ISSN 0974-0953

Current Conservation

Volume 3 Issue 3

Displaced and Disobedient Knowledge

When a Push Comes to Hush

The Germination of a Conservation Conflict

Questioning Conservation Practice - and its Response

Current Conservation online is available at www.currentconservation.org

Cover Photo: Village assembly meeting in Vilima Vitatu to address constituent concerns about the Burunge Wildlife Management Area / Beth Croucher

ISSN 0974-0953

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Hassan Sachedina

Maasai community meeting in Emboreet Village, Simanjiro District, Tanzania

This special issue is produced with support from:
The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research
The International Institute for Environment and Developmnet
The Garfield Foundation

Problematising Neoliberal Biodiversity Conservation:

Displaced and Disobedient Knowledge

Jim Igoe, Sian Sullivan and Dan Brockington

It has now been nearly five years since Mac Chapin's article, 'A Challenge to Conservationists' (2004) caused a stir that reverberated through the 2004 World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Bangkok. Although many readers will be familiar with Chapin's article, which provoked the largest outpouring of reader letters ever received by *World Watch*, his main points are worth reiterating here. First, Chapin noted that a growing portion of the money available globally for biodiversity conservation increasingly is being controlled by the three largest conservation NGOs: the Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and the World Wide Fund for Nature. Dowie (2009) has added the Wildlife Conservation Society and the African Wildlife Foundation. Next, he pointed out that the growth of these organisations coincided with a general failure of conservation interventions in relation to local and indigenous communities, together with increased conflicts between these communities and global conservation practice. Finally, he expressed concern over the growing influence of the World Bank, bilateral agencies, and corporations on conservation NGOs. He argued that this situation made it increasingly difficult for conservation big NGOs (BINGOs) to be critical of the environmentally and socially disruptive spread of corporate enterprise, including extractive industries. Many of Chapin's observations and arguments have been echoed in the work of journalist Mark Dowie, which culminated this year in the publication of Conservation Refugees (2009).

This special issue of *Current Conservation* is the product of a network of scholars, activists, and conservation practitioners who have also observed and documented the kinds of dynamics noted by Chapin and Dowie. Members of this network also share observations that there has been a clear move beyond simple partnerships between corporate interests and global conservation, to an apparent paradigm shift in which economic growth and big business increasingly are presented as essential to successful biodiversity conservation and a sustainable future for our planet. In other words, there appears to be a strengthening consensus that there is a synergistic relationship between growing markets and the protection of nature. This consensus, which can be seen in both the realms of concept and practice, is variously referred to as market environmentalism (Anderson and Leal 1991), green neoliberalism (Goldman 2005), green capitalism (Heartfield 2008) and neoliberal conservation (Igoe and Brockington 2006; Sullivan 2006).

We are aware that these terms are widely, and to a certain extent justifiably, regarded as opaque jargon by many who work in the realm of international conservation. In this collection, therefore, we strive to be as clear as we possibly can about the particulars of what we are talking about. An excellent place to begin is Bram Buscher's (2008) concise and thorough treatment of what the 'neoliberalisation' of conservation looks like in a specific intellectual/policy context. His case study of the 2007 meetings of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) describes the alignment of conservation with market forces, seen through the pervasiveness of certain ideas and rhetoric. He was especially concerned with assertions that markets can bring about win-win solutions through conservation interventions, in which value is added to nature through ecotourism and 'ecosystem services.' Most recently the concept of 'cultural services' has been added to this discussion.[1]

This increasingly pervasive and powerful narrative about markets and nature asserts that value added to nature through various kinds of for-profit investment and finance can provide incentives for local people to protect nature, and thus also enjoy a profit from the 'cultural services' that they provide in protecting global biodiversity. It will also provide the financial means necessary to protect the gains made in the global expansion of protected areas during the 1990s in a context where parks are being rapidly downsized and degazetted.[2] This thinking was pervasive at the most recent WCC in Barcelona. The entrance to the Congress was aesthetically dominated by corporate displays, while the Congress featured films with titles such as 'Conservation is Everybody's Business'. The Congress

[1] http://www.conservation.org/learn/culture/Pages/overview.aspx, accessed 4 Nov 2009.

[2] As seen in WWF US' PADDD (Protected Area Degazettement, Downgrading, and Downsizing) initiative. http://www.worldwildlife.org/who/careers/internships.html, accessed 4 Nov 2009.

was also marked by contentious struggles over an emerging partnership between the IUCN and the Rio Tinto Mining Group, as well as another between the IUCN and Shell Oil. Research by Ken MacDonald (forthcoming) and Saul Cohen (forthcoming) on the Congress reveals how specific groups within the IUCN used various kinds of marketing and performance to make market-based conservation appear unproblematically compatible with social justice and ecological sustainability.

We find these transformations concerning on a number of levels. As work by Zoe Young (2002) and Michael Goldman (2005) have shown, the greening of the World Bank and the creation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in the 1990s facilitated the extension of market logic into natural and cultural realms previously beyond its reach. This process has revolved around the phenomenon that social scientists from Marx on refer to as commodification, the transformation of objects and processes into products and experiences accruing monetary value determined by trading in frequently distant markets (Castree 2007; Brockington *et al.* 2008). Thus spectacular landscapes are transformed to become high-end tourist destinations, often at the expense of local people and their livelihoods (West and Carrier 2004).[3] Thus a rainforest is reconceptualised as a specified number of carbon credits or the environmental damage of a gold mine is calculated in ways that make it appear amenable to offsetting by nature protection in another context. The underlying logic is that the higher the price for a tradable commodity — a species, a landscape, a cultural practice, or an 'ecosystem service' — the more likely it becomes that the commodity will be conserved or sustainably utilised into the future.

An economistic application of the term 'ecosystem services' (as posited by Costanza *et al.* 1987 and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005) thus reduces and transforms complex natural and social phenomena into priced and thereby tradable commodities whose priced value is set from afar (Sullivan 2009a and 2009b). An especially problematic aspect of these processes of commodification is that of environmental and social mitigation. Basically, this proposes the substitutability of one landscape for another, an environmental good for an environmental bad, and market opportunities for the livelihood practices and lifeworlds of people living on the landscapes in question. These concepts increasingly are deployed in association with extractive enterprises such as hydroelectric dams (Goldman 2005) and oil pipelines (Brockington *et al.* 2008), which harm the environment and contribute to the physical, social, and economic displacement of local people. The mitigation concept proposes that these types of harm can be corrected through nature conservation in other landscapes, combined with the absorption of displaced people into market-based economic opportunities. You can see how mitigation is presented in terms of business opportunity at the website of the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Program.[4]

Conservation and capitalism are thus transforming the world in partnership (Brockington *et al.* 2008). Conservation grows with extractive enterprise and large-scale development. It grows through promoting a global tourist industry that is heavily dependent on ecologically and economically unsustainable fossil fuel consumption (Chapin 2004; Carrier and MacLeod 2005; Sullivan 2006; Neves forthcoming). It grows through the promotion of consumer goods such as green credit cards, Starbuck's conservation coffee, and McDonalds Endangered Animal Happy Meals (Igoe, Neves and Brockington forthcoming). Finally, it grows alongside extractive enterprise through the provision of mitigating services and carbon offsets. In other words, conservation grows as capitalism matures and spreads, and vice versa. According to these arguments, biodiversity conservation and ecological sustainability appear to be best achieved through increased consumption.

Countering this logic is difficult. As a general rule, the analyses presented in this special issue have not been well received in conservation circles. As Buscher (2007: 230) has argued, the types of win-win scenarios proposed by neoliberal conservation are highly effective in bringing together 'a broad variety of interests and goals into apparently immutable objectives that can be embraced by all'. It thus is especially valuable in mobilising resources and support for conservation NGOs and interventions, which increasingly are also opportunities for business investment. In his systematic observations of the 2007 SCB meetings, Buscher noted that presentations of these kinds of ideas and scenarios more often were cast in terms of consensus building than in terms of 'intellectually sound and clear argumentation'. He thus concludes that the promotion of these types of concepts and scenarios tautologically affirms the very market logic they are

[3]This history of this process in Tanzania's World Famous Serengeti National Park is now well documented in the film, A Place without People. http://www.anemon.gr/place.html, accessed 4 Nov 2009.
Recent conflicts between local people, a hunting company, and the Tanzanian state on landscapes outside the park have also been documented an online video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-FP2gRvziw, accessed 4 Nov 2009.

[4]http://bbop.forest-trends.org/index.php, accessed 4 Nov 2004.

promoting, a phenomenon he calls 'market science.' In market science 'the best knowledge is apparently that which the most knowledge consumers (i.e., the audience) buy into'.

From a scientific stand point, Buscher concludes, this is a problematic state of affairs. He acknowledges the urgency of biodiversity conservation, and the corresponding need to build constituencies and procure financial support/investment. At the same time, he warns that doing this without an empirically grounded understanding of the often problematic complexities of relationships between global markets, 'the environment', and local peoples and livelihoods can contribute to the perpetuation of social injustice, as well as to paradoxically undermining the goals of biodiversity conservation.

Despite the difficulties of bringing alternative views into the arena of conservation business, we think these developments require critical analysis and challenge. The links between capitalism and conservation are more problematic than mainstream ideas regarding synergistic relationships between markets and the environment would have us believe. In some cases global conservation may be facilitating processes and relationships that undermine its own goals of protecting the environment and creating sustainability. In others, market-based approaches to conservation often are inimical to both good conservation and democratic processes.

Nevertheless, we also caution against treating conservation, and particularly conservation NGOs, as a group that acts in concert and always in agreement. It is true that many of the practices described above and their associated rhetoric are present in conservation NGOs: with so many of these organisations receiving various forms of support from the World Bank and bilateral development organisations, this is hardly surprising (cf. Young 2002). But it also is interesting to note the diversity of responses to these global pressures and funding flows that are visible in the conservation NGO sector. Despite an emphasis on consensus building, and the common stance that large global conservation meetings appear to encourage, it is intriguing to observe the variety of practice engaged in by different NGOs in their respective contexts of action. The empirically grounded studies of conservation performance and policy which this network has collated, some of which are reported below, thus describe considerable variety in policies, practices and consequences. Different NGOs working in the same region can behave in very different ways. Indeed the same NGO's performance in different regions also can vary considerably. These are structures and institutions which themselves produce diversity (see especially Dowie 2009).

This diversity in the conservation movement is reflected by the fact that some of the authors of the articles in this special issue themselves were working for conservation NGOs when they formed their views, and all have worked closely with them. This collection itself was reviewed and critiqued by other members and former members and employees of conservation NGOs. In other words, this is not a sector which can be easily typecast.

Unfortunately, it also has been a frequent common experience that the formal institutional responses to our work have not been sympathetic. In some cases our work and writing has been actively shut down and shut out through censorship, threats and proposed legal action. It has seemed at times that the knowledge we have produced through research and reflection somehow is 'disobedient' and subject to disciplining as such, which is why we use the term 'disobedient knowledge' here. Clearly, the knowledge we have produced in collaboration with local people and situated in local contexts does not mesh well with the ideas and rhetoric of neoliberal conservation. Nevertheless we remain convinced that it is relevant, in terms of both conservation and social justice agendas. Because of our concerns we have been working together to create an alternative locus of knowledge production concerning biodiversity conservation, sustainability, and our collective future. Based on our experiences we are working to design this locus of knowledge with the following principles in mind:

1) *Collaboration*: Current approaches to conservation, especially market-oriented ones, are driven by competition. NGOs compete with one another for sources of conservation funding. At the same time, scholars researching and producing knowledge regarding conservation, frequently in close collaboration with local people, also compete with each other for even scarcer sources of research funding, often provided by NGOs or the foundations that fund them;

2) *Affinity and Common Concern*: Research on conservation issues often is built around the availability of certain sources of funding, which may be tied to particular perspectives and agendas. We are attempting to build a research network that is minimally influenced by funding priorities, emphasising instead collaboration, friendship and shared concerns for both biological and cultural diversity;

3) *Inductive and Empirical Research, Open to Scrutiny and Contestation*: Our goal is to weave theories and discussions regarding conservation and sustainability that emerge from a diversity of empirical observations from different parts of the world. We are building these perspectives from patterns that we have noticed arising from our observations in many different locales and contexts. Our goal is to present these perspectives in both web-based forums that are interactive

in nature creating opportunity for dialogue and debate, as well as to publish in journals and other outlets, of which we intend this issue of Current Conservation as an initial collaborative contribution; and finally

4) *Openness*: Collaborative knowledge building depends on modes of communication that are, as far as possible, open, sincere, and constructive. In a competitive environment geared towards funding and profit, there are strong incentives to communicate in ways that cast doubt on perspectives and information that may be seen as undermining the procurement of funding and institutional growth. Such modes of communication often require the overlooking of perspectives and information that might be essential for effective institutional learning.

We do not envision this alternative locus of knowledge production to be standing in opposition to, or even wholly separate from, mainstream conservation. Our intention is rather that it will contribute to new types of productive tensions that broaden our understanding of conservation and its problematic relationships to capitalism, consumerism, and institutional competition. Our hope is that the conversations emerging from these productive tensions will reveal that alternatives to market-oriented conservation deserve more substantial consideration in policy circles, academic research, and public understandings of environmental issues. A full discussion of such alternatives is beyond the scope of this special issue. We anticipate that these will be the topic of upcoming conversations. We look forward to being part of these, as well as working with similarly committed people to imagine and implement alternative futures.

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Questioning Conservation Practice - and its Response:
The Establishment of Namaqua National Park

Tor A. Benjaminsen and Hanne Svarstad

We summarise research carried out in Namaqualand in South Africa, that identifies the discrepancies between rhetoric and practices in conservation. The research points at an on-going conflict between conservation and redistribution of land, and how the financially more powerful conservationists tend to win this competition. Finally, we report on how the critique was received by conservationists in South Africa and in Norway in the form of personal attacks and attempts at intimidation.

Over half of South Africa's 44 million people live in poverty, with almost 70 per cent of the poor living in rural areas. It is well known that colonialism and apartheid resulted in Africans being dispossessed of land on a large scale and confined to overcrowded reserves or Bantustans. After the establishment of the new democratic South Africa in 1994, land reform was therefore seen as a key tool to fight poverty and injustice.

Namaqualand is a semi-arid area in the Northern Cape Province comprising of about 48,000 sq. km. and 70,000 inhabitants. The population consists of people of Nama identity, people of mixed descent, and a minority of European origin. Following the settlement of Europeans during the early part of the eighteenth century, Namaqualand was annexed to the Cape Colony between 1798 and 1847. The resulting land dispossession largely compromised the livelihoods of non-whites and confined them to mission stations, which acted as places of refuge. The mission stations later became centres of 'coloured reserves', which served as reservoirs of labour for mining and farming in the area. These reserves, which today are labeled 'communal areas', constituted about 23 per cent of Namaqualand's area prior to land reform, while about 400–450 white commercial farmers owned almost 52 per cent of the land. Today, about 30,000 people live in Namaqualand's six communal areas. One third of the people of Namaqualand engage in small stock farming. They continue to feel strongly about the loss of their ancestral land, and they are keen to increase their land base.

Natural scientists point out that Namaqualand contains more than 3,500 plant species, 25 per cent of which are endemic to this area, and that it is one of only two internationally recognised dryland biodiversity hotspots in the world. Eager to protect this biodiversity against indigenous use, scientists and conservationists have for a long time maintained that livestock farming, as historically and currently carried out by the people in communal areas, is a threat to this biologically important environment.

However, in view of Namaqualand's history of racial and social injustice, Benjaminsen *et al.* (2006) argue that it is ethically problematic to privilege conservation of a maximum level of biodiversity and one particular perception of the ideal landscape at the expense of livelihood security and poverty alleviation. It is also problematic because it presents the private ranch system as an ideal one, without considering disparate production goals and unequal economic opportunities and constraints. Benjaminsen *et al.* (2006) also present historical evidence

The 'rhino-proof' fence around Namaqua National Park erected through the Park's 'Empowerment Project'

Tor A. Benjaminsen

demonstrating that rangelands in the area are capable of sustaining livestock densities far greater than those recommended by the Department of Agriculture, which uses 'commercial' ranches as a reference model and refers to maximum meat production as the livestock keeping objective. In fact, for most farmers in communal areas, livestock keeping is but one of several livelihood sources, which often will encompass wage labour, remittances, pensions, and social security grants. Some of these sources are insecure, and livestock keeping represents a safety net against fluctuations in other incomes – as a 'bank account' that they can dip into to make up for regular seasonal shortages or when other sources fail (Benjaminsen *et al.* 2006). Namaqualand's communal livestock farming sector thus has multiple production objectives: milk and meat are important elements in household food security; sheep and goats provide capital storage, insurance, and cash income; and donkeys provide draft power for transport and crop operations.

In line with conservationist conclusions about the value and potential threats to Namaqualand's biodiversity, environmentalists during the last ten years have been mobilising resources for protected area expansion as well as a range of other conservation initiatives. But the problem for local communities is that within the framework of market-based reform, these initiatives tend to compete with redistribution of land to these communities. This tension or trade-off between Western-style conservation and support to the livelihoods of marginalised communities was the focus of research published by Benjaminsen *et al.* (2008). In particular, the research focused on the creation and expansion of the Namaqua National Park.

The park was established in 2002 as a typical 'fortress' park and it is said to be one of the fastest expanding parks in the world. The purchase of land to create and expand the park has been funded primarily by wealthy South Africans (the industrialists Leslie Hill and Anton Rupert) through a fund managed by WWF-South Africa. The expansion of the park directly out-competes land reform in the area by the conservation fund being willing to pay far above the market price. The result is that landless neighbouring communities remain landless or with very little land. In addition, the community conservation rhetoric is used in the park's presentation of itself. A 'rhino-proof fence' has for instance been erected around the park as part of the park's 'empowerment project'. The park also claims that its 'empowerment of local people and institutions has been enormous'. Its main contribution to this 'empowerment' seems to be environmental education leading to 'demonstrable improvements in the attitudes of local communities towards conservation as a justifiable form of land use'. Based on an early draft of Benjaminsen *et al.* (2008), a network of conservationists and natural scientists reacted strongly already in 2005 through a series of emails. The purpose was clearly to try and stop the publication through intimidation of its authors.

Simultaneously, we had a discussion with WWF-Norway in Norwegian media. Our main argument was that there is a gap between rhetoric and practice in conservation work in Africa. In this debate, we were also using the example of Namaqua National Park. Our critique of WWF caused WWF-Norway to make strong personal attacks on us instead of involving in a constructive debate. They also contacted the directors of our research institutes in order to try to force us through silence.

Why are some conservationists reacting in this way to critique? As Chapin (2004) has shown, big conservation organisations have increased their funding and power tremendously since the 1990s. This increase is due to a highly successful fundraising campaign among businesses, governments in rich countries and wealthy individuals. To sustain this powerful position, big conservation organisations spend large amounts of money on public relations. Critique is therefore a threat to the glossy picture presented and hence to the financial and administrative expansion of the organisations and the particular type of conservation they represent.

Conservationists may find it legitimate to neglect principles of ethics and transparency in order to pursue their goals. This type of strategy may, however, in the longer term have adverse effects not only on local people's livelihoods, but also on environments.

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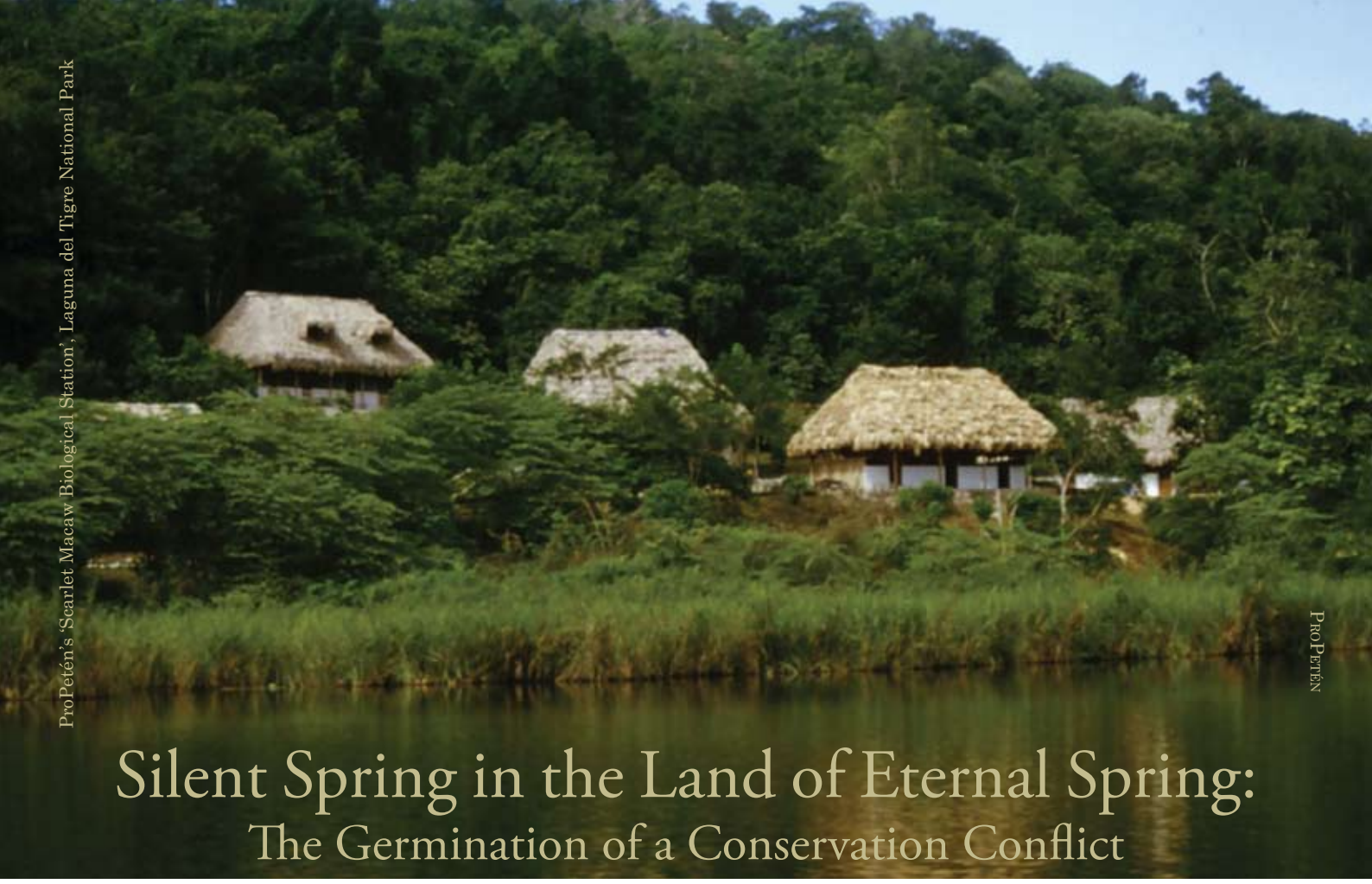

ProPetén's 'Scarlet Macaw Biological Station', Laguna del Tigre National Park

ProPetén

Silent Spring in the Land of Eternal Spring:
The Germination of a Conservation Conflict

Liza Grandia

This article recounts the 2002-03 separation of a Guatemalan NGO called ProPetén from Conservation International (CI). As one of the cases cited by both Bray and Anderson's (2005) report and Chapin's (2004) seminal article, 'A Challenge to Conservationists,' the previously unpublished details of this organisational divorce illustrate the divergence of local environmental interests from the increasingly neoliberal agenda of large, transnational conservation organisations, as described by other journalists and academics such as MacDonald (2008), Dowie (2009), and Igoe and Sullivan (2008).

To begin, I must disclose that before becoming a cultural anthropologist, I worked for CI's Guatemala program (a.k.a. ProPetén) for five years between 1993-1999 (7 months in DC and 4 years in the Petén, Guatemala, field office) as a volunteer, intern, affiliated Fulbright researcher, and eventually paid staff. Because of my long-term commitment to the project, my former Guatemalan colleagues invited me and one other North American anthropologist to join its founding board of directors when planning began in 2002 to legalise ProPetén as an independent NGO. Having moved back to Petén for dissertation research between September 2002 and May 2004, I was present and involved with all the events described herein as secretary (2002-03), then president (2003-05), and finally emeritus advisor (2005-present) of this new board of directors. All events described in this article are documented in my fieldnotes, email records, and/or organisational archives. The contextual explanations of the growing schism between ProPetén and CI over several 'springs' are based on my anthropological interpretation of events and should not be interpreted as an official ProPetén statement.

Spring 1990. Described romantically in the travel-writing genre as the 'land of eternal spring,' Guatemala's natural beauty also constitutes a central part of the planet's third most important biodiversity 'hotspot' (according to CI's own internal ranking system). Following Guatemala's 1990 declaration of the 1.6 million hectare Maya Biosphere Reserve in northern Guatemala (a complex of national parks surrounded by multiple-use and buffer zones), CI won the largest grant offered by USAID-Guatemala for community-based conservation efforts in this region. Charged with providing economic alternatives to deforestation for communities located inside the Reserve, CI established a field office called 'ProPetén' and hired

a talented, local Guatemalan team. Over the next several years, ProPetén launched a series of successful flagship projects in ecotourism, sustainable timber management, non-timber forest products, primary and reproductive health, and environmental education that helped CI to gain credibility among more bi- and multi-lateral donors and build its global brand as an organisation with a mission 'to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature.'

Spring planning meetings, late 1990s. Building on the success of CI's initially decentralised structure that empowered national directors to make good decisions based on the local context, money began to flow into CI's global coffers. To meet the needs of its new multilateral and corporate donors, headquarters leadership also began to demand more reports, more budget requisitions, more vertical communication, and more complicated planning frameworks from its field staff. Little by little, national directors lost the autonomy they held in the early 1990s. At almost every annual planning meeting (always held in the spring) around the millennium turn, CI's CEO and President announced the creation of a new DC-based and -staffed initiative (e.g., the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science in 1999, the Center for Leadership in Business in 2001, among others). The absence of a 'center' led by social scientists to support partnerships with grassroots, indigenous, or community-based organisations was notable. While many kinds of organisations (corporate, nonprofit, governmental) develop structural tensions between satellite offices and headquarters, CI's disproportionate growth in DC staff over field staff exacerbated these normal internal divisions. Adding to the tensions was a cultural clash between an increasingly corporate management style at headquarters and the more diverse and pragmatic management styles of community-based field programs.

Spring 2000. After having been heralded as CI's poster project for a decade, ProPetén's leadership began hearing murmurs from DC staff that they were doing too much 'development' and wasting 'scarce' conservation dollars on 'poverty alleviation' instead of focusing on strict biodiversity conservation. Precisely as CI's central management had begun to question its community-based field programs, USAID-Guatemala also happened to be closing down the ten-year Maya Biosphere Reserve initiative. For over a decade, CI headquarters had negotiated the maximum NICRA (Negotiated Indirect Cost Recovery Agreement) rate from USAID, which meant that it collected an average of 38 per cent in overhead fees from ProPetén's million dollar-plus annual grant. Once a major source of revenue for CI, the ProPetén field office was soon to become a liability. Without consulting its Guatemalan field staff, CI's President Russell Mittermeier wrote a memo to USAID-Guatemala pledging to establish ProPetén 'as a fully independent non-governmental organisation under Guatemalan law' within seven months, following which 'CI will continue to act as an associate, providing technical support and advice as needed....' (21 December 2000).

Spring 2002. Two years later, the swift and amicable separation promised by Mittermeier to USAID began to sour into prolonged and bitter divorce. To be fair, ProPetén was not the only local organisation that experienced problems in becoming legally independent of its international counterpart as USAID-Guatemala closed down the original Maya Biosphere Reserve project; Defensores de la Naturaleza / TNC, CARE-Petén / CARE International, and Centro Maya / Rodale all had their own disagreements. However, of all these organisations, ProPetén and CI suffered the longest and most acrimonious separation process with disagreements along three lines: (a) ownership of a local biological station, (b) budgetary issues, and (c) philosophical approaches to 'business' and the environment.

The most contentious point of separation was over future ownership of ProPetén's biological research station located in a conflictive region of Laguna del Tigre National Park. Bypassing the ProPetén field office, a pair of CI biologists traveled directly to the station in early 2002 to draw up an inventory and a 'co'-management plan in which CI would take control of the station and leave ProPetén with the more difficult, conflictive, and sometimes physically dangerous community relations with surrounding villages. According to their budget, CI would contribute nothing to the community projects, but ProPetén would be expected to raise 50 per cent of the station's research and operating budget. After ProPetén rejected this lopsided plan, CI then proposed partnering with other NGOs unfamiliar with the local context to 'co'-manage

ProPetén's agronomist Eric Mena, teaching about improved agricultural methods to Q'eqchi' women using liberation pedagogy techniques

ProPetén's social scientist, Amilcar Corzo, researching traditional agricultural techniques with Petenero elders

the station. Both these proposals were unacceptable to the Guatemalan staff who had risked their lives defending the property after loggers tricked local communities into burning it down days before its planned inauguration in 1997. CI refused to contribute funds for the station's reconstruction, so ProPetén's director decided to raise the money himself from the Japanese embassy in Guatemala city for a more humbly designed facility built with local materials that would be less of a target for arson. As a space for Guatemalan biologists and university students to carry out applied research involving local villages, the station's scientific program was perhaps not as glamorous as CI's famous 'rapid assessment programs' for inventorying biodiversity, but it contributed significantly to the formation of a committed class of conservation professionals in Guatemala. Moreover, the health and agricultural training programs that ProPetén then organised at the station also developed a network of neighboring village leaders willing to cooperate with conservation activities. As such, the station became a symbol of national sovereignty for the ProPetén team, university students, and local people — and was simply not negotiable.

The conditions of CI's long-term financial commitment to continued conservation work in Petén became a second point of contention. Uncertain whether CI would pay them the pensions due to them under Guatemalan law, ProPetén's employees threatened to sue in the early spring of 2002. Under some pressure from USAID-Guatemala, CI did pay the pensions and also promised in May 2002 to relinquish the station, provide USD 100,000 in general start-up funding, delegate all outstanding project funds (USD 86,287 from twelve donors), and transfer all other fixed assets accrued over the life of the USAID program to ProPetén by the end of that fiscal year. June passed with no further word from CI. ProPetén was born as a Guatemalan NGO with 57 employees and not a cent in the bank. Not until August did CI give half the promised start-up money (USD 50,000) but held onto the other funds and assets. ProPetén began to lay off workers, eventually losing more than half its original staff. As the months rolled by, ProPetén's board realised the DC accountants were trying to reassign the aforementioned pension payments to ProPetén's start-up budget and other project balances. CI's lawyers also continued to quibble over ProPetén's shares in an ecotourism alliance ('Eco-Maya') and attempted to renege upon debts CI acquired from a failed micro-credit fund ('Fondo Maya') planned and established by DC-based staff in the 1990s.

While ProPetén's board complied with CI's request for a 'gentlemen's agreement' not to speak of these troubles to any donors, we later learned that CI had secretly communicated with ProPetén's twelve donors asking them to reassign outstanding balances to other divisions of CI's multi-million budget. Trusted friends in DC confided that CI had tried to block a medium-sized grant that ProPetén was poised to receive from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to implement a three-year project in partnership with an indigenous-led NGO called the BioItzá Association. While the GEF grant proceeded normally, CI did manage to block a pass-through grant (an anticipated USD 300,000) that ProPetén was to receive from USAID/Washington's Population and Environment program in recognition of its successful 'Remedios' program. After failing to contract another Guatemalan NGO (with no previous experience in Petén) for this project, CI diverted this funding to another country program.

Spring 2003. Following the unexpected loss of ProPetén's executive director to liver cancer in May 2003, USAID-Guatemala officers renewed pressure on CI to honor its legal commitments to ProPetén. After more months of delays, CI finally transferred the biological station and fixed assets to a deeply weakened ProPetén in July 2003, although CI's 990 form for 2001 available online reveals that the organisation had already claimed to the IRS USD 243,344 for a 'transfer to local NGO in Guatemala.' Subsequent tax reports show that after squabbling over relatively small budget amounts with ProPetén (in CI's terms, not ProPetén's), CI immediately donated USD 471,000 to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) for projects in Petén in 2004, illustrating a pattern of 'strange bedfellows' described by Christine McDonald in Green Inc. in which 'big industry groups and big conservation groups that seem like logical rivals end up in [counterintuitive] alliances, partnerships, and pacts' (2008: 204).

While CI's leadership internally dismissed the ugliness of the ProPetén divorce to other CI staff as being

caused by 'personality conflicts,' the irreconcilable differences between the two organisations actually went deeper. Working in a densely populated region with thousands of farmers also living inside the Maya Biosphere Reserve, ProPetén remained committed to community-based partnerships as the best methodology for biodiversity conservation. CI, however, had begun to move up the economic scale to establish multiple partnerships with corporations such as Monsanto, Alcoa, Anheuser-Busch, BP, Fiji Water, Chevron Corporation, ConocoPhillips, Ford Motor Company, Rio Tinto, Royal Caribbean Cruises, S.C. Johnson &Son, Shell Oil, Starbucks, even Wal-Mart. Representatives of many of these corporations also garnered influential seats on CI's board of directors.

To be clear, ProPetén's Guatemalan leadership was not opposed to engaging with the market, per se, but they wanted to help communities develop economic interests in conservation at a scale and pace that local people could manage themselves. This meant, for example, supporting projects to help women's groups sell artisanal herbal products locally rather than making bioprospecting agreements with pharmaceutical corporations (as CI's lawyers once proposed in 1999). It also meant supporting local ecotourism businesses rather than signing partnerships with large hotel owners and other corporate players involved in the Inter-American Development Bank's controversial Puebla to Panama Plan (as CI did in 2002). Another serious disagreement concerned whether ProPetén should continue a decade of village extension work to establish certified community-run forest concessions or switch to complicated, top-down carbon-trading leases (as proposed by CI in 2002). The very same DC-based economists that had argued in the early 1990s that ProPetén must help communities 'use it [the forests] or lose it' began to argue the opposite by the late 1990s: that 'direct conservation' (i.e., paying villagers leases not to harvest their trees) was the more cost-effective approach. The problem with the economists' proposed carbon trading scheme for Petén was that it only offered short-term funding to just two village groups – threatening the unity and marketing of the other 21 other community forest concessions operating in the Maya Biosphere Reserve. When the Guatemalan park service eventually rejected CI's plan for these and other reasons, the DC economists accused ProPetén's executive director of not demonstrating sufficient enthusiasm for their plan in meetings with the Guatemalan government.

As these and other examples reveal, ProPetén's staff had broadened their environmental philosophy to integrated concerns about ecological and human welfare, much in the same way that the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* had expanded U.S. environmentalism from its origins among a small band of elites interested on wilderness preservation into an expanded social movement involving new constituencies such as housewives, students, inner-city residents, and factory workers. CI unfortunately remained devoted to a technical and increasingly corporate model of biodiversity conservation myopically focused on park preservation. Six years after its financial and ideological separation from CI, ProPetén has rebuilt itself under the leadership of two dynamic Guatemalan women, Rosa Maria Chan and Rosita Contreras. As an independent Guatemala organisation, ProPetén not only continues to support community-based conservation, but has also joined popular and agrarian struggles against corporate trade and neoliberalism and embraced other environmental justice issues to establish a greener life not only for the forest, but also for the people of the land of eternal spring.

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Parts of this piece were published in my letter-to-the-editor in response to Chapin's (2004) article.

However, spatial and political constraints imposed by the new *World Watch* editor replacing Ed Ayers in the controversy surrounding Chapin's article prevented me from telling the full story at that time. http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-19042693_ITM

Gudgiwa Camp Traditional Village

When a Push Comes to Hush:
Promoting Mainstream Views and Silencing Alternatives through Conservation Narratives

Saul Cohen

Gudigwa Village Hut

In March 2003, Gudigwa Camp opened to great fanfare and high expectations. For Conservation International (CI), the NGO that designed, funded and established the camp for the village of Gudigwa, the logic behind it was self-evident and unequivocal: in exchange for the villagers' support of its conservation agenda in this wildlife-rich region of northern Botswana, CI provided them with much needed 'development' in the form of a high-end cultural tourism project. However, only five years later, CI issued a report declaring the project a 'commercial failure' (despite some 'lasting positive social impacts for the community') and admitted that they made some 'fundamental and strategic errors in the early stages of the project implementation... dooming it to failure' (Smuts *et al.* 2008: iv). The project that was meant to act as a replicable model for how tourism could successfully 'address the twin challenges of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation' was now reduced to 'key lessons learned' of how not to do it.

Unfortunately, the key lessons learned rely on understandings and analyses of community-based conservation that entail stubborn blind spots that will likely result in CI and other conservation organisations continuing to make mistakes. CI created and relied upon its own particular and problematic narrative to facilitate and help implement the project and its broader conservation agenda in ways that have silenced local voices and perspectives. Moreover, the suspect conclusions CI draws from its experience with Gudigwa Camp are being used to chart CI's embrace of a neoliberal conservation paradigm, which emphasizes market forces and private sector initiatives as the main drivers of conservation (Igoe and Fortwangler 2007). This paradigm threatens not only to hamper engagement with the alternative views of its past and future 'targets' but also due to its goal of transforming 'community-members' to 'market-actors' can potentially foreclose this possibility altogether, thereby exacerbating some of conservation's shortcomings further.

The Narrative

CI's narrative of Gudigwa Camp is reproduced in marketing material, the information booklet given to the camp's visitors, various newspaper articles, applications for donor funding, CI's initial feasibility study and its recent review document. It is generally presented as follows:

For centuries eight nomadic Bugakhwe (Khwe-speaking San / 'Bushman') clans lived in the northern Botswana sandveld surviving on their traditional hunting and gathering practices. In 1987, the Government of Botswana encouraged them to settle in Gudigwa Village so they could take advantage of its services such as a permanent water source, a primary school and health clinic. The village's location in the wildlife rich regions of northern Botswana, and high level of poverty made it a logical choice for a project whose goals were the expansion of protected areas in the region and the generation of employment opportunities and income for the villagers. The camp's uniqueness and competitive advantage come from its additional goal of attempting to preserve the villagers' threatened Bugakhwe culture by demonstrating their traditional singing, dancing, stories, food and ecological knowledge to tourists.

While admitting that this narrative is romanticised to appeal to tourists and donors, CI staff do not provide any more details of the villagers' diverse and complex histories, including their integration into regional markets, political and cultural marginalisation and contentious relationships with conservation. These aspects of the villagers' experiences are conspicuously absent in CI's narrative despite their significant impact on the project. After 10 years of interaction with Gudigwa, the story that CI tells of the villagers has mostly remained unchanged.

The Contentious 'Bushman' and Conservation

CI's assertion that 'the community expressed its desire to earn money by doing what they know and love – hunting and gathering on the land, living a traditional way of life etc.,' directly contradicts some of the discussions I had with various villagers who expressed a certain uneasiness

Patrick Mosweu, a traditional guide at the camp, demonstrates how to build and sleep in a temporary shelter

Above: Performing a traditional healing ceremony;
Below: Gudigwa Camp staff

with the project's goal of preserving their culture. For example, one elder claimed that 'there is nothing I miss about my old life. The life in the past was a problem. Maybe you can say I am going to hunt and maybe that is the time you are going to die in the bushes. Or maybe you have sent your children to go hunting and some of them die in the bush. With that, it's a problem.' Similarly, after asking someone what he thought of being referred to as a 'Bushman' he declared 'we don't want to be called Bushman, we don't live in the bush. We are not animals'. While these views were not shared by all the villagers, they illustrate the social and political complexity and contradictions of indigenous identity in Botswana that is missing from CI's narratives.

Conservation practices, including relocations from areas that would become protected areas and the curtailment of hunting rights, were viewed by the state as necessary steps to changing the Bugakhwe's traditional relationship to land and wildlife and the first steps to assimilating them into the national mainstream. However, the villagers' experience with these efforts to conserve wild spaces and species is often associated with violence and repression. I was told by some villagers that they were beaten, arrested and harassed by the state when suspected of poaching, or being 'convinced' to relocate. One person even described his whole village fleeing across the border to Namibia after the "DWNP [Department of Wildlife and National Parks] came quietly at night with guns, beating people, shooting and threatening them because they wanted us people to move from the area so they could create a Wildlife Management Area". I personally witnessed the Botswana Defense Force (BDF) entering the village to search for illegally hunted meat. The villagers complained that the BDF was discriminating against them as it had no evidence or warrants to justify the raid and staged a general strike to protest the perceived violation of their rights.

The Opportunistic Imperative

The villagers' poverty (largely a result of lost access to resources combined with political and cultural marginalisation) has meant that they are compelled to take advantage of any livelihood opportunities that present themselves. For the past 40 years, the Bugakhwe have taken advantage of various sporadic work and welfare options but rarely were these opportunities presented to all of them in similar ways. Some, after leaving their families behind in Botswana, worked in the mines in South Africa. Others enlisted in the South African Defense Force (SADF) in South West Africa (Namibia) and received good wages, as well as numerous social and educational services for their families. Many men also worked as guides, trackers and hunters within Botswana's burgeoning tourist industry. People whose circumstances prevented them from the above opportunities became dependant on welfare programs. A few were unable to prove that they were born in Botswana and were not recognised as citizens by the state and

were thus unable to avail themselves of these programs.

These processes afforded certain advantages and difficulties with regard to wealth, income, education, language skills and nationality and directly resulted in the current stratified nature of Gudigwa village. It also created or reinforced individual, family and clan loyalties and rivalries. These differences become important when trying to understand the individual and collective responses, reactions and engagements with Gudigwa Camp. The social categories required by and imposed by CI, such as 'village' and 'community', assumed a consistency that is at odds with the villagers' experience of these categories. When Gudigwa Camp was initiated, for instance, families involved with another community-based project interpreted it as a threat to their interests. However, another larger and comparatively well-educated and wealthy family recognised it as an opportunity with great potential and dedicated themselves to it. Some individuals resented the perceived monopolisation of the camp's various staff positions and claimed they were never given a chance to benefit directly from the camp. The people who were involved with the camp resented those individuals who, after not involving themselves in the formative stages and building of the camp, were now trying to reap its benefits. This resulted in ongoing intra-community friction which continually threatened the viability of the camp.

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Traditional and professional guides taking tourists on a bushwalk

Justifying a Neoliberal Turn

The dynamics briefly described here are conspicuously absent from CI's review of the project. In fact, despite conducting community focus groups, the report contains very little input from community members. This is somewhat perplexing as the project was established as a community-based, grass-roots and participatory conservation project in which the voice and perceptions of the 'community' were supposedly prioritised. What is of particular concern is the report's conclusion that signals CI's turn away from community to market-based conservation. It states that:

Embracing these lessons learned... CI has altered its strategy to focus attention on the private sector. By focussing on the tourism value chain and assuming the role of facilitator as opposed to that of participant, CI is attempting to utilise market forces and market players to address many of the challenges associated with tourism operations in areas of high biodiversity and poverty (Smuts *et al.* 2008: 45).

This new narrative threatens to continue to erase rather than incorporate the complexity, diversity and political nature of local histories, including the villagers' sometimes problematic relations with conservation, and existing market-forces now being positioned as the solution to conservation's various challenges. This threatens to further anonymise already faceless people, communities and cultures by reducing them to market-actors. CI's turn from 'participant' to 'facilitator' further removes it from the 'targets' of its intervention and the messy and inevitably political nature of its programmes. It will also further diminish its ability to expand its perspectives and generate new insights by engaging with the other stories people are telling about conservation. There is, unfortunately, likely no place for these rich, diverse and nuanced histories briefly discussed in this paper in proposed attempts to optimise 'tourism value chains'.

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Critical Business and Uncritical Conservation:
The Invisibility of Dissent in the World of Marine Ecotourism

Madalena do Pico, Azores, Portugal 2009

Katja Neves

While mass media viewing audiences around the world have become accustomed to seeing globally circulating images of people protesting human relations with whales, they normally associate such imagery with a transnational urban activist youth, associated with environmental NGOs (ENGOs) like Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd, protesting against the commercial hunting of whales.

The protestors I am about to familiarise you with, by contrast, are middle aged men living in the Azorean village of Lajes do Pico. They hold serious suspicion of anti-whaling NGOs, and claim that anti-whalers have become blind to many of the serious problems facing whales and dolphins in the present day. These men are passionately committed to questioning the taken-for-granted assumption that all forms of whale watching are ecologically beneficial, while relying on whale hunter knowledge for the development and articulation of a deep ecological understanding of what constitute sound and environmentally friendly relations between humans and cetaceans in the context of marine mammal ecotourism (Neves-Graca 2004).

In July 1999, Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio visited Lajes de Pico in direct connection with promoting whale watching in the Azores. On the morning of his visit, locals woke up to the calmest and most perfect weather they had ever seen in the summer months. There was hardly a cloud in the sky, and the breeze that would soon blow in from the windward side of the island had not yet awoken. No one could have guessed the big storm that was brewing around the president's visit. No one that is, except for a group of local citizens who were intent on protesting a planned whale watching trip for the President's enjoyment.

As the President's entourage approached Lajes, the bay was filled with old whale hunting canoes on sail, a former whale hunting engine boat, and a few small motor vessels. These vessels were initially mistaken as a welcoming gesture. Soon however, word reached the entourage program manager that the boats were intentionally blocking ocean sea access to Espaco Thalassa, the whale watching company chosen to take the President out on a whale watching trip.

Why would this group of Pacific men have gotten organised for such a public disruption of the Presidential visit? After centuries of neglect, Azoreans are normally extremely welcoming of dignitaries from the Portuguese mainland (Neves 1995). Could it be that they were making a statement against Espaco Thalassa for being partly owned and run by a French citizen who had clashed with the locals due to his candidness about their former whale hunting and dolphin killing practices? The truth is the protest was neither against Espaco Thalassa per se, nor the President: it was instead the voicing of extreme discontent over the model of whale watching promoted by Espaco Thalassa, and against rendering invisible the alternative understandings of whale watching based on whalers' knowledge of cetaceans and their judgment on which types of whale watching encounters are the least pernicious for whales and dolphins.

The Azorean whalers of Lajes do Pico hunted sperm whales locally from about 1882 to 1983. Although they did so mostly in the context of 20th century industrial whaling, Azorean whaling remained highly artisanal throughout this period. Whales were hunted with small open whale boats (known locally as whaling canoes) fitted by 7 men crews, including a harpooner. They used motor launches only as supplementary support to tow whale boats, and to tug the whales back to port once they were killed. Given the precariousness of hunting whales under such delicate conditions, whaling success depended greatly on these men's ability to fully understand the behavior of whales: this was especially important if they were to preempt and/or quickly respond to whale reactions during the hunting encounter. It can truthfully be said that the lives of these men depended on such highly developed acuity (Neves-Graca 2002, 2005).

As the century during which Azorean men hunted whales unfolded, a very keen sense of whaler identity developed in the archipelago, although nowhere as intense as in Lajes do Pico (Neves-Graca 2002, 2006, 2007). At the core of this sense of identity was the recognition of deep similarities between whaler selves and the whales they hunted (Neves 2005). Whalers often stated that because successful hunting requires the ability to be and to behave in whale-like fashion (i.e., to see and to know the world from a whale's perspective), whalers and whales met in a space of shared 'ontology' which the whalers described as a deeply relational mode of existence. It is thus perhaps not all that surprising that many of the former whale hunters I interviewed in Pico for over a decade now, have told me repeatedly and with great conviction that "no one loves a whale as much as a whaler does".

Shortly after whale watching was introduced in Lajes as a commercial activity in 1989, the wisdom the whalers had accumulated through generations of hunting became increasingly marginal and silenced. This unfolded along the lines of a dichotomous evaluation of the whale hunting legacy vis-a-vis contemporary whale watching. Whalers were squarely situated as belonging to a foregone and mythical past in opposition to current normative and scientific understandings of whales and cetaceans in general. Their views and ideas were presented as quintessentially non-ecological, and they were even called 'whale murderers' by activists in European mass media outlets (Neves-Graca 2004).

And yet, not only did the former whale hunters hold strong opinions about whale ecology, which were often critical of whale watching practices, they were resolute in having their voices heard. Quite a few were hired by 'alternative local' whale watching companies, including those whose logic of existence was less oriented towards capital extraction and accumulation, and more concerned with the re-embedding of the whaling legacy within the context of contemporary environmental concerns and sensitivities. To be sure, partly out of having been exposed to the green discourses of radical ecologists and partly through the support of networks that included activists and scholars who disagreed with the dominant capitalist vision for whale watching in the Azores, the former whalers became steadily more apt at articulating well informed and sound environmental critiques of this activity. They also became part of a movement for the implementation of alternative forms of whale watching practice that was less commercially oriented and also potentially less damaging to whales and dolphins.

At the core of this critique and alternative positioning was the recognition of the serious disturbances caused to whales and dolphins by boats producing high pitch under-water noise. The whalers often postulated that such a form of pollution must introduce serious stress on cetaceans who rely on echo-location to find food, to communicate with one another, to navigate, and to raise and nurture their off-springs. Interestingly, only now have scientists begun to publish a cohesive body of scientific research that proves

the validity of the whalers' position. As an alternative, they proposed that boats with onboard engines should be used in whale watching and that strict measures should be introduced in relation to how whales should be approached and how human-whale encounters should be conducted. Far from wanting to romanticise whaler knowledge, it is relevant to point out that the whalers of Lajes do Pico did not have 'perfect or total knowledge of whales' or their ecosystem. In fact, some of their premises and practices have been the target of valid critiques by scientists and mainstream whale watching operators.

Nevertheless, the whalers' views still entailed a much more holistic understanding of cetaceans and of the potential impacts of whale watching on cetaceans than those espoused by dominant whale watching companies, the local government, and national and international ENGOs. Of these groups, the former whalers were the most committed to figuring out how this activity ought to be regulated so as to be environmentally sustainable for future generations. How is it possible then that constituencies ranging from local levels of governance, the University of the Azores, representatives of Greenpeace and WWF, and even the well intended founders of the first Azorean whale watching companies were so intent on not just dismissing whaler opinions, but to go as far as outright silencing them?

While the full disclosure of all the details implicit in this question would be extremely lengthy and complex (Neves-Graca 2004 and 2007), it can be explained in relation to the logic that pervades current views on whale watching all the way from the International Whaling Commission (IWC), through ENGOs, to local and regional levels of governance in the Azores. This logic is based on two core premises that are more greatly supported by ideological belief than by fact and/or scientific evidence: 1) that the best way to preserve cetaceans and their marine environments is to envision and implement profitable commercial uses of these species, i.e., that people are not motivated to protect the environments unless they can do so at a profit; 2) that whale watching is quintessentially an ecologically benign capitalist enterprise and hence, that whale watching and conservation are two sides of the same coin. The problem, as I have argued elsewhere (Neves forthcoming-a; Neves forthcoming-b) is that conservation is increasingly being subsumed by capitalist logic, resulting in a deadly fallacy that conflates ecological processes with economic goals and strategies. In the context of whale watching this has resulted in worrisome negative environmental impacts on cetaceans, as is the case of the Canary Islands, where sperm whales where harassed to the point of exhibiting signs of the effects of long term extreme distress (Neves-Graca 2004, 2007; forthcoming-b).

In effect, a serious consequence of confusing conservation with capitalist interests is that it creates major blind spots which have impeded the IWC and organisations like Greenpeace and the WWF from effectively evaluating the true environmental impacts of commercialised nature protection. The year before the Portuguese president's visit to Lajes do Pico, there had been a three day conference meant to establish the basic principles for whale watching in the Azores. It was clear that the views of whale watching promoted by the IWC, Greenpeace, XXX, the Azorean University, the Azorean Government, and the most capitalist Azorean whale watchers had not only aligned, but had also become a dominant paradigm that left very little space of alternative views. It was even clearer that this group of constituencies was not interested in the opinions of dissident whale watching companies and former whale hunters, regarding a more cautious and critical approach to the potentially negative impacts of an excessively commercial form of whale watching. While the whalers were then successfully silenced, this was not something they were willing to let happen during the presidential visit of 1999.

The protest (mentioned above) was a means to voice an alternative understanding of what constitutes a healthy and sustainable relation between the economic goals associated with marine ecotourism, and marine conservation objectives. The whalers wanted the world to know about the importance of embedding economic goals within ecological concerns, which in turn was seen as critically important for securing the economic and social sustainability of the Lajence population. The demonstration created a space for the voicing of such concerns and alternative views, some of which were eventually incorporated into the law that currently legislates whale watching in the Azores. In the final instance, this case shows not only that there exist well conceptualised and coordinated alternative understandings to mainstream conservation, but also that the latter can be effectively resisted when alternative visions are soundly conceptualised, constituencies manage to organise themselves effectively, and when there is sufficient commitment to the sustainability of local socio-economic processes.

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Strategies for Effective and Just Conservation:
The Austral Foundation's Review of Conservation in Fiji

Annette Lees and Suliana Siwatibau

In the tropical, developing world conservation sector, big NGOs (BINGOs) dominate the prioritisation and implementation of conservation programmes (Rodriguez *et al.* 2007). Questions are asked about the impact and effectiveness of this dominance (Chapin 2004). Our research studied the impact and effectiveness of BINGO-dominance on the conservation sector in a small island developing nation in the Pacific – Fiji. In small island nations, trends and impacts can have a clarity and visibility that may not always be transparent in large countries, hence providing us the opportunity to investigate assumptions that underpin BINGO programme design in developing nations throughout the world.

The review took place during 2007. We interviewed 67 informants, who were selected to be representative of stakeholders, collaborators, and other participants and funders of the conservation sector. Over 70 reports, articles and other literature from published and unpublished sources were reviewed, as were numerous conventions, strategies, policies and documents. The draft findings of the review were put to a meeting of 29 stakeholders and informants, and the ensuing discussion and conclusions were taken into account in the final analysis.

Fiji as an International Conservation Priority

The combination of Fiji's perceived international biodiversity values and the degree of threat facing its species and ecosystems has made the country a priority for a number of international conservation organisations.

For a total Fiji population of 900,000, we found 23 non-government agencies (including 18 BINGOs) and at least a half-dozen community-based groups working on conservation outcomes. A total of 148 individuals are employed full time in government and non-government conservation programmes and projects. Several Pacific regional secretariats with conservation mandates include Fiji in their oversight. By analysing the budgets of both government and non-government funding sources, we estimate that collectively over USD 8 million is spent on its biodiversity conservation annually.

A Biodiversity Crisis in Fiji

Most of the 18 BINGOs that have started conservation programmes in Fiji arrived a decade ago. While these arrivals resulted in a significant increase in the number of conservation projects

and programmes operating in Fiji, as well as increases in the total budget for conservation and the number of staff employed in the sector, the past decade has not seen an increase either in conservation success in this country, or in capacity development of Fijian institutions that is commensurate with the international resources that the BINGOs have brought to Fiji. Instead our review identified serious biodiversity conservation issues in Fiji including forest degradation and loss, invasive weeds and predators, endemic species threatened with extinction, and over-harvesting and pollution of marine habitats. While BINGOs may not be responsible for the current biodiversity crisis, given the resources they have brought to their work, they are accountable for having little impact on reducing the crisis.

Conservation History

Our analysis of the history of conservation programmes in Fiji revealed that over the past 30 years there have been nearly 50 significant conservation initiatives or programme start-ups. The changes and trends that have occurred during this time have been driven more by changes and trends in international understanding than by local needs and conservation priorities. This situation is exacerbated by interventions based on faulty assumptions about the underlying causes of Fiji's biodiversity crisis. These assumptions include: lack of local awareness about conservation and the environment, inadequate policies and legislation, shortage of information and science, the need for new ideas, and inadequate resources. Our review does not confirm that any of these assumptions of program design were leading causes of biodiversity loss in Fiji. Instead we conclude that solutions will be found in a reassessment of conservation approaches and strategies based on sound strategic thinking. Two cornerstones to this reassessment are discussed below: national ownership of the crisis, and increased national capacity.

National Ownership of the Problem and the Solutions

Definition of conservation success provided to us by informants during the review includes the vision of Fiji nationals managing conservation effectively - from community level to government - and being accountable to the people of Fiji for that work. Interviewees made clear that Fiji nationals are central to resolving the biodiversity crisis. National and community leaders in Fiji need to own the conservation problems, set the priorities for action and design the solutions. There is a critical role for international organisations to provide technical support, experience and capacity development to support this agenda, but international organisations cannot be in the driver's seat of conservation programming if effective, sustainable solutions are to be found. This is a deeper concept of ownership than participatory methodologies that link community members in village-based projects. Much of the aid and development sector has already embraced the concept of partners owning and defining programme direction (Chambers 1995; Fowler 2002; see also the 1995 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness).

In contrast to this, Fijian nationals describe a situation where conservation is being done for them or to them by the 20 international agencies (including 18 BINGOs) that dominate the prioritisation, research, design, implementation, funding and evaluation of biodiversity conservation programmes and projects in Fiji. Sixty per cent of the total conservation budget in Fiji is managed by BINGOs. Yet BINGOs select their own programme priorities and are neither accountable within Fiji for this sizable portion of the national resource pool, nor are they required within Fiji to be transparent about their operations. To attract donor funding, each BINGO seeks to attribute success and ideas to itself. As a result of which, projects, buildings, vehicles, and sometimes even communities are 'branded' with the name and symbol of the BINGO and/or donors. In both subtle and obvious ways this shifts the ownership of current conservation initiatives away from Fiji, from local people, and from local institutions that have the long-term responsibility for both the problem and solutions.

In their enthusiasm for ecosystem and species conservation, armed with science, supported by impressive budgets, and backed by a powerful global movement, BINGOs have swelled to fill the 'conservation' niche in Fiji to the point where the sector represents a problem with many foreign solution-finders but with few local leaders and owners.

'Lost in translation' has been a local concept of conservation that centres on resource management. International agencies bring an 'international' perspective of conservation, primarily one that concerns itself with species conservation (most particularly endemic and endangered species), habitat protection or the preservation of iconic, 'pristine', 'wild', or 'remote' landscapes. By contrast, the review confirmed Fijian-centred interest in biodiversity is primarily focused on its usefulness to people. As one informant told us 'Communities don't use the word 'conservation'. We can't even translate it into Fijian.' Locally-led conservation initiatives are almost always based on some practical reason, such as safeguarding food supply or because of ancestral, or cultural imperatives. Conservation is closely linked to development.

We found very little ownership of the 'international view' of conservation among Fijians after more than a

decade of diligent work by BINGOs in Fiji. An important start to building Fijian ownership and leadership of the biodiversity crisis would be to observe more carefully and thoughtfully the triggers for Fijian interest in conservation as it is linked to resource management, and make those the central components of international support to the sector. The question 'whose priorities are being met by this programme?' (a common question from Fijians we interviewed during the review) may be an effective early filter to programme design.

Fijian Capacity

The review found that there are two asymmetries in capacity within Fiji's conservation sector: between government and NGOs, and between BINGOs and Fijian organisations and agencies. On the first point, despite the fact that solutions to the most profound problems facing conservation in Fiji require government response to be effectively resolved, capacity rests disproportionately with the NGOs. Only one of the 22 NGOs told us that lack of capacity was a problem for them. By contrast, every government department with a role in biodiversity conservation that we interviewed said lack of capacity was their main, or one of their main, problems. There are about 45 government staff working on conservation outcomes for a total budget of USD 644,000. There are more than twice as many people (103) working for NGOs in Fiji with a total budget of just under USD 7.73 million – a budget more than 90 per cent higher than that of the Government.

Within the NGO sector, resourcing and capacity for biodiversity conservation rests primarily with the BINGOs. This situation is exacerbated by the practice of BINGOs opening offices in Fiji and employing local staff. Thirteen BINGOs have done just this. Today there are 24 people working for local NGOs on conservation (as defined by Fijians) compared with nearly 80 working for BINGOs. Local NGOs and government cannot compete with the salaries and other benefits that BINGOs offer. From the viewpoint of an individual, there are obvious advantages in working for a BINGO including the higher salary, exposure to international experience, and increased resources to support conservation programmes. For national conservation outcomes, however, the negative impacts are serious. BINGO office-opening acts as a magnet, concentrating talented Fiji nationals into the service of international agencies and away from local NGOs and government. This in turn exacerbates the lack of capacity of the local agencies and government and further diminishes the likelihood of the growth and development of a Fiji-led conservation sector. Similar issues are reported in the conservation sector in other developing countries (Rodriguez *et al.* 2007).

The review found that after decades of sustained internationally-led conservation implementation in Fiji, there remains little capacity at both the NGO and governmental levels to design and lead effective conservation programmes. There are internationally-led capacity development projects in Fiji, but these tend to focus on developing technical skills (mapping, participatory methodologies, biological monitoring, information transfer), while the international agencies still control the skills required for programme prioritising, strategy, direction, and design. Yet it is the latter skills that are most critical for building long-term Fijian ownership and leadership and sustainability of conservation.

A fundamental reassessment of the role of international agencies and where capacity needs to be built, needs to be undertaken. Their most effective approach to conservation is likely to be supporting the growth of local organisations, national and sub-national government capacity and local leaders. Talented local leaders and Fijian organisations are better able than international agencies to define biodiversity conservation in terms that are both credible and compelling to the people of Fiji. Importantly, only local NGOs will take on the role of mobilising civil society to hold government accountable. Even though this work is an essential contribution to biodiversity conservation in Fiji (government corruption or inaction are significant contributors to biodiversity loss), it is not work that the BINGOs will do (Edwards 2002; Chapin 2004).

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The Spectacular Growth of a Conservation NGO and the Paradoxes of Neoliberal Conservation

Hassan Sachedina, Jim Igoe and Dan Brockington

Among the responses to Chapin's 'Challenge to Conservationists' in *World Watch* was a letter from Dr. Patrick Bergin, CEO of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). It stated that AWF would not be joining the debate surrounding Chapin's article, because it was more concerned with becoming a 'different kind of conservation organisation.' According to Bergin the AWF was a forward-looking organisation which meant that it should not be concerned with past mistakes and problems that might hinder its forward motion. He further described Africa's wildlife and wild lands as essential to building a sustainable future (Igoe and Croucher 2007).[1]

This confident letter reflected an evolution of AWF's public image and self-imagination, consistently portrayed as an unmitigated success story. AWF more than doubled its operating budget between 1999 and 2006, from USD 8,274,170 to USD 20,022,394 (Sachedina 2008: 328). It thus became one of the most important conservation NGOs operating in Africa, eclipsed only by the Wildlife Conservation Society, Conservation International, and WWF-International (Scholfield and Brockington 2008: 43). In 2006 AWF entered into a partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC, the world's largest conservation NGO), which coincided with a three-year (2005-2008) campaign to raise USD100 million dollars and double AWF's presence in Africa. The partnership was strengthened in 2008 by a USD10 million gift from philanthropists Dennis Keller (chair of AWF board of trustees) and his wife Connie Keller (chair of the TNC Illinois Chapter).[2]

This remarkable growth resulted from the AWF's ability to tap growing US government and corporate funding. In the late 1990s, AWF was the most privileged recipient of money from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) operating in Tanzania, receiving USD10.5 million in 1998 (Sachedina 2008: 326-330). AWF has also been relatively successful in securing partnerships with the corporate sector. The organisation entered into a major partnership with Starbucks Coffee Company; received in kind support from Clear Channel Communications, Inc. in the form of airport advertising worth millions of dollars; and partnered with Disney to save wild dogs, as well as a smaller company called Endangered Species Chocolate.[3] AWF's interventions in Eastern and Southern Africa have been featured as 'success stories' by the Green Living Project through a multi-media presentation that tours REI and LL Bean Stores throughout the United States.[4] The organisation also features an AWF Visa Card that promises the protection of African wildlife and wild lands with every purchase, as well as web sites where supporters are invited to adopt virtual animals (with names and personalities) and virtual acres of landscapes.[5]

AWF's African Heartland Initiative has been central to its success in capturing these opportunities. This was a deliberate attempt to scale up the geographic reach of the organisation by expanding its sphere of operations on the ground. It was also an attempt to make the organisation's work more appealing to a larger audience.

[1]For the full text of Bergin's letter please visit: http://www.worldwatch.org/node/1832, accessed 5 Jun 2009.

[2]http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/illinois/press/press3483.html, accessed 5 Jun 2009.

[3]http://www.awf.org/content/solution/detail/3372/, accessed 13 Jun 2009.
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[4]http://www.greenlivingproject.com/events/, accessed 13 Jun 2009.

[5]http://www.awf.org/section/engaging_you/getcc, accessed 13 Jun 2009.
http://www.awf.org/section/engaging_you/donate/donors/adoption_center, accessed 13 Jun 2009.

Sachedina (2008: 329) observes that this initiative was 'branded' with the advice of an American consultant. The 'Heartlands' brand was carefully chosen because of its association with the culturally significant 'heartlands' of the US, as well as for its 'inspirational value', which means, in part, its ability to attract funding. Heartlands envisage 'a conservation vision big enough for Africa.' They evoke the idea of a large continent, which demands a major initiative and a bigger AWF with a bigger presence in Africa, all of which requires more of funding.[6] Accordingly, over the past ten years, AWF has opened new offices in Southern, Central and Eastern Africa, while plans for a 'West African Heartland' would extend the organisation's presence into a part of Africa which has generally received less attention from transnational conservation (cf. Scholfield and Brockington 2008).

The AWF's approach to growth fits well with anthropologist Anna Tsing's concept of 'spectacular accumulation.'[7] This term normally applied to commercial companies' strategies for seeking start-up capital to pursue potential opportunities and/or resources. They typically face difficulties in that potential investors are most likely to invest in resources and opportunities that are already well in hand. To overcome this, firms increasingly resort to the use of digital film, GIS technology, satellite imagery, maps, and expert testimony to virtually call into existence the resources and opportunities that they hope to procure once they have acquired the necessary capital. Because of the distance between investors and the resources/opportunities, the spectacular performances of these firms often become effective substitutes for actual opportunities/resources. By these means resourceful firms are able to accumulate capital with which to pursue opportunities/resources.

NGOs can use the same techniques to present potential supporters with compelling virtual opportunities (problems that need to be solved) and resources (e.g., science, experience, and authentic connections to communities). In doing so they enjoy a significant advantage over commercial firms. At some point the firm must deliver a profitable return to its investors. If the resources/opportunities fail to materialise it may wind up in trouble. When it comes to NGO returns, however, the stock in-trade are compelling success stories, and these can be produced by the same means as the spectacular performances that convinced people to support an intervention in the first place. Unlike tangible fiscal returns, such outcomes remain largely unverifiable to the average supporter of a particular intervention.

The AWF's work demonstrates clearly the techniques of spectacular accumulation. As Sachedina (2008, in press) has shown, AWF's Heartland campaign has relied heavily on maps and other representations of landscapes in anticipation of significantly influencing conservation in them. Using these representations AWF has come to gain control of specific, and rather small portions of the landscapes in question. As relatively small as they are, however, the control of these landscapes has been essential to building NGO brands. It suits fundraising to be the only visible player in a particularly important conservation landscape, as donors often wish to support programs that are clearly the most established. Moreover, representations of these 'controlled' landscapes, are connected to claims about the possibility of influencing far larger landscapes.

These representations also conceal a number of disturbing trends that are consistent with the analysis presented by Chapin in his *World Watch* article (as outlined in the introduction of this special issue) and dismissed by Bergin in his response to that article. While these trends have not been readily visible to many conservation supporters, their details are well documented in studies that are available online (Igoe and Croucher 2007; Sachedina 2008).[8] They include pressures to use money within a stipulated period of time (colloquially known as 'meeting the burn rate'), poor financial management and lack of internal accountability, conflicts of interests resulting from Tanzanian officials receiving various sorts of payments and benefits from AWF, ongoing conflicts with various groups at the community level, including the displacement of local people and their livelihoods by Tanzanian officials involved in AWF-sponsored interventions and a focus on

[6]view AWF's African Heartland video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1HmLRFwtj0&eurl=http%3A%2F%2Fvideo%2Egoogle%2Ecom%2Fvideosearch%3Fq%3Dafrican%2Bheartlands%26hl%3Den%26emb%3D0%26aq%3Df&feature=player_embedded, accessed 1 Jul 2009.

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Jim Igoe compares notes with faculty and students from the College of African Wildlife Management at a Community Meeting in the Maasai Steppe Heartland

donors and fundraising which came to overshadow village-based fieldwork.

These developments are important in and of themselves, but are doubly concerning when one considers their connections to the logic of neoliberal conservation as outlined in the introduction to this issue. AWF's Heartland vision revolves around the idea that it is possible to use 'good science' and the profit motive to maximise 'both the economic and ecological function' of African landscapes. This in turn revolves around the intensive management of people and wildlife, as well as the education of people to take advantage of new market opportunities by seeing themselves as 'asset owners' whose livelihoods depend on the protection of wildlife. This perspective fits well with the win-win scenarios that have become such an essential component of neoliberal conservation. In fact, from this perspective there are no losers. Wildlife, local people, NGOs, government agencies, western tourists, investors and for-profit companies all come out on top.

The successful growth strategy of AWF clearly demonstrates that such rosy scenarios are effective at mobilising people and money. Unfortunately, they also conceal conflicts, connections, and paradoxes that are ubiquitous features of late capitalism and neoliberal conservation (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008 and Brockington 2009).[9] Such scenarios can downplay the displacement of rural people by conservation and/or development. Or, where such displacements are acknowledged, the received wisdom is that they will be 'mitigated' by new kinds of market opportunities, as the economic potential of the environment is unlocked through conservation interventions.[10] They also sidestep difficult questions about the efficacy of specific conservation strategies, a move that appears to contradict repeated calls by conservationists for a stronger evidence base to assess the effectiveness of their interventions. Sachedina's work further suggests that conservation would also benefit from a more vigorous examination of actual patterns of conservation NGO expenditure.

It will remain difficult to engage with these complex and thorny problems as long as win-win market solutions are consistently presented as a kind of common sense in mainstream biodiversity conservation. As measures expand to include payments for ecosystem services, certified hunting ventures, carbon offset schemes under REDD (Reduced Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation), the concealments are likely to grow. Under such circumstances it would behoove us to begin exploring alternatives to neoliberal approaches to conservation

[9]Igoe, J. and D. Brockington. 2007. Neoliberal Conservation: a Brief Introduction www.conservationandsociety.org/cs-5-4-432.pdf, accessed Jun 27 2009.
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[10]For a detailed discussion of these ideas please see the video coverage of the IIED sponsored workshop on conservation and food sovereignty, which took place at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, in October 2008, see http://www.iied.org/natural-resources/key-issues/food-and-agriculture/conservation-and-food-sovereignty-workshop-video-barcelona-oct-08, accessed Jun 27 2009.

and development, and finding more nuanced ways of presenting the socio-ecological problems that concern everyone in the global conservation community.

Taking these steps will involve difficult conversations, and reconsidering the assumptions that have been so effective at mobilising conservation resources in recent years. This does not mean a blanket rejection of market-driven conservation, but it will require more candid and inclusive evaluations of how well they are actually working. From this perspective, works like Chapin's 'Challenge to Conservationists', though inconvenient, provide invaluable catalyst for the suspension of prevailing assumptions and beliefs. Though it may be profitable in the short-term to refuse to engage in reflexive thinking and dialogue, in the long-term such refusal stifles opportunities for learning, and therefore the possibility of finding more socially and ecologically effective conservation alternatives.

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Strategies for Effective and Just Conservation:
The Global Environment Facility and India Eco-Development – Growing the Inefficient Economic Approach to Conservation

Zoe Young

The emergence of global conservation funds over the last 20 years has been driven by donor governments' priorities. These priorities include pacifying Western green and scientific lobbies, expanding economic growth through big business-as-usual, and the rebranding of old public institutions like the World Bank to chime with new agendas - particularly climate change and biodiversity conservation. Without an accompanying strategic framework to drive global trade and investment into more ecologically and socio-culturally sensitive developments, billions of dollars and any number of excellent projects - and quite a few less than excellent - have not created the substantive 'global environmental benefits' promised through innovations like the Global Environment Facility (GEF; Young 2002). While exploring the allocation of GEF's billion or so US dollars a year, often as a 'sweetener' to 'green' development finance, I also found that research that did not treat marketisation of nature as given - but rather explored the roots, flaws and impacts of this 'new green order' - was not particularly welcome in donor and allied circles.

One of the first projects GEF funded in the Bank was a Programme for measuring the Incremental Costs of the Environment (PRINCE). PRINCE offered a framework for setting economic terms on global environmental value, to facilitate donor treasuries' restriction of GEF to protecting only 'globally' beneficial nature. This theoretical approach enables economic consultants to justify others' geo-political and business decisions on what to fund. It also set the stage for 'offsetting' the costs of protection against continued environmental destruction elsewhere.

Some of the more effective and credible critics of the GEF were offered medium sized projects of their own, as well as some small policy concessions, and thus transformed into an 'official opposition' that worked within the framework of the GEF. In this emerging 'win-win-win' scenario for bankers, donors, conservation big NGOs (BINGOs), project 'beneficiaries' and an 'evaluation community' (whose terms of reference leave out almost as much as they include), serious questions of cultural difference, human rights, or the effectiveness of conservation projects per se were effectively sidelined.

For if even one 'economic actor' rates a river, a lake, a tree, a flower, a frog, a fish, a view or a sacred grove as 'priceless', then all sums in an honest economic assessment would be reduced to zero. And by the same token, if any

one theoretical gram of carbon (or methane, or methyl bromide...) could be 'the one' that takes our atmosphere past a climatic tipping point, who can price our coastal cities and so much threatened more? Through the GEF and related programmes like the EU'S Clean Development Mechanism, the complex reality of our socio-biosphere has been squeezed into small economic 'black boxes'... where it clearly does not fit; and the attempt has not done much for global conservation goals.

Researching the GEF

Our findings came through extensive desk study, questionnaires, interviews, participant observation and analysis. I found that professionals working with the GEF operate within numerous political, ideological and bureaucratic restrictions, with large gaps between aspiration and reality also attributable to the social, cultural, economic and spiritual distance between the people making funding decisions and those experiencing their impacts. Lacking the necessary time, transparency and accountability to enable effective feedback from the ground, GEF's promises of 'public participation' were often reduced to the directive that 'you participate in my project' (Sunita Narain of the Centre for Science and Environment, at the 1998 GEF-NGO consultation in New Delhi).

I found that unrealistic targets and the desire to placate diverse constituencies led officials to focus on smooth presentation of progress peppered with promises to adapt and improve in response to regular critical evaluations. Neither was it in GEF's remit to share out effective control of development finance to some of the world's most marginalised people, nor to engage substantively with the findings of critical research into the donor-led approach to supporting conservation.

Eco-Development

Our detailed case study was the India Eco-Development project at Nagarhole in Karnataka, South India, visited in 1997 and 1998. This aimed to combine traditional tiger reserve management with 'ecological' village level development – bribing locals to stay outside national park boundaries (Young, Makoni and Boehmer-Christiansen 2001; Mathews 2005). I was the guest of the Forest Department for a tour of the park's newly funded roads, jeeps, watchtowers and fences, plus water pumps and biogas plants in surrounding villages. These officials seemed to be allied to local representatives of the WCS and WWF; some were openly racist towards *adivasi* forest dwellers and could not conceive of their playing a meaningful part in conservation on their own terms of the forests they called home.

I also visited the people who traditionally lived inside the forest now designated as national park. For the most part they seemed unhappy with the project and its backers, who they felt were more interested in depriving them of land and access to sustainable natural resources, than in understanding the complex forest community and challenging the socially dominant people most involved in smuggling and encroachment. Working with local development NGOs, some *adivasis* had put together a 'Peoples' Plan' for the park, focused on removing roads and concrete buildings, providing water holes for wildlife and inviting tourists to stay in mud and straw settlements and walk among the wildlife. This proposal was apparently ignored in the Eco-Development process.

According to the World Bank's internal project assessment in 2002, of "twelve biological research studies... awarded under the project... none have yet been completed. A socioeconomic study ... is generally anecdotal; this report could be improved with more quantitative data on forest dependence." So even four years after the project started, it lacked the baseline scientific data for effective action.

In 1998 a complaint about India Eco-Development at Nagarhole was submitted by *adivasis* to the World Bank's independent Inspection Panel, which found it to be justified, but (lacking consistent BINGO pressure

Inside the World Bank's headquarters in Washington DC

Dylan Howitt

on the issue in Washington) the process fizzled out. I later found that the damning IP report was not translated into the local Kannada language; it was not available in the Bank's India office even in English. By 2004 however, the Nagarhole project had been discontinued anyway, and some forest officials arrested for corruption.

In 2005, Forest Park Press concluded a survey of GEF-funded projects in India with the claim that Eco-Development failed to address the actual causes of deforestation; alienated indigenous communities from their traditional habitats and cultures; promoted 'unsustainable, unwanted and culturally inappropriate alternative livelihood activities'; and comprised 'a huge wastage of funds' that created 'social conflict'.

Filming the GEF

While undertaking the research I found that very few people knew what GEF was doing, or why. In this context I joined Dylan Howitt to make a documentary about the GEF, making complex conservation finance issues accessible by showing the human side of stories usually confined to dry reports or promotional gloss. Our film, 'Suits and Savages – Why the World Bank Won't Save the World' was made on a shoestring budget from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council's (then) Global Environmental Change Programme. It takes a long zoom - and a 'video letter' - from Indian forest dwellers to the World Bank in Washington DC, via a heated GEF-NGO consultation about Eco-Development in New Delhi.

The then GEF CEO Mohamed El-Ashry had promised full co-operation with our work. So after we filmed the consultation, I was surprised when, without warning, I was bundled out of the Governing Council meeting for discreetly filming the proceedings. GEF Secretariat staff told me 'Council members need confidentiality and had agreed not to allow filming in the chamber'. Yet three Council members independently said they had no objection to being filmed, and suggested that any ban came from the Secretariat.

The following year we arranged numerous on camera interviews with GEF officials in Washington DC, and planned to film a screening of a 'video letter' that we had brought to the World Bank from some of the *adivasis* at Nagarhole forest. But after we arrived, our interviews gradually dried up. Officials' children were suddenly sick, a Bank vice-president claimed we had 'never mentioned anything about a camera' when we came to film him as arranged. When I sought clearance to film a GEF reception in the lobby of the World Bank's main building, the GEF Secretariat's CEO, Mohamed El-Ashry asked me to check with Bank security; they gave permission, so we started shooting. A member of the GEF Secretariat then stopped us, claiming we were going 'against instructions'. When I went to speak to El-Ashry again, he waved me away, refusing to communicate further. (A few days later we filmed another social event in the same grand atrium which appears in the film).

Eventually we learned indirectly that El-Ashry had disliked an article I had written on the GEF's relationship with NGOs (I sent him a draft for comment the year before - and received no reply. This was later published as Young 1999). In the end, only a couple of the more confident (and, interestingly, fellow British) staff of the World Bank would appear in the film. One said he had retorted to those who would lean on him that 'it is better to be upfront about what we are trying to do than to invite suspicion by hiding away'.

Screening the Film

I sent the completed film to all those who were interviewed, and arranged various screenings internationally. When translated and dubbed, we screened the film to acclaim at *adivasi* settlements in and around Nagarhole forest. Forest officials set up road blocks on our route, but we took detours, brought journalists and gathered friendly crowds. Officials also threatened to arrest me if I showed the film at their offices. They claimed this was because we had filmed inside the park 'illegally' – even though the film shows them escorting us in the park and granting interviews in their own offices.

Preparing to interview human rights activist Kenchaiah for 'Suits and Savages'

Adivasi march for land rights and self-determination in HDKote, near Nagarhole, Karnataka, India

The UK representative on the GEF's governing Council in the 1990s was a civil servant in the Department for International Development who had officially supported my colleague's funding application for research on the GEF, and expressed interest in using our outputs. However his successor in the post declined to participate in any screening or discussions once the research and the film were completed. Invitations to the World Bank went unanswered, but some years later I learned - off the record - that Bank staff had been making their own copies (without our copyright consent) for internal training on responding to NGO critics.

GEF is still presented to the world as a source of innovation in transparent, accountable, effective environmental finance and the World Bank has been given many more environmental funds to run. Our research showed that while some kind of learning was certainly going on, the natural forests of India, the ever scarcer tigers, and the human cultures that have dwelled there for centuries without the desire to buy and sell the earth for private gain, were not the ones benefiting from those lessons.

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This newsletter is produced with support from:

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NATURE CONSERVATION TRUST