly through boycotting meetings, or implicitly through 'apathy' and 'lack of enthusiasm' for the project process (cf. Scott, 1985, 1990). However, in this context they are unlikely to overtly refute government help given the already difficult conditions under which they live.

The discourses emerging from this analysis suggest that participatory conservation is complex at the interface of implementation in the field. On the one hand, the discourse of inclusion and participation

(rather than exclusion) may be the emerging form of social control. However, individuals and communities are not passive recipients of development and there are signs that, for example in the case study, some local people do have the skills to manipulate and rearticulate the discourses with which they are presented. Furthermore, Tsing *et al.* (1999) propound their concerns over ethnicity and territoriality in the community-based natural resource management process, two highly emotive issues in the local Kalahari context (with the Basarwa population's history of dispossession and exclusion) which must affect issues of accountability and motivation in these projects.

There could also be the argument that participation may not be a 'good thing', that local people may not want more participation or may not have the time to participate. However, this assumes that people are fully aware of the development or implementation process and have been able to make fully-informed choices about opportunities available. More often that not, apathy and unwillingness to participate are a result of development efforts that do not take account of local priorities, local livelihood dynamics or local concerns and past experiences. If people do not want to participate it is often because a project has been presented to them in such a way that they feel it is not relevant to their needs and priorities and it is not *their* project. For effective participation, people need to be involved from the start of projects when priorities and objectives are set (and at times and in ways suitable to different members of the community or group), even if this is within a broad structure determined by a national policy. It is only then that projects can be locally relevant as well as locally-owned.

Earlier in the paper it was suggested that this case study emerged in a 'policy gap' in the community development and natural resource management sphere of Botswana's policy arena. At the time there were no guidelines for such programmes and only general policy objectives in documents such as the *Wildlife Conservation Policy* (1986), *National Conservation Strategy* (1990), *Tourism Act* (1992) and the *Wildlife and National Parks Act* (1992) (Republic of Botswana, 1986, 1990, 1992, 1992a). However, since these consultations in western Botswana, significant progress has been made by the Botswana Government in developing a community-based natural resource management policy. The Ministry of Agriculture has followed suit by drafting their own national policy on the 'use and management of natural resources' (Rozemeijer and van der Jagt, 2000). The two departments are currently drafting an all embracing 'unifying' community-based natural resource management policy.

The unified policy aims to promote sustainable natural resource use while conserving natural resources and functioning ecosystems. It aims to achieve this by giving communities incentives to:

- 1 increase the value of existing resources;
- 2 contribute to and be responsible for resource management;
- 3 generate or increase benefits derived from natural resource management; and
- 4 diversify local business activities (NRMP, 1999).

One of the key premises behind this policy is the shift from open access to community-controlled natural resource tenure. Communities will therefore realize greater opportunities to enjoy natural resource management, use, access and exclusion rights through mechanisms such as community-based organizations (CBOs), natural resource use leases and quotas. This will afford communities greater control over their natural resource base, and give them a higher profile in their relationship with government and other conservation institutions.

There is still a tendency to report the successes of community-based natural resource management projects in Botswana rather than openly examine the failures or difficulties in particular projects (e.g. Winer, 1994, 1994a, 1995; Steiner and Rihoy, 1995; HaBarad *et al.*, 1995). Given the current policy changes, it needs to be questioned whether there are signs that the problems associated with the differing stakeholder perspectives (illustrated in the case study) are being addressed by these policy shifts and whether the Botswana Government (and DWNP in particular) is learning from the experience. The early success of the Chobe Enclave project (NE Botswana), the flagship of the NRMP, was heavily influenced by the external (and expatriate) expertise dominating in the implementation process (Ecosurv, 1996). Similarly, Rozemeijer and van der Jagt (2000: 15) suggest that the recent successful KD1 project in Kgalagadi District (SW Botswana) might be 'an exception in terms of the assistance it has received'. While the successes are encouraging and sometimes ground-breaking (e.g. the locally relevant ward system adopted for the formation of the community trust in KD1), there has to be concern about the sustainability of such heavily expert-led projects, and the levels of participation and empowerment that they achieve. Rozemeijer and van der Jagt (2000) briefly make reference to the difficulties faced in Seronga, a community in NW Botswana where the CBNRM trust has become a powerful village institution benefiting a few élites, and suggest that these problems can be attributed to a lack of expert assistance and monitoring. Furthermore, the communities mentioned in the case study do not appear on the list of established trusts and projects (i.e. CBOs) even though it is four years since the consultations (cf. Rozemeijer and van der Jagt, 2000). This evidence suggests that significant expert involvement in projects is linked with project 'success' in this programme. Conversely, when this involvement does not take place projects are likely to have faced 'difficulties' or 'failure'. This presents two problems:

- 1 on what criteria are these projects deemed 'successful'? and
- 2 what is the sustainability, and replicability, of heavily expert led projects?

Ultimately, at this interface of development intervention, it seems there is still a long way to go before Botswana achieves its goal of participatory conservation.

Conclusion

The above discussion brings to light some of the complex issues involved in community-based natural resource management projects in Botswana. The consultation process in the Kalahari context revealed that although the project appears to have a sound participatory approach it is essentially a planner-centred form of participation. Thus, few choices are available to the community and they are encouraged to follow the government recommendations. The language and images used in the consultation meeting (and in the published guidelines – see Twyman, 1997, 1998) are manipulative and dominating although communities are aware of potential problems. It must be questioned whether or not the project is concerned with empowerment or compliance, participation or dictation. These findings have important implications for community-based natural resource management projects elsewhere as they show evidence to suggest we should question whether community-based natural resource management projects are the panacea to natural resource management and conservation projects.

The significance of variations in wildlife populations (both in number and species diversity) and the complexity of the 'sustainability' issue forms the foundation of Kalahari communities' concern about the proposed community-based natural resource management project. However, this concern is masked by the planner-centred participation process apparent in the consultations about the proposed projects. This debate has significant implications for Botswana and for community-based natural resource management initiatives around the world: similar projects and policies aiming to enhance sustainable natural resource use and improve society-environment interactions in particular environments may find their approaches have unpredicted impacts in different social and ecological environments and may prove to be 'unsustainable'. This relates directly to concerns about social justice and environmental sustainability, and environmental and development narratives which make misguided assumptions about particular problems and then prescribe definitive solutions. At a global level, 'participatory' and 'community-based' projects are currently in vogue and governments are under pressure from international conventions and international Aid agreements to adopt such approaches, irrespective of whether they

are adaptable in specific local and regional environmental contexts. While the move to involve people in the management and utilization of their environmental resources should be lauded, attention must be given to the form of this 'participation' and the motives behind such initiatives. It is only when this is addressed that people will feel in control of their resource based livelihoods and only then that appropriate, sustainable and ecologically-sensitive policies can be put effectively into practice.

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