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Repertoires of Domination: Decentralization as Process in Botswana and Senegal

AMY R. POTEETE

Concordia University, Montreal, QC, Canada

and

JESSE C. RIBOT*

University of Illinois, Urbana, IL, USA

Summary. — Decentralization promises to empower local actors, but threatens others with a loss of power. We describe “repertoires of domination” as the set of acts actors perform to defend—or entrench and expand—their positions. We illustrate, through case studies of decentralization in natural resource sectors in Botswana and Senegal, how repertoires of domination prevent local-level democratization. The concept of repertoire brings attention to the availability of multiple, substitutable acts of domination that draw upon varied sources of power. Neither decentralization nor democratization can be achieved once and for all. These processes are both advanced and halted through acts of contestation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Decentralization promises improvements in efficiency, responsiveness to spatially variable conditions, and greater opportunities for citizen participation and empowerment. In theory, these outcomes hinge on *how* decentralization alters relations of authority and, especially, the allocation of power to broadly representative and downwardly accountable local actors (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Blair, 2000). To enhance local democracy, decentralization must increase opportunities for local people to participate in binding forms of consultation (representation with accountability) and provide access to significant material resources and decision-making authority (Crook & Manor, 1998; Ribot, Chhatre, & Lankina, 2008).

Despite national-level political struggles around legislation (Eaton, Kaiser, & Smoke, 2009; Heller, 2001), decentralization reforms have been widely promulgated. In implementation, however, central actors as well as local-level officials, traditional leaders, and commercial elites, resist the loss of power. Although successes have been documented, instances of local democratic empowerment through decentralization are few and far between (Blair, 2000; Crook & Manor, 1998; Fung & Wright, 2003; Heller, 2001; Ribot, 2004). Disappointments with decentralization are often attributed to institutional problems, suggesting that improvements can be gained with greater attention to “getting the institutions right” (Fung & Wright, 2003; Gibson & Marks, 1995; Manor, 2004; Wunsch, 2001). Responsibilities of local actors are often increased, while their authority to make significant local decisions is not. Onerous requirements and inadequate finances limit the ability of local actors to exercise new powers that are formally within their reach. Alternatively, reforms devolve meaningful authority to local actors who are not accountable to a broadly defined local community (Manor, 2004; Ribot, 2004; Ribot *et al.*, 2008; Wittayapak & Vandergeest, 2009).

These problems are not simply the products of flawed institutional design (Tacconi, Siagian, & Syam, 2006; Wittayapak & Vandergeest, 2009). They reflect the political contestation surrounding decentralization programs. Decentralization programs are typically presented as enhancing local democracy and development, yet are motivated by many other political and economic concerns or crises (Agrawal & Ostrom, 2001; Alden Wily & Mbaya, 2001; Barrow, Gichohi, & Infield, 2001; Bazaara, 2006; O’Neill, 2003; Ribot, 2004). Regardless of motives, powerful actors—including governments promoting decentralization—resist local empowerment at every step (Bates, 1983; Blaikie, 2006; Ribot & Oyono, 2005; Wunsch, 2001).

Centripetal forces are a constant aspect of decentralization reforms, manifest through many different acts. Central actors counteract the loss of powers by blocking the transfer of meaningful powers to local authorities or by only “transferring” powers to local actors they can control (Ribot, 2004). Other agencies, NGOs, and commercial interests gain power by positioning themselves as intermediaries between center and local, while resisting both central oversight and downward

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accountability (Guyer, 1994; Mazonde, 1996; National Research Council, 1992; Utting, 1999). In the same place, devolution of one power may be stymied by arguments that local actors lack capacity, while the transfer of another power may be prevented via selective implementation of laws or threats of violence. Across localities, powerful actors may use totally different theatrics to retain power over the same domain, such as the right to commercially exploit forests. The common net result is continued nonlocal control over all significant local decision-making processes (Grindle, 2007; Harriss, Stokke, & Törnquist, 2004).

The sets of acts that those contending for power can perform to establish, defend, entrench, or expand a position of dominance are what we call “repertoires of domination.” In the next section, we develop this concept of “repertoires of domination” to describe the myriad tactics government officials and nonstate actors use to limit meaningful shifts of authority associated with decentralization. Subsequent sections illustrate the interactions between repertoires of domination and decentralization policies related to wildlife management in Botswana and forestry management in Senegal. The specific repertoires, or sets of routine claim-making actions, differ across the two cases and across sets of actors within each case, but in both cases they activate processes that short-circuit the consolidation of local democracy. We conclude by drawing out the implications of repertoires of domination for the conceptualization of power, the process of decentralization, and the prospects for political change.

2. REPERTOIRES OF DOMINATION: TURNING RESISTANCE ON ITS HEAD

We define “repertoires of domination” as the sets of routine claim-making actions available to actors as they seek to gain, expand, or defend positions of dominance vis-à-vis particular types of other actors. They represent a sub-set of repertoires of contention (Tilly, 1978, 2006, 2008) defined by the goal of domination. We are *not* claiming that dominance is actually achieved or that any single dominant actor exists. Contestation for dominance is an ongoing process—part of the ongoing production and reproduction of hierarchy.

In principle, Tilly’s (1978) repertoires of contention encompass claim-making by any set of actors, whether within the state or outside, whether powerful or marginalized. Nonetheless, most applications of the concept focus on the repertoires mobilized by actors challenging the status quo, such as in Scott’s (1985) discussion of “everyday forms of resistance.” There are some exceptions. Ribot and Oyono (2005) write of “repertoires of resistance” concerning powerful actors resisting decentralization, Peluso (1992) writes of “repertoires of control” and Salvatore (2000) of “repertoires of coercion.” Our distinction between domination and resistance is not based on differences in activities or goals. Rather, it reflects the relative position of the actors. While powerful central actors frequently “resist” decentralization (often involving control and coercion), we chose to use the language of “domination” to avoid any confusion with the more-common usage of the term “resistance” to refer to the actions of the poor against domination by the powerful. The distinction recognizes that structural positioning—socially, economically, and politically—affects not only the options available to actors, but also how their efforts to gain and maintain power are perceived.

Like other types of repertoires, repertoires of domination vary across settings and relationships and are influenced by

familiarity, socially constructed meanings and norms of appropriate behavior in particular types of relationships, and strategic considerations. They involve performances in diverse realms of social interaction and draw upon diverse resources such as capital and market access, social identity and status, formal and informal authority, technology, and knowledge. Repertoires of domination include many solo and small ensemble performances in relatively intimate settings, including coded threats, bribes, coercion, and collusion. Although these actions involve few actors and occur in less-public settings, they are still claim-making performances.

The concept of “repertoires of domination” trains interest on the multiple ways in which powerful actors gain, build, and maintain positions of dominance. Actors engage in routine or practiced ways of doing things as well as creative improvisation and the quality of their performances varies based on skill and experience (Alexander & Mast, 2006). Actors constantly define their own roles and those of their allies and foes, display or claim power, or highlight the vulnerability and dependency of their rivals. Their performances may appeal to morality or showcase their strengths in markets, politics, or violence. To sway opinions or build constituencies, they deploy multiple acts to convey the same messages and present different (even contradictory) messages to different audiences.

Multiple performances are possible and, indeed, commonplace in part because there are multiple sources and forms of power: political, economic, discursive, coercive, symbolic and real violence, and the power to access, control, and manufacture knowledge. Formal and informal, state and non-state powers often coexist and reinforce each other, but the correspondence is not perfect. Actors who lack formal rights, for example, can control informal sources of power, whether material, discursive, or rooted in violence. Actors hold bundles of power, which they mobilize to gain, maintain, or control access to tangible and intangible things (Ribot & Peluso, 2003), including more power. Thus, actors that control access to scarce resources or markets may be able to use their economic power to gain access to valuable resources to which they do not have any legal right. Likewise, privileged access to information can be parlayed into privileged access to material resources.

This understanding of power implies that the state is not the only or even the most important source of power and regulation (Mitchell, 1991). Power also resides in nonstate public authorities—what Lund (2006) refers to as “twilight institutions”—and operates outside of and across particular organizations (Foucault, 1976, 1979). Power may manifest at least as much in the “leakages” across boundaries—organizational, spatial, sectoral, and temporal—as in the boundaries themselves (compare Rajchman, 2000).

This understanding of power has several implications. We emphasize three here. First, if power takes multiple forms and is not easily contained, it must be understood as mobilized (or perhaps produced) through *practice* (Bourdieu, 1977). Second, manifestations of power are not static; they are subject to *improvisation* and *transposition* (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 82–83; Sewell, 1992, pp. 17–18). Third, if power is not monopolized by state institutions, then changes in state institutions, including those resulting from decentralization policies, influence some but not all strands of power. Hence, the forms and uses of power must be observed in *practice*, these practices must be followed as they *shift* and *reconfigure*, and formal policy must be viewed as *affecting only some of the powers* of actors who regulate and of those regulated.

We argue that decentralization rarely generates democratization because powerful actors use repertoires of domination

effectively to circumvent or neutralize formal policy change. Because repertoires involve actions in multiple realms of social interaction and draw on a variety of socio-political, material, and normative resources, they represent sources of flexibility and creativity in the exercise of power. Through a whole array of acts by powerful actors within and outside of the state, decentralization reforms are constrained and reworked.

3. DECENTRALIZATION IN BOTSWANA AND SENEGAL

We are concerned with programs that decentralize control over decisions and revenue streams associated with local natural resources. Local control over decisions and sources of revenue should increase the autonomy of local communities from central government and other powerful actors. Yet, as with other forms of decentralization, most programs for decentralized natural resource management have had little effect on local power (Hulme & Murphree, 2001; Larson & Ribot, 2007; Wittayapak & Vandergeest, 2009).

We consider two examples: Botswana's Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program for wildlife management and the decentralization of forestry management in Senegal. While we find flawed institutional arrangements in both countries, repertoires of domination present more fundamental obstacles to local empowerment and democratization. In both cases, actors threatened by decentralization drew upon defensive repertoires to fetter the transfer of significant powers to local authorities. We describe the origins and main features of the sector-specific decentralization policy or program for each case. We then illustrate how repertoires of domination are performed to slow, halt, or reverse the consolidation of local authority and processes of democratization. Although the specific practices are diverse and rooted in local contexts and relationships, an overlapping set of mechanisms is at work in the two cases. These mechanisms include (de)legitimation; misrepresentation and obfuscation; the fostering of dependency; threats, bribes, and coercion; and coalition-building and collusion.

(a) Botswana: decentralization of wildlife management

Botswana's Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program decentralizes wildlife management on the grounds that rural residents will support conservation measures if they receive tangible benefits from wildlife (Blaikie, 2006; Poteete, 2009; Taylor, 2002). Launched in 1989, it encompasses many of the most wildlife-rich areas in Botswana. The 2007 CBNRM policy affirmed the legal basis for community management, yet also calls for the diversion of fully 65% of the revenues generated in community-managed areas into a National Environment Fund (RoB, 2007).

Botswana's CBNRM represents an ambiguous example of democratic decentralization since downward accountability remains weak (Boggs, 2000; Cassidy, 2000; Thakadu, 2005). Nonetheless, CBNRM has conferred significant control over wildlife revenues to communities in select wildlife-rich areas. The case of Khwai illustrates the myriad tactics by which threatened commercial interests, district-level agencies, and national politicians sought to limit local autonomy. Similar acts of domination played out in many other communities, contributing to a partial recentralization of wildlife management in 2007. This case draws on fieldwork by Poteete in 2004, 2005, and 2009, including confidential interviews with key informants in 2005. The conflict in Khwai is documented

in the lease agreements, memos and reports, and correspondence in the files of the *Tawana Land Board* (TLB/B/11/28).

(i) Centralized conservation and high-end tourism

Virtually nonexistent in the late 1980s, international tourism burgeoned in the 1990s to become Botswana's second largest economic sector (Mbaiwa, 2005a; Stevens & Jansen, 2002). Botswana promotes high-cost, low-volume tourism by charging high fees for entry into protected areas and regulating safari operations. Tour operators must acquire a license to offer tourism services, a lease from the Land Board for the use of land for campsites and lodges, and permits from the wildlife department to enter protected areas or hunt. The wildlife department has divided the country into Controlled Hunting Areas (CHAs) and designated allowable forms of resource use for each CHA. Where hunting is allowed, the wildlife department sets an annual quota for the maximum off-take for each species. Safari companies purchase licenses that specify the number of each species its clients may hunt. The regulations and fees represent significant entry barriers into tourism. Tour operators benefit from restrictions on competition, especially the near elimination of competition from the low end of the market.

These policies, regulations, and practices favor the Land Boards, the wildlife department and high-end tour operations while imposing high costs on rural residents. Exclusionary protected areas reduce the land available for residences and agriculture. Since the mid-1980s, livestock production has been restricted even in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) outside of parks and reserves (Magole, 2009; RoB, 1986; Taylor, 2002; Twyman, 2001).¹ Quotas and restrictions on subsistence hunting techniques have tightened progressively (Bolaane, 2004; Magole, 2009; Taylor, 2002). Unlicensed subsistence hunters are treated as poachers and subjected to stiff penalties and abusive treatment (Bolaane, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2005b; Taylor, 2000). Residents of wilderness areas complain bitterly about the lack of local benefits from tourism and the limits placed on their livelihoods with the popular refrain that government only cares about the welfare of wild animals (Interviews, 2004–09).

(ii) Selective decentralization of wildlife management

Through the CBNRM program, the government attempted to assuage built-up resentment by allowing residents of designated areas to make decisions about natural-resource management and tourism activities. To benefit from CBNRM, residents of an eligible area must legally register a Community-Based Organization (CBO)—a special-purpose organization encompassing one or a few villages. A district-level *Technical Advisory Committee* (TAC) oversees the formation of CBOs through a series of community meetings, culminating in nonpartisan elections (Cassidy, 2000; Thakadu, 2005).

There is no legal definition of local community membership and elections to the CBOs are not closely regulated (Boggs, 2000; Cassidy, 2000; Thakadu, 2005). Membership criteria must be specified, however, in the CBO constitution. The TAC encourages CBOs to define membership based on residency and vetoes formulations it finds questionable (Interviews, 2005; Cassidy, 2000; Thakadu, 2005). The veto power of the TAC, ambiguities about CBO membership, and poor regulation of elections weaken downward accountability.

Once registered, CBOs receive rights to access and manage land from the Land Board and rights over particular uses of wildlife resources from the wildlife department (e.g., photo safaris, hunting quotas). A CBO may manage its area directly, sell or auction access and use rights to members or

nonmembers, or form a joint venture partnership with a safari operator. CBOs have the formal authority to decide which safari companies—if any—can operate in their areas and on what terms. Joint venture partners usually promise employment opportunities, training and educational opportunities, targeted investments in infrastructure and local businesses, and assistance with day-to-day challenges (e.g., plowing or funerals).

Revenues generated from tourism activities in community-managed areas flow directly to the CBOs. CBOs have considerable discretion over their allocation. Investments in water development, small businesses, and community services reflect locally set priorities. When fully implemented, however, the CBNRM policy of 2007 will replace more or less unconditional revenue flows with conditional grants and represents a significant partial re-centralization. While the 2007 policy marks a sharp change of direction in some respects, it also institutionalizes processes of re-centralization that were already well underway.

CBNRM generated considerable political opposition because it threatened the power of safari companies, various government agencies, and politicians. Actors threatened by CBNRM mobilized to limit or reverse their loss of power (National CBNRM Forum, 2001; Poteete, 2009; Rozemeijer, 2003; Swatuk, 2005). The conflicts in Khwai illustrate the array of actors aligned against CBNRM and the depth and breadth of each actor's repertoire.

(iii) *Khwai and the Tsaro Lodge*

The village of Khwai was created to accommodate people displaced by the Moremi Game Reserve in 1963. The wildlife department later designated Khwai and the surrounding area as a WMA and several companies constructed safari lodges on land leased from the Tawana Land Board (TLB). There have long been hostile relations between the residents of Khwai, government agencies, and the safari companies (Bolaane, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2005b; Taylor, 2000). Residents never accepted the Reserve, the area's status as a WMA, or the presence of safari companies. To defuse this situation, the government decided in 1995 to transfer a wilderness area to Khwai under CBNRM; lodges in the area were to be transferred from safari companies to Khwai when existing leases expired. Residents of Khwai found, however, that the promised benefits were not easily obtained.

The Khwai Development Trust (KDT) became operational in 2000, after five years of negotiation. Residents of Khwai approached CBNRM as an opportunity to reverse historical losses. They initially limited membership in KDT to Basarwa, the ethnic label for the people who had been evicted from the Moremi Game Reserve and the most marginalized ethnic category in Botswana.² The government, however, had adopted a policy of racial and ethnic neutrality in response to racial politics in the region during the apartheid era. Insisting that they were simply enforcing standard regulations to which all communities must conform, the TLB and the wildlife department denied the relevance of past displacement or the possibility that formally nondiscriminatory arrangements might favor powerful nonlocal actors. They refused to transfer management rights until KDT adopted an ethnically neutral constitution (Bolaane, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2005b). The KDT constitution allows any adult with at least five years of residency in Khwai to become a member.

KDT could not engage in tourism or other commercial activities until the TLB approved its management plan. KDT proposed to auction off its wildlife quota animal by animal (Boggs, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2005b). Official regulations

allowed such arrangements, and yet the TLB balked. Posing as a defender of good business practices, it asked for details and insisted on adherence to a management plan developed for the area before the area's transfer to "community management" (TLB/B/11/28 I (65)). The TLB eventually allowed KDT to conduct an auction in 2000, but continued to press for more familiar arrangements. Safari companies disliked the animal-by-animal auction and lowered their bids after the first year. By 2002, KDT agreed to auction off the entire quota to a single company (Boggs, 2004).

KDT expected to gain management rights over the Tsaro lodge when the lease to a safari company expired in 2001. The files of the TLB reveal that the lease had been transferred several times. Upon approval of each transfer, the TLB informed the new tenants that the lease would not be renewed (TLB/B/11/28 I (62)).³ The lease clearly stated that all physical improvements would be transferred without compensation at the end of the lease. Nonetheless, as documented below, the tenant, Chobe Holdings (Pty) Ltd. lobbied national politicians, the TLB and KDT for an extension of its lease and, when that request was denied, sought compensation for fixed investments (TLB/B/11/28 I (42) and (61)). The company challenged the authority of the TLB and KDT by violating the terms of its lease, seeking favoritism, mobilizing political pressure, and making threats—as described below.

The company pressed its case in a letter to a local MP and cabinet member, Jacob Nkate (TLB/B/11/28 I (42)). First, the company noted that the fifteen-year leases for tourism in community-managed areas are much shorter than the 50–99 year leases for other commercial sectors. Second, Chobe argued that a "benevolent landlord" would give rights of first refusal to the current leaseholder even in the absence of a legal requirement to do so. Third, it noted that it had invested substantially in refurbishing the lodge. These appeals—to precedence, informal business norms, and the establishment of informal property claims through investment—attempted to establish the company's role as a responsible business that had been wronged and thereby legitimize its claim for an extension of its lease.

The company simultaneously pursued other tactics. Its letter to Nkate dismissed KDT as lacking both the capacity and authority to make decisions. It nonetheless launched negotiations with the CBO in an effort to get partial compensation for fixed improvements. KDT rejected this idea. In subsequent correspondence with officials, the company portrayed KDT as failing to negotiate sincerely (TLB/B/11/28 I (46)). From the community's perspective, however, KDT had already gone beyond what was required in giving the company a hearing and was under no obligation to accept its proposal.

Chobe Holdings also characterized the TLB as irresponsible and biased (TLB/B/11/28 I (42)). It argued that the TLB provided inadequate notice of lease termination. When a local newspaper reported on the conflict, the company accused the TLB of going to the press (TBL/B/11/28 I (53)). The company suggested that the central government should overrule local authorities because they had discredited themselves. The cabinet suspended the eviction and discussed the matter, but decided to uphold the terms of the lease and proceed with the transfer to KDT (TLB/B/11/28 I (45), (52), and (57)). While disputing the termination of its lease, Chobe Holdings had continued to book clients (TLB/B/11/28 I (60)). It then argued successfully for a delay in vacating the premises to avoid disruptions for the tourists. According to the TLB, Chobe Holdings trashed the lodge when leaving (TLB/B/11/28 I (60)).⁴ Afterward, in another letter to Nkate, the company claimed wrongful injury and demanded compensation for

physical improvements on the property (TLB/B/11/28 I (61)). The central government again backed the TLB (TLB/B/11/28 I (63)).

KDT gained management authority over the Tsaro Lodge in January 2002, but needed the TLB's approval for its management plan before it could reopen. By June 2002, the lodge had not yet reopened and Ian Khama, then Botswana's vice president,⁵ entered the drama as a defender of national interests in keeping tourist facilities operational. Khama suggested that KDT should partner with Chobe Holdings to manage the lodge and speed its reopening (TLB/B/KDT/11/28 I). In correspondence with the TLB, the vice president repeatedly demanded that Chobe Holdings be given right of first refusal before launching an open bidding process for management of the lodge. Despite its persistence, Chobe Holdings failed to gain an extension of its lease, compensation for fixed improvements, or priority status in KDT's selection of a joint venture partner. KDT eventually entered a partnership with another company and received a grant from the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Program in 2007 to refurbish the lodge (GEF Small Grants Program, 2006).

(iv) *Repertoires of domination in Botswana*

The acts observed in the conflicts surrounding Khwai have parallels in many other communities as national politicians, officials in various agencies, other local authorities, and commercial interests resist the shifts in power promised by CBNRM. Some acts foster dependency; others involve obfuscation and misrepresentation, or sabotage and coercion. Many seek to delegitimize CBOs and the idea of decentralized natural resource management. Collectively, these repertoires of domination produce ongoing pressures for recentralization.

The Land Board plays a two-sided role as the guardian of policies and procedures for land administration. In its relations with politicians and safari companies, the Land Board poses as a *guard* against infringements on the rights of CBOs. In its relations with the CBOs, however, the Land Board construes guardianship as *supervisory authority*. In the Tsaro Lodge dispute, the TLB insisted upon KDT's legal right to develop its own management strategy and choose its own business partners, despite repeated pressure from the vice president and the office of the president over more than two years (TLB/B/11/28 I). In internal correspondence, the TLB repeatedly underlined its own lack of discretionary authority and the risks of a legal challenge if standard procedures for the selection of business partners were not respected.

While legal challenges to Land Board decisions are common,⁶ the Land Board, TAC, and other government agencies exercise authority over the CBOs. Cabinet ministers join these agencies in pressuring CBOs to adopt particular organizational forms, influence the composition of the boards, alter their management plans, and interfere in the selection of business partners by threatening to deprive CBOs of tourism revenues or dissolve their trusts (e.g., Gaotlhobogwe, 2010; Mguni, 2010; Toka, 2010).⁷ Some interventions enhance accountability, while others constrain choices related to membership eligibility, management goals, management and marketing strategies, and the allocation of revenues (development goals). In fact, conflicts between KDT and the TLB over the management plan further delayed reopening the Tsaro Lodge. Ironically, the vice president pointed to this delay—a product of the TLB's reticence to grant KDT discretion over management strategies—as a justification for bringing in Chobe Holdings.

Like Chobe Holdings, many safari companies complain about the CBOs' limited understanding of business practices,

mount legal challenges, threaten to withhold investment in community-managed areas, make moral appeals, discredit local authorities, and appeal to national politicians (Interviews, 2005; National CBNRM Forum, 2001, 2003, 2005; Rozemeijer, 2003).⁸ Threats to withhold investment or to sabotage fixed property upon termination of a lease undermined the CBOs' legal rights to choose and change their business partners.

The push and pull between CBOs, commercial interests, and district-level officials is part of a larger drama. The vice president's interventions in CBNRM attracted a lot of attention (Interviews, 2005). As a series of draft versions of the CBNRM policy circulated within the government and among stakeholders, many officials and stakeholders suspected that Ian Khama was the main political force pushing for recentralization of wildlife management (Interviews, 2005). Whether true or not, this widespread belief created a sense that CBNRM and the authority of the CBOs were vulnerable. Several politicians (and government officials) depicted CBNRM as a threat to national unity (National CBNRM Forum, 2001; Ntuane, 2007a, 2007b; Poteete, 2009). They attributed the country's relative political cohesion and stability to the management of natural resources as national resources and, warned that, because CBNRM violates this fundamental principle, it could present a dangerous slippery slope.

Another act of delegitimation emphasizes the limited capacity of CBOs, depicts mismanagement as pervasive, and conflates mismanagement with corruption. Nearly one-third of the proceedings from the 2003 meeting of the National CBNRM Forum stakeholder group address mismanagement and corruption (National CBNRM Forum, 2003). The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) organized a workshop on CBNRM in 2006 and posted the keynote address on its website (Ramsden, 2006). Corruption within CBOs features regularly in the media, especially the government-run *Botswana Daily News* (e.g., BOPA, 2007a, 2007b). Officials also play up problems of mismanagement within CBOs during their regular tours of villages. In these performances, the government offers to intervene to protect ordinary people from corrupt local elites and to ensure that national resources are not squandered.

There is evidence of corruption, inefficient allocation of funds, and weak accounting practices in CBOs. And yet the depiction of CBOs as plagued by corruption and mismanagement is disingenuous. One CBO member accused the minister responsible for wildlife of trying "to paint everyone with the same brush" and observed that "[g]overnment has never taken money from the councils when they abuse it" (Mguni, 2010). The depiction of CBOs as particularly corrupt ignores the pervasiveness of such problems in *all* sectors. Decentralization does not guarantee improved management and lower corruption, but neither does centralization (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006).

(b) *Senegal: decentralization of forest management*

Forest villages in Senegal's Tambacounda Region successfully marketed charcoal in the capital city, Dakar, quintupling their income. This success story also illustrates how powerful actors succeed in limiting or preventing implementation of progressive decentralization reforms. This section describes Senegal's forestry sector decentralization reform and then tells the story of how development projects helped forest villagers reap a portion of the enormous profits available from their forests. As we will see, acts by government officials and merchants to maintain their domination of the sector both delayed

and constrained the villagers' realization of their legal rights to engage in charcoal production and exchange. Primary data for this case study are derived from interviews and documents gathered in Senegal by Ribot from 2004 to 2010.

(i) *The forestry sector before decentralization*

Charcoal is the primary cooking fuel in Senegal's cities. Given its value and its perceived⁹ impact on forests, charcoal production is heavily regulated by Senegal's Forest Service. Until 1998, forest management was fully centralized—orbiting around merchant licenses and production quotas allocated by the Forest Service, and permits for woodcutting and transport that could only be obtained by licensed merchants with quotas (Ribot, 1999a). The licenses are allocated to powerful merchants by the National Forest Service Director and Minister of Environment.

Each year, the Forest Service and Ministry of Environment fixed a national quota for charcoal production and allocated it among some 120–170 enterprises—cooperatives, economic interest groups and corporations—holding professional forest producer licenses delivered by the Forest Service. They promulgated an annual decree listing the quota for each enterprise and indicating the forested region, Tambacounda or Kolda, where these quotas were to be exploited. There was no local say in the matter.

With a charcoal quota, a merchant could then hire migrant laborers, obtain woodcutting permits, and bring their permitted migrant laborers to the forest. After production the merchant would pick up the charcoal. Most migrants produced two truckloads per year of about 300–400 sacks each. For each truckload, the merchant would pay the migrant workers in the forest, load the truck, and pay taxes to obtain a transport permit at the local forestry brigade office. With this permit they could transport their charcoal to market in Dakar. This system allowed the merchants to control market access.

(ii) *The forestry sector after decentralization*

Senegal's 1996 Decentralization Law (RdS, 1996b) transferred natural-resource management, among other powers, to elected rural councils. The law gave rural councils jurisdiction over "the organization of exploitation of all gathered plant products and the cutting of wood" (RdS 1996b:art.195). Another 1996 decentralization law, specifying the transfer of specific powers, gave the rural council jurisdiction over "management of forests on the basis of a management plan approved by the competent state authority" (RdS 1996a:art.30).

The 1998 forestry code (RdS 1998:art.L8,R21), to conform with the decentralization reforms, recognized rural councils' rights to determine who can produce in these forests. The new code also stated that "Community Forests are those forests situated outside of the forested domain of the State and included within the administrative boundaries of the rural community who is the manager" (RdS 1998:art.R9). The forested domain of the state consists of areas reserved for special uses and protection (RdS 1998:R2). Since most of Senegal's forests are not reserved, the new laws give most rural communities control over large portions of the forests—if not all of the forests—within their territorial boundaries.

As an added protection of these rights, the forestry code requires the Forest Service to obtain the signature of the rural council president (PCR, elected from among the rural councilors) before any commercial production can take place in their forests (RdS 1998:art.L4). The 1998 code changed the powers of all actors—foresters, councilors, and merchants. Rather than the Forest Service allocating access to urban merchants, the rural council could choose the merchants it wanted

working in its forests. In lieu of the Forest Service, the rural council now manages forests. Rather than receiving their quota from the Forest Service, the merchants would now have to go to the councils for production permission. With the new laws, the quantity merchants could exploit was to be determined by the ecological potential of the forest in a management plan approved by the PCR and Forest Service. These were the changes on paper.

(iii) *Maintaining Senegal's old forestry regime after reform*

Rural councilors wanted to stop merchants and migrants from cutting the forests. Some councilors also wanted forest villagers to have opportunities to exploit the forests themselves to bring income into the villages and revenues to the rural council. Decentralization gave these powers to the rural councils. Councilors attempted to exercise their new powers, but were blocked at every turn.

The new decentralization and forestry laws should apply equally to all zones of Senegal. The Forest Service, however, applies them differently in areas with donor supported forest-management projects (USAID and World Bank) and areas that have no project activity. In project areas, donors provide funding to develop management plans and train villagers to cut and carbonize. In nonproject areas, exploitation continues to take place, illegally, through quotas and permits as in the period before the 1998 law—the only difference is that rural council presidents in these areas are coerced into signing off before exploitation begins each year (Ribot, 2009b). Despite the new laws, foresters allow production without plans and continue to allocate quotas.

In donor areas, however, forest villagers reap significant benefits. Donors and foresters hold up the villagers' profits as a great success. But it is a qualified success. When compared to what merchants are gaining—in both project and nonmanaged areas—their success appears anemic. The image of success depends on how it is presented and performed. This section describes the acts faced by villagers in project areas who tried to profit from charcoal.

Hoping to increase village income, the World Bank's PROGEDE project began in 1998 to train forest villagers to produce and sell their own charcoal. In the first years of project production, forest villagers (like migrant laborers before them) had to sell their charcoal to licensed quota-toting merchants for a subsistence wage at the forest edge. A 1995 law liberalizing the professions made licensing in this sector illegal (RdS, 1995). Yet the foresters continued to recognize licenses. The 1998 forestry code specified that the quota system would be eliminated in 2001. This did not happen. Despite talk of village participation in production and marketing of charcoal, the Forest Service refused to give quotas to forest villagers or to the projects. Forest villagers were forced to sell to merchants with quotas at the forest edge; they could not take their charcoal to Dakar. It was not until 2006 that the first truckload of charcoal produced under PROGEDE was sold by forest villagers in Dakar (personal communication, project director, 2006).

Further, the Forest Service, with donor support, took several years to elaborate forest management plans. These plans were an overly complex and costly means to justify donor support and to prevent transfer of production and marketing rights to villagers. While performed as a means to protect the forests, these management plans have no measurable ecological function (Ribot, 1999b; Wurster, 2010). Foresters then took time to train forest villagers to produce charcoal. While portrayed by the Forest Service as necessary training, the villagers do not need training in charcoal production since

they do not want to produce charcoal themselves and usually hire expert migrant charcoal makers to do the work (Interviews, 2003–09; Ribot, 1999b).¹⁰ During the years devoted to plan development and training, foresters consistently refused to let the project participants sell charcoal to anyone but licensed merchants with quotas. The PROGEDE project, and later USAID's Wula Nafaa project, repeatedly asked the Forest Service for charcoal quotas for their project villages, but were turned down. Foresters pronounced that villagers lacked capacity to market their products or that marketing was only for the quota-holding licensed merchants—despite the legal elimination of quotas and licenses.

In 2005, while still allocating quotas to merchants, the Forest Service capitulated to donor pressure, agreeing to establish what they called “contracts” between project rural communities, the Forest Service and merchants. The forest service acted as if this “contract” were a new arrangement. Indeed, it was no different. Under these contracts the merchants agreed to buy project-produced charcoal. The contracts fixed the forest-edge price (the producer price in the forest) and included a fee to feed a forest-management fund managed by the forestry union, the Forest Service and rural council; this meant that the “council” forestry fund was controlled by the Forest Service and merchants. Under these contracts, the (illegally—RdS, 1995) licensed merchants were enabled to obtain permits (still not directly accessible to villagers) to transport the villagers' charcoal. The contracts were quotas by a different name: a performance of change without change. They kept villagers dependent on the merchants (and merchants dependent on foresters) for marketing rights.

Forest villages were unhappy with the low forest-edge price of \$1.50 per sack. They wanted transport permits to sell in Dakar where the price was usually \$10–14 per sack. The two projects continued requesting production quotas (despite the quota's illegal status) or contracts to allow circulation to Dakar so that the project villages could market their own charcoal. But, the Forest Service pulled out its “lack the capacity” act, arguing rural communities are unable to produce marketable quantities and do not know the markets. Meanwhile, villagers can produce as much as a professional migrant, especially since villagers, while pretending to the projects and foresters to do the work themselves, hire the professional migrants to produce for them. Furthermore, “knowing the market” merely requires finding one of many willing buyers—something truckers are happy to do for them. The PROGEDE project insisted, complaining to the Forest Service Director and the minister responsible for environment.

In 2006 the Forest Service Director asked a merchant who was “contracted” to purchase project charcoal to help the villagers to sell to wholesalers in Dakar. So, rather than getting their own quota or an independent contract, the project villagers took their first truck to Dakar under contract with a licensed merchant. In Dakar, they sold at \$11 per sack. They paid \$3 per sack for transport and \$100 (about 33¢ per sack) for bribes to foresters and police along the road, thus netting \$7.67 per sack (much more than the \$1.50 per sack they were getting in the forest). So, rather than earning just \$450 per truckload of 300 sacks (the product of four to six months of labor by one producer), by selling in Dakar they took home \$2300. They *quintupled* their income in just 3–5 days needed to take the charcoal to Dakar. This was a great success for the villagers and PROGEDE. The USAID project followed suit shortly after—using contracts with merchants to help villagers market their charcoal.

The villagers who went with the first truckloads to Dakar were delighted.¹¹ When they returned home with the money,

one villager said “we danced all night and forgot to eat.” But, they were also angry that they had been robbed for so long. For every truckload they were selling at the forest edge for \$450, the licensed merchants were making almost \$1850 in clear profit (about \$2300 in net income after transport, taxes, fees and payoffs minus the producer price). While an individual woodcutter can produce two truckloads of charcoal a year, each merchant was liberally allocated quotas for between 10 and 50 truckloads a year. Merchants were making astounding profit. Once the villagers saw the profits, they wanted to sell all their charcoal in Dakar. But they were systematically blocked by the Forest Service. When the projects asked for contracts allowing more production and transport to Dakar, they were still told they could have only a limited number of truckloads a year until villagers showed that they had the “capacity” to market the truckloads they were allocated.

As of June 2009, forest villagers in dozens of World Bank and USAID project villages in the managed areas got to take a total of about 80 truckloads per year to Dakar under contracts for charcoal production, while the other 7,000 truckloads that are sold in Dakar are still sold by the merchants. Forest villagers are earning a fragment of what they could make if the current laws were upheld by the Forest Service.

(iv) *Repertoires of domination in Senegal*

Foresters stand in uniform on their stage of authority performing acts that deny the obvious through seemingly logical statements that are known by all villagers and most researchers to be wrong. They claim villagers lack capacity to cut, carbonize and to market wood, when villagers have these capabilities. The foresters and sub-prefects perform a “public good” act. They justify their retention of control over charcoal production and marketing by saying “forests are for everyone,” “they are a national and global good.” They say that the role of the rural council is not to decide on forest use, it is to manage the forests. In this performance, foresters cast rural councils as administrators for the state and as sources of village labor (*corvée*), rather than as representative democratic bodies.

Foresters also insist that 20-year management plans, once signed by the PCR, take the place of the PCRs' right to approve each year's production. Foresters use the management plans, contrary to PCRs' understanding, to override the PCRs' rights to sign off before production can take place each year. Foresters act like there are *no* rights without a management plan, and then use the plans to confiscate rights. In this act, democratic decentralization disappears. In its place appears a modern reproduction of indirect rule.

In March 2009, the minister of environment decreed the elimination on 1 January 2010 of the (already illegal) quota system. This decree was in response to a conditionality on a \$60 million loan from the World Bank (personal communication, May 2010). Forester and donor alike act as if this is a great victory. But the quota was eliminated in 1998. Other ministers promised to eliminate it many times before that. This time they appear to have eliminated it. A proposed “new” forestry law replaces the quota with “contracts” (Ribot, 2009a). The quota has simply been renamed without real change.

The director of the Forest Service, in his role as defender of the environment, insists that a quota is needed to protect the forests. When shown that the quantities allocated in the quota system are half current consumption, he states that quotas are needed to limit production to the ecological capacity of the forests. When shown that the quotas and contracts are not calculated based on the ecological capacity of forests, he insists it

is set to limit consumption. Both arguments are transparently false, yet both are performed over and over. The quota, which a former director of the Forest Service called “a political instrument” for allocating access to lucrative markets, needs nonpolitical justification (personal communication, June 2010).

New laws are also transgressed or not implemented with the support of discursive performances of ecological necessity. Repetition of stock phrases about “fragility of the Sahel,” and insistence that quotas and plans with no ecological functions reduce consumption or protect these forests, are followed by shameless reinterpretation of policies. Capacity, national good, and ecology acts are all part of the repertoire of domination in Senegal’s forest sector (Ribot, 2009b; Ribot & Oyono, 2005). While there are small advances taking place, the success of some forest villagers profiting from charcoal sale is held up to divert attention from the widespread urban-merchant exploitation of what should now be rural community forests. Success—10 truckloads in a 1000—is performed to hide the ongoing extractive regime. Foresters and merchants, with support of prefects and donors, build a discursive wall of ecology, capacity, and national good between forest villagers and lucrative forest markets.

4. CONCLUSION: DOMINATION AND RESISTANCE

This article explored how wildlife managers, foresters, politicians, and merchants in Botswana and Senegal used repertoires of domination to gain, control, and maintain power in the face of new laws and programs for decentralizing natural resource management and use. The article develops and illustrates the use of the “repertoires of domination” framing. We draw three interlinked points from the case studies on: (a) the nature of repertoires; (b) the plurality of power; and (c) decentralization and democratization as ongoing and contested processes. We then reflect on how repertoires of domination might be countered.

(a) *The nature of repertoire*

A repertoire, by definition, includes multiple performances. Repertoires may change in response to opportunities or expand through actor creativity and improvisation. Thus, repertoires offer considerable—albeit not total—flexibility. The act on stage is only one of many possible acts. Ending one performance to promote more effective decentralization will not put the theater of domination out of business. In Senegal, when defeated, the charcoal “quota” was replaced by the “contract”: a new instrument with the same dominating role. In Botswana, Chobe Holdings appealed for a lease extension on the grounds that it had not been adequately forewarned of nonrenewal. When official records revealed that the company had received repeated notifications, Chobe threatened to embarrass the tourist trade by canceling safaris, thus drawing high political actors to its defense.

Skill in performance, both in terms of creativity and in the quality of performance, varies across actors and acts (Alexander & Mast, 2006). Arguably, rehearsal can raise the quality of performance. In Botswana, compared with the CBOs, the Land Boards and safari companies are more accustomed to performing for national politicians and the general public. The Land Boards and other district-level officials move easily between a supervisory or bullying role when dealing with villagers and that of a defender of local discretion and participatory processes when interacting with central government

officials, politicians, or commercial actors. Foresters in Senegal are well rehearsed in claiming that all acts of woodcutting equal deforestation. They are also well rehearsed in pronouncing the fragility of the Sahel and the need for management plans (with donor support), despite the lack of ecological justification for these positions and the ineffectiveness of the plans. Newly “empowered” local actors are still learning their roles and remain disadvantaged relative to established actors.

(b) *The plurality of power*

The background conditions of power influence both the richness of repertoires and the quality of particular performances. Repertoires include multiple performances because they draw on multiple *forms* of power—political, economic, discursive, coercive, symbolic and material. These powers may be located in things, instruments, techniques, symbols, individuals, institutions, relations, or in the contours of discourse. Actors who are striving for domination (like all other actors) have access to bundles of powers (Ghani, 1996). The strands in these bundles may be employed in combinations or one-by-one. We see in our case studies combinations of discursive and material power, as when actors controlling access to markets use normatively laden discourse to justify their claims or communicate threats or promises. In both countries, the depiction of natural resources as national resources delegitimizes local control and sanctions access to valuable resources by established commercial interests—who certainly do not represent “the nation as a whole.” Likewise, officials use administrative power to control material opportunities. Senegal’s foresters and members of Botswana’s district-level *Technical Advisory Committees* use their administrative authority to favor commercial interests while producing a discourse of villager incapacity that excludes villagers from lucrative markets. They use scientific discourses to evoke donor fear of environmental damage while enacting symbolic (since they have no ecological function) management plans to leverage funds. Practices must be observed with an eye to all forms that power can take.

The plurality of power implies that no single theory of power is sufficient to generate knowledge of the range of acts that are being used in a repertoire of domination. Different theories prioritize one or another source of power, based on assumptions about the ultimate sources of power and the mechanisms through which power operates. In practice (which is where performance takes place), different forms of power coexist. Actors draw opportunistically on forms of power that fit different theories even if those theories consider themselves to be incompatible. Hence, counter-actors as well as analysts would do well to be aware of multiple theories and forms of power—to recognize the many different acts in play.

(c) *Decentralization as a contested and ongoing process*

Neither decentralization nor democratization is simply aimed at and achieved once and for all. Decentralization and centralization, democratization and de-democratization, are iterative, contested, ongoing processes. Spaces of local autonomy are constantly being carved out, re-enclosed, and reopened. Domination is constantly being enacted, as is resistance or acts of counter-domination. We have focused on repertoires of domination, but recognize that repertoires of resistance are also ubiquitous, well rehearsed and constantly enacted.

These struggles produce change. Some produce new spaces of local autonomy. For example, the powers of rural councils

in Senegal were expanded under decentralization. They gained the power to sign off on the opening of the charcoal production season. While their exercise of this power has been largely blocked and will soon be taken away, tax and fine revenue from charcoal has gone up and rural populations have seen an increase in income in the areas where USAID and the World Bank have tried to protect local interests. In Botswana, CBOs gained discretionary sources of revenue that empowered them to pursue local priorities such as the construction of orphanages, provision of drinking water, and subsidies for small-scale enterprises. CBNRM also greatly empowers local communities in their dealings with safari companies, making the worst forms of exploitation less likely. The partial recentralization of CBNRM in 2007 represents a major loss, but not a complete reversal.

These successes are tempered. In both cases, decentralization achieved only a fraction of the autonomy promised in discourse and law. Equally importantly, the changes were not unidirectional. The empowerment of local communities was attenuated by the antics of powerful actors. In Botswana, CBNRM offered opportunities for the wildlife department and the Land Board to expand their authority vis-à-vis other government agencies as well as the CBOs. In Senegal, villagers in the project areas depend on the donors, the Forest Service and merchants to gain access to urban charcoal markets. Both countries introduced subsequent policies and regulations that further reduced the scope for local autonomy.

(d) *Resisting domination*

Given the constant impulse for domination, what can be done to realize more fully the democratizing potential of decentralization? The extent to which the democratizing potential of decentralization is realized depends on the depth and effective use of repertoires of resistance. Peluso (1992) points out that local resistance to state forestry responds to—even parallels—the mechanisms the state uses to exercise control over the forests. Scott has shown how everyday acts of foot dragging, sabotage and withdrawal serve as the weapons of the weak (Scott, 1985, 1990). Weapons of the weak erode and limit domination, but they represent the limited options available to—or perceived by—the weak. Empowerment must support informed and effective repertoires of resistance—aware of their own powers and informed of repertoires of domination.

Decentralization reforms are often launched with accompanying programs to inform the population and new elected

officials of their powers and rights. Being informed requires investigation and critical analysis, and not just a presentation of the laws as they are written—especially when those laws confer few powers. Local residents and their leaders will be better able to claim new powers if they recognize the ways in which their rights are being produced and attenuated. Of course, local actors are usually aware of abuses and can do little about them. While it is unlikely that repertoires of domination will be countered effectively if they are not recognized, awareness of them will not produce empowerment on its own. Empowerment is a constant process of leveraging existing sources of power more effectively and developing new sources of power. Awareness of repertoires by intervening agents, such as donors and NGOs, can also enable design of better decentralization interventions while making it more difficult for these powerful actors to play ignorant when they support dominating dynamics.

The density and vitality of voluntary organizations—variously labeled as civil society or social capital—are widely touted as conditions for empowerment (Lipset, 1959; Putnam, 1993). Organization—into unions, federations, or networks—can facilitate information exchange, learning across localities, and coordinated action. Nonlocal allies can help create and expand the space for local organizations to operate (e.g., Heller, 2001). Examples include Botswana's CBNRM Support network, sponsored by SNV and IUCN, and a USAID-financed *Democratie et Gouvernance Locale* (DGL) NGO in Senegal. NGOs, donors, and allies in government can provide critical support to local-level efforts to expand and exercise formal rights through political pressure, courts or direct action. Efforts also include research and the dissemination of research results through diverse channels, including research articles such as this one, policy briefs, popular articles, and films.

Ultimately, however, we return to two central observations: (1) decentralization and centralization, and democratization and de-democratization, are on-going processes, and (2) repertoires of domination and resistance enable on-going contestation for power. Consequently, there is no single, once-and-for-all recipe for successful decentralization or democratization. We have shown that it is not enough to activate processes of decentralization and democratization, because any reallocation of authority will be contested. To sustain these processes of decentralization and democratization requires the development and ongoing renewal of repertoires of resistance to counter pervasive centrifugal pressures.

NOTES

1. WMAs encompass more than 39% of Botswana's land area (Swatuk, 2005, p. 102).

2. The Basarwa are also known as San. Although widely referred to as an ethnic category, the term encompasses a variety of mutually incomprehensible language groups.

3. A summary of key events entitled "Tsaro Lodge Lease—NG 19 (Khwai)" appears between TLB/B/11/28 I (41) and (42).

4. A project description from the *GEF Small Grants Program* (2006) describes the lodge as having been vandalized.

5. Ian Khama became President of Botswana in April 2008.

6. Land Boards have faced regular legal challenges to their decisions based on accusations of favoritism or deviations from standard procedures since the establishment of the Land Tribunal in 1997.

7. Additional examples appear in TLB/R/7 III and TLB Temp file.

8. Numerous examples appear in the Tawana Land Board files (TLB/R/7 III).

9. Charcoal production in Senegal is believed by donors and by Senegal's Forest Service to be highly destructive to forests. The evidence, however, is slim. See Ribot (1999a) and Wurster (2010).

10. Fulbe 'experts' build traditional kilns. The Forest Service requires a new 'improved' Casamance kiln. Charcoal producers say it is not better and there is no evidence to this effect (Ribot, 1999b).

11. The story of the first truckload of charcoal is told in the film *Semín Nari Bor*, Ribot (2010).

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