

Policy Frameworks and Contexts II: review of natural resource (and natural resource related) policy in Southern Africa

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This paper is the second of a series of papers examining policy frameworks and contexts within southern Africa for the PANRUSA project. The first paper, Policy Frameworks and Contexts I: issues and links to poverty, natural resource use and desertification, summarised some of the key aspects of conceptual debates surrounding contemporary policy analysis. It was argued that current thinking emphasises the exigent need to retain a global/local perspective to investigate the different development and policy discourses that various different actors deploy. The frames and discourses that are critical to how policy is presented and articulated are critically linked to the chains of communications that determine the actual impacts and interactions that occur. Examination of this development interface reveals the dialectical nature of the chains of communication and power in the policy process, and leads to greater understanding of the strategic ways in which policy discourses (top-down or bottom-up) are subverted and manipulated by local populations, NGOs, governments and international agencies.

This second paper places emphasises on the current climate of policy change in southern Africa. The paper aims to review natural resource and natural resource-related policy across the region highlighting common themes and specific differences in the ways in which policy is articulated, interpreted and implemented. Key spheres in natural resource policy in southern Africa identified for this project are: rural development (including poverty and livelihoods), agriculture (including arable/rangeland practices and land issues), and natural resources (including biodiversity and desertification issues). Such spheres are not discreet and policy formulation in all sectors has implications for poverty, livelihoods, land use practices and people's interactions with the environment and natural resources in a range of contexts.

1. Introduction: Global to Local Policy Contexts in Southern Africa

Since the 1980s international conferences and agreements have brought the environment, poverty and development to the forefront of national and international policy debates both North and South (see previous briefing papers; Forsyth and Leach, 1998). Within Southern Africa countries have signed conventions, drawn up new policy documents, undertaken to meet targets, and established frameworks for implementing many of these conventions, sometimes ahead of Northern partners (Simon and Dodds, 1998). These shifts to incorporate international agendas into national policy contexts come at a time when countries across southern Africa are facing their own radical re-assessment of policy in all spheres, but most particularly those related to natural resources.

With an increasing amount of aid pouring into Southern Africa there has probably never been as much 'development' going on in terms of natural resource related activities.

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Framed within the discourse of international agreements and conventions, such operations are *collaborating* with existing government structures and programmes; *capacity-building* within these institutions at all levels; *empowering* local communities in natural resource management through *participatory* processes of extension; while also attempting to *create enabling conditions* for *sustainable livelihoods* at the local level, and simultaneously promote *strong macro-economies* at the national and regional levels.

But what does all this mean at the local level in these countries and how do these international discourses translate into national policies and regional and local projects and programmes? Of the three countries being examined in the PANRUSA project all now promote participatory and empowering community projects to some degree. This means local people are becoming involved and are being drawn into the policy process, but with what degree of success? Despite some uncertainty about the ways in which these discourses are being deployed and the underlying motivation for these shifts (Twyman, 1998; Taylor, 1999), what is significant is that a *global shift in discourse is taking place*. This discourse is not just a global phenomena discussed in the offices of NGOs and government ministers. It is being taken up by individuals, communities, government workers, NGOs etc. The discourse of participation is now familiar at a global level and the consequent impact at a local level is significant.

The following example illustrates clearly the global-local nexus of this new form of development. In Namibia there have been reports of communities informing NGOs that they had already been 'pre-ed by another NGO' and that further PRAs were not needed. Elsewhere, when a community found out its visitors were from an NGO they immediately made a list of projects they wanted established; they asked for sewing projects, tanneries and brick making facilities. These types of projects were perceived as 'real' projects to be 'delivered' by the NGO. Within the same community a school hostel had been needed and the community had come together, raised money, provided labour and built the hostel with no help from an NGO or other facilitating organisation. Where funds were needed these had been raised locally as well as through external (overseas) money, but all by the community themselves. When the NGO suggested to the community that they had just 'done a project themselves' they argued that it was not 'a project' and they did not have the skills to implement 'a project' properly. The NGO no longer runs income-generating projects, and is now facing the challenge of overcoming the local discourse of development that it has itself created. The NGO now wants to empower communities to establish and run their own initiatives and development agendas, but given the legacy of intervention, this is not what communities are now demanding. In an era of participation and community led approaches, this leaves the NGO in somewhat of a paradoxical dilemma as to its role in development in these communities.

This paper initially examines the dominant themes in natural resource policy in southern Africa, focusing on the spheres of rural development (including poverty and livelihoods), agriculture (including arable/rangeland practices and land issues), and natural resources (including biodiversity and desertification issues). The paper then identifies key policies in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana for further analysis. In South Africa, CONEPP has proved to be the cornerstone of a unique consultation process in policy formulation, suggesting that South Africa is committed to 'people-centred' governance. However the Reconstruction and Development Programme has come under considerable criticism and its replacement, GEAR faces a challenging future. Other critical issues in

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contemporary policy discourse in South Africa are the controversial land claims and the smallholder agriculture debates. In Namibia, decentralisation is currently high on the political agenda with up-coming elections. This debate has somewhat sidelined (in policy circles) the finalisation of the Communal Land Bill (a highly controversial document). The communal/commercial farming debate however dominates local development discourse and is central to issues of land reform and poverty alleviation. In Botswana, critical land use changes are the key policy issues to be debated. Following the acknowledged 'failure' of the TGLP, there is now increased pressure on the government to privatise the communal rangelands. This potentially puts increased pressure on 'reserve' areas, such as Wildlife Management Areas. Privatisation may also conflict with the principles of community based natural resource management being promoted in other areas of Botswana. Summary details of all policies mentioned in this paper are given in the Appendix.

2. Policy Frames and Discourses: dominant themes in natural resource policy in Southern Africa

Rural Development

Key issues in contemporary rural development discourses include: poverty alleviation; sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management; and, participation in, and empowerment through, the rural development process. These emerging discourses can be found in policy documents across Southern Africa, as well as in donor government policies and international agendas and agreements relevant to this region. Examination of the relationship between poverty and livelihoods can be found in PANRUSA Briefing Paper, *Poverty and Sustainable Livelihoods*, and analysis of the discourses of policies, 'poor people' and participation can be found in PANRUSA Briefing Paper, *Policy Frameworks and Contexts I*. This paper focuses on the regional level of policy articulation, interpretation and implementation in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.

Within Southern African development discourse, poverty alleviation has been linked with sustainable livelihoods and vulnerability, and recognition has been given to the multi-dimensional and complex forms poverty can take (Republic of Namibia, 1997, 1999; Republic of Botswana, 1997; May, 1998). Efforts to approach poverty alleviation through bottom-up initiatives have also been widespread. To achieve dual goals of democratisation and poverty alleviation, some governments are instituting policies of decentralisation, giving more power to local institutions and local tiers of government.

In South Africa, aims to decentralise rural development to a regional level forms part of its post-apartheid government restructuring policy. Decentralisation can be viewed as a move towards democratisation of government and planning, but caution should also be taken in assuming local structures are representative or competent in operating effectively at this level of governance. During this transitional period in South Africa, there is considerable institutional chaos and it is likely that rural local government will have access to few resources and it may take many years for it to become an effective channel for rural administration. Local government in South Africa is being developed as a two-tier system and exact development priorities will vary by province since local government is to be a provincial responsibility.

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Though South Africa is committed to grassroots projects which are empowering and participatory, and has proposed that all rural development projects be community-led, Presidential Lead Projects (PLP) have been set up in the interim to kick-start the rural development process. However, projects funded by RDP (Rural Development Programme) have been criticised for taking funds from ministries only to give it back through re-funding their core projects rather than initiating new ones. This has led to some ministry programmes relying on RDP funding for core services and while these ministries divert other funds elsewhere (Blumenfeld, 1997).

Rapid and sustained poverty reduction forms the foundation of rural development policy in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1997a). Rural areas are defined as 'sparsely populated areas in which people farm or depend on natural resources'¹ (Republic of South Africa, 1997a:4). The Rural Development Framework (RDF) is part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (see South Africa section) and represents the government's commitment to 'eradicate poverty' (Republic of South Africa, 1997a:5). This statement echoes DFID's commitment to eradicate poverty and is therefore highly relevant to DFID policy promotion in South Africa.

The RDF highlights key obstacles to rural development and the development of rural livelihoods. These obstacle are said to stem principally from apartheid's discriminatory policies particularly the forced removals from land (see Box 1).

Box 1: Key Obstacles to Rural Development in South Africa (after Republic of South Africa, 1997a)

- Landlessness (in homelands) and inappropriate farming methods (in commercial lands) have led to severe land degradation and soil erosion.
- Environmental management policies and practices remain sectoral and fragmented
- Current land ownership and land development patterns strongly reflect the political and economic conditions of apartheid. Racially-based policies were a cause of insecurity, landlessness and poverty amongst black people and of inefficient land administration and land use.
- Spatial planning in rural areas devoid of economic opportunity hinders any current rural development efforts
- In white commercial farming areas, past government polices have led to an over capitalised, over mechanised farm system. Many problems are to be faced in opening up the system.

¹ The definition of rural areas is useful and should be considered by PANRUSA. RDF (1997) define rural households as being located in: all farms large and small, including farming areas within former homelands, freehold and large scale farm sectors; all sparsely populated areas, not strictly agricultural; all wilderness areas and forest areas; rural settlements, whether the population benefit from the utilisation of natural resources or not; squatter camps away from towns; other small villages and settlements in rural areas with/without linkages to the rural economy. *What does PANRUSA define as rural? Are we focusing on cross-border rural areas or should we include towns etc. if some component of that population utilises natural resources in the region? Does there have to be a NR and rural component to the definition of households we are interested in?*

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In Namibia a similar process of decentralisation is being implemented. Namibia draw much of their policy innovation from Botswana and particularly where rural land issues are concerned are following the models of Regional Land Boards established in Botswana in the late 1970s. Some have been critical of this tendency, while others suggest that having dismantled the pre-independence tribal administrations, these new tiers of government are now being reinstated to serve a similar function (P Thataone, pers.comm., 1999).

The Namibian government have flagged poverty as a critical issue facing the future of Namibia (Republic of Namibia, 1997, 1999). If Namibia is to successfully meet the challenge of poverty, it will need to overcome the problems associated with 'poverty amidst plenty' (Republic of Namibia, 1997). The disparity in wealth between rich and poor (as well as urban and rural, black and white) is acute and more than two-thirds of Namibians are estimated as having standards of living so low that they live in 'absolute poverty'². Furthermore, it is the 'black' population which is mostly rural that form the majority of the poor. Poverty in Namibia is explained in terms of political, socio-economic and environmental factors, and history also plays a key role. The existence of poverty in contemporary Namibia is attributed to a number of specific reason, outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: Key Poverty Burdens in Namibia (after Republic of Namibia, 1997, 1999)

- From a historical-political perspective, apartheid policies were directly or indirectly responsible for many of the ills which face the country today; the effects of these policies continue to be felt in the physical, social, economic, environmental and spiritual heart of the nation. In 1964 the Odendaal Commission assigned 33.3 million hectares to 10 black 'homelands' and 34.9 million to white commercial farmers. The homelands, although predominantly lying in the higher rainfall areas of the country, are endowed with marginal soils and poor natural resource bases.
- The artificial concentration of the population into ethnic regions has led to over population in many areas and consequently to over-exploitation of natural resources. Recent evidence suggests that agricultural productivity in the communal areas is in secular decline, as increasing numbers of people attempt to work smaller and more marginal land. The majority of the rural population are no longer able to sustain themselves purely from agricultural production and must augment their incomes from a variety of different sources.
- The agriculture base is weak. Rainfall is limited and highly variable from year to year. The only perennial rivers are on boundaries with neighbouring counties. Soils are sandy and of low fertility. This combination of low fertility soils and unreliable rainfall have led households (particularly poor rural households) to diversify their sources of income. Pensions and remittances provide important supplements to cash wages and subsistence farming.
- Opportunities for employment outside of subsistence agriculture are extremely limited, the formal employment sector is small and unemployment is high. The ILO have estimated that 25-30% of the labour force in the formal sector are unemployed, while two-thirds of those in the subsistence sector are underemployed. To compound this problem,

² In 1993 the richest 7 00 Namibians were estimated to spend as much as the poorest 800 000 combined (Republic of Namibia, 1997).

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an estimated 16 500 new workers, at the present rate of population growth, are entering the labour market each year.

- The high population growth rate, estimated at 3% per annum, is also aggravating existing problems, for although Namibia's population density is among the lowest in the world, the distribution is highly skewed. The greatest concentration lives in the north which accounts for 60% of the total population. Within these areas population densities are also uneven resulting in local land shortages and 'hotspots' of human and animal concentration.
- The economy inherited at independence was not geared towards equitable growth and job creation. Resource rents from mining supported an elite population, but such an economy offered limited opportunities for participation by the indigenous majority. Annual growth rates have slowed and now less than half of Namibia's potentially economically active population is employed in the formal sector.

In Botswana, rural development is principally addressed through the Remote Area Development Programme. The RADP was initially set up in the 1970s to address some of the inequalities emerging in Botswana society, and the increasing pervasiveness of poverty in the rural areas. Remote Area Dwellers (those targeted by the programme) were seen as "all people living outside village settlements" (Gulbrandsen *et al*, 1986: 4) and this was later redefined (following the first Remote Area Development workshop in 1978) to include all those citizens who live outside the traditional village structure in a geographic or socio-economic sense (Campbell and Main, 1991; Hitchcock 1988a, 1997b). This allowed those who were disadvantaged or destitute but living in villages to come under the remit of RADP. This was particularly important in drought years when some people were forced to move to villages in search of food and water. These Remote Area Development populations were thus defined according to spatial location (remote), socio-political status (marginalised) and socio-economic status (impoverished and subject to discrimination) (Hitchcock, 1996).

Whilst the most common view of the Remote Area Dwellers is the poorest of the poor, several authors (Hitchcock, 1988ab, 1996; Young, 1995) have pointed out that there is significant socio-economic heterogeneity in the rural sector. Given the variety in herd sizes, arable land cultivated, trade opportunities etc. of the rural population it is difficult to justify outlining one development strategy for remote areas, particularly when this is coupled with the diversity of natural resources in the various districts. Further, Botswana does not in fact have a clear and coherent rural development policy, rather a set of overlapping yet disparate programmes which hinder effective development in the remote districts (Mokhurutshe, pers.comm., 1995).

A further misconception is that Remote Area Dwellers tend to be equated with Basarwa and thus Remote Area Development characteristics tend to be based the assumptions or received wisdoms about aboriginal or first peoples. Again this ignores the heterogeneity of the rural population, particularly amongst the Basarwa groups themselves (Hitchcock, 1996). Though the target group of the RADP has widened since the early days of the Bushmen Development Programme there is still a gap between who the programme is said to be dealing with and its actions (Enger, 1981; Wily, 1982; Campbell and Main, 1991). Little of the early anthropological research in the Kalahari was applied and there was a tendency to bypass people other than the most traditional hunter gatherers (Wily, 1982). However it was those

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who were ignored who were facing increasing conflict, depreciation and impoverishment (Lee, 1985).

The RADP carries out population and land use surveys in the remote areas; runs settlement schemes; sets up service centres and social infrastructure; attempts to find ways of diversifying the economic base of the remote area populations; aims to develop human resources and promote socio-political organisations; and carries out its own monitoring of the programme (Gulbrandsen *et al*, 1986). Despite the fact that the RADP has undergone regular assessments since its conception (see Enger, 1981; Childers, 1981; Gulbrandsen *et al*, 1986; Hitchcock, 1988ab; CHR, 1995) it is difficult to ascertain the extent of its success. The greatest indication of success would be the fulfilment of its ultimate aim, to become redundant (Enger, 1981), and there is little sign that this is likely to occur in the near future. However its provision of service centres in TGLP ranch blocks and its extension service to Remote Area Development settlements have certainly helped some section of the rural populations. However, these service centres are variable in their character, impacts and services offered (Hitchcock and Holm, 1993). In Wildlife Management Areas their principal role has been to service the settlements with an extension team and to facilitate in the capacity building of committees necessary for the implementation of the community based natural resource management projects. However the extension services in the RADP are very weak (despite USAID/NRMP supported PRA based training programme (Reynolds, 1997)) and this is the most fundamental constraint to the programme's success.

By not recognising the eclectic needs of the various groups in Botswana's rural society these policies have continued to further undermine the basis of many people's livelihoods. Though RADP have been well funded (with large support form the NORAD) it has failed to tackle the fundamental poverty in rural areas. In addition, by stating that groups must compete on an equal basis with each other, these assimilationist polices do not recognise the inherent inequality that exists in terms of access to resources and options for making a living (Good, 1993).

In conclusion to this section, it must be questioned whether these emerging rural development discourses signify a shift away from welfare approaches to poverty towards self-sustaining community-led projects with local training and capacity building? The brief examples given above suggest that in some sectors these issues are being addressed, but that in other areas, top-down blueprint solutions requiring capital and technical input are also dominating. Policy researchers should address questions of how the rural poor are both *included* and *excluded* from certain policy discourses. Furthermore, they should ask what role the rural poor play in the policy process, and whether this can be enhanced with the emergence of stronger discourses of participation and sustainable livelihoods. Where the discourse of participation is being taken up, mass training of extension workers and policy makers at the national and local levels is taking place. Correspondingly, the goal of social justice should be incorporated effectively into future natural resource and natural resource related policies. Furthermore, policies likely to be dressed in participatory rhetoric yet retaining strong manipulative and top down approaches should be challenged.

Agriculture

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Southern Africa agriculture encompasses both extensive and intensive arable and pastoral farming practices. The agriculture sector of most countries in Southern Africa remains strongly dualistic, with a relatively small number of large commercial farms and a large number of diverse smallholder farms. Typically the commercial farms occupy the most favourable areas, are highly mechanised, and enjoyed subsidised inputs (particularly in apartheid and colonial eras). Conversely smallholders typically occupy communal areas in more fragile and marginal environments, with poor extension services and reduced levels of subsidies (Whiteside, 1998). Botswana differs slightly from Namibia and South Africa as it has a small-scale but well established indigenous commercial farming base.

The complexity, diversity and risk-prone nature of smallholder arable and pastoral agriculture has generally been underestimated by agriculture professionals. Research extension and the provision of services for highly complex and very diverse farming systems is difficult if traditional top-down approaches are used in which complexity and diversity are seen as problems (Whiteside, 1998). Recent research has shown that local farmers use the complexity and diversity of their environment and resource use practices as part of the solution to making a living in such variable and risk-prone environments (Scoones, 1999 et al, 1996; Chambers 1997). Whiteside (1998) also argues that agriculture service providers need to work with local farmers and communities to make the best use of this variability and therefore, services and policies must support farmers in reducing their risks.

The suitability of different areas of Southern Africa for rainfed crop production varies enormously, with rainfall being the most important limiting factor. The population density in the individual countries of Southern Africa is very variable and can reflect historical factors as well as agriculture productivity. Critically, even within countries with low overall population densities, unequal distribution of land and people means that there are areas of acute land pressure (Whiteside, 1998). Commercial and subsistence livestock production faces similar problems with rainfall again being the most important limiting factor. In some communal areas pressure on rangeland resources has resulted in compositional changes to the natural resource base (e.g. from perennial to annual grasses) which causes acute problems in low rainfall years, but does not necessarily effect overall productivity in average (or good) rainfall year (White, 1993; Abel, 1993, Dahlberg, 1993).

Recent severe droughts have undermined smallholder resources across Southern Africa and left many of the poorer households without cattle. This has had knock on effects on draught power, land cultivation and fertility maintenance. Policies for smallholder support have been largely founded on the transfer of technology approach although more holistic and participatory approaches have also been incorporated more recently. This echoes a wider shift across policy spheres towards these approaches. Policies to encourage stock reduction during droughts through livestock food subsidies tied to livestock sales have only been partially successful in counties such as Namibia. In areas where wealth is viewed through cattle numbers, and with rising population levels, severe problems still occur.

In South Africa, a dual system of agriculture emerged through apartheid rule with white large-scale farming enjoying government subsidies. Black small-scale farming was principally confined to the subsistence sector in homeland areas which were marginal in terms of agricultural productivity. Despite agricultural reform in South Africa, there now prevails a controversial debate over small-scale versus large-scale farming in terms of overall productivity, efficiency, sustainability and long-term contribution to local, regional and national economies. Given the critical importance of agriculture to South Africa's economy,

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the agricultural policy reform process forms the focus of the detailed discussion in section 3 of this paper.

In Namibia, commercial land held by the individual through freehold tenure covers 44% of the country (362 000km²) and comprises 6 300 farms (6 123 white-owned) belonging to 4 200 farmers. Communal land is owned by the State and the legal status of land allocation in these areas in the absence of the Communal Land Bill is somewhat confused. Communal land covers 41% of the country (335 400km²) and is home to 138 000 households (NAPCOD, 1996). There is now a crisis in Namibia's communal lands, a) because of a lack of community-based structures that regulate use of existing resources, and b) because of a lack of overall land use planning for the region which can accommodate the interests of both large and small farmers (Fuller and Nghekembua, 1996b).

In the past, communal and commercial farming developed along separate (and principally ethnic) lines. The policy of separate development avoided direct conflicts though acute inequalities existed between the two farming systems. Today, two different groups are coming into increasing conflict over grazing, water, rights of way and access to land. They are the small communal farmers and the larger more commercialised indigenous farmers. While the dichotomy between commercial and communal has in the past been largely racially based between white commercial farmers and black communal farmers, the situation is now changing.

According to Fuller and Nghekembua (1996b), community management practices in the communal lands have broken down and there is now a lack of clarity over who manages these areas. There are two different routes through which management decisions can be taken at present, local communities and Tribal Authorities. The vacuum caused by lack of co-ordination between the two has left resource management in chaos. The legal framework governing access to land in communal areas is confused and an informal system governing allocation of resources has emerged. Communal farmers obtain residence rights and access to resources in a village from the village headman. Commercial or semi-commercial farmers, who are seeking access to the wider grazing areas, generally further away from settlements, obtain permission from senior headmen or 'kings' of the area. It is in these areas that commercial farmers are fencing off communal land. Such farmers often enclose more land than their allocation. Furthermore, it is likely that these elites can pay 'high prices' for the land, an option not available for the poorer communal farmers. Inequalities within the black population are polarising the situation with wealthy semi-commercialised and commercialised farmers able to command greater control over communal resources, while smaller poorer communal farmers are further dispossessed from the land and its resources.

One factor that could be playing a significant role in the current 'informal' management of the communal lands is the principle that land 'belongs' to one ethnic group. Constitutionally this idea is illegal, yet decades of ethnic division in Namibia may have fixed this idea in the minds of many communal area residents (Fuller and Turner, 1996), and pressure on resources may heighten and strengthen these divisions. It is unclear whether certain groups are dominating in the enclosure of the communal areas. Should this local discourse be emerging, this has significant implications for policy formulation in this sector and its implementation within both communal and commercial spheres.

Agriculture in Botswana can be divided into two distinct sectors: traditional and commercial. Commercial agriculture is largely confined to the freehold and leasehold farms,

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whereas traditional farming is exclusive to the communal areas. The commercial sector in Botswana uses modern technology and applies purchased inputs such as hybrid seeds, agro-chemicals, and exotic livestock breeds. It is also more likely to require hired labour, while traditional agriculture typically uses family labour. Commercial agriculture is integrated in formal markets, but the traditional sector produces mainly for its own consumption, only selling when surpluses are available. The traditional sector also includes resource-poor farmers who do not own cattle and are engaged in marginal crop production and are net food buyers. Such households supplement their own production through wage earnings, transfers and off-farm activities. Commercial farms comprise 8% of the total land area and tend to specialise in cattle production while traditional farms cover about 70% of Botswana's total land area, a considerable contrast to the situation in Namibia. Two thirds of traditional farmers practice mixed farming, with individual management of arable holdings and communal grazing livestock (Republic of Namibia, 1997). There is a great disparity in performance between the two sectors as the figures in Box 3 indicate.

Box 3: Agricultural Performance in Traditional and Commercial Sectors in Botswana (Republic of Namibia, 1997)

	Commercial	Traditional
Cattle		
Annual calving rate	60%	50%
Annual off-take rate	17%	8%
Annual mortality	5%	12%
Cereal Crops (maize, sorghum & millet)		
Average Yield	500kg/ha	200kg/ha
Pandamantenga Commercial Farms	750kg/ha	

Botswana's food requirements are increasingly purchased by export earnings from the diamond sector. However beef export earnings still adequately cover imports of basic cereals. Productivity in the livestock sector has been hampered by persistent drought, which has resulted in shortage of water and poor grazing conditions. Productivity in the arable sector is still low. Here the protracted incidence of poor weather conditions characterised by variable and low rainfall have adversely affected productivity in this sector. Of further concern to the Botswana government is the incidence of HIV/AIDS related diseases and their impact on the performance of the agricultural sector (Republic of Namibia, 1997). These diseases may have adverse effects on the provision of labour for agricultural production and off-farm employment and this may in turn negatively affect household economic situations and food security. The impact of HIV/AIDS related diseases on subsistence (as well as formal) labour provision is also a serious concern for South Africa and Namibia.

Land Reform and Land Policies

Southern African countries have traditionally had a strong dualistic tenure structure with cash crop production dominated by settler agriculture and indigenous or 'communal' sector for the most part ignored or used as reserve land to support the commercial sector in

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times of need (Bruce, 1998). It is striking that in these counties this pattern has not changed significantly since independence. There have been a number of attempts to 'modernise' land tenure and implement reform, of which Botswana is seen as perhaps the most successful in terms of decentralised control, but least successful in terms of equity of rights for women. In Namibia, land reform has meant the subdivision and reassignment of freehold white farms into small holdings for resettlements by Africans, but overall ownership remaining with the state. South Africa, while allowing community options on tenure, seems to have opted for freehold ownership nested within a market economy, and this is what is being promoted by government for reform beneficiaries, whether as individuals or private landholding groups. (Bruce, 1998)

Southern Africa presents some of the most thoroughly disrupted tenure systems in Africa. Indigenous tenure systems have been badly eroded by a century of intervention to the extent that it must be questioned as to whether it can be, or should be, resurrected. At the moment, there is an expanding debate over the authenticity of customary tenure in southern Africa. It is argued that its content was dramatically distorted by colonial policies and courts, emphasising its 'communal' elements and overstating the powers of traditional land tenure. (Bruce, 1998). The discourse over the 'real' content of tradition is mobilised in current political debates over land and reform issues (Bruce, 1998; James, 1999). It could also be argued that the interest in traditional authorities in this region may involve less a persistence of traditional values than a growing disillusionment by rural people with centralised government in the post-independence period, and an attempt to find in traditional authorities a counterbalance for the political dominance of urban-based national elites and their ideologies. Decentralisation in Namibia and South Africa could signify government recognition of this disillusionment, or depending on how much power is really being devolved to the regions, a new form of control in more remote areas is emerging.

Under colonialism and apartheid, various restrictions were placed on land rights. The challenge of tenure reform now is to de-racialise the system of land rights in a way which brings pre-existing vested rights in land within a non-racial unitary system. The challenge is to overcome current tenure disputes, overlapping tenure rights, and conflicting land claims. New policies *must* broaden the base of land ownership. Evidence from land reform around the world has demonstrated that many farm operations on smaller scales can be more efficient, but such reforms must be balanced with overall food security concerns at local, regional and national levels.

Natural Resources

The key factor about environmental policies in Southern Africa is that they are principally operating in dryland regions. Most of the area under consideration for the PANRUSA project is classified as semi-arid and the environment is characteristically dry (Thomas and Shaw, 1991), especially on a seasonal basis. In these areas, biological productivity is limited by rainfall and is therefore low.

There are a number of features about the Kalahari environment which have particular significance for this research. The diversity and variability of the Kalahari environment regulates all human interactions with this environment. As well as the seasonal patterns of summer and winter, there are marked year-to-year variations in rainfall which contribute

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significantly to the character of the Kalahari (Thomas and Shaw, 1991). Interannual rainfall variation ranges from less than 200mm per annum in the driest areas of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, to 500 mm p.a. over much of Botswana, and up to 600 mm p.a. in Southern District in Botswana and North West Province of South Africa (Thomas and Shaw, 1991). Rainfall variability affects the availability of moisture for plant and animal communities as well as human activities. Both long term changes and shorter term oscillations have been identified in the rainfall patterns in the Kalahari, the latter suggesting alternating wet and dry decades (Tyson, 1986). More recently links have been made between rainfall in southern Africa and the El Niño-Southern Oscillation originating in the Pacific Ocean (Wells, 1997). The combination of seasonality and interannual variability make the Kalahari environment highly unpredictable in terms of resource availability. Superimposed on this are the highly localised variations that can produce marked differences in vegetation over relatively small areas making the environment characteristically patchy.

Recently in Southern Africa there have been two periods of notable drought: 1982-1987 and 1992-1994. Such occurrences critically affect resource abundance and availability for the rural populations, limiting the plant and tree products that can be gathered and the fodder availability for livestock and wildlife. This puts pressure on the few resources that are available, both locally and at a national level, and can lead to irreversible changes in the environment, particularly in the light of recent work on the "disequilibrium" of rangelands (Abel and Blaikie, 1989; Behnke et al, 1993; Thomas and Middleton, 1994; Brockington and Homewood, 1996). The seasonality, patchiness and interannual variability of the Kalahari environment has meant that past activities in this region have been highly adapted and flexible. However, with structural changes imposed by national and international directives, and longer term changes in the environment, rural people are finding their adaptive flexibility impeded. This has serious implications both for their livelihoods and for the environment on which their livelihoods are based.

Desertification and Environmental Change

The principal arguments surrounding desertification in Southern Africa were outlined in PANRUSA Briefing Paper, *Desertification and the CCD: issues and links to poverty, natural resources and policy* (Thomas, 1998). This paper used the CCD framework to review desertification and its different natural resource, social and environmental dimensions. Many debates now identify clear links between environmental degradation, poverty and unsustainable resource use. DFID (1997) identifies land degradation and desertification as one of several issues that any poverty alleviating interventions need to address. The CCD definition of desertification also implicitly indicates that desertification is linked to unsustainable natural resource use practices in drylands. The CCD integrates both recent thinking on the importance of flexible rural livelihoods and recognition of the various linkages between desertification, welfare and poverty. Furthermore it recognises that desertification may cause poverty (if there is not a rich livelihood base in times of stress) and that poverty may cause desertification (as a lack of flexibility may cause particular resource use activities to continue to an unsustainable level) (Thomas, 1998).

In Namibia, the perception that degradation is occurring at accelerating rates due to human mismanagement of natural resources is an important force driving development policy

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and interventions. Over that last few years this has been crystallised with the *Namibian Programme to Combat Desertification (NAPCOD)*. Through its media programme this initiative has considerable influence in moulding a desertification-aware national consciousness which pervades thinking regarding communal land policy reform and natural resource management issues alike (Sullivan, 1999: 22).

South Africa (like Namibia and Botswana) signed up to the CCD in 1995 fully ratifying it in 1997. The Department of Environment and Tourism is responsible for co-ordinating, implementing and determining overall policy. However it will be left to the provinces to implement specific policy interventions. Given the problems South Africa is experiencing with decentralisation and restructuring of local government, it could be some time before such policies are put effectively into practice.

In Botswana, desertification debates are closely linked with debates surrounding the productivity of the rangeland, carrying capacities and livestock management practices. Human activities are said to be causing vegetative changes, typically loss of tree cover, bush-thickening due to grazing pressure, or changes in heavily grazed areas from perennial to annual grass species. However, it is uncertain what is really driving these changes. The impacts in terms of productivity, environmental stability/change and long term sustainable use of natural resources are highly complex and varied. The parts of the natural resource system that are particularly affected by changes in policy, practices, climate should be identified, and the nature of these linkages should be made clear. These issues have critical implications for Botswana's rangelands, but also for arable land across the region, particularly in terms of soil fertility maintenance strategies.

Managing Drought

Most of Southern Africa has low average rainfall and high variability in intra- and inter-seasonal rainfall pattern. Dry weather and dry areas are common, whereas drought, defined as 'the failure of expected rainfall', is less frequent. Farming practices in these areas are 'traditionally' well adapted and flexible enough to take account of the dry conditions. However, when people intensify their use of dry areas, either intentionally, or through increased population pressures, or if livelihood strategies are limited or weak, they become particularly prone to drought. All three countries operate drought relief measures. These are usually run at the district level and comprise emergency food rations and/or food-for-work schemes. Given that poverty in some areas is not solely due to drought, poor people often become dependent on these schemes. In Namibia for example, one drought officer re-defined 'drought' and therefore 'drought relief' to include 'those who could not benefit from the rain'. Botswana has been both praised and criticised for its drought relief policy and analysis of its programme provides insights for all three countries examined in the PANRUSA project.

Drought is endemic on the Kalahari and is an important variable in people's resource-based livelihoods in rural areas. Drought relief and recovery programmes in Botswana have both protected the rural poor from malnutrition and ensured they are able to maintain a large proportion of their economic assets (Holm, 1986). Viewed from a different angle, drought has exacerbated long-term trends in inequality and poverty. These have been concealed and addressed with crisis relief and recovery programmes which do not tackle these deeper problems (Solway, 1994). Recently, there have been two notable periods of drought that have prompted the relief and recovery programme. The first was 1982-1990 in response to the

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drought of the early 1980s. The programme was reinstated between 1992-1996 following a recurrence of drought years in the early 1990s (Ntwaagae, 1993). The programme's aims were twofold. First, to protect the nutritional status and health of the vulnerable groups and, secondly, to protect the economic assets of the rural populations to ensure rapid recovery from drought. The programme had four main elements: (a) food distribution to pregnant and lactating women, children and complete rations to Remote Area Dwellers; (b) the Labour Based Relief Programmes which provided employment opportunities in settlements and villages for food and later wages; (c) agricultural relief and recovery (administered through district agricultural offices); and, (d) clean and dependable sources of water (addressed by council water units) (Hay *et al*, 1985).

Botswana's early warning system and management of the drought relief programme have been highly praised by international governments and aid organisations (Simmons and Lyon, 1992; Hay *et al*, 1985; Holm, 1986; Valentine, 1993; Solway, 1994). However it has also received criticism for various elements of the approach. One view is that Botswana has the wealth to carry out its relief programme, but wealth does not necessarily translate into policies which promote justice and effective implementation (Holm, 1986). Simmons and Lyon (1992) argue that aggregate levels of aid disbursement rather than data obtained from actual field studies account for the apparent success of the programme. Using micro-level data on food aid flows, these authors show that there were deficiencies in food provision to some of the most vulnerable groups.

Though successful in many ways the relief and recovery programme has promoted longer-term dependency in many rural areas (Hitchcock *et al*, 1993; Holm, 1986; Ingstad, 1994) and to this extent it can be used as a political tool. These programmes are beginning to be seen as a *de facto* right of Botswana citizens and thus people are likely to support a government which promises to keep such programmes. However, once relief and recovery have taken place, the government may be keen to redirect drought relief and recovery funds to alternative development initiatives or to other sectors completely (Holm, 1986).

In 1990 the recovery programme was terminated causing considerable hardship for those who had become dependent on the food handouts and employment opportunities it offered, particularly in the west of Botswana (Murray, pers.comm., 1995). Elements of the programme were transferred, for example, food distribution to pregnant and lactating women was incorporated into primary health care programmes and managed through clinics. The destitute relief programme (Republic of Botswana, 1980) had also been established by this time and absorbed many of those unemployed and without means to make a living: complete Remote Area Dweller rations were no longer available and thus many became classified as destitute and once more received rations from this source (Murray, pers.comm., 1995). The drought relief and recovery programme was resurrected in 1992 in response to the devastating effect of its removal had on rural livelihoods and the continued drought in the early 1990s, but also in time for the 1994 elections. In 1996 the programme was stopped once again but this time, due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, there was no recovery programme in districts such as Ghanzi (Motlokwa, pers.comm., 1996) and once again considerable hardship ensued.

Solway (1994) argues that drought itself can be viewed as a 'revelatory crisis' which exposes structural contradictions as well as deteriorating socio-economic conditions. The nature of the crisis can be used by the government to conceal the deeper problems and trends of poverty and vulnerability. Poverty, vulnerability and inequality are still prevalent in most of the rural areas and while the programme addressed short-term needs it did not adequately

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address issues of long-term self-sufficiency nor the problem of dependency on hand-outs and employment opportunities. Drought occurrences in dryland Botswana have marked effects on resource-based livelihoods and labour-based drought relief programmes can alter significantly individuals' livelihood strategies. An extensive study by the Food Studies Group Oxford (Hay, 1990; Rockliffe-King, 1990; Buchanan-Smith, 1990; Amis, 1990; Cogill, 1990; Wallis, 1990) also recognises this point:

The main lesson arising from the evaluation is that because drought reduces the incomes of the poorest rural households, the lasting solution is to tackle the causes of their economic vulnerability, so minimizing the scope of emergency responses in times of drought....The analysis led to a clear distinction between promoting the growth of a sustainable rural economy, to the benefit of all rural dwellers, and providing for those households unable to support themselves at an acceptable standard of living. (Hay, 1990: 29)

They recommend the restructuring of the drought programme and detailed co-ordination of recovery systems with other development programmes already in operation (e.g. RADP). Specifically, they recommend that a division of responsibility needs to be coherently delineated to ensure low income vulnerable groups are reached. There is little evidence that the Food Studies Group recommendations have been implemented (see Buchanan-Smith, 1993). The dependency of remote populations, particularly in dryland areas, on the employment opportunities provided by this programme is significant, but has not been consistently recognised.

Environmental Management

South Africa has a rural environment made vulnerable by low erratic rainfall and by the poverty of many of its people. Land degradation and soil erosion are serious problems now and for the future. The management of land resources in South Africa is spread over different national and provincial ministries, each carrying their own jurisdiction as specified by Acts. This means that the institutional framework, as well as the legal system, generally fails to integrate their approach to land use, including the protection of the natural environment. The Physical Planning Act (125 of 1991), the Environment Conservation Act (73 of 1989) and the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (43 of 1983) assume integration of environmental management in land use planning. However, at the administrative level, environmental management practices remain sectoral and fragmented.

Therefore the present status of environmental management in South Africa is characterised by this fragmented policy and ineffective legislation. There is uncoordinated planning, ineffective enforcement of regulations and confusion about the assignment of functions to different levels of government. There are institutional conflicts of interest in regulating the environment and promoting resource exploitation. Furthermore, there is markedly limited public participation. In its first steps to redress these problems, South Africa established its new Environmental Management Policy through a unique process called CONEPP, the Consultative National Environmental Policy Process, which provided stakeholders in the South African environment (rural, urban, individuals, farmers, groups, organisations, policy experts etc.) to contribute to the policy. Eventually the policy will be backed up by legislation and a National Environmental Management Bill is currently in draft. The overarching goal of the strategy embraces sustainable development. The seven strategic

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goals for achieving environmental sustainability and integrated environmental management are outlined in Box 4.

Box 4: Objectives in the Environmental Management Policy (Republic of South Africa, 1997b)

- To create an effective, adequately resources and harmonised institutional; framework and an integrated legislative system, and build institutional capacity
- Promote equitable access to, and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources, and promote environmentally sustainable lifestyles. Integrate environmental impact management with all economic and development activities to achieve sustainable development with the emphasis on satisfying basic needs and ensuring environmental sustainability
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that environmental considerations are effectively integrated into the development of government policies and programmes, all spatial and economic development planning processes and all economic activity.
- Establish mechanisms and processes to ensure effective public participation in environmental governance
- Promote the education and empowerment of South Africa's people. Increase their awareness of, and concern for, environmental issues, and assist in developing the knowledge, skills, values and commitment necessary to address sustainable development
- Develop and maintain mechanisms to increase access to information and ensure effective management of environmental information
- Develop mechanisms to deal effectively and in the national interest with international issues affecting the environment

Incorporating environmental issues in rural development should be a concern for all Southern African governments. Environmental management should not be restricted to conservation of natural resources, the preservation of ecosystems, the maintenance of biological diversity. It should also include measures to help the poor to use and manage the environment sustainably whilst also understanding the cultural, social and economic forces that define our relationship to the environment. Environmental concerns therefore also embrace concerns for human rights.

In South Africa, certain environmental rights have been enshrined in the Constitution (Bill of Rights). Terms such as 'degradation', 'conservation' and 'ecologically sustainable development' are all mentioned though none of these are adequately defined. At the local government level, South Africa has stated that environmental policy should have goals of social justice, ecological sustainability as well as economic measures to encourage such policies. South Africa's local government will be responsible for containing negative impacts on the environment and for adopting measures to improve environmental management. The aim is to localise environmental management as far as possible.

Community-Based Natural Resource Management

In Namibia and Botswana, environmental management has been approached in a slightly different way. Rather than restructuring government, and natural resource related policies, these countries have attempted to integrate environmental concerns into existing

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policy structures, and through new guidelines addressing issues of sustainable development, community resource management and participation. In Botswana these concepts have been embraced by the National Conservation Strategy which specifically aims to 'increase the effectiveness with which natural resources are used and managed, so that beneficial interactions are optimised and harmful environmental side-effects are minimised' (Republic of Botswana, 1990:2). In Namibia, these issues are addressed in the government's Green Plan which sets out an ambitious national programme for achieving sustainable development through 'commitment, partnership and consultation' (Republic of Namibia, 1999: 174). As part of both of these programmes community based natural resources management initiatives have been established.

Community-based natural resource management programmes are based on the premise that local populations have a greater interest in the sustainable use of natural resources around them than do more centralised or distant government or private management institutions (Tsing et al, 1999). These local communities are credited with having a greater understanding of their local environment and are thus seen as more able to effectively manage natural resources through local or 'traditional' practices (Leach et al , 1999; Tsing et al, 1999). This move in global and local development discourse is part of a wider reassessment of the goals of conservation by international bodies such as the UN (for example, the Convention to Combat Desertification and Biodiversity Convention both advocate community-based approaches), national governments North and South (for example, indicated by the number of countries signed up to the sustainable development goals of Agenda 21), and NGOs and community-based organisations across the world (UN, 1995; Forsyth and Leach 1998). There is now increasing recognition that effective resource management must be linked with issues of equitable access to natural resources, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and the alleviation of poverty (Forsyth and Leach, 1998).

However the success of the community-based natural resource management concept has brought new challenges for 'policy implementors' and 'policy receivers' and some critical questions concerning motivation, accountability, sustainability and participation need to be addressed. In Botswana, these initiatives have been embraced by the Natural Resource Management Programme (NRMP) a USAID funded programme within the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. Joint venture initiatives are being set up between communities and commercial safari companies in an effort to maximise the sustainable economic use of wildlife and other natural resources. However, problems are emerging which have significant implications for the viability (and suitability) of these programmes and the sustainable use of natural resources (Twyman, 1998, Taylor, 1998).

In Namibia, conservancies have emerged as a key way of managing the natural resource base in some areas. The concept emerged from commercial farmland where individual farmers who have had legal rights since 1968 to use animal wildlife on their farms consumptively, realised that it was advantageous to pool their land and financial resources to make available a larger unit on which integrated management practices could be carried out. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism policy of 1992 enabled farmers in communal areas to take up similar opportunities³.

³ For further details see DEA working papers.

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3. South Africa

South Africa renounced apartheid in 1990 with the release of Nelson Mandela and his election to President in 1994 followed with the Government of National Unity. South Africa faces big challenges to redress the discrimination and inequalities of apartheid. This includes processes of reform across all sectors of government. This has been initiated principally through the Reconstruction and Development Programme which has recently been replaced by the GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) Programme. Reforms are within government structure as well as across the policy arena. New policy language has emerged which promotes peace, safety and security at the heart of the new strategy. Consultations in some sectors of government in the policy forming process have been unique e.g. CONEPP, and suggest that South Africa is committed to 'people-centred' governance. However, land and agricultural reform remain central to redressing inequalities in rural areas, where most of the poor are located, and are controversial with the largely white commercial farming sector. This sector has enjoyed subsidies and preferential treatment in markets and has produced most of South Africa's food requirements during apartheid and the related period of international sanctions. Food production on this scale has continued, but its sustainability and equitability remain in question. South Africa also differs from Botswana and Namibia by having a large population and perhaps some of the most entrenched forms of inequality to overcome in all sectors of society. This section of the paper briefly examines the rise and fall of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, before focusing on the state of South African agriculture in more detail.

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was established following the 1994 elections in South Africa by the new Government of National Unity. The RDP was conceived as a broad framework for socio-economic reform and initially received universal political support. Within one year this support had begun to erode, within two years the ministry which had initiated the programme had been abolished and RDP was downgraded, and by March 1996 the RDP Office was closed. According to Blumenfeld (1997) the RDP served initially as a powerful symbol and focus for the post-apartheid reconstruction effort, and signalled the new government's priority to tackle poverty. However it failed because of the ambiguities about its role and scope were never resolved. It could not sustain its duality of purpose as both a general vision for transformation and a strategic mechanism for change (Blumenfeld, 1997: 88). The RDP's political and institutional weaknesses severely undermined its credibility and led to serious failures of implementation. The Government of National Unity failed to seize the opportunity of using RDP as the vehicle for making some difficult economic policy choices. While there was increasing recognition that massive state intervention *per se* was not the answer, the government failed to prioritise RDP objectives or adopt growth-promoting policies that would generate the requisite resources. Blumenfeld's analysis of the situation suggests that however widespread the support and good the intention, these must be translated into real policies for promoting economic development and clear institutional structures for successful development planning and economic policy-making. The successor to RDP is the new Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy which has a more macro-economic focus, but still remains to be proven.

Mather (1996) points out that much of the writing on the impact of agriculture in South Africa highlights a grim picture of degradation. Soil loss is widespread in many agricultural areas (Yeld, 1993; Brand et al, 1992) due to environmentally inappropriate

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farming methods (Drummond, 1990), and overstocking of pastures (Kassier and Groenewald, 1992). Crisis situations have been declared, especially in some former homelands where 'over population' has put increasing pressure on limited natural resources. However the received wisdom that South African agriculture has had a universally devastating impact on rural ecologies should be re-examined in the light of the geographical disaggregation and assessment of available data, and the challenges to the 'received wisdoms' of ecological process in these regions (Mather, 1996).

The classic scenario presented as the cause of some of the most severely degraded areas is: severe overcrowding (especially in former homelands) leading to, 'overgrazing' of pastures, and over-cultivation of land, resulting in a decline of many indigenous methods of farming. In white controlled commercial areas the model of agriculture promoted has much in common with the historical development and contemporary features of agricultural systems in USA and Canada (Goodman and Redclift, 1991, Mather, 1996). White Agriculture has depended on the application of large amounts of synthetic fertiliser, pesticides and herbicides (all subsidised by the state). The state has guaranteed farmers in South Africa a set price for their produce regardless of overall yield. Farming is highly mechanised and relies on large amounts of fossil fuels. While this form of agricultural production has been beneficial to the country's national food security, it has come at considerable cost to the environment, and has produced the dualistic, or two-tiered, system of agriculture (van Rooyen et al, 1993). Drought aid has exacerbated this problem, especially where drought assistance has been given to white farmers allowing them to use it as a buffer for 'risky' farming or as an insurance if rains are poor (Vogel, 1994). These policies were promoted in part because of the belief that large-scale white farming was more efficient and economical than small-scale black farming (Lipton and Lipton, 1993), a continuing debate today.

Conservation measures also differed between homelands and areas controlled by white farmers. In homelands, conservation intervention was based on betterment or villagisation, and large conservation works. Villagisation of 1930s involved demarcation of arable and grazing land and often the culling of livestock in African rural communities. In White areas state supported conservation works were less coercive and less interventionist. They tended to campaign and work through organisations such as National Soil Erosion Council (1929).

The 1984 White Paper on Agriculture was the first to recognise that excessive exploitation of the environment would in the long term lead to lower standard of living for farmers and those dependent on the agricultural sector. Part of this shift was influenced by the severe drought of the early 1980s (Mather, 1996), and also by the government recognition of the excessive cost of subsidising the agricultural sector (Christiansen et al, 1993). However, the document failed to advance its policies in the relationship between the environment and farming in two ways. It focused exclusively on soil erosion and drought impacts, ignoring wider environmental problems and thus remaining similar in approach to 1930s documents. In essence, "it failed to change its environmental policies in response to what had become a far more complex system of agriculture" (Mather, 1996: 44). Tension is evident in the document between the goal of the sustainable use of natural resources and the political and economic role of agriculture during the mid-1980s in apartheid South Africa. In this context the perceived need for food self-sufficiency in the face of sanctions was paramount. "In a period of increasing isolation, agriculture had to continue its role as a supplier of raw materials and food while at the same time consuming the countries industrial

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output; in spite of the attention paid to the conservation of natural resources, environmental sustainability was always subordinate to the broader political and economic demands of the country during the mid-1980s” (Mather, 1996: 44).

From the late 1980s South Africa’s environmental policy was shaped significantly by the Council for the Environment’s (CoE) ‘Integrated Environmental Management Policy’, 1989. This effectively marked the country’s increasing engagement in its conservation strategy with international debates on development and the environment. It was an attempt to develop a strategy that was far more sensitive to the disparate demands of conservation and development (Mather, 1996). The CoE’s analysis of the relationship between agriculture and environment marked an important break with previous policy, and a more holistic approach to environmental management evolved. Topics now on the agenda included preservation of genetic diversity, injudicious use of pesticides, problems of salinisation and pollution of soils, and alternative remedies and techniques to tackling these problems.

Despite such awareness, serious questions about the success of a strategy which is dependent on ‘participation’ were raised (Mather, 1996). Quinlan (1993) argued that the policy had yet to be comprehensively evaluated and substantiated through practice, education and legislation. It was also argued that the report saw sustainable development within agriculture as something which should be fitted in to existing structures, failing therefore to provide a “meaningful way of integrating participation into the development process, a crucial consideration for ensuring sustainability” (Mather, 1996: 45). To be successful, there needs to be a “meaningful redesign of management structures and the reorientation of agricultural research and extension” i.e. significant political transformation is needed.

The 1995 White Paper reaffirmed several of the recommendations made in CoE report of the late 1980s. It called for the restructuring of subsidies to agriculture which encouraged farmers to plant crops in areas which could not sustain the intense level of cultivation and high energy inputs associated with industrial agriculture. The paper recommended natural and cost effective methods to maintain/increase soil fertility and so on, techniques better suited to resource poor farmers and less damaging to the environment. The White Paper also focuses on biodiversity, emphasising the holistic approach initiated in the CoE report in the late 1980s.

The 1995 White Paper is not a white paper in the traditional sense, more a mission statement to provide the basis for the formulation of agricultural policies. A democratic process was followed to produce the document. This involved participation by all rural stakeholders (political parties, farmers unions, grassroots organisations). This open approach has contributed to additional recommendations which demand far more radical changes in agricultural policy. However, given that some of the poorest and landless farmers are unorganised and institutionally marginalised, it remains to be seen whether their needs have been voiced and whether their needs will be met by this new strategy.

This recent White Paper is radical in its approach and unlike its predecessors it has shifted from ‘efficiency to substitutions’ (Mather, 1996: 46). It calls for substitutions by proposing farming practices which are less reliant on external and artificially manufactured inputs and depend instead on organic and natural methods of maintaining soil fertility, combating pests and controlling weeds. Such methods can be applied to both large and small scale farming thus promoting a broader range of viable farming systems in South Africa. This

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White Paper also places the costs of rehabilitating degraded land on the shoulder of farmers, putting management upon them, unlike previous policies.

Much depends on restructuring state institutions and university agriculture departments. But as yet, there is not a great deal of evidence to suggest that state agriculture departments are changing rapidly enough, and there is evidence of institutional inertia and scepticism about the reform process. Though South Africa has drawn on international experience for farming 'techniques', interventions and change need to be tailored to the specific complex range of contexts found in South Africa. There is further scepticism that 'sustainable development' is merely a phase, a paradigm and will soon become outdated.

The 1995 White Paper maintains the position that sustainable agriculture must be viewed in the context of the need to increase yields in a country which has a rapidly growing population, but with a resource base which is already being used to its full capacity. The mainly white commercial farming sector is seen as playing a continuing role, at least in the immediate future, of ensuring national food security. South Africa's new political order has been accompanied by an equally dramatic shift in policy regarding agriculture and the environment. The 1995 White Paper (and others) have converged on sustainability as the goal for a post-apartheid rural order. It remains to be seen whether they will achieve their goal. One of the key questions is whether present land distribution provides a good basis for future growth and employment in the agriculture sector and for the gradual elimination of the inequalities in access to land, or whether land reform and resettlement are necessary to achieve these goals (Binswanger and Deininger, 1993).

4. Namibia

Namibia gained independence from South Africa in 1989. Having been ruled under an apartheid regime the past policy context is one of racial exclusion and entrenched inequality. This is still evident in patterns of land use across the country though some attempts have been made to introduce land reform. Namibia is perhaps the most arid of the three countries in the PANRUSA project, adding to the difficulty of local people to maintain viable livelihood strategies. The key area of interest in this section is the dual land tenure system that emerged through apartheid and colonial rule and the present day changes and challenges that people are now facing.

The dualism of communal and commercial land tenure in Namibia dates back to the first land policy for the territory implemented by the German Colonial Authority in 1892. Over the next seventy years this dual land tenure system was to crystallise with the establishment of reserves initially known as 'home areas' and later called 'native nations', 'Bantustans' or 'homelands'. With these policies, communal and commercial areas continued to develop in isolation from each other until Independence in 1990. One of the driving forces of this separate land policy development was the perceived threat of land scarcity.

The most significant policy during this period was the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs (1962), more commonly known as the 'Odendaal Commission'. Its primary objective was to identify the land requirements of the main racial groups and delineate appropriate areas of land for each group. A separate black authority was responsible

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for each of the eleven ethnically defined Bantustans. Land was distributed along ethnic lines and separate development was entrenched in Namibia.

With Independence in 1990, the Namibian Constitution repealed all proclamations referring to these second tier (black) authorities, and in 1992 Regional Councils were established. Regional Councils have responsibility for planning physical developments in their regions, including the management of rangelands in communal areas. Namibia is in the process of formulating a National Land Policy, following the Agricultural (Commercial) Lands Reform Bill (1995) and the Communal Land Bill (in draft).

One of the major problems in the communal areas of Namibia is increasing enclosure of the land through private fencing. A study by Fuller and Turner (1996) in three communal areas across Namibia suggests that fencing of the communal lands is being done by 'those with money'. However, local people in some places also suggest that political patronage and close relationships to local political elites are a prerequisite for erecting a fence. In one area in their study, the illegal fencing was so pervasive that for some households erecting fences was a source of cash income. Furthermore, some communities were retaliating with 'defensive fencing' where fences were erected to prevent traditional grazing areas from being enclosed by people from outside the community.

In a study of Northern Namibia, Fuller and Nghekembua (1996b) found that fencing in communal areas started in the mid 1980s, about ten years after the communal farmers began to settle the area. From their study they concluded that there was clear evidence that because of the semi-commercial farmers fencing communal lands, this was put great pressure on lands which were left, and put pressure on adjacent areas where communal farmers were being forced to relocate.

Semi-commercial farmers who erect fences are obtaining exclusive rights of access to rangeland resources, and they are also able to utilise dual grazing rights on the remaining communal land. Most of these enclosed areas include watering pans, making access to water for communal farmers impossible (Fuller and Nghekembua, 1996b). Such activities can displace existing small-scale communal farmers, thus putting added pressure on lands surrounding communal areas, or force people to relocate to either overcrowded communal lands or in areas reserved for other activities (e.g. wildlife etc.).

The Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act of 1995 states that it will 'provide for the acquisition of agricultural land by the State for the purposes of land reform and for the allocation of such land to Namibian citizens who do not own or otherwise have use of any or of adequate agricultural land...; to vest in the State a preferent right to purchase agricultural land for the purposes of the Act; to regulate the acquisition of agricultural land by foreign nationals; to establish a Lands Tribunal and determine its jurisdiction' (Republic of Namibia, 1995: 2).

An important focus of the Act in terms of constraining potential forms of communal land and resource management is Section 38 which makes provision for the subdivision of land acquired under this Act into surveyed holdings for small scale farming purposes (interestingly, these restrictions echo conditions laid down for European settler farmers by the colonial authorities (Sullivan, 1999)). In other words, the Act advocates the further enclosure and subdivision of land through fencing.

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The draft Communal Lands Reform Bill also places emphasis on the subdivision of communal land into alienated land holdings. It proposes that any person or group of person holding recognised rights to communal land is 'entitled to convert such holding into a leasehold tenure of one hundred years' providing this takes into consideration local customary law. Similarly, vacant communal land may be delineated and allocated as economic land units. Allocation and management will ultimately rest with Regional Boards (modelled on Land Boards in Botswana). These Boards will have the power to allocate rights under customary law in Communal Lands falling under its jurisdiction, to cancel these rights, to allocate land and to demarcate land into economic holdings. A Land Adjudication Commission will be established to mediate disputes. The bill is still under development and has already gone through many changes (R Rohde, pers.comm., 1999). Furthermore, given the controversy surrounding the bill it is unlikely that it will be put through parliament before the election in 2000 (J Barns, pers.comm., 1999).

Despite the new reforms, the policy remains on track to transform traditional stock keepers into commercial farmers and replace customary forms of land tenure with freehold or leasehold title through the subdivision of communal land into fenced holdings. Both policies promote the privatisation and further enclosure of commercial and communal lands, and have led in some communal areas to 'land grabbing' and 'defensive fencing'. Such exclusion of people and livestock from 'former' communal lands exacerbates pressure on resources on the remaining communal lands and promotes the chaotic management systems which prevail.

The importance of mobility is a fundamental component of herd management in arid and unpredictable environments (Sullivan, 1999, 147; Scoones, 1995). Even when people have access to delineated areas of land this implies that the current policy emphasis on subdivision of land into individual land holdings may be inappropriate in some of Namibia's communal areas (Sullivan, 1999, 147). Furthermore, World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) Review Mission, funded by FAO (1993), stated that there should be a moratorium on fencing communal rangeland, and that communal areas should retain communal systems of land tenure, on the understanding that these systems best ensure security of tenure for the rural poor.

Suggestions that semi-commercial farms in the communal lands should be relocated are also problematic. In Namibia there is a general division between communal stock in the north and commercial stock in the south, and the division is reified by the existence of the 'red line' (a Veterinary Cordon Fence) across the country (Fuller and Nghekembua, 1996b; Sullivan, 1999). If semi-commercial farmers want to become commercialised farmers they cannot take their stock south. They must sell and re-buy at much higher prices, and so only the wealthiest farmers can move to the south. Because of the veterinary cordon fence, and thus by law, cattle must remain (albeit sold) in the north and thus overall this scenario does not reduce grazing or water pressure in the northern Namibia (Fuller and Nghekembua, 1996b).

5. Botswana

Botswana has had a democratically elected government since independence in 1966. Relatively wealthy, it has enjoyed high rates of growth, with a small population. However Botswana is now facing a rapidly increasing population within the context of high rates of mortality due to HIV/AIDS. Botswana needs to diversify its economy,

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currently reliant on diamonds, beef exports and tourism, if it is to maintain rates of growth into the next century (Greener, per comm., 1998). Botswana also needs to uphold environmentally sensitive policies and reduce pressures on rangeland resources from commercial livestock expansion, thus balancing environmental and economic needs relating to the livestock industry.

In Botswana, an important policy for the livestock industry was the 1975 Tribal Grazing Lands Policy. There were three goals to the TGLP:

- to improve range management and prevent overgrazing and further environmental degradation
- to bring about greater equality of rural income
- to foster growth and commercialisation of the livestock industry.

Land was zoned into three categories: commercial, communal and reserve. Only commercial land was officially zoned and gazetted. Areas zoned for commercial ranches assumed to be uninhabited were in fact occupied by a significant number of people. Wildlife Management Areas were then proposed for the reserved land category for people adversely affected by TGLP. Severe problems emerged with TGLP in relation to the use of dual grazing rights in the communal lands leading to increased pressure on the range and little incentive for 'good' management practices in ranches.

The failure of the TGLP to achieve its goals led the government to reconsider its agricultural policy in the 1980s, culminating in the 1990 National Policy on Agricultural Development. The limited land resources for livestock expansion and change in global economic climate indicated to the government that Botswana's expansionist approach to increasing livestock returns needed to be reconsidered. The new policy promotes the intensive use and efficient management of land resources and livestock to achieve its goal of increased productivity in this sector. One means of achieving this goal is the proposed fencing of some of the communal land areas. This is also seen as a step towards addressing the environmental and economic problems associated with or emanating from the communal grazing management system. Poor management has been identified as the most significant factor contributing to the poor performance of the agricultural sector (Balopi, 1996).

The potential impact of this policy on rural livelihoods in communal areas is critical. Experiences from other countries in Africa, and elsewhere around the world, suggest that privatisation of the communal lands can have devastating effects on the sustainability of rural livelihoods for the rural poor. It is also uncertain what overall environmental benefits result from these changes as grazing intensities could be concentrated further in corridors as poor or marginalised people are 'fenced out'. The impact fencing could have on wildlife in rural areas is also another crucial issue with implications for biodiversity, poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods. Decline of wildlife populations in Controlled Hunting Areas could potentially put further pressure on resources in Wildlife Management Areas either through violation of hunting regulations or political pressure to "free up" areas within the Wildlife Management Areas to citizen hunting. There is also increasing pressure to dezone land uses such as Wildlife Management Areas and game reserves to give way to cattle grazing (Balopi, 1996). Further, with the privatisation of the communal lands, people will inevitably be displaced (Machacha, 1996; Balopi, 1996; Maroba, 1996) and will almost certainly turn to the Wildlife Management Area settlements as places to settle and gain access to alternative water

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and grazing rights. This puts further pressure on already limited resources as Wildlife Management Areas are situated in what the government describes vaguely as “marginal” lands.

Policy objectives within Botswana’s National Development Plan for agriculture have included: improvement in food security at the household and national levels; diversification of the agricultural production base; increased agricultural output and productivity; increased employment opportunities for the fast growing labour force; provision of secure and productive environment for agricultural producers; and conservation of scarce agricultural and land resources for future generations. These policy objectives are to be achieved through four broad strategies, but are hampered by a number of major constraints facing production in the agricultural sector (see Box 5).

Box 5: Agricultural Policy in Botswana (Republic of Botswana, 1997)

Strategies to achieve policy objectives:

- Provision of adequate assistance and incentives to both arable and livestock farmers, particularly the resource-poor farmers.
- Provision of physical infrastructure, such as good roads and marketing infrastructure In the major production areas.
- Research technology development and extension support for farmers.
- Social capital development through long and short term training programmes.

Major constraints facing agricultural sector:

- Endemic drought
- Poor soils
- Poor management among producers/farmers and co-operative societies services.
- Weak extension delivery
- Shortage of qualified personnel
- Poor access to credit and production resources (especially draught power and labour)
- Inefficient and poor utilisation and management of natural resources

Botswana is facing increasing pressure to enclose, or privatise, its communal grazing areas. Alongside this, there are also pressures to introduce community-based natural resource management projects in areas such as Wildlife Management Areas. These two policies do not necessarily sit easily side by side and Botswana will have to resolve policy conflicts across these related sectors if it to achieve both social justice, ecological sustainability and economic stability at the local, regional and national levels.

6. Conclusion

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This paper has examined the current climate of policy change in Southern Africa. The dominant discourses emerging have been identified and potential problems facing these countries have been examined. In South Africa, CONEPP has proved to be the cornerstone of a unique consultation process in policy formulation, suggesting that South Africa is committed to 'people-centred' governance. South Africa also faces huge challenges in restructuring its agricultural sector and balancing the needs of local and national food security. Within this restructuring process are debates over land reform. In Namibia, decentralisation is currently high on the political agenda with up-coming elections. This debate has somewhat sidelined, in policy circles, the finalisation of the Communal Land Bill, a highly controversial document. The communal/commercial farming debate however dominates local development discourse and is central to issues of land reform and poverty alleviation. In Botswana, the livestock industry remains central to agricultural policy debate. Following the acknowledged 'failure' of the TGLP, there is now increased pressure on the government to privatise the communal rangelands. This potentially puts increased pressure on 'reserve' areas, such as Wildlife Management Areas. Privatisation may also conflict with the principles of community based natural resource management being promoted in other areas of Botswana. Overall, while the discourse of development in Southern Africa reflects the dialogue and issues (e.g. surrounding sustainability, participation, social and environmental justice etc.) within international development debates, the extent to which these policies are effectively put into practice remains to be seen.

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