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**Land, Resources and Visibility:  
The Origins and Implications of Land Mapping  
in Namibia's West Caprivi**

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by

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The name Khwe came as we didn't meet any other people on the land, just ourselves. We lived on our own and we didn't know where these other people came from but they took our land. Now we are just there without our land... So we have started working with these maps and names, as we are forced to do this to try and claim our land. Maybe the government will recognize us as people when they see this information in the maps.

*Khwe member of the Teemacane and #Heku Trusts, Botswana, 2003*

We Khwe are the last invisible nation alive in the world today... we are last, the last ones in a bad life.

*Khwe testimony in 'The Khwe of the Okavango Panhandle: The Past Life'  
(Teemacane Trust 2002)*

The day we get the information for the map, we can call other people to see whether we know the places, the *murambas* [dry river beds]. We can ask them, how do you call this place? When they fail to answer, we can say, well, our forefathers were calling this place like this.

*Khwe Headman, Omega III, West Caprivi, 2004*

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## List of Acronyms

CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (Zimbabwe)
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CGG	Community Game Guard
CI	Conservation International
CKGR	Central Kalahari Game Reserve (Botswana)
CRM	Community Resource Monitor
DEA	Directorate of Environmental Affairs
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (political party, Namibia)
FPK	First People of the Kalahari (NGO, Botswana)
GIS	Geographic Information System(s)
GPS	Global Positioning System
IRDNC	Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (NGO, Namibia)
KFO	Kuru Family of Organisations (NGO consortium, Botswana)
KGNP	Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (South Africa)
KT	Kyaramacan Trust (West Caprivi, Namibia)
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre (Namibia)
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism (Namibia)
MWCT	Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (pre-1990 Namibia)
NDF	Namibian Defence Force
NSHR	National Society for Human Rights (Namibia)
PGIS	Participatory Geographic Information Systems
PPGIS	Public Participation Geographic Information Systems
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SADF	South African Defence Force
SASI	South African San Institute
SSF	Special Field Force (Namibia)
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation (ruling party, Namibia)
TBNRM	Trans-Boundary Natural Resource Management
TFCA	Trans-Frontier Conservation Area
TOCaDI	Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (NGO, Botswana)
UNITA	Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola
WIMSA	Working Group for Indigenous Minorities of Southern Africa

## Introduction

A significant element in the rise of the ‘sustainable development’ discourse in the last two decades has been the resurgence of environmentalist concerns articulated in global terms. Issues concerning the environment and poverty, democracy and social justice have been drawn into focus under the same lens. As Peet and Watts (1996: 35) point out, “it is striking how indigenous rights movements, conservation politics, food security, the emphasis on local knowledges and calls for access to, and control over, local resources... crosscut the environment-poverty axis”. Each of these issues is brought to bear in the far north-east of Namibia, where local Khwe San people and an environmental NGO are preparing to map Khwe knowledge about land and natural resources in the West Caprivi Game Park. Global environmental and indigenous rights discourses have intersected with locally specific agendas to give rise to this plan. In this thesis, I seek to trace these influences and offer an interpretation of how they are manifested and contested within the context of an ‘environment and development’ project. In addition, I ask what the implications of mapping are for marginalized Khwe groups, investigating the claim that new mapping technologies can assist in the devolution of environmental management and in rural development.

I begin by addressing the powerful rise of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in southern Africa and in Namibia. This environmental and development discourse substantially frames the context of my field site, and stands to shape the mapping project in significant ways. Like other forms of ‘participatory development’, CBNRM praxis is liable to criticisms of ‘depoliticising’ its projects. Keeping politics and depoliticisation in sight, I review the literature on maps, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and power, emphasising their constructed nature and their embeddedness within social and political contexts. The relevance of maps and GIS for ‘development’ includes not only the shaping of policies, planning and interventions, but the use of spatial information technologies by ‘indigenous’ ‘communities’ to map their natural and cultural resources in ways which counter official versions of geography and landscape. Such ‘countermapping’ is inherently political, as people assert control over representations of themselves and their resources, and attempt to augment their power and legitimacy in relation to more powerful actors, especially the state.

The driving forces which create and structure the use of countermapping technologies include, I argue, both ‘environmental’ and ‘indigenous rights’ discourses. Conservationists and rights activists have often been interested in mapping the same land but for different purposes. Recent shifts towards ‘local participation’ in natural resource management, however, means that participatory mapping and the use of GIS is seen as a logical step for ‘capacity building’ and ‘empowerment’, as well as an instrument to assist environmental monitoring and management.

With roots in the indigenous rights movement, countermapping has become a global phenomenon since its advent in the early 1970s, and in the mid-1990s was used for the first time by indigenous San groups in southern Africa. This has been facilitated by transnational mapping networks, and was initially catalysed by politico-legal changes in post-Apartheid South Africa. Contesting past injustices and land expropriation, San groups in both South Africa and Botswana have used mapping as a politically strategic tool for identity-building and land claims.

The overview of CBNRM, maps and counter-mapping sets the stage for my Namibian case study. The West Caprivi setting is complex, and its unique social, political and economic history have made the local Khwe population one of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the country. Suffering from land dispossession, repeated experiences of war, unrest and stigmatisation, the Khwe have struggled for recognition and autonomy vis-à-vis the state and other ethnic groups. In recent years, they have been exposed to environmental and development discourses that have steadily put down strong roots in Caprivi. The Namibian NGO Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) has played a particularly influential role here.

I show that, despite the opportunities that CBNRM claims to offer, Khwe have derived few benefits from it thus far, and once again feel marginalized by other more powerful actors. This outcome is closely tied to the fact that Khwe communities cannot form a 'conservancy' - the dominant resource management institution advocated by Namibian CBNRM actors - within a National Park. At the same time, Khwe people face further anxieties about their future based on the Ministry of Environment and Tourism's (MET) new plans for the Park, including the 'zoning' of land into distinct areas with different purposes.

Contextualising the case study is essential for understanding how the idea of land and natural resource mapping is perceived by West Caprivi's different groups of actors, each of which have divergent agendas. For Khwe people, I argue, mapping presents an opportunity to affirm their identity, assert their ownership of land, and enhance their 'visibility'. In line with other southern African examples, Khwe understandings of mapping recognise its potential to expose and address political issues. IRDNC, on the other hand, casts the mapping first and foremost as a project to strengthen local people's capacity to manage an environmentally important conservation area. I argue that IRDNC, both unintentionally and strategically, 'depoliticises' the mapping project, and that this threatens the opportunity for a Khwe version of landscape to be seen, for Khwe voices to be heard, and for their interests to be fulfilled.

The implications of mapping West Caprivi are thus ambiguous for its Khwe residents. On the one hand, the mapping offers the prospect of augmented visibility and power for this marginalized group. On the other hand, mapping stands to be co-opted through environmental discourses, whereby its political nature is dampened or concealed. The project may become yet another part of the cycle of opportunity and disillusion that characterises Khwe alliances with others, most recently with CBNRM advocates. More widely, this case study supports the argument that indigenous counter-mapping has limitations as a site of resistance and empowerment, given the interests in 'local knowledge' of more powerful actors, including those who promote CBNRM. In addition, a critical examination of the increasing use of GIS in CBNRM, and its potential to democratise resource management, calls for caution rather than celebration.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **The Local Manifestations of Transnational Environmental Discourses: Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in Southern Africa**

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the complex workings of the multiple global environmental discourses currently at play, I consider here the rise of ‘Community Based Natural Resource Management’ in the southern African context, and specifically in Namibia. Since the early 1980s, there has been a global shift in conservation models away from exclusive protectionism and towards local participation and collaboration in natural resource management (Twyman 1998). Broadly, this framework for ‘community’ or ‘community-based’ conservation refers to ideas, policies, practices and behaviours that seek to give those who live in rural environments greater involvement in managing local natural resources – soil, water, species, habitats, landscapes or biodiversity - and greater access to benefits derived from those resources (Hulme and Murphree 2001: 4).

This approach is closely tied to the ‘participation’ orthodoxy which has been cemented since the 1980s as numerous donor agencies, governments and NGOs have incorporated this contested concept into their mandates and practice (Rahnema 1992; Nelson and Wright 1995; Guijt and Shah 1998). The community-based conservation approach is also tied to the growth of interest in ‘common property regimes’ for economically ‘efficient’ resource management (cf. Alden Wily 2000), and to arguments that have challenged Hardin’s (1968) pessimistic ‘tragedy of the commons’ thesis (Baland and Platteau 1996).

As a strategy for promoting ‘sustainable economic development’ and ‘enhanced biodiversity conservation’ (Hitchcock 2000), CBNRM is a dominant discourse in the context of my field site, West Caprivi. The origins of the proposed West Caprivi mapping are partly located within this discourse, as environmental actors increasingly employ maps and GIS as tools for natural resource management. Furthermore, the project’s implementation will be channelled through IRDNC, an NGO whose mission is founded on CBNRM principles. The following sections thus outline the central components of CBNRM discourse, as well as recent critiques of its theory and implementation. These lay the basis for understanding the approach and practices of IRDNC, to which Khwe people have been exposed since the early 1990s, and the framework in which the mapping project has evolved.

#### **1.1 The Rise of the ‘New Conservation’ in Southern Africa**

In southern Africa, the ‘new conservation’ approach (Hulme and Murphree 1999; 2001) is said to mark a departure from, and a challenge to, earlier ‘fortress conservation’ models (Brockington 2002), though this claim has since been questioned (eg. Sullivan 2002). Initiated by colonial administrations, the ‘fortress’ model involved the creation of protected conservation areas from which Africans were forcibly, and often violently, removed or displaced and subsequently excluded (Neumann 2000; Dieckmann 2001; Dutton and Archer 2004). Preservation and exclusion were the key principles on which national parks were founded, and laid the basis for the hostility with which many rural Africans came to view conservation efforts (Hill 1996; Hulme and Murphree 2001). Hunting was reserved for Europeans, whilst Africans who did so were classified as poachers.



With the formal establishment of conservation administrations in the colonies following the second World War, Africa maintained a special place in growing global conservation discourses due to “its exceptional endowment of large and charismatic species, high densities of wildlife and rapidly increasing pace of development and landscape change” (Adams and Hulme 2001: 11). As Adams and Hulme (2001: 12) also note, in the Western imagination, “Africa was portrayed as Eden, humankind as its chief destroyer and conservation, through a protectionist strategy, its necessary regime of salvation”. These imaginings still retain remarkable power and remain a strong element in contemporary conservation discourses (Adams and McShane 1992; Brockington and Homewood 1996; Sullivan 2002; Brockington 2003).

It is against, or at least alongside, the ‘fortress’ model that the ‘counternarrative’ of ‘community conservation’ has emerged since the 1980s, and been advocated at the World Congresses on National Parks and Protected Areas (1982, 1992), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) and in national policy-making and implementation. It has been acknowledged that virtually everywhere in Africa, conservation efforts have had adverse effects on local societies and economies. Attempting to confront this injustice has allowed conservation to acquire a ‘human face’ (Brockington 2003).

Three other central ideas underpin the theory of ‘community conservation’ (Hulme and Murphree 1999; 2001). Firstly, rejecting the idea that rural people necessarily ‘destroy’ or ‘degrade’ the environment, ‘community conservation’ theory asserts that a legal and policy context must be created such that rural people can manage their own resources. Central here is the idea that conservation activities should be devolved away from the state to the local level. This emphasis is linked to the observed incapacity of state bureaucracies to micromanage the environment and protect biodiversity (Baland and Platteau 1996; Gibson *et al* 2000; Barrow and Murphree 2001). Hence the prevailing jargon of ‘the community’ has arisen, as seen in a variety of development discourses, though this has subsequently been critiqued for its leanings towards staticism, homogeneity and harmony (Twyman 1998; Agrawal 1999; Sullivan 2002; Kull 2002). Secondly, the theory of ‘community conservation’ reconceptualises conservation along the lines of ‘sustainable development’, wherein natural resources can be utilized and managed, rather than simply preserved, to achieve both developmental and conservation goals.

Thirdly, it incorporates neoliberal economic thinking about markets. As described by Zerner (2000: 3), environmentalists over the last two decades have sought to fashion and implement a new family of environmentalisms based on markets, commodity flows, incentives and the idea that people are fundamentally economic creatures. Amongst other things, this market-based approach argues that wildlife species and habitats, including those that are rare and unique, should be exposed to market forces rather than shielded from them. As a result, in theory, high economic values will be placed on them, and the likelihood of conservation is enhanced. “Consumers (i.e. tourists, trophy hunters, the media and people who intrinsically value a species or habitat) will bid prices up so that alternative uses that would degrade the environment, particularly agriculture, will no longer be attractive to producers (i.e. the proprietors and managers of the resource)” (Hulme and Murphree 1999: 280). At the local level, conservation objectives can be tied to development needs. The economic rationale is

that poor people who participate in wildlife and natural resource management will benefit economically from activities such as tourism and monitored safari hunting. Community conservation and community-based tourism are considered able to improve 'livelihood sustainability' by diversifying sources of income in areas where livelihood strategies are often extremely limited. That 'equitable returns' from resource management will function as incentives to conserve the environment has become the new mantra of conservation and environment-development circles (Zerner 2000: 9).

These ideas constitute the basic tenets of 'Community Based Natural Resource Management' (CBNRM), a discourse which has quickly established its roots among state conservation agencies, aid donors, and conservation and development NGOs in southern Africa. According to Jones (1999), CBNRM programmes usually focus on providing rural communities with strong proprietorship over their land and resources, establishing or strengthening community organizational, institutional and resource management capacity, and thus address issues of governance and rural development in addition to conservation. To date, CBNRM has been concerned primarily, though not exclusively, with the management of wildlife on communal land, that is, land whose ownership is vested in the state, but which is designated to be utilised by rural farmers on a communal basis.

The power and success of community conservation discourses and narratives is doubtlessly multicausal. Some of the main reasons perhaps include their coincidence with global shifts in development discourses towards Chamberian 'bottom-up' approaches (Chambers 1983; 1995), 'participation', the reification of 'community', and towards a renewed interest in the market as a means of delivering development. In southern Africa, CBNRM appears to have been, at least initially, propelled primarily by white male elites, many of whom previously worked within the 'protectionist', 'fortress' framework. Such actors have found a new and legitimate role for themselves as advocates of community conservation in the post-independence contexts of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. This factor too may help to explain the rapid transition from 'fortress' to 'community' models, and the strength and pervasiveness of the CBNRM discourse. At the same time, it casts some doubt on the 'newness' of the 'new conservation', as certain elements of the protectionist discourse are sustained under a different guise (Ellis 1994; Sullivan 2002).

## **1.2 Critiques of CBNRM**

Whilst CBNRM theory is brightly optimistic, its practice and implementation has received substantial criticism. I briefly discuss just a few of these critiques below. One of the key critiques questions whether CBNRM does indeed devolve conservation management from the state to the local level. Murombedzi (1999), for example, reveals that the 'radical' appearance of the widely celebrated CAMPFIRE<sup>1</sup> programme in Zimbabwe, established to create strong collective tenure over wildlife resources in rural communal lands, masks a reality whereby conservation in many areas remains top-down and coercive, due to the failure of the programme to truly devolve authority and rights to the local level (cf. Ribot 2004). This failure means that local stewardship of resources is unlikely to improve, and that agriculture and

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<sup>1</sup> Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources.

livestock, as opposed to wildlife management, will remain the key strategies for household accumulation. In a related vein, Hill (1996) proposes that grassroots conservation such as CBNRM actually provides the Zimbabwean state with an opportunity to *extend* its authority rather than devolve it, and with greater opportunities to raise revenue and create political legitimacy.

Other critiques question the extent to which CBNRM can in fact break free from 'received wisdom' (Leach and Mearns 1996) about the environment and from a 'fortress' mentality. For example, Kull (2002) discusses community-based fire management in Madagascar, where farmers and herders rely on fire as a key agro-pastoral tool, and where the use of fire has, since colonial times, been condemned as a backward and environmentally threatening practice. He notes that 'received wisdoms' about environmental change and management persist amongst state, urban and external actors involved with the implementation of fire management projects, preventing the devolution of authority to peasants, and threatening the locally perceived legitimacy of fire policies. Like other critics, Kull also problematises the concept of 'community' as employed by the fire management project, and notes that CBNRM projects are likely to fail if pre-existing local decision-making institutions are not taken into account.

From a socio-political perspective, Alexander and McGregor (2000) trace the implementation and failure of a CAMPFIRE project in two districts in north western Zimbabwe, arguing that local histories, economics and politics play a crucial role in how such projects are received and realised. Whilst CAMPFIRE has been celebrated for overcoming the legacies of colonial interventions, and in particular for overcoming the exclusion of rural Africans from wildlife, the authors show how this project, as a result of the complex interaction of political and economic forces, actually reinforced memories of colonial land dispossession and postcolonial repression, producing distrust and fear amongst local residents. Nor did these people wish to revise their 'exclusion' from wildlife.

In terms of economics, Emerton (2001), whilst noting the sound economic rationale of community conservation approaches, calls for caution before automatically claiming their success. She argues that "generating broad development benefits does not ensure that the presence of wildlife generates a net local economic gain and is not the same as providing economic incentives for conservation" (Emerton 2001: 225). In a similar vein, Sullivan (2002) uses Namibian CBNRM revenue statistics to argue that it is unlikely that revenue from wildlife and/or tourism can constitute a substantial source of income for all members of a 'community'. To date, excluding those north-western conservancies in Namibia such as Kunene, which offer extraordinary tourist attractions, incomes from CBNRM initiatives have been low, making it unrealistic that people will view wildlife as an alternative to their usual means of livelihood.

Taken together, these critiques expose the conceptual weaknesses and limitations of community conservation. Like other development practices which promote 'participation' and 'empowerment', many CBNRM projects embody a rhetoric-versus-reality disjuncture and, like other development projects and interventions, CBNRM projects often fail to take into account local social and political dynamics. Consequently, CBNRM is often not the radically and qualitatively different approach to conservation that it claims to be (Sullivan 2002). The assessments outlined above,

though not definitive for analysing the context of West Caprivi, are valuable to keep in mind for this case study, where CBNRM has entered onto a complex socio-political stage. A critique that is most significant in this regard, and which is prevalent in evaluations of ‘participation’, points to CBNRM’s potential to ‘depoliticise’ development processes.

### **1.3 CBNRM, Participation and Depoliticisation**

Whilst Chambers, the best-known proponent of ‘participation’, has himself acknowledged the weak links in his arguments, the theory and praxis of participatory development have come under attack on numerous fronts. Many of the critiques of participation, drawing on Foucault, pertain to inadequate analyses of power and ‘community’ (Guijt and Shah 1998; Crawley 1998; Kapoor 2002; Parfitt 2004), whilst others highlight the discourse’s use of “a language of emancipation to incorporate marginalized populations of the Global South within an unreconstructed project of capitalist modernisation” (Williams 2004: 558; Escobar 1984).

Participation has been named ‘the new tyranny’ (Cooke and Kothari 2001), a practice which facilitates or constitutes the illegitimate and unjust exercise of power. Situations described as ‘participatory’ often, it is argued, hide relations of manipulation and coercion, in which some or all of the ‘subjects’ of development projects remain in positions of subordination. That is, participation is simply a means of pursuing top-down development whilst projecting an appealing image of inclusion and democracy (Mosse 2001). In the same vein, approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal have become tools for functional efficiency, a means to attaining project objects rather than an empowering end in itself (Nelson and Wright 1995; Crawley 1998; Parfitt 2004).

Together, these assessments fall under a broad and crucially important critique that participatory discourses and practice results in the *depoliticisation* of development (Williams 2004). This is ironic given the origin of the concept of participation in ‘radical politics’ and its philosophical synonymity with essentially political notions, such as ‘empowerment’, the contest of domination, and the broadening and deepening of democracy (Chhotray 2004: 328). The ‘depoliticisation’ critique is central to understanding how the plan to map West Caprivi was evolving in mid-2004, and certain aspects of the critique warrant particular attention. That is, the concept of participation serves to provide development projects with a source of legitimation (Rahnema 1992), whilst participatory development is simultaneously reworked as a set of technical practices that are ‘apolitical’ (Guijt and Shah 1998; Escobar 1999; Boas 2002; Chhotray 2004).

Ferguson’s (1994) classic study of the development apparatus in Lesotho demonstrates how the ‘depoliticisation’ of technocratic development practices facilitates the expansion of state power into the countryside, using ‘poverty’ as its point of entry. We see here a parallel with Murombedzi’s and Hill’s arguments, in that CBNRM may expand the power of actors who are already powerful, rather than its intended beneficiaries. As Williams (2004: 563) notes, “it is the gaps between the actual outcomes of participation, and the representations of agency it puts forward that lead to claims that it is acting to ‘de-politicise’ development”. These critiques inform the type of questions that I ask about mapping in West Caprivi, where there is

considerable tension between the interests of some development actors in depoliticising the project, and the interests of Khwe residents in emphasising the political aspects and implications of mapping.

Having considered the rise of the ‘new conservation’ in southern Africa and its manifestation in CBNRM theory and praxis, which play a central role in West Caprivi, I discuss in Chapter Two theories from geography on maps, Geographic Information Systems and power. Taken together, these themes provide the framework for first discussing the rise of San ‘countermapping’ in southern Africa, and subsequently for discussing the anticipated mapping of West Caprivi. Whilst ‘depoliticisation’ may indeed be at play in the West Caprivi context, I take into consideration Williams’ (2004) argument about the limitations of the depoliticisation critique. Firstly, he notes that depoliticisation is not necessarily an intentional, pre-determined outcome of participatory development. Instead, there is room for both positive and negative unintended consequences. Secondly, within this framework, any configuration of power/knowledge “opens up its own particular spaces and moments for resistance” (Williams 2004: 565; cf. Scott 1985); the subjects of development have agency, and a capacity for tactical and self-interested engagement with development projects. As a result, there may be opportunities for the *re*-politicisation of the discourses and practices of participatory development as alternative discourses and knowledges emerge. The responses of Khwe residents in West Caprivi to the idea of mapping confirm this. This in turn raises the question of whether the mapping project could enhance Khwe communities’ ability to engage with the state, to their advantage.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Maps, Power-knowledge and Representation

The sappers have already mapped most of the area. YOLLAND's official task, which OWEN is now doing, is to take each of the Gaelic names – every hill, stream, rock, even every patch of ground which possessed its own distinctive Irish name – and Anglicise it, either by changing it into its approximate English sound or by translating it into English words...These new standardized names were entered into the Name-Book, and when the new maps appeared they contained all these new Anglicised names.

Friel (1981: 34) *Translations: A Play*

Set in 1833, Friel's play traces the contours of power and identity in the context of the British government's first Ordinance Survey of Ireland, confirming the notion that "to catalogue the world is to appropriate it" (Harley 1989: 13). Although most of Britain's imperial mapping was carried out much further away from 'home', it is now widely acknowledged across disciplines in the literature on colonial history that the control and representation of geographical space was central to the colonizing project (Thomas 1994; Craib 2000; Fox 2002; Offen 2003).

As Crush emphasises, "imperialism itself was an act of geographical violence through which space was explored, reconstructed, re-named and controlled" (Crush 1994: 337). Amongst others, maps have been the weapons of this violence, as land was cut through with geographic lines, often blind to the presence of its indigenous inhabitants, in order to create space as an exploitable resource (McHaffie 1995). "Maps were produced to create property registers, garner knowledge about 'national resources', modernize and develop 'the hinterlands', and present the nation as a graphically real proposition for colonizing and investing" (Craib 2000: 28), such that "When overlaid with an abstract grid, land became a socially and historically flat surface for possession and control, a surface that was static and ahistorical" (ibid 2000: 20). Although these interpretations of maps as colonizing tools are sometimes over-simplified, they point to the fundamental relationship between maps and power.

Geographer J.B. Harley's discussions of the history of cartography, drawing on postmodern deconstruction theory, form a starting point for understanding this relationship (Harley 1988, 1989, 1990). Using historical examples ranging from ancient China to medieval Europe and the Mediterranean, Harley refutes the notion that cartographers' endeavours are 'scientific' or 'objective', and instead promotes a search for the social forces which configure and shape cartographic products, and for the locations of power in this constellation. He highlights the fissure between reality and its representation, arguing that maps are not value-free but embedded within the social and political contexts of map-producing societies. As graphical images, maps are social products and part of a social discourse about the world (Pickles 1992). Their power is obfuscated behind cartography's alleged scientific neutrality, as the political, social and cultural is transliterated into the 'natural'. In a Foucauldian vein, maps thus operate as a form of power-knowledge in society.

Early political theorists commended maps to statesmen who in turn were among their first systematic collectors; the state has remained a principal 'patron of cartographic activity' (Harley 1988: 284). Maps have been employed by European nation-states, amongst others, in the exercise of political power: to reinforce legal statutes and

territorial imperatives, as propaganda, and for purposes of warfare. The selective inclusions, omissions and classifications contained in maps signify particular human intent (Harley 1989; cf. Rose 2001). For example, it has been common practice for governments to methodically ‘cleanse’ official topographical maps of military installations and other features that could cause embarrassment, including nuclear waste dumps in the case of official maps in the United States (Harley 1988). All in all, Harley argues that maps are authoritarian images which can reinforce and legitimate the status quo. To this extent, they have a myth-making quality. Taking a place in the interdisciplinary study of text and knowledge, maps can be read for the discourses which they embody and perhaps disguise, and for the social worlds from which they emerge.

Whilst Harley’s interpretation of maps and map-making is insightful, though not without generalisation, he falls short in his conclusion that “The social history of maps...appears to have few genuinely popular alternative, or subversive modes of expression. Maps are pre-eminently a language of power, not of protest” (Harley 1988: 301). In the following sections, I will go on to demonstrate the extent to which, at the turn of the twenty-first century, maps are being used as ‘weapons of the weak’ in projects of resistance. Nevertheless, Harley’s emphasis on the *contexts* of map production provides a very useful guide to (re)constructing “the physical and social settings for the production and consumption of maps, the events leading up to these actions, the identity of map-makers and map-users, and their perceptions of the act of making and using maps in a socially constructed world. Such details can tell us not only about the motives behind cartographic activities but also what effect maps may have had and the significance of the information they communicate in human terms” (Harley 1988: 281).

Furthermore, Harley’s arguments can be productively complemented with Scott’s (1998) concept of ‘legibility’. Maps, Scott argues, together with other techniques of inventory-making and record-keeping, have been central to modern state projects of ‘legibility’ whereby the state simplifies diverse and complex social phenomena, such as local practices of land tenure, for the purposes of controlling and manipulating its subjects. Legibility thus creates a synoptic vision of space, landscapes, people and resources. Scott (1998: 78) argues that “an illegible society...is a hindrance to any effective intervention by the state, whether the purpose...is plunder or public welfare”. Understanding how legibility is attempted and created is thus connected to how people are created as subjects of development and environment discourse (cf. Escobar 1995). I go on to discuss contemporary mapping technologies which have potential not only to be state techniques for generating legibility, but tools for resistance by those at the margins of ‘developing’ society.

## **2.1 The Rise of Geographic Information Systems**

No present consideration of maps and mapping can ignore the rise of computer-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as sophisticated new technologies playing a central role in the construction, depiction and planning of space, landscapes and resources, and thus also in the creation of many contemporary maps. A GIS is a computerized system which provides techniques for collecting, storing, manipulating, analysing and representing geographically-referenced spatial information. In the past two decades, there has been a dramatic uptake and diffusion of GIS into almost all

sectors of government, business, NGOs and community organisations (Harris and Weiner 2003). GIS technology has become a powerful force in planning practice (Aitken and Michel 1995), with applications ranging from educational access projects, telecommunications planning and water provision, to crime prevention and housing renovation. (Mather 1997; Clark 1998; Craig *et al* 2002). Significantly, GIS has also been increasingly employed for natural resource management (Poole 1995a), including in southern Africa (eg. Tagg 1996).

Whilst critical theorists in geography remain suspicious of GIS, and have fostered a vocal 'GIS and Society' debate through the 1990s, practitioners of GIS have celebrated its potential for fostering community participation and empowerment in local decision-making, planning, and the management of a variety of resources. Many indigenous groups have employed GIS technology, to varying extents, in their own mapping and 'countermapping' projects, as I shall go on to discuss. This short review of some of the extensive 'GIS and Society' literature, then, aims to complement the framework which Harley, Pickles and Scott have laid down for understanding the relationship between maps and power. In many ways, critiques of GIS appear to be consistent with this framework; indeed, Pickles (1995) extends his power-knowledge approach to an analysis of GIS.

GI Systems, like maps, are historically specific social constructions, connected to a larger set of social, economic and cultural practices, which privilege some information and modes of representation over others, and which have social consequences such as the shaping of policies, planning and interventions (Sheppard 1995; Aitken and Michel 1995; Harvey and Chrisman 1998). GI technology also involves the construction of new relationships between different social actors (Harvey and Chrisman 1998) and new imagined communities (Pickles 1995). Overall, GI Systems have an ambiguous status due to the competing, if not polarised, definitions of their purposes and potential championed by different groups. Critical reflection on GIS by social theorists has not significantly altered the use and application of GIS by practitioners (Kwan 2002). The gulf between the 'theory' and 'practice' literature, in terms of the implications and effects of GIS for particular groups in particular contexts, highlights the need for research which takes both aspects into consideration. The 'public participation' GIS research arena has more recently begun to bridge such divides (Carver 2003).

## **2.2 Social Theorists on GIS: A New Hegemonic Technology?**

Sheppard (1995) notes that the hegemonic rise of GIS has caused considerable discomforts and anxieties within the discipline of geography, primarily because of the technology's associations with positivism, instrumental rationality, and claims to objectivity. Feminist work too has laid the basis for a critique of GIS, extending feminist critiques of 'vision' as an objectifying, 'masculinist' mode of knowledge production (Haraway 1991; Kwan 2002). The political and ethical implications of GIS in terms of information control and access constitute other key issues within the debate (Clark 1998). Whilst the critiques of GIS are numerous, I will endeavour to provide a brief overview of these.

In terms of ontology and epistemology, GI Systems have been justifiably criticized for their embeddedness in the Western context out of which they have emerged.



Linked to this is the critique that GIS incorporates some forms of knowledge better than others (Sheppard 1995), or fails to incorporate culturally diverse ways of knowing (Rundstrom 1995; Mather 1997), and privileges certain ways of thinking over others (Aitken and Michel 1995). GIS is often presented by specialists and software vendors as a universal toolkit, but social commentators have questioned the capacity of GIS to deal with the diversity of spatial planning tasks that exist ‘on the ground’, and have suggested that each GIS is actually locally constructed. Commentators have also deemed GIS to be limited in terms of representing space, especially with respect to qualitative socio-cultural understandings of space and locality.

In terms of ethics and politics, the debate has revolved around the ‘democratic’ limits of GIS. Many have argued that these types of technology are restrictive, elitist and antisocial (Clark 1998). Unequal access to GI technology hinders democratic ideals. Some have noted that GIS appears to be more for policy-makers, planners and researchers than the local people whom the information concerns (Jordan 2002). The use of GIS, bolstered by its presumed scientific authority, may disenfranchise certain groups who do not conform to the dominant discourse of planning and science (Aitken and Michel 1995). Importantly, theorists have noted the Foucauldian ‘surveillance’ potential of GIS in remotely monitoring and influencing human behaviour (Pickles 1991; Sheppard 1995) and thus reconfiguring disciplinary life, such that “GIS is just one...new [complex] of discourse, practice and institutional ensemble, among many others, effecting changes in the modalities of power” (Pickles 1995: 24).

In summary, seen from these perspectives, GIS is a visual technique which has potential to be used by powerful actors in projects of legibility and surveillance. These critiques, although in many cases valid, lose sight of the agency held by the recipients of ‘gaze’ (Yar 2003), and the possibility of GIS technology being appropriated for resistance and empowerment. These are the issues to which I turn in the following section and in Chapter Three.

### **2.3 GIS for Empowerment, and the Rise of Participatory GIS**

In contrast to suspicious social theorists, the protagonists of GIS “use language such as freedom, opportunity, empowerment, communication and democracy to signify a continued faith in the essentially benign role of the technology” (Clark 1998: 305). Whilst some descriptions of GIS are rose-tinted (eg. Dangermond 2002), most GIS protagonists reviewed here have a more nuanced view of the positive potential of GI technology, acknowledging its weaknesses at the same time as highlighting its strengths.

Protagonists have argued that GIS constitutes a powerful communication tool for local planning and the efficient allocation of resources. Allowing ordinary people decentralised access to greater quantities of higher quality information (Clark 1998), GIS is said to enable better decision-making and problem-solving – informing the prioritisation of goals and issues, the consideration of alternatives, and the attainment of viable conclusions (Carver 2003). GIS can also facilitate communication (Sirait *et al* 1994) and conflict resolution (Kyem 2002, 2004). Linked to this, Harvey and Chrisman (1998: 1687) propose that GIS serves to mediate and stabilize relationships

between actors with divergent worldviews, as they negotiate collaboration or agreements which encompass technological elements.

Contesting social theorists' arguments that GIS will serve only the powerful, others have noted the potential of GIS for subversion and to empower 'voices at the margins' (Aitken and Michel 1995; Clark 1998), including the legitimisation of alternative knowledge systems within the dominant social paradigm (Laituri 2002). GIS can also be used to catalyse political pressure to encourage leaders to attend to the needs of underprivileged groups in society (Kyem 2004). Recent years have seen the increased employment of GIS in research and development projects that incorporate 'community participation' (Craig *et al* 2002). Whilst the use of cartographic representation to empower marginalized groups is not new, (for example, mapping techniques used in PRA and RRA), this form of 'participatory' GIS (PGIS) signifies a paradigm shift in the application of GIS technology in recent years (Carver 2003: 64). This has resulted from the merging of social critiques of GIS with ideas about public participation and decision-making. According to Kyem (2004), the rise of community-based GIS applications undercuts the claim that GIS represents particular epistemologies and that local knowledge cannot be translated into cartographic maps.

The locales of PGIS applications range from Western inner-city neighbourhoods to rural Third World villages. To take just two examples, Harris and Weiner *et al* (1995) propose that GIS can be employed for bottom-up social transformation and the pursuit of equity in post-apartheid South Africa. They propose that GIS can be used to redress South Africa's political ecology and skewed distribution of resources (Harris and Weiner *et al* 2002; 2003). In Mpumalanga, for example, socially differentiated local knowledge and perspectives (of blacks and whites, men and women) on land history and current land use has been integrated into a GIS with the view to identifying potential land-reform projects. A second example is documented by Kyem (2002, 2004) and concerns collaborative forest management in southern Ghana by the state Forest Department and local residents living close to the Aboma Forest Reserve. Here, GIS has been used as a tool for conflict resolution between villagers who support or resist logging in their area. Maps reflecting the different interests of the respective parties with regard to logging were created in the context of participatory meetings, and facilitated negotiations and the resolution of conflicting agendas. More generally, the easily-readable maps created through the GIS have been used to raise awareness about issues that affect the allocation and use of local resources.

The overall impression made by the GIS literature is that GIS is a binary power tool which has the contradictory potential to be either empowering or disempowering: to reduce social inequities or exacerbate them, to be subversive or to serve a techno-elite (Dunn *et al* 1997; Sheppard *et al* 1999; Craig, *et al* 2002). The literature struggles to get beyond this dichotomy, and moreover fails to acknowledge a rather simple explanation which may underlie it. That is, the outcomes of GIS applications depend on the contexts in which they are employed, where a diversity of social and political dynamics are at play. It is no surprise then that there are potentially endless configurations of power relations between different actors which could result from the application of GIS to any one situation, including the 'empowerment' or 'disempowerment' of marginalized groups. The GIS literature also suffers from the reification of an undifferentiated 'community', with few examples that explore the

heterogenous interests in GIS of any one group of people, or the varied effects of its use on different actors within the same group.

Both the mapping and GIS literature form an necessary starting point from which to analyse the mapping of West Caprivi. Maps and GI Systems are social constructions, embedded in specific contexts and, crucially, in particular relationships of power which they may indeed reinforce. They also have social consequences such as the shaping of development policies and planning, and this is particularly relevant for the case of West Caprivi, where mapping will be carried out within a natural resource 'management planning' discourse. The social and political implications of mapping and GIS are ambiguous and context-specific. In the next chapter, I go on to discuss the rise and politics of indigenous people's 'countermapping', deepening an exploration of the ways in which mapping has been employed not to work *for* 'legibility', but against it.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Indigenous People's Countermapping, Visibility, and GIS for Natural Resource Management

You are either on the map or you run the risk of being gnawed away.  
(Fox 2002: 76)

In this chapter I consider the rapid growth of mapping projects carried out by indigenous groups worldwide in the last fifteen years. This carries us into discussions of contemporary Third World mapping politics (Peluso 1995). Maps remain as 'power' tools for strategies of selective inscription and representation but, contra Harley, the emergence of indigenous mapping proves them to be tools accessible to those on the margins of society for the purposes of countering the dominant frameworks through which indigenous peoples are represented and subordinated. Hence many of the projects carried out have been categorised as 'countermapping' initiatives (Peluso 1995; Poole 1995b; Hodgson and Schroeder 2002). This is not to say that 'countermapping' does not have historical precedents: Craib (2000), for example, discusses subalterns' attempts to contest state and foreign capitalist intrusion in colonial Mexico through strategies of 'conscious illegibility'.

Countermaps, I argue, offer the prospect of 'visibility' for marginalized groups. Counterposed to Scott's 'legibility', I define projects of 'visibility' as bids for power that secure a greater degree of parity with, and recognition by, more powerful actors. Such projects may include modes of resistance that either destabilize dominant representations of marginalized groups, or strategically utilize such representations to their advantage. Securing visibility is a means of gaining legitimacy and may be attained in part through the appropriation of the techniques of legibility (cf. Peluso 1995).

Based on deep ethnography which highlighted indigenous conceptions of space, the mapping methodology first used to create 'land use and occupancy studies' was pioneered in the Canadian Northwest Territories by Inuit people in the early 1970s in the context of legal changes which recognised aboriginal land titles (Freeman 1976; Brody 2002; Poole 1995; Sirait *et al* 1994). The resulting maps served as tools for negotiating land claims with the Canadian government. As described by Brody (2002: 147), amongst a host of information collected about land occupancy and resource use, and correlating historical changes, "Hunters, trappers, fishermen, and berry pickers mapped out all the land they had ever used in their lifetimes, encircling hunting areas species by species, marking gathering locations and camping sites – everything their life on the land had entailed that could be marked on a map". Similar 'map biography' projects were subsequently carried out by other First Nations groups, the main objectives being "a demonstration of the extent of land use and the elucidation of the people's land-use systems" (Brody 2002: 148) by those who had suffered land dispossession.

A review of countermapping since its advent in the 1970s reveals that the use of geographic information technologies in such projects has almost become the norm, both in Canada and worldwide. The redefinition of 'knowledge' in international indigenous rights discourses as being at the core of 'indigenous' identities has played a significant part here (Conklin 2002; Sillitoe *et al* 2002; Agrawal 1995). Duerden and Kuhn (1996: 49) note that whilst no GIS existed in 1980 for Canadian Yukon or

Northwest Territories, there were 18 GI Systems in place by 1996, and that these were driven primarily by the need to negotiate indigenous land claims, and a desire for parity with government in such negotiations.

In a survey carried out for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Biodiversity Support Program, Poole (1995a) documents 63 locally initiated or managed mapping projects worldwide which employ GIS and satellite sensing technologies, wherein local people have attempted to regain or exercise control over their lands and natural resources, vis-à-vis the state or other interest groups. A brief web-based search today for analogous projects reveals an even more extensive array of mapping schemes (eg. <http://www.iapad.org/bibliography.htm>). Although the projects themselves vary widely, the main purposes of mapping and GI technologies are to achieve recognition of land rights, to demarcate 'traditional' territories, to protect demarcated lands, to gather and guard 'traditional' knowledge, and to manage 'traditional' lands and resources (cf. Bond 2002; Duerden and Kuhn 1996). In theory, maps reveal information about conflicts, overlaps and trends in areas where rights and responsibilities are unclear, and allow popular participation in arenas previously dominated by the maps of governments and corporations (Alcorn 2001). As Fox *et al* (2003) recount, countermapping has led to the signing of treaties over land claims, compensation for Native American and Maori land loss, and the formation of indigenous territory and government, such as in Nunavut, Canada.

Countermapping, as understood from its applications, and in its similarity to other mapping processes which I have discussed here (Harley 1988, 1989, 1990; Pickles 1992), is inherently political. For example, Peluso (1995) describes the local countermapping of forest territories in Indonesia, which was a reaction to the government's superseding of 'customary' forest rights through official planning and mapping. She argues that the "Mapping of forest resources is...an intrinsically political act: whether drawn for their protection or production, they are drawings of a nation's strategic space" (1995: 383). Similarly, Robbins (2003: 237) proposes that "the use of countermaps...is...explicitly political insofar as it advocates an account of local reality that may be at odds with one produced through more centralized and institutionalised use of technology". The political nature of countermapping, and its potential to undermine state power has been recognised and in some cases counteracted by governments. For example, in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, following the recognition by a court of community maps as legal documents for supporting land claims, a bill was introduced to regulate the activities of land surveyors, and to declare community-mapping initiatives illegal (Fox *et al* 2003: 3).

Countermapping may not only fuel politics between state agencies and local resource user groups, but within local groups themselves. As Aitken (2002: 364) states, effective participatory GIS clarifies and ultimately politicises the issues about which local people feel concern. Similarly, in the context of mapping Miskitu community land claims in Nicaragua, Offen (2003: 384) argues that "the mapping process changes, and further politicises, indigenous conceptions of their own relationship to the land". The implications of this for indigenous groups are important, and I discuss these below.

According to 'liberation' mapping theories, through countermapping, local people can assert control over representations of themselves and their resources, and over their

previous exclusion from official versions of landscapes. Countermapping can 'remedy' political invisibility (Denniston 1994) and represents 'political capital' for small and marginalized groups (cf. Orlove 1991). Importantly, the act of countermapping may appropriate the state's techniques and manner of representation to strengthen the legitimacy of 'customary' claims to land and resources (Peluso 1995: 384; Fox 2002). For example, Denniston (1994: 30) describes how the use of "scientific maps and technical evaluations" by indigenous Indians in Honduras "built a graphic and credible base from which to launch political campaigns on several issues, including legalizing communal homelands, stemming the incursions of colonization by settlers and development by multinational companies, and resolving the relationship between Indian homelands and national protected areas". Such 'appropriations' characterise 'resistance' which draws on dominant discourses and ideology.<sup>2</sup>

The theory and practice of countermapping, however, entails its own array of problems and weaknesses, which have often been overlooked in the excitement over its liberating potential. It is questionable whether the ethnographic attention to detail that marked the pioneer Canadian mapping has been maintained as indigenous mapping has 'gone global', and as 'rights' and 'power' become increasingly framed in spatial terms (Fox *et al* 2003) due to the widespread use of technologies such as GIS by a host of different actors. At a recent workshop held in Thailand on mapping "many workshop participants claimed that they had no choice but to map. For them, today's villagers are already 'caught up in a mapping world' and do not have an 'exit option'. They can refuse to map, but they cannot escape the implications of living in a world in which others will eventually map their lands" (Fox *et al* 2003: 12). GIS from this perspective is a 'hegemonic' technology, part of a dominant discourse on land rights and use, rather than a counter-hegemonic tool for visibility or empowerment. The potential of countermapping as a counter-hegemonic site of resistance thus stands in danger of being diluted as it is brought within the fold of the dominant order and its discourses.<sup>3</sup>

Other critiques of GIS can also be applied to countermapping, for example, in the privileging of particular knowledges over others, or the incompatibility of GIS with indigenous knowledge systems (Rundstrom 1995). Countermaps may produce illusions about a 'community's' apparently homogenous 'local knowledge' (Robbins 2003), whereas there are in fact multiple interests and actors within these groups who compete to have their voices heard and represented in mapping projects. Countermaps may also give impressions of static land ownership or use, enhancing the exclusivity of claims to resources, whereas historically such ownership or use may have been more flexible, fluid or contingent on a number of variables. (eg. Campbell 2002). Countermapping can thus freeze dynamic social processes (Peluso 1995; cf. Scott 1998), not only those within and among the groups offering up their knowledge for inscription, but also in terms of the influence of NGO facilitators and technical experts on the type of knowledge eventually documented and its representation. Like many other projects with the aim of 'empowerment', countermapping has unintended consequences which fail to meet that goal. These include the potential for internal

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<sup>2</sup> For anthropological discussions on resistance which functions within the framework of 'available' hegemony, see Kulick (1996) and Howe (1998).

<sup>3</sup> S.Sullivan, pers.comm., 30/03/05

conflict over land ownership, loss of indigenous conceptions of space, increased privatisation of land, and regulation and co-optation by the state. Such are some of the 'ironic effects' of the rise of spatial information technology (Fox *et al* 2003) which may result from both local people and outsiders gaining increased knowledge or producing new knowledge, via mapping, about an area's resources. Mapping thus retains an ambiguous character, varying between situations, but encompassing the potential for both 'legibility' and 'visibility'.

### **3.1 Indigenous Rights, Environmental Discourses, and GI Technologies**

Peluso (1995: 400) argues that in its unique late twentieth-century manifestation, "Counter-mapping is...made possible in part by both technological developments and the last decade's push toward participatory politics and management strategies". Participatory politics within environmental and conservation discourses, as discussed in Chapter One, are especially relevant for the purposes of this thesis. The mapping of natural resources has been a central part of many of the 'countermapping' exercises documented in the literature. Whilst this may not be surprising, given that natural resources often form the keystone of indigenous people's subsistence and/or identities, and that they may also hold great value for other interest groups, it is pertinent to investigate the links between this practice and the rise of powerful environmental discourses, including that of CBNRM. The links between countermapping and the concurrent adoption by environmental organisations of new technologies such as GIS for biodiversity conservation and management must also be examined.

Peluso and others have noted that the costs of, and skills required for, 'high tech' mapping are likely to make mapping prohibitive for poor people. This factor plays an important structuring role in terms of how countermapping is facilitated. The entrance of NGOs and expatriates as champions, facilitators and gatekeepers of mapping sets the stage for complex social relationships and power dynamics with regard to the generation and control of information. Communities may not retain control over maps where facilitator-NGOs control GIS databases, for example. Alternatively, outside facilitators may play key roles in influencing which actors become most involved with, or indeed benefit most from, the use of countermapping technology. As Fox *et al* (2003) show, one NGO in Indonesia chose to revitalize 'traditional' institutions, entrusting them with the control of maps, whilst another NGO chose to bypass traditional leaders and support a functional committee on forest conservation. Such actions have considerable implications for local power relations.

It is not simply a factor of 'high technology' that is relevant here, but also the discourses which create and structure the use of such technologies. For the case of countermapping, both 'indigenous rights' and 'environmental' discourses are at play. There is a convergence and interrelationship here of multiple factors. As Alcorn (2001: 1) points out, conservationists and NGO activists are often interested in mapping the same lands as indigenous peoples, but with different goals:

Conservationists may want to prioritise biodiversity, to manage resources, to change protected area policy, to demarcate protected areas, and/or to collect and analyse data for protected area planning. Activists, on the other hand, may want to organise communities to renew cultural identity, to take steps toward legal reform, to demand accountability, to plan land use, and/or to advocate decentralisation.

At the same time, there has been a shift in conservation models away from exclusive protectionism towards a framework which encourages local participation and collaboration in natural resource management, as I have described. This falls in line with the rise of ‘participation’ in development agendas, and participatory mapping is viewed as a logical extension in the repertoire of ‘capacity building strategies’ for the ‘empowerment’ of local communities (Fox *et al* 2003). In addition, “the emergence of indigenous peoples as a social movement and as a category in international human rights law has contributed to conservation agencies rethinking their approach to conservation” (Colchester 2004), and these same agencies now often recognise the value of ‘traditional’ or ‘indigenous’ knowledge and practice for instrumental conservation purposes (Poole 1995a; Duerden and Kuhn 1996).

At the same time as indigenous groups have begun to regain control over land and natural resources, and employ countermapping strategies and new technologies, the environmental movement has incorporated the same technologies into its own practices. Poole (1995a: 6) claims that it is widely accepted that mapping technologies have extensive potential for environmental monitoring and resource management, for example, to coordinate ‘indigenous management systems’ with government conservation planning (Sirait *et al* 1994). This reflects the rise and adoption of GIS in a host of different arenas, but also the mutual influence felt between environmental and indigenous rights discourses. There is also an underlying struggle here, as different actors drawing on different discourses struggle over the representation and control of land and natural resources, even though GIS is potentially a tool for accommodating and reconciling both conservation and human development goals. Acknowledging this tension is pertinent for West Caprivi. Before finally turning to this case study, I briefly discuss the advent of ‘indigenous countermapping’ among San groups in southern Africa, considering the factors which have catalysed and facilitated this development.

### **3.2 Visibility, Identity and Development: The Emergence of San Countermapping in Southern Africa**

[Under Apartheid] the San in South Africa either didn’t ‘exist’ or they were declared ‘coloureds’; the apartheid government [took] away their identity. But this mapping is bringing it back. So it’s a lot more than just a map, it is history, it is family trees, it is identity and therefore dignity. So it is, let me say, a core piece of development.<sup>4</sup>

Post-apartheid politics and international indigenous rights agendas in the 1980s and 1990s have played an important part in the rise of discourses on ‘indigenous’ identity and San social movements in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia (Robins 2001; Hitchcock 2002; Sylvain 2002). The politics of land dispossession and displacement, as for many other southern Africans, has been and remains a central issue for many San groups. This is well-demonstrated by the #Khomani land claim in South Africa (Chennels 2002; Crawhall 2000, 2001), the heated debates and court case over San rights in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana (Hitchcock 2002), and demands for land in Namibia’s Etosha National Park by Hai//om evictees (Suzman 2004). Yet the engagement by San with issues of land is distinguished by the ways in

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Regional Co-ordinator, WIMSA, Windhoek, 24/08/04.



which they have constructed and re-worked an ‘indigenous’ identity for themselves, and the ways in which this process intersects with donor and NGO development discourses about ‘cultural authenticity’. As Robins (2001: 843) has convincingly argued, “by participating in NGO and donor-driven projects, indigenous groups, such as the Kalahari San, are drawing on the modern institutions and resources of a global civil society to reconstitute themselves as a ‘traditional community’”.

Land and natural resource mapping has emerged as one of the tools that has been employed by San actors and San organisations in the process of constructing and contesting issues of identity, rights and visibility. As such, I argue that the use of counter-mapping is one of the ways in which both San ‘tradition’ and ‘community’ are currently being created. Indeed, maps may be an enabling element for ‘strategic essentialism’, a concept which I discuss below. If such maps reinforce dominant stereotypes about San, one may well ask whether they can be called ‘counter’ maps. I suggest that the maps nevertheless live up to their name in that San are deliberately employing such artefacts to gain power and visibility in their negotiations with the state.

From the perspective of some San activists such as Nigel Crawhall,<sup>5</sup> the mapping of San knowledge is about re-claiming histories that have been marginalized, if not made virtually invisible, by colonialism and apartheid. Alongside language and oral history projects, Crawhall (2000; 2001) has argued that mapping, in its capacity to restore #Khomani identity and foster visibility, can be used as a tool for development. Valuable historical and cultural resources can be identified and subsequently used and managed for income-generating development initiatives. Many proposed initiatives include ways in which to ‘market’ ‘traditional knowledge’ about the environment, such as in the context of eco-tourism. Critically, mapping has been an important part of San strategies in terms of promoting and securing land rights (Hitchcock 2002: 817), although this specific aspect of the land claims has received very little academic attention. I thus briefly describe the role of mapping in the South African #Khomani land claim, and in San claims to Botswana’s Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The #Khomani San group was forcibly displaced in two phases from the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (KGNP), in the 1930s and 1970s and, reclassified as ‘coloured’, subsequently fragmented into a diaspora (Dutton and Archer 2004; Chennels 2002; Sylvain 2002). Under the legal framework of the post-Apartheid constitution in the mid-1990s, a #Khomani land claim was lodged and facilitated by Roger Chennels and the South African San Institute (SASI)<sup>6</sup>.

At this time, Crawhall (2000) reports, claimant families, #Khomani leaders and surviving elders all agreed that there was a need to record their history, which would contribute towards their efforts to prove their San identity and their original occupation of KGNP. The rationale for mapping was based on proving the #Khomani relationship to the land, a relationship which purportedly had been undermined for decades. Land mapping, as a catalyst for encouraging people to speak their histories and thus recover or solidify their ‘traditional knowledge’ and their past, became a

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<sup>5</sup> Crawhall was a consultant to the South African San Institute (SASI) and now runs their Culture and Heritage Management Programme.

<sup>6</sup>SASI was established in the early 1990s as the first and only NGO in South Africa dealing with indigenous issues.

legal tool for the creation or restitution of rights. SASI initiated the mapping process by taking a handful of #Khomani people into KGNP to gather information about the Park landscape and its social history. This included place names (to show original occupancy), information about hunting and gathering of resources, significant historical community events, and settlement sites, including mobile camps.

GIS was used to capture this knowledge and experience, and compile maps which reflected a holistic combination of physical, cultural and ecological landscapes (Crawhall 2000). In this context, Crawhall has argued that GIS is a powerful tool not only for mobilising knowledge but for providing an interface between indigenous peoples and outsiders. Crawhall also states that the maps removed all doubt about the original occupation of the Park, and are a testimony to the human rights abuses experienced by #Khomani elders. The #Khomani land claim succeeded in 1999, returning to the claimants 65 000 hectares of land in and around what is now called the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. To date, this is the only example of a successful San land claim in southern Africa (Chennels 2002).

In the #Khomani case, maps served not only to distill and clarify a history of oppression and dispossession, but also as a constituent of political opportunity in terms of the ‘strategic essentialism’ which was closely tied to making claims to land and resources. Strategic essentialism is a term recently used by anthropologists to describe tactics through which indigenous groups have themselves made essentialist claims to cultural continuity and authenticity to achieve certain ends, including ‘visibility’. Such tactics often capitalise on and reproduce Western stereotypes of the ‘traditional’ and ‘primitive’, that is, the same stereotypes which have typically been used to exploit and oppress the San. As Sylvain (2002: 1081) has argued, “the #Khomani San and the activists and lawyers working on their behalf, recognize that the legitimacy of their claims for land and resources requires concealing the truth about who they have become after a history of colonization and apartheid”. Maps displaying ‘traditional knowledge’ have worked instrumentally to support the creation of “a highly cohesive and consensual [#Khomani] community with a common cultural heritage” (Robins 2001: 833) which, following the successful land claim, suffered from social fragmentation, conflict and leadership struggles.

The #Khomani case marks the birth of ‘countermapping’ in southern Africa. Most importantly it reveals that, within the framework of indigenous rights discourses, natural and cultural resource mapping is *inherently political*. Significantly, the #Khomani mapping project was informed by transnational linkages and cooperation between SASI and two Northern organisations. These were Open Channels, a UK-based NGO working to empower people through the use of media, and Strata 360, a Canadian-based GIS NGO which specialises in indigenous people’s mapping. Key individuals within these organisations, Hugh Brody, Bill Kemp and Valter Blazevic, brought to the table decades of experience in mapping Canadian First Nations and Mayan territories. Through these transnational connections, then, the emergence of indigenous countermapping in southern Africa is linked to the ideologies, and technical and methodological knowledges, employed by similar such movements elsewhere. The abovementioned external experts and a South African mapping consultant, Arthur Albertson, have continued to play an important role in propelling

and facilitating mapping projects in the region, for example, in Etosha National Park in Namibia and in the Central Kalahari, Dobe and Ngamiland (NG13) in Botswana.<sup>7</sup>

Mapping for the purposes of land claims and National Park co-management schemes has also been carried out by San people displaced by the postcolonial government from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) in Botswana. Transnational and NGO linkages again have played an important role here, and help us to find the roots of the planned mapping of West Caprivi. For example, in 1996 and 1997, San organisations and activists in Botswana made contact with the South African law firm which had worked with the #Khomani on their land claim (Hitchcock 2002: 816), drawing on the firm's experience for the purposes of negotiating a land claim with the their government. Later, the organisation First People of the Kalahari (FPK) secured advice from those involved in the #Khomani mapping. FPK sought to obtain training for some of its personnel in community mapping using Geographic Positioning Systems and aerial photographs (Hitchcock 2002: 818). In 1999, two FPK staff took part in community mapping efforts facilitated by the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (TOCaDI) in Ngamiland, on the border with Namibia's West Caprivi. Over the next two years, many of the ancestral territories in CKGR were mapped, facilitated by the consultant Arthur Albertson. Albertson simultaneously facilitated the Ngamiland mapping. Overall, multiple regional linkages among San organisations have fostered continuities in terms of approaches to land claims and the use of methodologies such as mapping.

This brief introduction to San countermapping has highlighted the politicised nature of land and resource mapping for the purposes of 'indigenous' identity-building and land claims, as well as the importance of transnational networks for fostering mapping discourses and practices which emphasise San identity, rights and visibility. The next part of the thesis introduces West Caprivi and its Khwe San communities, and the rise of environmental discourses in Namibia. It lays the basis for considering how ideas about mapping which were born under an 'indigenous rights' framework are transferred into, and reworked within, a context of environmental discourses.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see TOCaDI's (2003a, 2003b) minutes of a land mapping workshop held in Botswana in April 2003.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Introducing West Caprivi

A journey through West Caprivi along its single tarred road, much like traversing an official map of the area with the eye, gives an impression of emptiness (see Figures 1-4). Such an impression is entirely deceptive, given the dense and tangled web of history and politics which has shaped the existence of West Caprivi's Khwe residents. The Khwe are arguably amongst the poorest and most marginalized communities in Namibia. Like other San groups in Namibia, they stand out because of their dependency, extreme poverty, political alienation, and a variety of social, educational and health problems (Suzman 2002: 25).

Although I cannot do justice here to the complex origins of the contemporary status of Khwe communities, as Rousset (2003a) and Orth (2003) have done, I briefly trace some of the key factors underlying what is represented by Khwe people as a long history of dispossession, loss of autonomy and marginalization both by other ethnic groups and by the state. I go on to discuss the rise of environmental discourses in West Caprivi, and Khwe disillusionment and frustration with NGO-facilitated CBNRM, in terms of the minimal benefits which have accrued to them thus far. In addition, continued state intervention into Khwe settlement and livelihoods, as manifested in the MET 'Vision for Bwabwata National Park', has served once more to create uncertainty and anxiety for Khwe residents about their future. I argue that, taken together, these historical, social and political factors explain why the prospect of land and resource mapping has been enthusiastically greeted by the Khwe people whom I interviewed. I go on to consider the ways in which Khwe perspectives on mapping diverge from those of institutional 'environmental' actors, especially in terms of rights and visibility.

#### 4.1 War, Displacement and Dispossession in the Pre-Independence Era

In marked contrast to the long-standing and ardent attention paid to other San groups in the region over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there are very few histories or ethnographies about the San people of West Caprivi.<sup>8</sup> These people call themselves Khwe, and their former territory stretched into southern Angola, south-western Zambia and northern Botswana. One of the reasons for this lack of attention is that the Khwe were considered 'hybrids' by colonial scientists who were more interested in 'pure Bushmen'.<sup>9</sup> A second reason is that West Caprivi became a no-access zone during its occupation by the South African Defence Force (SADF).

Most agree that prior to the arrival of the SADF in the late 1960s, people in West Caprivi lived from hunting and trapping, veldfood gathering, cultivation of millet, maize and vegetables, and fishing along the Kavango and Kwando rivers (Brown and Jones 1994; Rousset 2003a; Boden 2003). The Khwe have been integrated into wider historical and economic processes for decades (Brenzinger 1998; cf. Dieckmann

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<sup>8</sup> The most substantial works are that of Oswin Kohler (eg. 1989, 1991, 1997), written in German, which are based on research carried out between 1954 and 1957. Unpublished Masters research on the Khwe has been carried out by J.Diemer (1996), I. Orth (2003) and K.Rousset (2003a). Unpublished doctoral research has been carried out by G.Boden. Several other researchers from Cologne University have also carried out research in West Caprivi, eg. Brenzinger (1998).

<sup>9</sup> G.Boden, pers.comm., 6/04/05.

2001). A variety of published evidence suggests that for at least two centuries, the Khwe have not conformed to a hunting-gathering stereotype. Influenced by immigrating Bantu neighbours, and by colonialism and Apartheid, Khwe people have at various points in time become farmers, cattle-rearers, mineworkers, and soldiers. The intimate Khwe knowledge of their surrounding environment and its natural resources, or the type of knowledge which is often associated with the stereotype of ‘Bushmen’ known to both African and Western outsiders, however, is in Khwe eyes a central part of their identity (Rousset 2003a), as it is for other San groups in the region (eg. Hitchcock 2000). Based on extensive fieldwork, Rousset (2003a: 48) has described the “fervent self-association” of Khwe people with the bush, and their “insistence that they are dependent for survival on food and medicinal resources found in the bush”.<sup>10</sup>

That the Khwe regard themselves as having a distinct identity was bolstered during West Caprivi’s two-decade occupation by the South African military, when the area was used as a springboard for operations into Angola against SWAPO liberation fighters. The area known as West Caprivi was declared a Nature Park in 1963, despite recommendations around the same time from an Apartheid government land planning body, the Odendaal Commission, that it be converted into a ‘homeland’ for Bushmen. The decision to reserve West Caprivi as a conservation area, and upgrade its status to that of a Game Park, was most likely due to its strategic geopolitical importance, given the emergence of Independence struggles in neighbouring Angola and Zambia, and subsequently in Namibia (Rousset 2003b). This was confirmed when West Caprivi was declared a military zone circa 1970, and conservation officials were denied access to the area, with the SADF appointing their own ‘Nature Conservation’ authorities. Both the Park’s declaration and its subsequent occupation substantially limited the livelihood strategies that Khwe were employing at the time (Orth 2003: 134), and cemented a process of land and resource dispossession .

Recruiting Khwe men, as well as others from San groups in southern Angola, and concentrating their families in West Caprivi military bases, the SADF propelled a romanticised and essentialist discourse about the ‘Bushmen soldiers’. SADF Colonel Breytenbach, for example, described the Khwe and !Xu Bushmen recruits as ‘stone age hunter-gatherers’ who lived an ‘innocent and idyllic life’ and who “could have shown us the way back to living in harmony with nature...the secrets of the bush...[and] how to feel at one with the spirit of ancient Africa” (Breytenbach 1997: 83). These same qualities were claimed to enhance their capacity for tracking and soldiering: “the Bushmen were intrepid ambushers and skilled stalkers by nature. They love to stalk an unwary enemy, to shoot the hell out of him, and then disappear like a shadow into the bush...” (ibid 1997: 80).

As Rousset describes, Khwe soldiers were continually categorised by the SADF as ‘different’ from other African soldiers, and the SADF reinforced the Khwe fear of and antagonism towards the Bantu groups whom the Khwe associated with experiences of land dispossession and loss of autonomy in the past. In particular, the Khwe relationship with neighbouring Hambukushu people, according to Khwe accounts and to early literature, has been marked by Hambukushu dominance since their arrival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Orth 2003). Khwe claim that the Hambukushu asserted their

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<sup>10</sup> Rousset was a fieldworker for IRDNC, and her association with the NGO may have influenced the ways in which Khwe people represented themselves to her.

dominance not only by taking Khwe as slaves, but also over the landscape and its resources, clearing large tracts of land for agriculture and hunting animals indiscriminately (Rousset 2003a). Dispossession by Hambukushu is thus emphasised in contemporary Khwe narratives about their history. Land and resources remain central elements in the present-day antagonism between the two groups, following the migration of Hambukushu families into western West Caprivi since the mid-1990s (WWF 1997), and Hambukushu 'export' of natural resources such as grass and wood from West Caprivi to settlements across the Kavango River (Orth 2003).

Though little detailed research has been carried out on the monetarisation of the Khwe economy through Khwe men's incorporation into the SADF, its effects, including a legacy of alcoholism, appear to have radically impacted the long-term situation of the Khwe, as did the provision by the SADF of a host of free 'modern' services such as running water, pharmacies, schools, clinics, a bank, and self-service stores (Breytenbach 1997; Van Keulen 1989; Rousset 2003b). These services, alongside army salaries, came to an abrupt halt when the SADF withdrew in early 1990 following Namibia's independence, taking with them four thousand Khwe and !Xu who chose to emigrate to South Africa, and leaving adrift some five thousand people who had become dependent on the SADF for their day-to-day survival.<sup>11</sup> As Suzman (2001: 56) writes, "The SADF ultimately became the centre of the Kxoe [sic] socio-economic and political world. Its presence resulted in greater dependency on the cash economy, a commensurate change in livelihood strategies, the sedentarisation of large portions of the Kxoe population, and a radical and traumatic transformation of the Kxoe worldview".

A government socio-ecological survey carried out in 1990 reported that "Although a fairly robust subsistence sub-economy still operates at Omega [settlement], years of wage labour have raised aspirations and needs to the point where it is difficult for most people to envisage living without a cash income. Consequently, future work opportunities were [people's] primary concern." (Brown and Jones 1994: 46). Rousset (2003b) notes that the majority of Khwe reverted to veldfood collection, cultivation and small-scale stock farming to survive. Importantly, these activities have had to be carried out within the constraints placed on them by the MET due to the land's status as a Game Park. Income-generating opportunities for West Caprivi's 4650 adult residents<sup>12</sup> have remained pitiful, with only 3.5% of the population in employment, and a further 2% receiving pensions (IRDNC 2005). As a result, Khwe people have been eager to participate in development projects that hold prospects of improving their livelihoods, including CBNRM projects (Orth 2003). After the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), IRDNC is the second biggest employer in West Caprivi, providing incomes for 43 individuals and allowances for a Board of Trustees. It has also fostered income-generation projects such as the establishment of a community-owned tourist campsite, and craft-making by Khwe women.

Food aid is donated several times a year to unemployed Khwe by the government, and Rousset (2003b: 10) reports that "Without the donated maize meal, oil, and

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<sup>11</sup> West Caprivi's five core settlements remain today without running water or sanitation, and usually just a single water pump to service an entire village.

<sup>12</sup> Of these, 3775 are Khwe (81%), 830 are Hambukushu (18%), and 70 are !Xu (1%) (IRDNC 2005).

occasional sugar, fish tins and beans, it is unlikely that people in West Caprivi could survive...the threat of hunger is very real. It is illegal to hunt, and anyhow there is not much wildlife remaining around villages. Elephants can damage an entire year's crops in a single night. It is not easy to keep livestock safe from predators. Rain is not always reliable". Indeed, monthly reports made by Khwe representatives to IRDNC in 2003 and 2004 serve as evidence of the ongoing hunger prevalent among their communities, which results in people spending days, sometimes even weeks, at a time out in the bush to collect enough wild foods to survive.

#### **4.2 The Political Nature of Contemporary Khwe Identity, and Struggles over Leadership and Land**

A dire lack of services, employment opportunities and food security are only part of the marginalisation faced by Khwe communities. Most Khwe believe that this combination of neglect and discrimination by the government is due to their historical involvement with the SADF, for which they claim to have been stigmatised as traitors (K. Rousset, pers.comm.), and due to their post-independence record of supporting the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance rather than the ruling SWAPO party. Indeed, the choice of at least 1600 Khwe to move to South Africa in 1990 when the SADF withdrew from West Caprivi was motivated by fear of retaliation by the SWAPO government (cf. Orth 2003). Discrimination against Khwe is not only 'political', but also social, in a country where San are considered to be social inferiors by the majority of Namibians (Suzman 2002).

Apparently linked to their stigmatised political identity, and long-standing government suspicion of them, Khwe people fell victim to human rights abuses during the political unrest of 1999-2002 in Caprivi region (Suzman 2002; Boden 2003; NSHR 2001). They were suspected of collaborating with enemies of the state after a secessionist attempt by the Caprivi Liberation Front<sup>13</sup> in August 1999. 700 people fled from Omega III to Botswana following harassment by Namibian Defence Force soldiers who were deployed in the area in large numbers. On the tail of the secessionist attempt, Namibia permitted the Angolan military to use the Caprivi region to attack UNITA-controlled areas in southern Angola. By January 2000 a number of civilians had been killed on the trans-Caprivi highway and surrounding areas by unknown gunmen and by mine blasts. Once more, large numbers of Khwe residents fled into Botswana after persecution, allegations of gun-running, and unlawful arrests by the NDF. Fear and distrust have thus become central to the Khwe relationship with the state.

Another significant, long-standing and controversial issue revolves around the refusal of the Namibian government to officially recognise the Khwe 'Traditional Authority' or leadership. This leadership is less structured and rigid than that of neighbouring Bantu groups and fails, from the government's point of view, to conform to conventional modes of authority due to its inclusive, flexible consensus-seeking characteristics (Rousset 2003a, 2003b). The Khwe situation in this regard

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<sup>13</sup> The secessionist attempt was a product of complex and long-standing ethnic and party politics in East Caprivi, in which the Khwe appear to have played no part (Suzman 2002). The movement was mainly supported by SiLozi-speaking Mafwe people, who have historically had an antagonistic relationship with SWAPO. It was led by Mishake Muyongo, a member of Mafwe royal family and former president of the DTA.

reflects the broader problem of poor representation of San in Namibia's various government structures (Suzman 2002).<sup>14</sup> In essence, the Namibian Traditional Authorities Act (1995) caters for the leadership of groups sharing common ancestry, language, cultural heritage and customs to be recognised and paid a wage by the state. Traditional Authorities are the institutions consulted by the government over matters of planning, and various other issues and decisions which may affect the people under any particular leadership's jurisdiction. This in turn has considerable implications for local development processes and the degree of control that rural people may exercise over those processes. Most crucially, Traditional Authorities can grant or deny land use rights (Orth 2003).

Whilst the majority of West Caprivi residents consider themselves to be subjects of Khwe leaders, the leader of the neighbouring Hambukushu community has claimed since 1995 that all of West Caprivi falls under his jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup> This claim has been validated by government officials, as well as by President Nujoma himself (WIMSA 2004), and many Khwe people regard this imposition of Hambukushu leadership as evidence of state-sanctioned discrimination against them (Rousset 2003a: 61). Consequently, their mistrust of both the government and Hambukushu has deepened (Orth 2003). At the same time, however, 'the government' is not an homogenous entity. On the ground, local government officials from the MET who recognise the efficacy of Khwe leadership structures continue to work informally through these structures, as long as Khwe representatives do not represent themselves at meetings as a traditional authority. Nevertheless, a leadership and authority dispute has ensued and remains unresolved. It has significant implications for Khwe power in terms of decision-making over local land use and development, and for West Caprivi's socio-economic development more broadly. The Khwe struggle for the recognition of their leaders is closely tied to their struggle for land rights.

A key example concerns the development in 1996 of a scenic tourist campsite, N//goava-ca, by Khwe authorities together with IRDNC. The campsite was the first of its type to be built in the area, and embodied the first opportunity for Khwe to benefit from eco-tourism in their area. In the same year, the government proposed to expand a prison farm immediately adjacent to the campsite. Khwe leaders opposed this plan, justifiably arguing that it would be inappropriate, given the land's prime tourism potential and the nearby presence of a school and hostel. The prison farm plans, however, were implemented and completed with the support of the Hambukushu Traditional Authority. Subsequently, the Khwe staff working at the campsite received an eviction notice to facilitate the expansion of the prison. Khwe leaders, aided by a human rights organisation, opposed the eviction order and attained an out-of-court settlement in 1999 by which the campsite could continue to operate. This example reveals the ongoing power struggles between Khwe and Hambukushu leaders and the government over land and resources. With its excellent tourism potential, as Caprivi's tourism resumes after the unrest of 1999-2002, N//goava-ca campsite remains a contested resource with an uncertain future. This uncertainty is exacerbated by MET's plans to implement 'zonation' plans within the Park, and by its hesitancy to make an official statement about what the future status of the campsite will be and who will control and manage it.

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<sup>14</sup> In 1998, when the government officially recognised the leaders of 31 'traditional authorities', none of the six San designates were recognised (Orth 2003: 151).

<sup>15</sup> G. Boden, pers.comm., 6/04/05.



Khwe have actively resisted their marginalisation by the government (Rousset 2003a). Khwe communities have continued to support their leaders and, with the help of the Legal Assistance Centre, Khwe leaders have launched a pending court case against the government in order to secure recognition of their Traditional Authority. The failure of the government to acknowledge Khwe leadership has thus become a forum for Khwe to struggle for a degree of autonomy, for control over land which they see as theirs but which is being encroached by Hambukushu settlers and cultivators (WWF 1997), and over decisions regarding the future use and management of that land, as seen in the case of the campsite. Identity has become central to Khwe strategies to obtain security and stability, as they attempt to represent themselves as a cohesive and distinct ethnic group, and to vie for legitimacy as an indigenous people in national, regional and global discourses (Orth 2003: 146).<sup>16</sup>

### **4.3 The Khwe Relationship to Environmental Discourses**

Having provided a brief outline of a few key historical, political, economic and social factors which have shaped Khwe identity and livelihoods in the present, I now turn to investigate their relationship to environmental discourses, past and present. Not surprisingly, given the complexity of factors at play, this relationship has been a contested and difficult one. The struggle that Khwe people face to meet their basic daily needs, and related struggles over leadership, land and resources, has implications for the environmental resource management policies that IRDNC seeks to promote and establish.

Making use of, and strategising within, environmental discourses in the present is perhaps one of the only available options for Khwe in terms of improving future livelihood security. Khwe interest in, or acquiescence to, CBNRM projects may also be a product of their quest for secure land tenure and for visibility (cf. Sullivan 2002). As Orth (2003: 141) points out, protection of the environment has recently become a trajectory for Khwe exclusion of outsiders from using resources in West Caprivi. At the same time it is in IRDNC's interest to secure Khwe rights, given that the efficacy and sustainability of decentralised environmental projects is closely correlated to land-tenure security (Baland and Platteau 1996; Zerner 2000; Ribot 2004). How to go about this, given that IRDNC does not want to fuel politically-sensitive discussions about 'land rights' within a state National Park, is one of the complicated tasks that the NGO faces.

As mentioned earlier, the occupation of West Caprivi by the SADF entailed the appointment of conservation officials from within the military. Upholding a protectionist regime, in which the SADF was of course allowed to bend the rules, these officials imposed restrictive laws on Khwe people with regard to the domestic animals they could own, and with regard to their practice of gathering food resources from the bush. West Caprivi residents came to view conservation officials in an extremely negative light. For example, upon hearing that West Caprivi would remain a Game Park after Independence, a Khwe resident reported to surveyors in 1990 that

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<sup>16</sup> For example, in 1997 the late Khwe Chief Kipi George addressed the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva, describing Khwe struggles over autonomy and land (George 1997).

“The army’s nature conservation people shot many of our donkeys and horses.<sup>17</sup> What will happen when these new conservation people come to live with us? How many of our animals will you shoot?” (Brown and Jones 1994: 50). In the same survey, a Khwe woman “claimed that a young conservator had fired shots from a pistol above her head to chase her out of the Buffalo area where she was collecting *veld* food...[telling] her to leave the food for the birds” (ibid 1994: 50). Despite the fact that West Caprivi functioned as a military zone as opposed to a Game Park during the SADF occupation, Khwe people were nevertheless exposed to an undiluted version of the ‘fortress’ conservation mentality which marked colonial administrations, and that I have discussed in Chapter One.

#### 4.4 The Rise of CBNRM and the Conservancy Model in Namibia

A socio-ecological survey was carried out by the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (MWCT, the predecessor of MET) in collaboration with IRDNC in 1990 soon after the SADF withdrawal. In contrast to the ‘fortress’ approach, its recommendations were grounded in ‘community conservation’ and a CBNRM ethos. The report recognized that the removal or translocation of Khwe people from the Park was undesirable both politically and in terms of environmental goals. It proposed that for conservation efforts to be successful, local people should be involved and have some degree of ‘ownership’ over resources rather than be alienated from those resources (Brown and Jones 1994: 78). The concept of ‘ownership’ as employed in the report is better defined as ‘proprietorship’ (Long 2004), a concept which in the CBNRM literature refers to sanctioned land use rights, including the right to determine the mode and extent of use and management of land and resources; rights of access and inclusion; and rights to benefit fully from use and management.

The West Caprivi Game Park is a rare example of an instance where people have been allowed to remain within Park boundaries. There is only one other case like it in Namibia, that of the Namib Naukluft National Park. The MWCT report arguably marked an important transition point in the history of West Caprivi, as CBNRM discourses began to take root on the back of the SADF occupation which had cast much of the use of natural resources by Khwe people as illegal. In the post-independence context of the Park, however, one may well ask *from a Khwe perspective* how much has changed, given that hunting remains illegal, and that Khwe residents still express a fear of arrest by MET when going out in the bush to collect veldfood. What CBNRM discourses seem to suggest is that Khwe people should benefit from *other*, more powerful people’s use of their resources (eg. through trophy hunting or tourism) whilst curtailing their own use of those resources. Whilst this may be a form of ‘control’ from an outside perspective, it does not necessarily coincide with what Khwe people may understand as control over their resources.

The particular manifestation of CBNRM which has evolved in Namibia is dominated by the ‘conservancy model’. Like other natural resource management policies in the region, the evolution of Namibia’s conservancies is linked to broader historical processes of colonisation and apartheid, and the highly skewed land distribution which those systems engendered. A dual tenure system entrenched white ownership

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<sup>17</sup> The horse-shooting may be related to the fact that SADF officials claimed that Khwe men were (illegally) hunting giraffe from horseback (S. Mayes, pers.comm.).

of land but left blacks with insecure tenure on state-owned communal land. Today, communal land residents have usufruct rights over land and resources. Although 'traditional' authorities allocate land for various purposes, the state has ultimate control over how the land is used, and by whom (Long 2004: 27).

The origins of the CBNRM conservancy model are found in the late 1960s, when shifts in wildlife policy allowed for individual proprietorship of game by white settler farmers who could benefit financially from wildlife (Jones and Murphree 2001). Under these circumstances, freehold landowners realised the advantages of pooling land and financial resources such that integrated management of wildlife could be carried out (Sullivan 2002: 162). In the 1980s and 1990s, this same proprietorship was extended to black communal-land farmers, based on legislation originally intended to benefit white settlers. The work of IRDNC has been central to the development of the communal conservancy model, which grew partly out of early efforts by IRDNC's founders in the 1980s to counter heavy wildlife poaching in Kunene region by establishing a "community game guard" system. The same actors simultaneously worked to bring financial benefits from wildlife-based tourism to local communities.

Following Namibia's Independence in 1990, and based on the apparent success of the Kunene community game guard system, IRDNC's founders worked with the MWCT to develop a new policy towards conservation on communal land. Other major influences besides the work of IRDNC included theory about common property resource management regimes, the experience of neighbouring countries in terms of CBNRM, socio-ecological surveys carried out by MET, and the experience of white-owned conservancies. The outcome of these discussions was the framework for communal-area conservancy formation, which was legislated through the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996. This framework has been a major achievement of the country's CBNRM programme, given the exclusionary conservation policies of the past (Sullivan 2003). Communal area residents who form a common property resource management institution (a 'conservancy') are granted proprietorship of, and have management responsibilities over, certain wildlife species. The ultimate ownership of wildlife, like the ownership of communal land, remains with the state (Sullivan 2002: 164).

To be registered as such, a conservancy needs to have a defined boundary and membership, a representative management committee, a legal constitution recognised by government, and plan for the equitable distribution of benefits (Jones 1999). As in other CBNRM programmes in the region, the assumption here is that "local communities will respond to instrumental incentives established or enhanced through government policy and legislation. If local communities have secure rights...over the resource, can retain the benefits of sustainable use, and these benefits outweigh the cost of managing the resource, then sustainable use is likely" (Jones 1999: 298).

Overall, then, IRDNC's institutional identity is closely tied to Namibia's dominant CBNRM model. Furthermore, conservancy formation, indirectly catalysing multiple reconceptualisations of land, resources, 'community' and space, has been one of IRDNC's primary activities for over a decade. The formation of new conservancies has not been problem-free, and most of the difficulties encountered concern the heterogenous nature of communities (Jones 1999; Corbett and Jones 2000; Sullivan

2002, 2003), where different interest groups compete for rights, revenues and resources. Some conservancies in Kunene and East Caprivi have been marked by disputes over boundaries, whilst others have encountered conflict between generations or along gender or ethnic lines. It is thus clear that the establishment of conservancies has often unintentionally become a crucible for making a variety of political concerns visible.

Perhaps one of the most interesting critiques of Namibia's conservancy programme comes from Sullivan (2002), who argues that despite its 'new' and progressive appearance, the conservancy model has strong continuities with past wildlife conservation priorities. Importantly, she highlights the divergences between conservationist and local priorities which are expressed in the context of conservancy formation. She argues that the opportunity to establish conservancies is appropriated by local people as a forum for expressing and contesting claims to land, rather than being pursued to gain rights over wildlife. Sullivan (2002: 165) suggests that rural people's discussions about conservancy formation "have provided a much-needed outlet for debate regarding land redistribution in the context of speculation and optimism ushered in by an independent Namibia", and in the context of a lack of a legal basis for establishing tenure rights in communal lands.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the requirement for every conservancy to define its physical boundaries has been treated by rural residents as a chance to clarify rights to tracts of land, even though a conservancy legally only establishes rights to economic returns on wildlife on that land.

According to Sullivan (2002: 166), in the absence of any other legitimate way of doing so, "the conservancy option has become the only means by which people can gain any apparent security to land", and this may be a significant factor in explaining the rapid rate at which conservancies have been established since 1998. To date, 31 conservancies have been formed,<sup>19</sup> meaning that CBNRM is now being implemented on over a quarter of Namibia's communal land (Long 2004: 162). Conservancies can thus be seen as spaces in which local people may articulate their demands on the state. Sullivan's findings are significant for West Caprivi: IRDNC's CBNRM projects, most recently that of proposed natural resource mapping, may be interpreted by Khwe people as an opportunity to pursue 'visibility', express their claims to land, and perhaps even to argue for land rights (cf. Orth 2003, Taylor 2001). In addition, engagement with CBNRM projects may create openings to build alliances with international donor organisations, and to participate in regional and global discourses about indigenous minorities (Orth 2003: 126; Robins 2001)

#### **4.5 Opportunity and Disillusion: CBNRM's Rise in West Caprivi**

Following the socio-ecological survey of 1990, IRDNC was requested by the government to assist them with involving local people in a CBNRM programme. In

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<sup>18</sup> The policy framework for land reform in communal areas has for most of the duration of Namibia's CBNRM programme been unclear (Corbett and Jones 2000: 4) but, in light of the importance of secure land tenure for the devolution of wildlife rights, policy-makers in the MET and implementing NGOs have hoped that the conservancy model could help shape appropriate land tenure reform (Sullivan 2002: 166). It remains unclear as to how forthcoming land reform bills will affect, or be affected by, conservancies.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Jo Tagg, Directorate of Environmental Affairs, Windhoek, 24/08/04.

introducing CBNRM concepts to West Caprivi residents, IRDNC and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism faced considerable hurdles, given the extremely negative experiences Khwe people had of previous ‘conservation’ rules and regulations. Nevertheless, IRDNC established a Community Game Guard (CGG) and Community Resource Monitor (CRM) programme along the same lines as the programme pioneered in Kunene region. Male CGGs, many of whom were soldiers under the SADF, monitor wildlife movement and numbers, report poaching activities and confiscate illegal weapons. Female CRMs monitor the harvesting of wild foods and medicines and advise their peers about how to harvest plants in a sustainable manner such that they can be re-used in the future.

By the mid-1990s, Rousset (2003a, 2003b) reports that despite incidents of human-animal conflict such as wildlife-caused deaths, and the destruction of crop fields by wildlife, there was a general sense of support for wildlife conservation among the Khwe communities (cf. Orth 2003). However, besides the employment opportunities offered by IRDNC, few benefits from wildlife conservation had been seen. Revenues from trophy hunting by safari hunters and their expatriate clients, which is paradoxically permitted in certain areas of the Park,<sup>20</sup> were fed back into state funds due to a lack of mechanisms to channel such revenues to rural communities. Khwe people remained in a situation, initiated by the SADF occupation, where they had lost access to and control over many of the resources that they understood as their own.

In 1996, the legislated framework that catered for the formation of ‘conservancies’ came into being. As described above, a conservancy is the only mechanism which allows rural people to benefit financially from ecotourism and trophy hunting. Subsequently, a group of Khwe leaders applied for permission to establish a conservancy, but this was denied because of the protected status of the land as ‘Park’ not communal. Over the next few years, Khwe people watched as non-Khwe communities in East Caprivi successfully established the conservancies of Kwando and Mayuni in areas immediately adjacent to the Park, which now have fully-functional and income-generating tourist campsites. The success of these conservancies has been a source of resentment among Khwe people, who point out that much of the wildlife that frequents the new conservancies actually originates from West Caprivi. As three Khwe interviewees told me:

Even the government people don’t know there’s a community [here in West Caprivi]. They just think it’s a Park [with no people in it]. Our animals cross over the other side of Kwando and people get benefits there, but we are the owners of the land.<sup>21</sup>

In the East Caprivi conservancies, they get benefits from the hunters. But the animals come from West Caprivi, [whilst] we are just sitting in darkness and get nothing.<sup>22</sup>

It’s a very serious case. The Khwe community have [lived] for a long time with wildlife, they have knowledge about it, and know how to [live] with it. It really affects us when other communities get benefit; it’s painful.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hunting concessions are held by two safari operators, one at Buffalo on the Kavango River, and one in the Kwando Triangle on the Kwando River (Interview with MET representative, Mahango, 17/08/04).

<sup>21</sup> Discussion with young Khwe man, Mashambo, 19/08/04.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Khwe Community Game Guard, Omega III, 19/08/04.

<sup>23</sup> Discussion with Khwe man, Mashambo, 19/08/04.

Members of the Khwe communities have thus become increasingly disillusioned about receiving the benefits that the utopian CBNRM discourse, as propounded by IRDNC and the MET, has promised (Rousset 2003b). This is tied to an ever-present sense of marginalization, lack of recognition and invisibility vis-à-vis other groups, as evidenced in the statements above. It is also linked to Caprivi's political upheavals between 1999 and 2002, when many of IRDNC's projects were disrupted, postponing any materialization of benefits.

As I discuss shortly, many Khwe see themselves as the legitimate owners of West Caprivi's land and resources, including wildlife, and hence perceive their lack of CBNRM benefits as particularly unjust. I go on to argue that they see land and natural resource mapping as a potential channel to assert their ownership over resources and to make themselves visible vis-à-vis other more powerful actors. This is not to imply that IRDNC wishes to deny Khwe rights in the Park; indeed IRDNC in theory aims to promote a sense of Khwe 'ownership' over resources for the purposes of better environmental management. Yet Khwe and IRDNC conceptions of 'rights' diverge, and this informs the ways in which these actors perceive the plan for land mapping.

#### **4.6 The MET Vision Document and Khwe Anxieties about the Future**

In 1999, the MET produced a plan to change the status of the West Caprivi Game Park (Rousset 2003a, 2003b). This plan, "The Bwabwata National Park Vision" accords with the recommendations made in the socio-ecological survey published in 1994. Its primary goal is to improve management, conservation and development in the area, and to allow for communities living within the Park to benefit equitably from wildlife and tourism. The plan also outlines the anticipated 'zoning' of the Park into distinct areas which have different purposes (Figure 2). As a consequence of this zoning, two 'core' conservation areas will be created, where human settlement is not permitted. In addition, a 'multiple use' area, i.e. most of the rest of the Park, will allow residents to benefit from sustainable use of wildlife and tourism, whilst carrying out their livelihood activities such as crop and small-stock farming. Finally, the two most heavily populated settlements in the Park, an area of 60 000 hectares combined, will be fenced off, 'deproclaimed' and no longer have Park status. They will become communal land, on which cattle can be raised and agriculture practised.<sup>24</sup>

Whilst the Khwe leadership expressed some enthusiasm on hearing the MET's plan for the Park, hoping that it would finally produce concrete benefits for their people, they faced disillusion once more when the plan was postponed due to the political unrest throughout 1999-2002. By 2003, some stability had returned to the region and, with the MET plan now soon to be implemented, residents' perspectives on the plan were collected by IRDNC on several occasions (IRDNC 2004b; Rousset 2003b). Their central worries are that they might be forced to re-settle under the new Park structure, and that they will be prevented from accessing resources which they have

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<sup>24</sup> In mid-2004, West Caprivi actors were still awaiting the official gazetting and implementation of the plan, but expected this to materialize within a few months. IRDNC intends to convince West Caprivi residents to apply for conservancies to be established in the two deproclaimed areas. This potential 'subversion' of state plans is noteworthy, yet raises a number of questions as to inclusion, representation and benefits. Furthermore, the deproclaimed areas contain little wildlife, and so there may be low incentives for natural resource management (K.Rousset, pers.comm.17/03/05).

utilised in the past, including plant foods and medicines in the core areas. Residents have expressed strong opposition to the fencing-in of the two 'deproclaimed' settlements, fearing that this will curtail their free movement and their collection of veldfoods. Others are concerned that the fenced area will be too small to allow for future expansion of farming activities.

The vast majority oppose MET's proposal that those living in the 'multiple use area' should live without cattle, and are not convinced that the benefits from trophy hunting and tourism will substitute or outweigh the benefits derived from owning cattle. As the Khwe headman of /ui-Tcukx'om stated, "Goats and chicken cannot plough fields. Who will provide milk for our children? Who will pay their school fees? It seems the government is killing the people" (Rousset 2003b: 16). The MET decree on cattle is particularly sensitive as it echoes numerous Apartheid and postcolonial government interventions carried out since 1938 which have disallowed cattle ownership following outbreaks of animal disease. Most recently, in 1996, cattle owners residing outside of Omega and Mutc'iku were forced to kill or sell their stock after a spate of lung disease, and most have not been able to afford to re-stock since that time.

In summary, the new MET plan has raised numerous concerns and anxieties for Khwe residents about their future, and has reinforced their sense of invisibility in relation to a powerful state. Although having ostensibly benign intentions to allow West Caprivi residents to benefit from natural resources, the MET plan resonates with many of the other state interventions that Khwe people have experienced historically. This is due to the sense of exclusion from land and resources that is fostered by the proposed rules and boundaries. The MET plan also constitutes yet another CBNRM 'promise' in which Khwe, based on their experience of the past 15 years, are likely to have little faith. This is because CBNRM projects in West Caprivi seem to have been marked by cycles of opportunity and disillusion.

There seems to be a contradiction inherent to the Khwe relationship with CBNRM. On the one hand, under the rise of a powerful CBNRM discourse in Namibia, in particular of the conservancy model, Khwe people have been steadily incorporated into a sphere of 'environmentalism' through the activities and discourses of IRDNC. On the other hand, despite IRDNC's role as a persistent proponent of CBNRM in the Caprivi region, Khwe people have remained marginalized from 'mainstream' CBNRM practices, specifically in terms of being unable to form a conservancy due to land legislation. This, I suggest, is interpreted by Khwe people as yet another of the multiple faces of marginalisation which shapes their lives and identities as Khwe. It is in this broad context that new opportunities such as land mapping may be strategically seized upon by Khwe people in a quest for increased visibility and power.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **The Origins of the West Caprivi Mapping**

Understanding the local historical, social and political factors which have shaped Khwe livelihoods and identity in the present, and understanding Khwe relationships to environmental discourses, is essential for contextualising how the idea of land mapping is perceived and interpreted in West Caprivi. I now consider the immediate origins of the plan to map West Caprivi. Several main influences can be discerned. Some stem from IRDNC and reflect participatory development and environmental discourses. Other influences stem from IRDNC's and Khwe links to transnational networks through which countermapping theory and practice has been diffused, and subsequently found appeal amongst new constituencies. As such, the West Caprivi mapping project emerges at an intersection of environmental and indigenous rights discourses, and as a space in which actors with these different yet overlapping agendas may compete over what form and purpose the mapping will have.

#### **5.1 Maps and GIS in Namibian CBNRM Discourse**

Participatory resource mapping activities along PRA lines were conducted by IRDNC staff with members of the Khwe community, in particular with the Community Resource Monitors (CRMs), as early as the mid-1990s. Many of these documented valuable plant resources (including wild foods, medicines and construction materials) in the areas surrounding Khwe settlements.<sup>25</sup> This served as a way to integrate women into IRDNC's CBNRM activities, which in their pioneer form in the Kunene region had initially focused primarily on wildlife protection and created an all-male Community Game Guard programme. The fact that women are major users of natural resources was neglected, and women received little direct benefit from CBNRM activities (Flintan 2001).

The CRM programme was initiated in 1994 in East Caprivi in order to give women the opportunity to facilitate information flows between local users and both local and regional decision-makers, thus having a chance to influence decisions which were made about natural resources on which people were dependent. This PRA-type mapping is thus tied to the discourses of 'natural resource management' and 'management planning' as envisioned by IRDNC and MET, but also emphasised the extensive knowledge that Khwe adults hold about the diverse uses of a host of natural resources. IRDNC's practices have arguably served to reinforce Khwe 'self-association' with the bush and its resources, and the construction of an identity along these lines. Such practices have also provided Khwe with a channel for recording, and thus proving, their historical usage of resources in the area.<sup>26</sup> Again, this is a potentially valuable strategy in terms of Khwe struggles over land and leadership.

More explicitly tied to the discourse of 'management planning' has been the rise of the use of GIS within the CBNRM field in Namibia since 1996, parallel to the rise of the conservancy model. In its bid to acquire regional 'overviews' of wildlife densities and human-animal conflict, and to foster the emergence of conservancies, the national CBNRM programme has worked together with IRDNC, amongst various other NGOs

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<sup>25</sup> For example, as described in IRDNC's West Caprivi Khoenatcapi Monthly Report, 10/97.

<sup>26</sup> K.Rousset, pers.comm., 17/05/03.



and service providers, to collect and manage data primarily on wildlife (see Figure 5), but also on existing human settlements and infrastructure within conservancies. Incorporated into a single national GIS, this data is theoretically accessible to MET, all service providers and conservancy representatives for the purposes of management planning, including land-use 'zoning' of conservancies, and the sharing of information with potential investors such as tourism operators or trophy hunters.<sup>27</sup> I argue here that the CBNRM GIS comprises a set of technologies which functions to create new representations of both national and local space and resources that are planted firmly within the contours of powerful environmental discourses. On the one hand, these representations may be thought of as 'hegemonic'. On the other hand, local actors such as conservancy members participate to varying extents in the process of the production of these representations, for example, by providing information which is assimilated into the GIS. Hence there is an opportunity for local actors to influence the GIS 'from below'.

Sub-sections of data from the national GIS can easily be printed out in the form of maps, which can then be used by, eg. conservancy committees. Arguably, these CBNRM GIS maps foster re-conceptualisations of space as local actors come to perceive their land in cartographic form and, in accordance with 'management planning' discourses, divide this land up into different land-use zones. It is not simply a question of collecting and displaying 'local knowledge' about resources, but also a question of rural actors' decision-making about land-use, based on those new representations. Whilst resource maps are said by MET and IRDNC to empower conservancy members to negotiate with other stakeholders over resources, mapping may itself facilitate the entry and involvement of powerful external actors. For example, the IRDNC-facilitated mapping of Kasika and Impalila Conservancies on the Chobe floodplain (CI and IRDNC 2004) was catalysed by the interests of the organisation Conservation International (CI) in local elephant populations.<sup>28</sup> The inscription of local space and resources onto maps makes these entities discernible to outside parties, and provides such parties with a foothold to further their own interests.

Though not necessarily intended, the institution of Community Game Guarding (which has its roots in IRDNC's vision) has become an integral part of the GIS machinery in the case of West Caprivi. Equipped with 2x2 kilometre grid-maps of the Park, which are just a handful from a set of grid maps which cover the entire country, the Community Game Guards patrol vast distances through the bush, recording and geo-referencing wildlife sightings and 'incidents' such as poaching or human-animal conflict (eg. crop damage; death or injury to people). Interestingly, the 'fixed routes' that the CGGs patrol are routes that they themselves identified and chose to use; they are the same or similar to routes that these Khwe men used in the past, and possibly still use, for their own harvesting of resources and in order to access water.<sup>29</sup>

The data collected by CGGs is then fed back to MET and also into the national GIS database. Where substantial amounts of information about the land and its resources

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with J. Tagg, National CBNRM GIS Database Manager, DEA, Windhoek, 24/08/04.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with S. Slater-Jones and C. Murphy, IRDNC, Katima, 8/09/04.

<sup>29</sup> Interviews with S. Mayes, Namibia Nature Foundation, Windhoek, 25/08/04; and two CGGs in Omega III and Chetto, 19/08/04 and 6/09/04.

was once mostly restricted to the domain of Khwe users, such information has been incorporated into, and partially enables, what appears to be the emergence of a vast environmental resource surveillance programme. The grid maps and the national GIS thus make the landscape 'legible' and facilitate a governmental and NGO gaze over the Park. This extends their knowledge of, and hence power over, the area's wildlife resources and the ways in which they are used. The detailed mapping of West Caprivi would arguably extend this legibility and gaze even further.

## **5.2 Khwe Desires for Mapping, and Transnational NGO Networks**

Whilst CBNRM proponents in Namibia appear increasingly to deploy new mapping technologies such as GIS to achieve environmental goals, ideas and practices concerning maps and mapping are by no means restricted to CBNRM discourses. According to IRDNC representatives, at least since 1998, members of the Khwe communities had talked about wanting to map the area out of historical interest, to record the historical names of their territory such that they could share this fast-disappearing information with their children in the future.<sup>30</sup> Other rationales for mapping soon appeared, for example with respect to the government's failure to recognise the Khwe Traditional Authority. In early 2003, an anthropologist working in West Caprivi documented place-names in the eastern part of West Caprivi and produced an approximated map of the area (Figure 6). She did this with a view to strengthening the position of the Khwe leadership in their struggle to be recognised by the state in the capacity of a 'traditional authority', by proving their historical occupation, and detailed knowledge, of the area.

Transnational networks and theories of 'Transboundary Natural Resource Management' (TBNRM) have also been instrumental in bringing ideas of mapping to West Caprivi. The activities of the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (TOCaDI),<sup>31</sup> a Botswanan NGO with a strong emphasis on San affirmative action, and IRDNC's desire to establish TBNRM initiatives in collaboration with NGOs in neighbouring countries, are noteworthy in this respect. As early as 1998, facilitated by IRDNC, representatives of the West Caprivi Khwe communities made exchange visits to Botswana, where they established contact with Community Trust members from Khwai, Mababe and Gudigwa. Together they discussed the similar challenges they faced, including feelings of being marginalized by their governments, of struggling to secure control over land, and of efforts to establish representative structures for themselves.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the Khwe representatives noted that the residents of Gudigwa were in the process of mapping their ancestral land in order to substantiate their application to government for the formation of their own Community Trust. IRDNC observed that this was perhaps something that West Caprivians should replicate to formalize their claim to the area in view of the increasing 'land grabs' by 'neighbouring groups', that is, Hambukushu families in-migrating to the eastern side of the Kavango river.

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<sup>30</sup> R. Diggle, IRDNC Caprivi Coordinator, pers.comm.; K. Rousset, former IRDNC fieldworker, pers.comm.

<sup>31</sup> TOCaDI is one of the Kuru Family of Organisations (KFO), a consortium of NGOs that have the common goal of empowering the San, given their status as the most vulnerable group of indigenous peoples in Botswana. Whilst still focusing on San issues, TOCaDI has integrated other ethnic groups into its programme.

<sup>32</sup> IRDNC Report: West Caprivi Conservancy Committee Exchange Visit to Botswana, 09/98.

In 2001, despite the political troubles in Caprivi which precluded IRDNC from carrying out many of its activities and indeed delayed the implementation of any mapping, a meeting between the Khwe Traditional Authority and the Technical Advisor to the National Remote Sensing Centre in Windhoek resulted in more concrete discussions over what the West Caprivi maps might involve. According to IRDNC records, “the aim is to compile a record of local names for land units, along with the area’s settlement history and land uses (such as veldfood collection areas). This map will be a tool for land use planning, education, and perhaps more urgently, to reinforce the Khwe efforts to have their claims to the area and their traditional leadership recognised. Given the current political climate, it is becoming increasingly evident that any development in West Caprivi depends on the acknowledgement of leadership by government.”<sup>33</sup> Here, IRDNC recognises mapping as a political instrument with value for securing Khwe rights and ‘visibility’. Such recognition, however, appears to be more or less absent from recent discussions of mapping which, as I soon show, were dominated by the requirements of environmental management planning.

Communication between IRDNC and TOCaDI continued between 1999 and the present, with the purpose of exchanging their ideas and experiences of working with San groups, and in light of possible future collaboration between the two organisations. By the end of 2003, the detailed mapping of NG13 in Botswana, a dry and remote area of nearly 3000 square kilometres lying immediately adjacent to West Caprivi, which was historically occupied by Khwe people, had been completed by the #Heku Community Trust<sup>34</sup> together with Arthur Albertson, an external mapping consultant, and with the support of TOCaDI (Figures 7-10). The main product of this mapping is a lengthy ‘management plan’ (#Heku Community Trust *et al* 2003) that proposes substantial eco-tourism plans for NG13, and which was submitted to the Maun Land Board in support of #Heku’s application for a lease on this ‘undesigned’ piece of land (KFO 2003: 61). Although couched in ‘management’ discourses and presented as a commercial venture in order to secure government approval, the NG13 application is seen by TOCaDI primarily as a way to secure community rights over the area and to diversify livelihood strategies. Non-commercial consumption of natural resources is likely to be more important and viable than commercial tourism plans.<sup>35</sup>

The NG13 mapping project in particular has influenced IRDNC’s interest in mapping, given the immediate proximity of NG13 to West Caprivi, the fact that both areas are part of a larger regional ecosystem, and the presumed similarity of historical and current natural resource use by Khwe people in both areas. IRDNC’s Caprivi Coordinator has expressed his ‘transboundary’ agenda to see a region-wide mapping process and product, ‘owned’ by the communities and strengthening their rights, to aid the management of a key environmental area (cf. IRDNC 2004a). Transboundary Natural Resource Management (TBNRM) initiatives and Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) have become a new trend in southern Africa in recent

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<sup>33</sup> IRDNC Memo: West Caprivi Traditional Authority and Committee visit to Windhoek, 5/09/01.

<sup>34</sup> This Trust represents some 2200 economically disadvantaged people, 80% Khwe and 20% Hambukushu, from the settlements of Kaputura, Tobere, Kyeica and Gudigwa, most of whom are unemployed.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with K.Rousset, TOCaDI, 23/07/04; A.Albertson, pers.comm., 16/03/05.

years. They involve the merging together of National Parks or conservation areas which lie adjacent to each other but are divided by international borders. As described by Draper *et al* (2004), TFCAs are ‘a post-national dream’ for conservation and the sustainable use of biological and cultural resources, with the objective of facilitating regional peace, cooperation and socio-economic development (Hanks 2003; Stern *et al* 2003; Brosius and Russell 2003).

From IRDNC’s perspective, a successful TBNRM project would potentially allow the free movement of large game such as elephant across international boundaries, movement which is currently restricted by border fences.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, IRDNC’s Coordinator feared that the new popular focus on ‘transboundary management’ could serve to marginalize rural people’s potential involvement in conservation, which would then counter the organisation’s goals. Such fears are reinforced by Draper *et al* (2004), who argue that TFCAs are more about fostering cohesion between black and white political and business elites than about local participation.

Whilst IRDNC’s interest in potential transboundary mapping is primarily environmental, TOCaDI’s interest in the same idea is grounded in its focus on San rights and representation, and indeed upon notions of linking and unifying San groups transnationally. As representative from KFO, of which TOCaDI is a member, told me,

[It] would be wonderful [for] all this information [on Khwe history and resources to] be documented and put down....to say, wow, look at what happened here before the Germans drew these borders. Some sort of alternative reality can be superimposed upon the present map, because we won’t be able to get away from the present map, but in people’s consciousness, that other reality exists....[This process] will probably bring bonds, much more coherence...this process can bring glue on the ground level between the different groups.<sup>37</sup>

Whilst IRDNC desired a strong connection and continuity between the NG13 mapping and the planned mapping of West Caprivi, it is questionable whether such continuity is realistic, given the differing agendas of the two respective facilitator-NGOs, namely that TOCaDI has a much more ‘indigenous rights-based’ approach and political agenda than IRDNC.

In summary, the origins of the plan to map West Caprivi can be traced to several different groups with varying yet intersecting interests in, and agendas related to, land, natural resources and Khwe knowledge of those entities. Among the influences at play are CBNRM and TBNRM agendas, Khwe interests in visibility and self-determination, and the agendas of pro-San organisations looking to have regional influence. Transnational networks have played an important role in the spread of ideas about counter-mapping within the region. Due to links between overseas mapping experts, San organisations and individual actors, the NG13 project has close ties to both South Africa’s #Khomani mapping, and Botswana’s CKGR mapping. Indeed, some mapping consultants have been involved in more than one of these projects, and hence have directly transferred their knowledge, experience and methodology between contexts.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with R. Diggle, IRDNC Caprivi Coordinator, 18/07/04.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with W. le Roux, TOCaDI, Shakawe, 26/07/04.

The West Caprivi mapping thus has the potential to be the most recent addition to a growing body of San ‘countermapping’ which was born within an indigenous rights framework. Whether it will be categorised as ‘countermapping’, however, will perhaps depend on the extent to which the political factors of Khwe rights and ‘visibility’ are conceived of as a priority by the actors involved. Because mapping has the potential to offer something to a variety of different stakeholders in West Caprivi, it is likely that the mapping project will be contested as it materializes. Such contestation is evident even in the early stages of planning, as I go on to discuss.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Rights, Visibility and Depoliticisation: Understandings and Expectations of the West Caprivi Mapping**

I have outlined the context in which San countermapping emerged in southern Africa, and I have subsequently contextualised the West Caprivi case study, including a brief overview of the immediate origins of the plan to map this area. I now turn to factors which were shaping the mapping project in mid-2004 during its very early stages. Specifically, I ask how the anticipated mapping was understood by different actors - namely by IRDNC, MET and Khwe representatives - and what the implications of these understandings are. Not surprisingly, the perspectives of the different actors diverge in significant ways.

As described in Chapter Two, and in the examples of San countermapping, mapping is a political action, through which control over representations of space, identity and resources is contested. In southern Africa, where land is deeply politicised due to colonialism's legacies, mapping has been used on more than one occasion by San groups to draw attention to issues of land dispossession and restitution, and to advance land rights and claims. How will it be used by the Khwe of West Caprivi, given their history of marginalisation and exclusion, yet also given the presence of powerful environmental discourses driven by IRDNC and MET? In this chapter, I propose that Khwe understandings and expectations of mapping are etched along political lines. At the same time, West Caprivi's environmental actors are wary of 'land politics' and Khwe-Hambukushu antagonisms, and tend to present mapping as a technical instrument for the purposes of environmental 'management planning'.

#### **6.1 'Khwe Names on Khwe Land'<sup>38</sup>: Khwe perspectives on mapping**

In introducing West Caprivi, I demonstrated how the history of the Khwe, together with local social and political dynamics, would make mapping appealing for this marginalized group. My interviews with members of the Khwe 'communities', namely village headmen, the Kyaramacan Trustees,<sup>39</sup> members of the former Steering Committee, and several CRMs and CGGs, produced consistent responses with regard to people's desires for mapping, and their perspectives on what mapping could achieve. The interviewees highlighted the same core set of issues, emphasising their need to re-affirm their presence on the land, and indeed render visible their purported ownership of the land in the face of marginalization and dispossession by both the Apartheid and post-Independence governments, and by other ethnic groups such as the Hambukushu. The Khwe perspectives proffered during my interviews speak to the politics of land, autonomy and 'visibility', and make sense in terms of Khwe people's experience of the last half-century.

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<sup>38</sup> This phrase comes from an interview with a Khwe headman (Omega, 18/08/04), during which he stated that "[A map] is going to help us to have our Khwe names on Khwe land. So this new generation can prove this map and gain our rights".

<sup>39</sup> The Kyaramacan Trust is a legal body that, facilitated by IRDNC and LAC, was formed in late 2003 at the request of MET's minister. It represents the residents of West Caprivi (both Khwe and Hambukushu). Its purposes include negotiating with MET concerning residents' rights in the Park, and providing a forum for a partnership between MET and residents.

One of the reasons given by interviewees for why maps would be useful to them could be broadly defined as the ‘social change’ which appears to have fractured the system of knowledge transfer between older and younger generations. The knowledge that my respondents referred to concerned the landscape, its features and its resources. They various changes and disruptions that had taken place in recent years<sup>40</sup>, including the introduction of formal schooling for children, which lessens the probability of them learning about their natural surrounds. As a Khwe headman told me, “In the past, the only school which the youth had was to go into the bush with their parents and learn what they do. But, in modern life, most people focus on school”<sup>41</sup>.

In addition, people were unable to traverse the bush as they did in the past due to political conflict, and due to MET rules and regulations: “If we could have a map, the map can help [children to know about the land and the bush], [because the children] cannot move [around], because of the MET, because of these boundaries...”<sup>42</sup>. Also mentioned were the changing aspirations of the younger generation. A young Khwe man who was involved with WIMSA said:

I think that some of the young people, they’re not interested to ask the elders, ‘how did you live in the past, as you are old...[and] I want to know’. They just follow the new life...saying... ‘no, I’ve studied...other things. We don’t want to study heritage’...[But] because you don’t have your heritage, [the government] can easily tell you [that you cannot even get leadership].<sup>43</sup>

Based on these kinds of factors, people felt that a map would help to ‘keep the history’ of the Khwe, to teach children ‘where we come from and where we are’, and to assist them to learn the old place-names and their locations. Knowledge of the past was seen as a valuable and important resource, closely tied to identity:

There’s a danger [of forgetting the history of the Khwe] because people lose their ownership of identity, and people lose their ownership of the traditional life. Young people won’t know about it, [and yet] the name ‘Khwe’ depends on those things [eg. knowledge about resources in the bush].<sup>44</sup>

My respondents also often stated that a map of Khwe territories would prove to both outsiders and the government that the area belonged in the past to the Khwe forefathers, and that Khwe communities are thus the ‘owners of the land’:

Really we are in a difficult situation now because Mbambo [the Hambukushu leader] is saying that the area between the rivers is his. So we are just flying, there’s nothing to show where the Khwe are. The map can show leaders that this place belongs to the Khwe.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Orth (2003: 136), citing Kohler (1997), notes that the disruption of Khwe oral traditions and knowledge transfer may have begun when younger Khwe generations moved into SADF army bases, leaving the elderly in their former settlements.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with male Khwe headman, Chetto, 11/08/04.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with elderly male Khwe headman, Mutc’iku, 18/08/04.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with young Khwe man, WIMSA Youth Facilitator, Mutc’iku, 17/08/04.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with male Khwe Kyaramacan Trustee, N//goava-ca, 12/08/04.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with elderly Khwe headman, Omega III, 19/08/04.

[With a map] we can even see that our forefathers, they have settled all these bushes, [from] here to [the] Angola border. That's why it's important to us to have our map, to still have the names from our forefathers that were given to us, [which] we will give to the map, showing that this is where the Khwe community was settled long ago.<sup>46</sup>

A map, many said, would act as evidence to use against outsiders who attempted to undermine Khwe land rights:

Our young people will keep this [map] as history. Whenever another community wants to take the land; they can say no, this land belongs to the Khwe community, this is where the *omurambas* [dry river beds] are, which have been named by our fathers. It will give them power.<sup>47</sup>

If we don't have a map, we could claim things, but nothing will happen. If you have a map, you can show that this is my land, [that] I was born here, [that] my father died here...maybe it will help.<sup>48</sup>

If we can go to court [about the lack of recognition of the Khwe Traditional Authority], we can show the court [the map], [proving] we know this area [and] that the government must [acknowledge] our rights.<sup>49</sup>

The issue of land rights being undermined appears to be closely tied to Khwe resentment and concern about Khwe place-names being overwritten by Hambukushu ones, following Hambukushu settlement in the area. Interviewees also mentioned the ignorance of the government about the existence of many named places in West Caprivi, emphasising that “there are *people* living in West Caprivi, not only animals”.<sup>50</sup> Khwe people have already demonstrated a concern about place-names in the past. For example, CGGs in 1998 pointed out to IRDNC several times that the Khwe place names on their patrol maps were incorrectly spelled.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, at an IRDNC-Kyaramacan Trust meeting in August 2004, a Khwe woman expressed to me her dissatisfaction with the place names on maps being displayed by IRDNC representatives. These maps, derived from the national CBNRM GIS, contained some place names that were either mis-spelled in Khwedam or were names used by the SADF during its occupation (cf. Figure 4).

Here, Khwe place names symbolise Khwe autonomy. Asserting and defending those names represents a claim to belonging and ownership, and a quest for augmented power and visibility. As Ormerling (1983: 239) has argued in his discussion of minority toponyms on maps, the rendering of toponyms is “often the first and only manifestation by which the [group] can reveal itself to outsiders”. Place names are thus significant for representing identity, and my findings resonate with Orth's (2003: 147) suggestion that the contemporary Khwe emphasis on their own language and

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with elderly Khwe headman, Mutc'iku, 18/08/04.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Khwe headman, Pipo, 19/08/04.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Khwe man, former Steering Committee member, Chetto, 11/08/04.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with male senior Khwe Councillor and IRDNC employee, 10/08/04.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with male Khwe headman, Chetto, 11/08/04, and with male former Steering Committee member, Omega, 18/08/04.

<sup>51</sup> West Caprivi Monthly Reports, March and May 1998 (IRDNC). It is noteworthy, however, that a Khwe orthography was only developed by German researchers in the late 1990s, and mapmakers did not have access to it (G.Boden, pers.comm.,6/04/05).



place names is a recent phenomenon, part of a “revitalisation of tradition”, and a strategy for creating a cohesive identity for themselves in the context of struggles over land and leadership.

There was also considerable concern and lack of information amongst respondents about the boundaries of the different proposed zones within the national Park, which they had heard about in the context of MET’s new plan for the Park. These concerns point to the sense of exclusion from resources that residents feel as a result of having to live with Park rules, and were also expressed by some of my (few) Hambukushu respondents. As one headman stated, “We’re in darkness, we don’t know what the different areas are, and it seems like the whole place is under MET control. So we’ll be glad to have a map... We had a meeting with MET [to discuss where people can harvest their resources]...but they said no, the place is only for us, we’ll cut our boundaries where we want”.<sup>52</sup>

More generally, respondents stated that they did not know where MET land ‘begins and ends’, and that a map would assist them in this regard. As in the case of the N//goava-ca campsite, the status of the land was felt to be indeterminate as people awaited information about, and enforcement of, boundaries. As Orth (2003: 144) describes, “Working on, and thus investing a lot of energy, in the land [ie. practising agriculture] without knowing when the government, one of its ministries or the [Ha]Mbukushu chief might next come to lay claims on it, was perceived as extremely dissatisfying”. Thus maps and the information therein are envisaged as tools for retaining a degree of power or parity in relation to both a ‘surveillant’ state and Hambukushu expansion. In this capacity maps would assist in combating uncertainty over land tenure.

Some Khwe leaders made astute comments about the ‘politics’ that the mapping project might throw up, in particular with regard to who would control the project. They perceived MET’s interest in mapping to be a guise for maintaining state control over Khwe communities:

MET don’t know the bush, but they just want to cover it. Because MET know that if they cannot be there, when we [make] this map, they can say that, ‘no, no, this is not what we need’. This is why MET wants to be involved, so they can make their boundaries to stop us. The MET [should] be under [the control of] the community, the owners of the land. The Khwe community should have their own power to name their places.<sup>53</sup>

Once more, such statements were representative of a quest for autonomy and visibility.

A related issue concerned the involvement of Hambukushu people in the mapping project. In an official climate of nation-building (Sullivan 2003), IRDNC is obliged from a political perspective and indeed from a CBNRM one, to include *all* West Caprivi’s resource users (or at least their representatives) in the mapping project, including the minority of Hambukushu residents. IRDNC is sensitive about losing favour with government agencies by being seen to promote Khwe interests above

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Hambukushu headman, Mutc’iku, 17/08/04.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Khwe Acting Chief, Mutc’iku, 18/08/04.

those of other ethnic groups. In contrast, Khwe interviewees claimed that there was no reason for Hambukushu residents to be involved in the mapping, because as ‘newcomers’ who came ‘yesterday’ to West Caprivi, Hambukushu were not ‘owners’ of the land. One young man told me, “We cannot give time to [Hambukushu people] to name the places [in the mapping project], because the places were not [originally] named by Hambukushu...So even though they can join the project...they cannot [provide] the names of the places”.<sup>54</sup> They also asserted that all the names on the map should only be written in Khwedam: “Khwe came and settled first, and then Bantus came and chased them out, and renamed the places, even though they already had Khwe names. In the map it should just be Khwe names”.<sup>55</sup> Another interviewee claimed that if Hambukushu people were involved in the mapping, there were sure to be conflicts between the two groups over the information to be included in the map.<sup>56</sup> These kinds of sentiments are bound to complicate IRDNC’s aims of inclusivity, and point to the political dynamics that the mapping project could expose.

Other Khwe interests shown in mapping stood more in line with CBNRM discourse, and this is no doubt due to the influence of IRDNC. For example, respondents said that a map would help ‘the community’ to define areas suitable for tourism, trophy hunting and other developments from which they could benefit in the future. Some respondents, especially those who had been involved with, or exposed to, IRDNC’s activities, linked the map with securing resource ‘rights’ (‘proprietorship’) in order to gain economic benefits. For example, they recognised that a lack of ‘community’ rights and recognition translates as an inability to access revenues from trophy hunting.

Overall, mapping was perceived by my Khwe interviewees in an optimistic light. When asked if they foresaw any problems arising in relation to the mapping, they virtually all answered in the negative. No doubt, more extensive research would have revealed more complex and nuanced views about the potential and problems of mapping. Based on the responses that I collected, however, I argue that the West Caprivi mapping project is understood by Khwe representatives as a new opportunity to secure visibility and autonomy, goals which have been undermined by a long series of historical, political and economic events. Khwe understandings and expectations of mapping, however, even at this early stage of the process, prove to be quite different to those of IRDNC and MET. For those whom I interviewed, mapping stands to be a tool of politics, revealing West Caprivi’s contested power relationships over land, resources and leadership in which Khwe have most often had the losing hand. Mapping constitutes an opportunity to challenge these power hierarchies, through which Khwe can assert their identity and ‘ownership’ of the land.

## **6.2 The Discourse of ‘Management Planning’: How the mapping is shaped by IRDNC and MET**

There is a significant contrast between how MET and IRDNC understand mapping vis-à-vis Khwe actors. Indeed, an examination of these perspectives shows that mapping may ‘subtract’ Khwe power rather than expand it. Furthermore, IRDNC’s

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with young Khwe man, WIMSA Youth Facilitator, Mutc’iku, 17/08/04.

<sup>55</sup> Khwe man, Kyaramacan Trustee, Mashambo, 19/08/04.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Khwe Acting Chief, Mutc’iku, 18/08/04.

representation of the mapping project differs substantially to other countermapping projects in the region. I suggest that this is tied to IRDNC's institutional identity and reputation; to the environmental discourses in which its praxis is grounded; and to the politicised nature of Khwe identity, given their historical alliance with the SADF during Namibia's independence struggle, their stigmatisation by some government actors as 'traitors', and their recent demands for their leaders to be recognised. In contrast to Khwe perspectives, IRDNC dampens or conceals the inherently political nature of mapping. On some occasions, this action is strategic, whilst at other times it is unintended. In both cases, however, aspects of environmental and development discourse used by the NGO and the MET, especially that of 'management planning', serve to frame and represent the mapping in ways quite different to the San 'countermapping' seen in South Africa and Botswana.

Amongst those whom I interviewed, MET's interests in land mapping overlapped with some Khwe interests in terms of seeing maps as a CBNRM tool for communication or negotiation between stakeholders. Generally, however, MET's interests diverged from Khwe agendas, and cast mapping as a technique for 'legibility'. MET representatives implied that mapping would allow increased surveillance and monitoring of West Caprivi with regard to both human and wildlife activity. A key factor here is that the maps, drawing substantially on Khwe knowledge, would reveal new information about resources to the authorities, for example, about water locations. Representatives mentioned that the mapping would allow for infrastructural development of the Park, for example, opening up new roads or putting in boreholes for wildlife, based on new information about areas with high game densities.<sup>57</sup> This in turn would assist MET to conduct wildlife counts and prevent poaching. As an MET Warden told me, "Especially for us who do game monitoring, [mapping] will be helpful. If we know how many waterholes [there are], which [ones] are bigger, which [ones] have water longer, then we can patrol there and do anti-poaching activities."<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, maps would reveal to MET the different areas in which Park 'communities' harvest particular natural resources. Consequently, MET would be able to pinpoint these activities and negotiate with residents about access to resources. Overall, the 'visibility' which Khwe people desire, and which maps could augment, could ironically undermine their power vis-à-vis the Park authorities. Maps could serve to bring Khwe subsistence activities under increased scrutinization by Park authorities as the landscape is made 'legible'. Mapping could also facilitate the loss of Khwe control over knowledge about places and resources in West Caprivi. These political implications, however, were not referred to by any of the actors involved.

From my interviews and participant observation at NGO-community meetings, it became clear that a discourse of 'management planning' provided the structuring context for discussions of the anticipated mapping project. This discourse is linked to the emergence of the conservancy model in Namibia in the last decade and, importantly, to donor requirements which sit strongly (if somewhat invisibly to the outsider) on the shoulders of government agencies and NGOs (Sullivan 2003). MET demands management plans from all conservancies as part of the process that makes

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with two MET representatives, Katima, 2/08/04.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

them a legitimate body recognised by the state. Whilst the newly formed Kyaramacan Trust (KT) differs from a 'Conservancy Committee' due to West Caprivi's status as a Park, in other ways the Trust is seen in a similar light and therefore must conform to the same or similar MET requirements which are faced by other conservancies.

According to the MET, having a management plan in place is a prerequisite for the Trust to gain rights to revenues from hunting and tourism in the Park. In addition, with the final steps in the implementation of the MET's new 'Vision' plan for the Park being underway, it seemed timely that a 'community' management plan should be created simultaneously. IRDNC and the KT have been placed under pressure to rapidly produce such a plan.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, IRDNC has maintained communication with Botswana's TOCaDI and fostered links between Khwe groups separated by the international border, with a view to making the West Caprivi project similar to that of NG13 (see Figure 12). These two goals, that of producing a management plan for MET, and that of creating a project consistent with NG13, presented contradictions of which IRDNC seemed unaware, but with which it may have to grapple in the future.

In July 2004, a 'technical' meeting was held to discuss plans for mapping West Caprivi, and was attended by representatives from IRDNC, MET, TOCaDI, KT, an anthropologist, and the consultant who facilitated the NG13 mapping. During this meeting, the mapping of NG13 was described in some detail by the NG13 consultant and by TOCaDI representatives. Whilst the consultant emphasised the great importance of collecting and understanding data about historical land use, IRDNC representatives challenged his perspectives. Pointing to their more immediate need to meet MET requirements, they asked what type of data would be most 'relevant' or 'appropriate' for the purposes of a West Caprivi management plan. They questioned the amount of historical detail to be included, arguing that a more 'basic' map with less detail would suffice for the needs of a management plan. At the same time, an MET official advocated that the map's format should be consistent with the national CBNRM GIS, saying that "The best legs you can give [a project] is to fit it into a national system".<sup>60</sup> This argument thus proposed that the West Caprivi maps conform to the state's and NGOs' 'common language' of legibility, rather than acknowledge the specificities of West Caprivi's social landscape.

Not only did MET's demands steer the discussion of land mapping into an 'environmental management' framework, but the requirements of the management plan, combined with time constraints, threatened to minimize attention to 'detail' about the Khwe landscape and its histories. This avoidance of detail was presented as a way of being cost-effective. It also embodied a type of resistance to the need for external mapping expertise, given that IRDNC had recently carried out its own basic mapping work in Kasika and Impalila Conservancies (Figure 11).<sup>61</sup> As such, IRDNC made a firm bid for its own control of the mapping project. At the same time, the avoidance of 'detail' inevitably constituted an avoidance of politics, as the NGO was aware that in-depth discussion about the landscape and its characteristics could well highlight Khwe-Hambukushu antagonisms, and lead not only to internal community conflicts but to discussions of land claims. These were all issues that IRDNC wished

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<sup>59</sup> Interviews with IRDNC representatives, 18/07/04 and 8/09/04.

<sup>60</sup> MET (DEA) official, N//goava-ca, 22/07/04.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with IRDNC representatives, 18/07/04 and 8/09/04.

to circumvent, and its practitioners distanced themselves from any conflict that would interfere with their objectives (Chhotray 2004).

Overall, during the very early stages of project planning in July-September 2004, the discourse of management planning structured and shaped the way that the mapping was conceived. Theoretically, from a CBNRM perspective, management plans are a tool for securing rights, where rights are sets of mutually recognised claims and decision-making powers over resources. Whilst mapping could be a valuable component of management planning in this respect, and indeed serve Khwe interests, it appears that the circumstances under which IRDNC and KT must produce the management plan may serve to compromise the mapping and subsequently Khwe interests. That is, mapping was thought of more as a subsidiary tool for planning and stakeholder negotiations than an end in itself, or as a process which prioritised Khwe issues.

The project may thus be co-opted to serve institutional interests and needs. Overlooking 'detail' may result in unreliable and inconsistent mapping data. In the longer-term, this may threaten the legal credibility of mapping, should the data be used in the future to validate the claims of Khwe residents<sup>62</sup>. In turn, the prospect of increased Khwe visibility - which, according to my interviews, was foremost on Khwe agendas - may be diminished. Moreover, the complex and politicised issues of identity, rights and land, which appear to be so significant for Khwe respondents, may be marginalized as the mapping project is channelled through the management planning discourse. Thus, in contrast to other instances of San counter-mapping in the region, where indigenous rights discourses have bolstered the inherently political nature of mapping, the West Caprivi mapping is in danger of being depoliticised by environmental actors and CBNRM discourse.

### **6.3 Other Modes of 'Depoliticisation'**

The discourse of management planning is not the only mode through which the mapping project may be depoliticised. Whilst this discourse invoked the 'technical' treatment of a CBNRM project and resulted in its subtle, 'unintended' depoliticisation (Williams 2004), some actors in West Caprivi have *consciously* depoliticised the way that the project is represented and understood. IRDNC and MET representatives with whom I spoke were aware of, though did not necessarily speak explicitly about, the politically sensitive implications of mapping. These sensitivities are rooted in the socio-political history of West Caprivi which I have already outlined. Amongst others, they concern the contested relationships and power dynamics between Khwe and the SWAPO government, and between Khwe and neighbouring Hambukushu groups.

An awareness and acknowledgement of local politics meant that some of my interviewees highlighted the need for the mapping to be (re)presented as an apolitical, government-sanctioned project. This was necessary in order to legitimise the project and protect it from being thwarted by opposing interests. Such representation was also necessary to protect IRDNC's organisational reputation, to maintain IRDNC's good relationship with the state and to secure the state's support, and to protect Khwe

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<sup>62</sup> A. Albertson, pers.comm., 16/03/05.

community members from potential intimidation and abuse by government actors. As a Khwe employee of IRDNC, who had himself experienced intimidation by the NDF during Caprivi's recent political disruptions, told me:

If you say [that the mapping project is] just [for] Khwe, then people say, oh, remember the Khwe are trouble. But it's true. In West Caprivi, [if] something happens, like a village meeting, we [have to] inform the police, [and] army, because there's [been] unrest in the area. After the meeting, there might be questions. You [have to] answer [them], [explaining the] purpose of the meeting, how [did] you arrange the meeting, and where...this meeting [came from]. That question you must answer it until they're satisfied and say, ok, this is a meeting for development. Otherwise, you go for prison.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, an ex-employee of IRDNC reported that:

They need to be careful that NDF doesn't see the maps as a plot against the government. They probably need to involve the NDF to prevent that. How public will the mapping be? If it [just involves] small village meetings, [that are] low key, it's less likely to be interpreted as a movement. It's important that it doesn't happen in centres, as that will give the Khwe more ownership [over the process]. Otherwise they'll just hide in the corner [and not say anything]. It can't be seen as a land claim, it must be portrayed as an MET activity and plan. Perhaps by sending MET guys out with the [mapping] groups? Everything that happens in West Caprivi involving Khwe can be interpreted as an anti-government plan...<sup>64</sup>

Such statements point to the underlying hotbed of politics and sensitivities in which IRDNC's projects are carried out. Any activities involving Khwe leadership, or Khwe people more generally, have been treated in the past with suspicion by some government representatives.

IRDNC has taken risks in showcasing the government's discrimination against Khwe by supporting the recognition of Khwe leadership. The NGO is aware that it risks being seen as a 'white' group<sup>65</sup> prioritising Khwe interests over those of Hambukushu groups.<sup>66</sup> It has at times secured disfavour by working with the Khwe at all. For example, although the new Kyaramacan Trust is apparently supported by the MET, some government officials, including the Regional Governor for Kavango, have voiced their suspicion that the Trust represents the interests of the (unofficial) Khwe Traditional Authority and has been driven by donors.<sup>67</sup> A similar pattern is discernible in previous years. In 2001, for example, an IRDNC representative was chastised by the Governor of Caprivi, who told her that NGOs should work within the confines of government and not 'confuse the people' by working with a 'so-called traditional authority' that is unrecognised by the state. The Governor also claimed that the Khwe

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<sup>63</sup> Discussion with Khwe employee of IRDNC, 10/08/04.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with K.Rousset, TOCaDI and ex-IRDNC, Shakawe, 23/07/04.

<sup>65</sup> IRDNC's Directors are white southern Africans based outside of Caprivi, whilst its Caprivi Coordinator is a white expatriate. Several of the Caprivi staff are also white, both southern African and expatriate. These factors play a part in IRDNC's institutional identity and relationships, though space constraints preclude discussion of this here.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with K.Rousset, TOCaDI and ex-IRDNC, Shakawe, 23/07/04.

<sup>67</sup> IRDNC West Caprivi Task Force Meeting Minutes, Katima, 18/08/03.

institution with which IRDNC was working at that time to promote CBNRM activities, was an illegitimate body.<sup>68</sup>

IRDNC is thus aware that it treads on sensitive ground when working with Khwe, and that the relationship between Khwe and the state is highly contested and antagonistic. It is this awareness which informs IRDNC actors' strategic decisions to represent its West Caprivi projects, and indeed the mapping project, in particular 'de-politicised' ways. Such projects must be couched in terms of 'development' and 'environment' in order to smooth over any undertones of political subversion. This is clearly seen in the following statements from an IRDNC representative:

You do have to be very sensitive to the fact that this is not just communal land, but it's state land, a national park. And sure, some see this process as part of the West Caprivi residents laying claim to the land – that is politically very sensitive indeed, and I doubt we would get any support from land ministries for the process if that is what everyone viewed this as...So...what we want out of this is a map...[with] some management value...for conservation and tourism purposes, and even for ministry...otherwise it will be difficult to get their support, and we need their support.

IRDNC can't officially promote San interests in Bwabwata National Park – ...we'd get very little done and very little support if that happened. I've made this clear to the people we work with in West Caprivi that this must be seen as a natural resource management planning process, and that it must be seen as in the interests of the [whole] community, [not only Khwe residents], as it is in the ministry.

We mustn't talk about San land or San securing their rights. If we talk about that, we're going to land in deep trouble. Whatever the arguments behind it are, we can't go down that route...We obviously have a moral obligation, but we'd be shooting ourselves. It's very very difficult.<sup>69</sup>

Some MET representatives, too, were aware of the politics underlying the mapping. They referred to the potential for the 'subversion' of the project to serve Khwe interests rather than to maintain the status quo of local power structures, or to promote 'environmental' interests. When asked whether he foresaw any potential problems or sensitivities in terms of the mapping, one MET official replied, "Only if other people influence [the Khwe] during the map-making, for example, influencing them to do something against conservation, or politically, that's really sensitive. Those people are easily influenced due to their [poor] lifestyle and standard".<sup>70</sup> Another official responded that, "As long as the implementers [of the mapping] don't force the Ministry [and as long as the] Khwe [don't] feel like they could be given exclusive rights and be on their natural [way of] life, [there will be no problem]".<sup>71</sup>

Thus several IRDNC and MET actors acknowledged the 'politics' inherent to any mapping of West Caprivi, which revolve around Khwe identity, leadership, and the control of land and resources. Such acknowledgement, however, was not made public. IRDNC representatives chose to consciously depoliticise the mapping in order

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<sup>68</sup> IRDNC Memo 5/09/01: West Caprivi Traditional Authority and Committee Visit to Windhoek.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with IRDNC representative, 18/07/04.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with MET representative, Katima, 1/09/04.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with second MET representative, Katima, 1/09/04.

to maintain the legitimacy of both IRDNC as an organisation and its projects. Depoliticisation tactics as used by both IRDNC staff, and potentially by Khwe project participants, may also be employed to protect Khwe participants against harassment from state security forces. 'Depoliticisation' is thus a political strategy itself. It never removes politics from CBNRM projects but actually functions as *part* of the political relationships among West Caprivi's actors. Simultaneously, MET may *allow* for the execution, and concurrent depoliticisation, of an essentially political 'environment and development' exercise, given that the state benefits from IRDNC's international funding in a context where its own resources are limited. The relationships of power between state, NGO and society in West Caprivi are thus complex, shifting and contradictory.

Both the discourse of 'management planning' and the strategic representation of the mapping project by IRDNC actors serve to 'depoliticise' a project which will inevitably mirror and underscore political issues – the relationships of power between different groups with respect to identity and visibility, leadership and autonomy, land and resources. These are the very issues that Khwe people emphasised.



## Conclusion

In this case study, I have investigated the role of mapping and GIS in processes of environment-oriented 'development', and the implications of these technologies for a marginalized indigenous group. The land and natural resource maps of West Caprivi have yet to be created, but it is clear that the process of their production will be a complex and contested one, as already evidenced in their planning. I have argued that maps are inherently political artefacts, the outcome of specific social, historical and political circumstances. In southern Africa, as in other cases of 'countermapping', maps have been strategically created and employed by San groups in the process of constructing and contesting identity, rights and visibility. This is best demonstrated in the #Khomani land claim case. Concurrent with the birth of countermapping for 'indigenous rights' has been the incorporation of mapping and GIS into Namibian CBNRM praxis. Maps, as employed by CBNRM proponents for environmental monitoring and management, foster the re-conceptualisation of space and resources by local actors. Indeed, maps for conservancy 'management planning' may provide a forum for struggles over land and resources.

Situated at an intersection of multiple influences, including indigenous rights and environmental discourses, transnational networks and specifically local agendas, the idea of mapping has materialized in the far north-east of Namibia. Mapping not only to bring into focus West Caprivi's contested power relationships over land, resources and leadership, but will be a product of those relationships, in which Khwe perceive themselves to be the underdogs. Mapping is likely to develop as a space in which actors with contrasting yet partially overlapping agendas will compete over what form and purpose the mapping will have.

Against a background of dispossession, loss of autonomy and marginalization both by other ethnic groups and the state, the Khwe have been exposed over the past fifteen years to new and powerful environmental discourses, in particular that of CBNRM. Their experience of CBNRM has oscillated between opportunity and disillusion; in 2004, disillusion and uncertainty were at the forefront. I argue that an understanding of both their broader and more recent history explains the optimism and enthusiasm with which the idea of mapping has been greeted by some Khwe people. This is not a naïve optimism, however, but one which at its core emphasises power dynamics, and the inequality and invisibility that Khwe people feel. The prospect of mapping West Caprivi offers an opportunity to assert Khwe identity, belonging and ownership of land. It offers a chance to be recognised and acknowledged by the state, by neighbouring groups and by outsiders. That is, mapping embodies the potential for 'visibility'.

Mapping for visibility, however, depends upon an acknowledgement of the deeply political nature of this activity, and this is where Khwe interests may not be fulfilled. The interests of IRDNC and MET in mapping diverge from those of Khwe people. Drawing on environmental and development discourse, especially that of 'management planning', IRDNC steers the mapping into the realm of the 'technical', sidelining and glossing over its political implications. At the same time, IRDNC consciously represents the mapping as apolitical. This 'depoliticisation' is in fact a political strategy itself, and is used by IRDNC to legitimate the project, to avoid confronting the politically sensitive issues of land and leadership, to protect its

reputation as an organisation, and to maintain its good relationship with the state. State and donor requirements of management planning, combined with IRDNC's depoliticising practices, threaten to diminish attention to Khwe history and their struggle for land and autonomy. Their quest for 'visibility' may not be met.

The implications of West Caprivi's mapping for the Khwe are thus ambiguous. The fact that there is even dialogue over the mapping may be a positive indicator, but it is questionable whether more powerful actors will truly engage with Khwe understandings of their relationship with the land. It remains to be seen whether Khwe interests will be screened out by the workings of environmental discourses, or whether Khwe actors will find ways in which to (re)politicise the mapping and appropriate it for their own means. It also remains to be seen whether Khwe interests can be reconciled with those of environmental actors, and whether mapping can accommodate both conservation and human development goals.

The wider implications of this case study include that despite its counter-hegemonic potential, indigenous countermapping will never be free from the threat of assimilation into the agendas of more powerful actors. Furthermore, the use of mapping and GIS in CBNRM projects arguably extends the surveillant capacities and authority of the state, making questionable the claim that these technologies can assist in the devolution and democratisation of environmental management in the context of rural development.

## Appendix I: Research Methodology

### Introduction: Theoretical Leanings

Critiques from postmodernism, post-structuralism and feminism have vigorously challenged objectivist social science approaches, refusing a mimetic relationship between reality and its representation, and emphasising that all knowledges are partial, contingent, and laced with the workings of power. Such critiques have propelled researchers to engage more self-consciously in the process of fieldwork, and to produce methods which are sensitive to power relations (Rose 1997; England 1994; Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Approaches based upon 'reflexivity' and 'positionality' have thus become prominent among, though are not limited to, feminist researchers in a variety of disciplines. From this perspective, metanarratives (Lyotard 1984) and broad claims to truth are rejected in favour of situated knowledges. Reflexivity is thus a 'situating' method, and involves "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England 1994: 82).

Ideally, reflexivity renders the circumstances of fieldwork, data collection and analysis transparent, in contrast to purportedly 'objective' research in which these issues have routinely been screened out. Acknowledging that research is a multi-stage process rather than simply a product, I discuss here my own experiences of engaging with practices of reflexivity and positionality. Informed by these strategies, and employing ethnographic and participant-observation approaches, I embarked on two months of fieldwork in rural Namibia to research an 'environment and development' project. The issues that were predominant in my research, and that are significant to the research of international development more broadly, include the dynamics of working with NGOs; conducting research in poor, marginalized communities; and how new technologies are contested by different groups of actors in the development process. In this appendix, I reflect upon the strengths and limitations of my chosen methodologies for conducting research within these frameworks.

### Research Questions and Methodologies

My research questions revolved around a) the implications of NGO-facilitated land mapping for a variety of ongoing struggles over land, resources and identity both local and national, and b) around the role of GIS in natural resource management and 'development'. I employed a range of different research techniques and tools in order to address these questions. My intention, derived from anthropological and ethnographic principles, was that this would cater methodologically for a more holistic understanding of my research topics and the way that they interrelated. An holistic approach is the notion that "in principle anything in the research context can be relevant and could potentially be taken into account" (Gellner and Hirsch 2001: 7). Employing a range of techniques has also been advocated by feminist researchers with a view to compensating for the weaknesses of any single method with the strengths of another (Rocheleau 1995; Kwan 2002). Similarly, this approach has been used for studying NGOs (Markowitz 2001).

I required methodologies which would grant insights into the perspectives of different groups of actors, each of whom had interests in West Caprivi and in mapping, and into the discourses which framed the mapping. I also needed to learn

about the relationships between the different actors, both as spoken about and as enacted. Finally, I needed to learn about how GIS was being spoken about and used both by environmentalists and indigenous rights NGOs. Whilst interviews constituted the central component of the research, other 'primary' techniques included participant-observation at meetings and at the IRDNC office, and informal socializing. 'Secondary' research techniques included a) analysis of NGO literature, records and email correspondence and b) the gathering and interpretation of historical and contemporary maps. Throughout the fieldwork, I kept detailed notes on my activities, social interactions, and reflections about the research.

### **Initiating the Research: The Dynamics of Working through an NGO**

I set off for fieldwork with a flexible frame of mind, but did not anticipate how many obstacles I would encounter. The implementation of my research was very much a continually evolving process, one, which had to take into account a host of logistical, and other difficulties, and adapt accordingly. I had envisaged that IRDNC might find a practical role for me to play in terms of the mapping project. I felt that this would legitimate my presence, facilitate my research, and minimise the extent to which information was distorted or withheld (Francis 1993). It would also create an opportunity for both IRDNC and the Khwe communities to derive some benefit from whatever skills or labour I might have to offer. In other words, I had wanted the relationship to have an element of reciprocity to it. This stands in line with feminist approaches that, countering asymmetrical and exploitative research relationships, have emphasised relationships based on empathy, mutual respect and the sharing of knowledge (Oakley 1981; England 1994; Wilkinson 1998). On arrival in West Caprivi, I was thus anxious to define my 'role', which in turn would shape the 'identity' that I was known by. The mapping project, however, was still in its infant stages, and there appeared to be no clear role for me to adopt. As such, I explained my presence through having a former association with IRDNC, and as a student researcher. I also realised that I would have to shift the focus of the research to the origins and implications of the mapping rather than its implementation. In addition, the research would now involve more 'observation' than 'participation'.

My situation was substantially complicated by the fact that I was dependent on IRDNC for both accommodation and transport. To this extent I was no doubt automatically associated with the NGO both by its own staff, by MET officials and by Khwe people, regardless of my attempts to try and distance myself from IRDNC by emphasising my 'researcher' identity. I was uncomfortable about being given accommodation in the staff compound which catered primarily for the white expatriate higher-level administrators; indeed even within that group I imagine there were 'questions' about my being granted some of the good-quality accommodation. I surmised, but could not confirm, that this privilege was to do with my former voluntary work which the NGO had valued. Negotiating my identity in the 'expatriate' compound was also tricky at times. I wanted to maintain a sense of 'objectivity' in my interactions there, in order to gauge the social relationships that were ongoing within the NGO hierarchy. At the same time, I felt the need to make friends and negotiate a sense of belonging in a situation where I was somewhat of a lonely outsider (Shaffir 1991). This dynamic persisted throughout my stay.

Transport proved perhaps to be the biggest logistical obstacle that I faced. Rented vehicles were not available in Katima Mulilo, and there is no formal public transport system in Caprivi. As a result, I found myself heavily dependent on IRDNC for transport, for example, to attend various meetings held by the NGO. Meetings often entailed overnight stays in rustic camping sites, for which I had to carry sizeable amounts of camping equipment. Vehicle space thus became a constraint too, but having the equipment with me was also necessary given that plans would change so often, and that I needed to be ready for any eventuality. I would often camp in a new place on each consecutive night. For one week of the fieldwork, I was able to hire one of IRDNC's vehicles for my own use, but was concerned that, for those who weren't aware of the transaction, this gave the illusion that I was being treated by the administrators as a member of staff, or that I *was* a member of staff.

My fieldwork was characterised by many hours travelling on the road, given the significant distances between the IRDNC's Katima headquarters and its village meetings in West Caprivi. It was not unusual for IRDNC staff to clock up 1000 kilometres in a week, just to attend meetings. Vehicle breakdowns were a fairly regular occurrence, and once more required considerable flexibility on my part. (Occasionally I had to hitch lifts to get to my destination, together with all my gear). Plans would sometimes change at the last minute, robbing me of an entire day's research in a location that was difficult to access. I tried to transform these mishaps into opportunities, capitalising on the chance to converse informally with IRDNC staff. Overall, planning in advance was rarely possible. The frustration that I felt as a consequence of this made me aware that I was trying too hard to be 'in control' of the research process,<sup>72</sup> which in turn was closely tied to the time and resource constraints I faced.

## **Interviews**

Semi-structured qualitative interviews formed a central part of my research, and through this technique I attempted to understand the perspectives of a variety of 'stakeholders' with interests in the resources of West Caprivi Game Park and in mapping. Interviewing has been critiqued by feminists as a product of Western scientific methods which assumes and reinforces the power of the interviewer (Oakley 1981) and posits the interviewee as 'object'. They argue, however, that interviewing can remain a useful research tool, as long as the power dynamics and ethical implications of research relationships are explicitly acknowledged and challenged where necessary (Finch 1984). Semi-structured interviews differ from a structured survey approach in that they give respondents an opportunity to interactively define the scope of the interview (Foddy 1993). In contrast to a positivist approach that prescribes abstract and pre-determined categories on to the 'objects' of research, this type of interviewing ideally facilitates the inclusion of voices and issues that might otherwise remain unheard if quantitative methods were used (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

*1. Sampling.* I conducted a total of 42 interviews, each lasting between 30 minutes and an hour. Table 1 below summarises my sample.

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<sup>72</sup> Certain factors clearly lay beyond my control, for example, the fact that the expiry of the work permit of the IRDNC employee tasked with implementing the mapping project coincided with the second half of my visit.

Sector Interviewed		Number of Persons/Groups Interviewed
NGOs	IRDNC, Katima	6
	TOCaDI, Shakawe	3
	WIMSA, Windhoek	1
	NNF, Windhoek	1
	Strata 360, Montreal	1
		<b>Subtotal</b>
Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), Katima & Windhoek		6
		<b>Subtotal</b>
Khwe residents, West Caprivi	Individuals	15
	Small Groups of 2-3	6
Hambukushu residents, West Caprivi	Individuals	1
	Small Groups of 2-3	1
		<b>Subtotal</b>
Researchers		1
		<b>TOTAL Interviews</b>
		<b>42</b>

**Table 1: Summary of interviews**

Due to a shortage of time and resources, I was forced to omit interviewing other important stakeholders, including more Hambukushu people, safari hunting operators, and the Ministries of Land and Agriculture. These omissions have resulted in a portrayal of West Caprivi that, although complex, is less complex than it should be. Proportionally, Khwe people may appear ‘over-represented’ in my sampling. This was intentional, as my research primarily asks about the implications of resource mapping for *Khwe* people, given that they constitute the majority of West Caprivi’s population (70-80%), that they are a particularly marginalized group, and that they stand both to influence the mapping’s implementation and to be directly affected by it. In terms of the NGO interviews, half were conducted with IRDNC staff. I was not as dependent on interviews to gain insights into IRDNC perspectives as I was for the case of Khwe representatives. This was partly to do with shared language, and partly to do with the fact that I had greater informal exposure to IRDNC perspectives than Khwe ones.

My interview sampling was biased in several further respects. I relied on my IRDNC contacts for suggestions about whom to interview, both among the Khwe communities and within MET. Thus my interviewees inevitably fell within the contours of IRDNC’s ‘networks’. My selection of Khwe interviewees was substantially determined by the recommendations of a man who was both a senior Khwe authority and an employee of IRDNC. Consequently, my interviewees were mostly men, eight of whom held senior positions of authority such as headmanships. Most of the remaining interviewees had some connection to IRDNC and had been exposed to ‘CBNRM’ theory and practice. These included members of the former Steering Committee, current Kyaramacan Trustees, Community Game Guards, and Community Resource Monitors.

Whilst it was of course pertinent to interview such people, given my interest in the relationship between Khwe people and environmental discourses, I was concerned that interviewees were just repeating to me what they knew CBNRM ‘was good for’, rather than sharing their more nuanced experiences of it. The majority of my interviewees held some standing in local society, either as ‘traditional’ leaders, or economically as IRDNC employees. Although Khwe are described by anthropologists as being an egalitarian society with various ‘levelling’ mechanisms, my knowledge of intra-Khwe power relations was vague at best; my thesis thus glosses over the fact that even poor, marginalized groups themselves contain hierarchies.

In terms of gender, women’s voices were definitely under-represented, although the views of the five women interviewed appeared to be consistent with the men. My previous research with CRMs, however, made me aware that ‘digging deeper’ would no doubt have revealed the ways in which women’s interests in CBNRM, in mapping, and in associating with IRDNC, diverged from men’s (Rocheleau 1995; Edmunds *et al* 1995). Spending a longer period of time in the field, gaining more exposure to Khwe people through a stronger commitment to ethnographic principles, and the use of a female translator may have partially ameliorated this problem.

Whilst the majority of the interviews were one-to-one, several were conducted with small groups of 2-3 people (see Table 1). In the cases of the Khwe interviews, it was common for people who were not being interviewed to come and observe these meetings. Other family members would inevitably listen to interviews carried out in a family homestead. In one case, my interview with a Khwe headman was spontaneously attended by about 30 village residents, including women and children. This may have influenced my interviewees’ responses in ways that I, as a socially inept outsider, was not aware. In the group interviews, one person’s voice often predominated, and I subsequently tried to facilitate the ‘voices’ of the other participants. Ultimately, these group discussions too were influenced by power relations and social dynamics that were invisible to me.

*2. Language, Translators and Access.* Whilst my interviews with NGO and MET representatives were conducted in my first language, English, I was dependent on translators when interviewing members of the West Caprivi communities, who generally speak Khwedam and Afrikaans. The pitfalls of translation have been widely discussed (Temple and Edwards 2002), and among social scientists, anthropologists have perhaps placed the most emphasis on the importance of language for understanding cultural norms and worldviews. The short time frame of my research, however, did not justify my learning a new language to the level required for interviewing. Furthermore, an orthography for the Khwedam language has only very recently been created, and there are virtually no learning materials available.

Finding an appropriate translator proved difficult, given that the majority of Khwe people do not speak English, and that the few who do tend to be IRDNC employees. For two interviews, I relied for translation on a Khwe IRDNC employee. This was far from ideal, as I had little understanding about the relationships between this translator and my interviewees, and the extent to which this may have restricted the interviewees from divulging their honest opinions. Furthermore, on this particular occasion, IRDNC had incorporated my ‘need’ for interviews into their meeting

agenda. This probably gave the impression that the interviews were an activity driven by IRDNC, rather than by me as an independent researcher. I worried that the interviewees felt coerced into the situation. For the rest of the interviews, I hired a Khwe man with whom I had worked previously. His language skills were fairly good, but there were still many occasions when I had to try and interpret what he was translating. His translating skills improved over the duration of the research, which again resulted in inconsistency in the quality of the data collected.

3. *Content of Interviews.* The construction of my interview questions was an evolving process. I planned the majority of questions in advance, and referred when necessary to a list during the interviews. My questions for NGO and MET representatives, especially at the outset, tended to be the product of my desire to gradually ‘piece together’ different parts of a ‘puzzle’, that is, filling gaps in my own knowledge about West Caprivi. To a certain extent, I then repeated the same questions to different actors and compared or cross-checked their responses. For the community interviews, however, my questions were much more consistent, which allowed for a definite comparison of responses. This consistency was the product of focusing specifically on the issue of mapping, whereas for NGO and MET representatives, I asked a more diverse set of questions which not only considered mapping, but posed questions about CBNRM, the use of GIS, institutional histories and relationships and so on. Again, the knowledge I gleaned is admittedly partial and contingent upon the identities of the actors I met

4. *My identity as interviewer.* Positional factors such as race, gender, class and nationality, amongst others, have been widely acknowledged to shape the power relations between researcher and the researched, and hence the production of academic knowledge (Haraway 1991; McDowell 1992; Mullings 1999). Being a young, white Zimbabwean woman, the characteristics which probably most influenced my social interactions in West Caprivi were race, gender, age and economic status. As already highlighted, another central problem for my research was the degree to which I was associated with IRDNC by my various interviewees, especially the Khwe respondents. I had already met some of these people during a previous visit in 2003, at which time I *was* affiliated with IRDNC, albeit briefly. For my MPhil research, I was anxious to ‘re-define’ my identity and positionality so as not to be over-associated with IRDNC, but in reality this was difficult to achieve, given my dependence on the organisation for logistical support, especially transport. For instance, the fact that I arrived at meetings in an IRDNC vehicle must have coloured people’s perceptions of me.

At the beginning of each interview, I attempted to clarify my ‘status’ and position, and highlighted that my interviews were *not* being conducted *for* IRDNC but for my own research purposes. I do not know how successful my attempts at ‘dis-association’ were. Furthermore, this strategy was not consistent. On some occasions, for example, I felt the need to legitimate myself through reference to my association with IRDNC, for example, when meeting MET officials. These inconsistencies reveal the ways in which researchers tend to ‘manipulate’ their self-representation, depending on the circumstances (Mullings 1999; Shaffir 1991).

They also point to Judith Butler’s (1990) argument about performativity, which complicates the ‘positional’ approach. Butler argues that our identities do not pre-



exist our performances of them, and are in fact deeply uncertain. As Rose (1997: 316) has elaborated, “no identity is secure in and of itself; it may only be made temporarily more certain...by being enacted...[T]here is no clear landscape of social positions to be charted by an all-seeing analyst...Instead, researcher, researched and research make each other; research and selves are ‘interactive texts’”. Rose’s discussion pushes the notion of the contingency of knowledge much further than the average feminist argument. Importantly, this highlights the uncertainty inherent to social interactions in the fieldwork situation and certainly resonates with my own experiences.

7. *Culture, Ethics and Fair Return for Assistance.* My interviews with Khwe people raised several ethical issues that honestly made me question the whole notion of research among underprivileged groups, where multiple inequalities between the researcher and the researched are repeatedly exposed (McCorkel and Myers 2003). During one of my first interviews with a Khwe headman, he said to me, “You researchers come and go, but nothing ever comes of it”. I felt ashamed. This is undoubtedly a recurrent theme, and particular for San in southern Africa, who for many years have had a constant stream of researchers on their doorstep (Robins 2002), though somewhat less so in West Caprivi. Researchers like myself, on the other hand, will leave Oxford with an MPhil degree and an impressive CV which will potentially secure them well-paid jobs. Will they remember that their degrees and employment were in part enabled by the underprivileged communities that they studied? Will the underprivileged ever get a share of the privilege which they have helped to build?

I was continually aware of my comparative ‘wealth’ vis-à-vis my Khwe hosts and informants, and acutely conscious about the issue of food in particular. I knew that the villagers knew that I would arrive with a trunk full of food in places where people often only had one meal a day. Khwe culture places strong emphasis on sharing; requests for food or the use of household items should never be refused. If I shared food, then I should share with everybody, but then there would not be enough to go round. I tried to keep my own eating as discreet as possible, out of embarrassment and out of not knowing how to handle the situation. Overall, I was poorly informed about Khwe norms of reciprocity.

I attempted to give a full explanation to each interviewee about the purposes of my research, explaining that although I *hoped* it to be of *joint use* to the communities, IRDNC and MET in terms of aiding the mapping process and hence ‘development’, I could not absolutely guarantee its usefulness. Indeed I could not guarantee that anyone in a position of power or influence would even read it. I aimed to reassure interviewees that confidentiality and anonymity would be practiced with regard to the information imparted to me – though I could not be sure if my translators made this point clearly.

I gave each Khwe interviewee a kilo of maize-meal (the staple food) in return for the time spent talking to me. This was simply a token, constrained by my budget and by transport arrangements. I believed it was better than a cash equivalent (Devereux and Hoddinott 1993), given the problem of alcohol in West Caprivi, and given that maize-meal would find its way to several stomachs rather than just one. I offered to send

interviewees a hard copy of their interview, but this offer was inconsistent, as at first I had assumed that they would not want one due to illiteracy. Subsequently, I realised that sharing interview transcripts was important *despite* illiteracy, perhaps giving my informants some sense of ‘ownership’ over the information they had shared with me. It also contributed towards the ‘reciprocity’ that I desired in my research relationships.

Despite feeling guilt and shame about my ‘wealth’ and research ethics, there were occasions when Khwe people actively took advantage of *me*. Whilst these events made me angry, retrospectively I also silently congratulated these people for making the most of a naïve white girl who could basically afford it. For example, when I hired a vehicle for a week, I gave free lifts to several hitchhikers. There is no public transport system in West Caprivi and private drivers thus charge a taxi fee to those whom they give transport. I figured that I was doing a good deed by giving my lifts free. In fact, I happily provided one Khwe passenger with about 200km worth of transport. I found out on arrival at our destination that this young man had actually been charging a fee to everyone else who caught lifts along the way, and keeping the proceeds for himself. I was morally outraged, but once I had cooled down, I wondered whether this was all part of my ‘fair return for assistance’ deal.

### **Participant-Observation and Informal Interaction**

A good proportion of my understanding of IRDNC as an organisation was based on participant-observation. I attended staff meetings in the Katima office when possible, and attended meetings between IRDNC and Khwe representatives. I was also able to attend two meetings specifically on mapping. The majority of the meetings were *not* focused on the mapping, however. These gave me general insights into IRDNC’s ‘culture’, organisational goals, CBNRM projects, and its relationships with ‘local communities’, including Khwe. Informal interaction and conversations, for example, during journeys to meetings or social gatherings, provided me further opportunities to understand IRDNC staff perspectives on intra-IRDNC relationships, Khwe communities, and the place of mapping in IRDNC’s agenda. It was sometimes difficult to draw a line between my research interests and ‘friendships’, for I genuinely had interests in both.

Whilst attendance of meetings was definitely useful for my research, ultimately I should have attended many more to get a true sense of the abovementioned factors. Once again, my own ‘unclear’ identity, and how this was interpreted by those present at meetings, made me anxious. If I had had a functional role to play in the mapping project, my presence may have been more legitimate. With regard to informal interactions, maintaining a purely ‘researcher’ identity is consuming in many ways, if not impossible to maintain. It was extremely challenging to try and analyse people and relationships *all the time*; hence in some ways perhaps I should have made a clear-cut distinction about what I did and did not regard as ‘research’. My anthropological ‘holistic’ approach, however, meant that I zealously recorded every piece of potentially valuable information in my fieldwork notes. All these kinds of problems would have been resolved or made easier if the research period had been longer.

### **Secondary Research Techniques**

## *1. Analysis of NGO literature, documents and email correspondence.*

I collected and read as much material as I could about West Caprivi, the Khwe, and IRDNC's role in the area. For this I relied mostly on the NGO 'libraries' at IRDNC, WIMSA and TOCaDI, though time spent at the latter two was circumscribed. Much of IRDNC's small library was related to its conservation and environment goals, and reflected the work and experiences of its staff. This set of material was biased in its own ways, in terms of the interests it represented, but valuable for understanding the make-up of CBNRM discourses about 'environment and development'. IRDNC has tended to privilege Khwe voices and interests over Hambukushu interests in West Caprivi: its staff have been much more involved with Khwe than Hambukushu people, and the NGO tends to view Hambukushu as a threat to conservation. IRDNC also has copies of anthropological work done by German researchers. Again, these works focus on Khwe perspectives, perhaps because of the Western academic intrigue with San groups. These biases no doubt filtered through into my analysis, and the attention that I have paid to one marginalized group has no doubt in turn marginalized other histories and perspectives.

Other documents that I analysed included minutes of recent meetings held in West Caprivi, for example, with the emergent Kyaramacan Trust. These were useful for understanding institutional relationships and dynamics. They were somewhat marginal yet significant texts which tended to challenge some of the dominant narratives which IRDNC perpetuated. The shortfalls of these texts were that English was not always the first language of the writer, making the descriptions therein open to interpretation. I was also able to read a selection of reports on West Caprivi by IRDNC staff written in the late 1990s. These were helpful for an 'historical' perspective, and for identifying the roots of contemporary projects and discourses. Through these reports, I was able to trace some of the origins of the planned resource mapping, and IRDNC's transnational relationships. The shortfall of these reports is their brevity, and they therefore lack the detail necessary for a thorough analysis. Furthermore, not all the reports were in the records, creating some unfilled temporal 'gaps'.

Analysing email correspondence also formed a small part of my research. From the start of my correspondence with IRDNC, TOCaDI and with other mapping contacts, I kept records of these email exchanges. These were useful for tracing the relationship between these different actors and myself as a researcher. They were also a useful record for understanding how NGO actors viewed an anticipated project in its early stages, and the potential roles that those actors saw me playing in the project. After arriving in Caprivi, I was also included on an email list via which various aspects of the mapping were discussed and debated by NGO and MET representatives, an anthropologist, and a mapping consultant. Emails were useful 'texts' for revealing dominant narratives and discourses, and the way that these entities were contested and shaped by people with different disciplinary and institutional backgrounds. They reveal just how socially constructed a mapping project is.

## *2. Analysis of historical and contemporary maps.*

During my fieldwork, I noted the presence and absence of maps on office walls and in records, given my specific interest in these artefacts, their role in how landscapes are constructed and, more recently, their role in ‘development’ projects. I aimed to create a catalogue of all the different maps of West Caprivi that I could find. I located a number of historical maps in the Windhoek Archives, dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and also acquired contemporary official maps from the General Surveyor’s Office. These revealed the hugely varying ‘stories’ that maps tell about place, landscape and cartographers. I also viewed computerised maps of West Caprivi stored in the CBNRM GIS database, and maps that CGGs used on their bush patrols. The visually impressive maps of Khwe resources in Botswana’s NG13 were also important for getting a sense of what indigenous ‘counter-mappers’ have been producing, both in southern Africa and worldwide. Overall, analysis of maps was a research component that I did not have enough time to explore and develop fully, but it was important for my own ‘jigsaw puzzle’ knowledge. Future mapping research would necessitate much greater attention to theories about images and vision (Foucault 1977; Haraway 1991; Jay 1993) and to visual methodologies (Rose 2001).

## **Conclusions**

The central problems that arose in my research included time constraints, a dependency on IRDNC, and my privileged status vis-à-vis many whom I interviewed. Each of these had implications for my research relationships, the power dynamics therein, and consequently for my research ethics. As recent anthropological and feminist works have argued (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Crapanzano 1992; Rose 1997; Mullings 1999), reflexive and situated approaches to research highlight the partial, intersubjective nature of any knowledge that we produce, and makes us sensitive to the social dynamics of power. This is crucial for development research carried out both within NGOs and among impoverished groups. Whilst making us aware of asymmetry and exploitation, however, reflexivity cannot remove these relations (England 1994) or tone down their complexity. Nor does it decenter the researcher’s privilege, and to this extent, the researcher may fail to provide meaningful accounts of how power organises knowledge production (Wasserfall 1993). My attempts at ‘appropriate’ reciprocity arguably worked better in some circumstances than others, but I felt ill-equipped to deal with the ethical issues thrown up when interviewing Khwe people. Overall, the demand to situate knowledge is a demand to recognize the messiness, complexity and uncertainty of the research process (Rose 1997). Knowledge is negotiated and dialogical; identities and meanings are not fixed but open to manipulation and change. Despite recognising these issues, researchers still have the power to distort, make invisible, overlook, or exaggerate their findings (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). They may still be tempted, as I have, to produce a clean and neat analysis of their fieldwork, even whilst knowing that the reality of a social setting is infinitely more complex.

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