

Participatory Development and Community-Based Conservation: Opportunities Missed for Lessons Learned?

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This paper traces the evolution as well as key elements, and provides examples of implementation of participatory development and community-based conservation, two concepts that resemble distant cousins in the intersecting worlds of development assistance and environmental conservation. The paper examines the connections between the concepts, the implications of participatory development for community-based conservation, and the reasons for the differences in their conceptualization and implementation. The paper is based on a review of the literature in both fields and on the authors' research and experience with participatory development and community-based conservation. Several keys to understanding the disconnection between the concepts emerge; intellectual and pragmatic origins of and impetus for the concepts, the expertise and interests of their promoters, and the differing emphasis on participation as means versus end. Results may inform our understandings of why many participatory approaches to conservation have failed to achieve meaningful participation in practice.

KEY WORDS: conservation; participatory development; theory; praxis.

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INTRODUCTION

Participatory development and community-based conservation resemble distant cousins in the intersecting worlds of development assistance and environmental conservation. While promoters of community-based conservation sometimes acknowledge that the concept is similar to participatory development, there is evidence that community-based conservation practitioners have been relearning lessons accumulated in the field of participatory development over the last three decades. This paper traces the evolution of both concepts, their key elements, and provides examples of their implementation. The comparison is undertaken in order to identify areas of intersection between the two, and to suggest ways in which community-based conservation might be informed by participatory development. Two boundaries of the discussion need to be stipulated. First, in this paper community-based conservation refers to efforts to conserve wildlife or “biodiversity,” resources traditionally protected via parks and protected areas, rather than natural resources like water, soils, or forests. Participatory development has been promoted in the latter fields, under the terms participatory resource management and community-based natural resource management, and many of the participatory development examples cited deal with these natural resources (particularly water). It is with biodiversity and wildlife that the largest gaps between the concepts can be seen. Second, the discussion and examples are in an international context, where development and conservation are interventions often funded by multilateral, bilateral, and nongovernment agencies.

The paper is driven by what we see as three realities in conservation and development:

Reality 1. Over the last 20 years, mainstream narratives about conservation and development have been merging, a process that accelerated with the release of the Brundtland Commission Report in 1987 (WCED, 1987). With conservation and development defined as “opposite sides of the same coin,” development organizations have increasingly incorporated environmental rhetoric into policy, just as conservation organizations have acknowledged the development needs of local people. In the latter instance what emerges is community-based conservation and it is now a dominant theme in conservation policy statements by organizations such as the IUCN, WWF, or Conservation International: “it has become rare to find a forest or park management project proposal that does not talk about local participation in conservation” (Wells and Brandon, 1993, p. 158), and it soon may “be difficult to find a rural conservation project that does not define itself as community-based” (Hackel, 1999, p. 730). Such is the concept’s popularity that conservationists ignore it at their peril; Lundy (1999) suggests that

failure to reference community participation in a project proposal can spell “doom” and rejection by funders. Consideration of community-based conservation is thus warranted because of its popularity.

Reality 2. Development assistance agencies have responded to the merging of narratives by funding conservation activities: “biodiversity conservation and land stabilization have become major priorities among multilateral lending agencies and other development institutions” (Brosius *et al.*, 1998, p. 163), and there has been a dramatic increase in bilateral and multilateral development assistance monies spent on biodiversity protection via protected areas (Wells and Brandon, 1993). The USAID, CIDA, SIDA, IDRC, German Development Agency, and World Bank (via the Global Environment Facility) are all active in funding conservation activities, provided they make some link with local social and economic development (Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Boza, 1993; Lundy, 1999; Songorwa, 1999; Wells and Brandon, 1993). Funding for such projects is often transferred via environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) (Lundy, 1999), and it is possible that the shared narrative of conservation and development, as epitomized by community-based conservation, has led to increased competition for funding between NGOs traditionally interested in development and the growing number of ENGOS. There are implications of directing development assistance funds to ENGOS (Campbell, 2002a; Meyer, 1993, 1997; Price, 1994), and these need to be explored.

Reality 3. While there is a shared language, there is evidence that promoters of community-based conservation have not learned from or looked to participatory development for guidance. Lundy (1999, p. 130) concludes “that international donors have learnt nothing from past mistakes [in participatory development].” Wells and Brandon (1993, pp. 160–161) find “little evidence that the organizations implementing ICDPs (Integrated Conservation and Development Projects) have benefited from the well-documented experiences in the closely-related field of participatory rural development.” What is most problematic about this lack of attention to past experience is that development organizations themselves have had problems implementing participatory development in practice (Vainio-Mattila, 2000). These problems will likely be magnified when conservation organizations, traditionally rooted in the natural sciences and bringing with them associated professional norms and prioritizing conservation, attempt to implement community-based initiatives (Campbell, 2000; Little, 1994).

Based on these three realities, this paper has three objectives: first, to examine connections (in both reasons for evolution and underlying principles) between participatory development and community-based conservation; second, to consider the implications of participatory development for community-based conservation; and third, to discuss the reasons for

the differences in conceptualization and implementation of the concepts. To accomplish this, we turn to the literature in both fields, and to our own research and experience with participatory development and community-based conservation.

DEFINITIONS AND FOUNDATIONS OF PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION

Participatory Development

There is no one definition of participatory development, but there are two keys to describing the concept: the actor and the meaning of participation. In terms of “actor,” the literature refers to “people’s participation” (McCall, 1987), “community participation” (Midgeley *et al.*, 1986), “people’s own development” (Swantz, 1986), “community development” (Gow and Vansart, 1983), and “self-help” (Verhagen, 1987). Use of these categories reflects a variety of political and sociological epistemologies. The important commonality is the shift from a passive voice (such as in “basic needs development”) to an active voice. The second aspect, the meaning of participation, refers to the positioning of participatory initiatives on the continuum from manipulating participation for the achievement of externally identified project goals to the empowerment of the actors to define such goals themselves, as well as the actions required to achieve them. Arnstein’s *Ladder of Citizen Participation* (Arnstein, 1969) is perhaps the best known and often-cited continuum. The difference is that of viewing participation as a means to project implementation and viewing participation as an end that, when achieved, will result in long-term engagement by those involved in the process of solution finding.

Participatory development emerged as a paradigm shift in development thinking during the 1960s and early 1970s, and while participatory development has been described and defined in a variety of ways (Sachs, 1992; Vainio-Mattila, 1997; World Bank, 1996), all of these definitions reflect the desire by those involved as agents of donor agencies to engage more deeply with the contexts of their work. Participatory development was informed by ideas evolving primarily from four contexts: (i) the theoretical works by phenomenologists of the Frankfurt School in the 1950s and 1960s, and especially work done by Jürgen Habermas since the 1970s regarding the relationship between theory and praxis; (ii) the work on student participation in/control of their education informed by Paulo Freire, and related questions about production of knowledge; (iii) work done within and by development NGOs to shift power relationships within development practice and to redefine roles

of external agents; and (iv) the profound frustrations with failed development projects experienced by many working within the world of externally funded development interventions. While the genesis of the paradigm shift has been discussed in greater detail elsewhere (Vainio-Mattila, 1996, 2000), the combined intellectual and experiential basis of the shift is worth noting. The three central discourses that emerge—theory versus praxis, production of knowledge, and the role of external agents—are described in more detail later in the paper, where their meanings in a participatory development context, and their implications for, and evidence in, community-based conservation are discussed.

Community-Based Conservation

As with participatory development, there is no one definition of community-based conservation. It does, however, have two broadly recognized objectives: to enhance wildlife/biodiversity conservation and to provide incentives, normally economic, for local people. Their connection is strong; through community-based conservation local people will benefit from and take ownership of conservation, and thus will be more likely to support it. How such objectives are achieved is also important, and Little (1994, p. 350) concludes that community-based conservation implies “at least some of the following: local-level, voluntary, people-centred, participatory, decentralized, village based management.”

The predecessors of community-based conservation include the concept of buffer zones, introduced by UNESCO’s Man [sic] and the Biosphere programme in 1979, and Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) popularized in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Both have been criticized for their failures to adequately involve local populations in planning (Wells and Brandon, 1993). In theory, community-based conservation is different in that it places the community’s involvement at the center of conservation, rather than the mechanism (e.g., a park, project, or land use zoning) for achieving it. The search for alternatives to a protected areas approach arises from three issues: (i) pragmatic concerns associated with protecting resources in developing countries, where exclusionary protection has failed to incorporate “the human dimension of ecological issues” (Meyer and Helfman, 1993, p. 570), increasingly seen as key to the success of conservation undertakings (Ecological Applications, 1993; Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997; Mangel *et al.*, 1996). This failure can undermine biological goals of conservation because of encroachment and illegal harvesting activities by local people, and efforts to enforce exclusion can consume disproportionate amounts of conservation funds; (ii) a critique of the philosophical basis of

parks and protected areas, rooted in both North American romanticism and European utilitarianism (McCormick, 1989) and emphasizing the separateness of humans from nature. When imported to developing countries, this vision has at times conflicted with local visions of human–environment relations (Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997), and can undermine local cultural and social norms, and traditional or indigenous knowledge (e.g., Marks, 1984); and (iii) interest in environmental justice, and a critique of the way traditional conservation activities impinge on rural livelihoods. Local human populations bear a disproportionate share of the conservation costs, through lost access to land and resources (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Hackel, 1999; Schöitz, 1989; Wainwright and Wehrmeyer, 1998) and through reduced variety of economic activities (Homewood and Rogers, 1991; Turton, 1987). Parks can exacerbate existing inequities between the rural poor living next to them and those who gain through visiting, knowing areas exist, or receiving wider environmental benefits of protection.

While there is some similarity in the reasons for the evolution of participatory development and community-based conservation, e.g., a concern for just treatment of rural people, pragmatic motivations for pursuing community-based conservation have dominated its implementation. This contrasts with participatory development where the intellectual foundations of the movement are equally as important as experience in the field. In the following sections, we focus on the defining characteristics of participatory development—praxis and theory, production of knowledge, and the role of external agents—suggest what these imply for community-based conservation, and contrast this with the evidence from community-based conservation in practice to date.

PRAXIS AND THEORY

Praxis and Theory in Participatory Development

In the debate on the relationship between praxis and theory, participatory development writings explore the possibilities of experience as a basis of explanation without the support of a metatheory. An example of this kind of work is the participatory research carried out by Marja-Liisa Swantz in Tanzania in the 1970s on women's roles in the changing practices of socialization (Swantz, 1985). In her work, the analysis is based on interpretation of the women's narratives of their lives, with the analysis itself becoming a change propagation element of the narrative. Another example of such scholarship is provided by Bhatt and Tandon (2001) writing on the role of citizen participation in natural resource management. It is perhaps ironic

that even academics writing in this area refer to themselves as “practitioners” rather than “theorists,” the usual nomenclature for proponents of new ways of explicating. Foundational to this exploration has been the work of Habermas (1973). In particular, his observations on the interactivity of the theory and praxis are valuable, although Habermas would probably remain skeptical of some of the uses of his ideas in participatory development and related action research contexts:

The fashionable demand for a type of “action research,” that is to combine political enlightenment with research, overlooks that uncontrolled modification of the field with simultaneous gathering of data in that field, a condition which is also valid for social sciences. (Habermas, 1973, p. 11)

Fals Borda (1977, 1987) builds on Habermas’ ideas of interactivity and argues strongly on the issue of praxis-theory relationship. He sees the two as utterly integrated. Consequently, he draws the conclusion that neither can the object nor subject of research be separated. There can be no explanation without the context, no theory without action.

Implications for Community-Based Conservation

The implication of the praxis-theory debate for community-based conservation is that there can be no universal metatruths about conservation that can be separated from, or implemented in isolation from, the context within which people interact with the species/ecosystem for which conservation strategies are being designed. The experience of communities with the environment, including access to, and control over the use of, natural resources, is central to the explanations and visions of conservation as well as the choice of appropriate conservation strategies.

An example of this can be seen in the very patchy achievements of community water projects in the developing world. Typically, the focus of such projects is placed, apart from the physical infrastructure, on the formation of user committees to manage repairs to water points, and more importantly to administer recently established user fees. The donor driven structures of water management are based on an understanding of natural resource systems, as opposed to an understanding of existing relationships between users and their resource, and on the assumption that since no “modern” water supply system has existed, no water management system exists as all. This may be quite untrue in reality. In situations where the resource, such as water, is already scarce, it is conceivable, and even likely, that sophisticated systems of conservation already exist to ensure continuity of access to water.

For example, in Northern Namibia, the Kwanyama-speaking people distinguish nine different sources of water depending on whether they are

underground or surface sources, on depth and surface area of the source, and on whether the source needs to be maintained by digging or not. The tenure system related to water is complex; water tenure and water source tenure are differentiated in order to allow everyone access to water while control over the water source is maintained by individuals. This control implies a jurisdiction over how much water is drawn during the dry season and by whom, and a right to call upon the water source users to help with the maintenance of the water source. The introduction of a formal water management structure involving water point committees answerable to the Directorate of Rural Water Supply eroded the traditional water management system and, as a result, weakened existing water conservation processes (based on Vainio-Mattila, 1996, pp. 188–199).

Praxis and Theory in Community-Based Conservation

If there has been a universal metatruth for conservation, and particularly wildlife conservation, it is contained in the protected areas approach. To some extent, the community-based component of community-based conservation counters the exclusion in this approach, but, as community-based conservation is often undertaken in conjunction with protected areas (and was conceived of as a way to link them with local development), the universal metatruth remains. Furthermore, “tacked on” economic components have often failed to improve conservation success (Adams and Thomas, 1993; Mehta and Kellert, 1998; Wells and Brandon, 1992).

A popular community-based conservation strategy is to promote tourism to existing protected areas and channel a portion of profits back to communities. This can be done by selling hunting licenses to safari tourists, or through encouraging/facilitating local investment into tourist services. The objectives of community-based conservation are theoretically met through continued existence of the protected area (the universal metatruth remains) and diversion of tourist dollars to local communities. However, the success of such undertakings has been limited. For example, Wainwright and Wehrmeyer (1998, p. 934) examine a game hunting licensing scheme in the Luangwa Integrated Resource Development Project and conclude that communities benefit little from the project, and have not been encouraged to participate. While some direct employment with safaris has resulted, this benefits only 11% of community members. Whether or not poaching has been reduced is questionable, although people ranked wildlife as more valuable after the project than they had before.

A more successful example of community-based conservation in a tourism context is at Tortuguero National Park, Costa Rica (Campbell,

2002a), where a US-based ENGO, the Caribbean Conservation Corporation (CCC) has promoted tourism to replace income earned via a marine turtle harvest. Local guiding and work in/ownership of tourism services is the main source of the village's economy. Negative environmental impacts of tourism on natural resources exist, but are being controlled and minimized via guiding and by the nature of the industry, i.e., it remains small scale primarily because of Tortuguero's remoteness, accessible by boat or by plane. Economically, benefits to the community exist, but local ownership of the tourism industry is low. Nevertheless, the economic benefits suffice to generate support for the conservation effort. Peskin (2002) found that guides in particular are highly supportive of conservation activities. However, community participation in the original designation of the protected area was minimal and options for development consideration do not include increasing access to protected resources. The metatruth remains intact, and ecotourism is now used to reinforce it (Campbell, 2002a). The CCC's scientific director has proposed that ecotourism be adopted as a blueprint development strategy everywhere where marine turtles nest (Troëng *et al.*, 2002).

KNOWLEDGE

Production of Knowledge in Participatory Development

A criterion that validates participatory development as a separate development paradigm is its assumption that knowledge is produced by a social process (Vainio-Mattila, 1996). We may indeed have species or ecosystem-based knowledge that is relevant, but unless that knowledge is situated in the social reality of the development context, we can hardly hope for the long-term changes effected by development interventions to be sustainable. "Situating" knowledge refers to a process whereby access to the information, and control over its use shifts from the experts and scientists to the people whose lives are being affected.

Excellent examples of this are provided by both Banuri and Appel-Marglin (1993) and Leach *et al.* (1997a). The first is a collection of case studies from India, Finland, and the USA (Maine) illustrating the relationship between traditional and scientific knowledge. The most poignant of the case studies is possibly the one of Finland, where the author (Jukka Oksa) concludes that despite the existence of highly sophisticated silvicultural expertise in Finland, the main reason for the relative health of the Finnish forests is that conservation practices are based on traditional knowledge passed from one generation of farmers to another.

In the second example, Leach *et al.* (1997a) challenge the conventional wisdom of negative impacts of human settlements in the fragile environment

on the southern edge of the Sahara. They point to the evidence of aerial photographs and interviews with community elders to illustrate that the forest regeneration has been most rigorous precisely where people are settled, and, on the contrary, deforestation often follows abandonment of villages.

Implications for Community-Based Conservation

The implication for community-based conservation is that knowledge that has been produced through long, mutually adaptive processes of human communities interacting with their environment can be valuable to conservation efforts. This knowledge has sometimes been lost for the simple reason that, historically, conservation practitioners have not included processes that would allow for the effective integration of such knowledge into conservation strategies. Such processes have been developed within participatory development and vary from the mechanistic tools of documenting knowledge of people with varied literacy/numeracy skills (community mapping, transecting, sorting and ranking, Venn diagrams, etc.), to methodologies that systematically explore local technical knowledge (Rapid Rural Appraisal, RRA; Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation, PAME; Participatory Learning Approach, PLA; etc.), to the participatory approach predicated upon the integration of the three debates described here. What is noteworthy is that all these tools, methodologies, and the approach itself is highly adaptable to the context of community-based conservation.

Local Knowledge in Community-Based Conservation

The value of local, often indigenous, knowledge is sometimes acknowledged as part of the community-based conservation concept, but in an overly simplistic fashion (Agrawal and Gibson, 2001). This is in spite of extensive scholarship examining current and historical relationships between people and resources (for a summary, see Agrawal and Gibson, 2001, p. 6), and theorizing about traditional ecological knowledge and common property resources in other fields of resource management, for example, Fikret Berkes' work on fisheries (Berkes *et al.*, 2000; Berkes and Pockock, 1981; Smith and Berkes, 1991). In her study of marine turtle conservation, Campbell (2002b, 1997) found that scientists, most of them members of the IUCN's Marine Turtle Specialist Group, continue to rely heavily on western scientific criteria to determine appropriate conservation practices. A recent example of this appears in an editorial written by the scientific officer for the Community Conservation Network in Palau. He argues that western science is crucial

to conservation and that those promoting traditional management practices “need to wise up to the fact that their world is not the one inhabited by their ancestors’ ancestors” (Pilcher, 2002, p. 1). While Pilcher (2002) argues for combining science and traditional practices rather than ignoring traditional practices altogether, his article has a defensive tone that hints of a backlash against local knowledge, an issue Dove (2002) addresses more generally.

One problematic example where local knowledge has been recognized as relevant to conservation is in the case of bioprospecting in Costa Rica. The mining of genetic resources by drug companies is again conceived of as a way to maintain protected areas (where genetic materials are housed) while generating economic benefit (Campbell, 2002c). The national agency responsible for bioprospecting (INBio) acknowledges the importance of local knowledge of medicinal uses of plants to its work (Nygren, 1998), and employs local people in inventory activities as parataxonomists (Evans, 1999; Janzen *et al.*, 1993). However, this use of local knowledge can be critiqued. Socially, Evans (1999) points out that much of the language regarding parataxonomists is paternalistic and condescending and that, with only 30 parataxonomists employed in the early 1990s, employment is fairly minimal (INBio describes its current workforce as “a small army” (INBio, 2000)). Also problematic is the way local knowledge is indirectly treated as “culturally and socially free “human capital” to be exploited in the service of biobusiness” (Nygren, 1998, p. 208). While the value of “local knowledge” is acknowledged and parataxonomists are paid wages for their services, intellectual property rights to resultant products are ceded to Merck (and, by extension, lost to the parataxonomists). These are of great economic value, and their ownership by Merck implies that its research and development activities are more important than the local knowledge used in material identification. Local knowledge is valuable, but relatively less so.

EXTERNAL AGENTS

Participatory Development and External Agents

The third debate focuses on the role of the external agent, whether a researcher, a development agent, or a conservationist. The main shift is from conventional development practice of the subject (active, donor)–object (passive, recipient) relationship to a subject–subject relationship within participatory development. Again the Habermasian reconceptualization of the subject is significant to the understanding of the subject as a participant in the universe s/he inhabits (Meehan, 1995).

The language of development has shifted significantly over the last 40 years of development interventions. In the 1960s the conceptualization of

aid recipients as “target groups” began to give way to the idea of “beneficiaries” as the military language of the postwar era was being slowly replaced by that of economics. At the same time, a shift from defining the recipients entirely from the outside towards allowing more self-definition began. This became even more prominent in the 1970s, when “beneficiaries” was increasingly replaced by the term “interest groups,” reflecting the idea that communities involved as recipients of development aid will have diverse interests, leading to choices made by the community members regarding their involvement in externally funded (and planned, implemented, and evaluated!) interventions.

Sustainable development rhetoric in the 1980s introduced the concept of “stakeholders.” This was and remains a highly problematic term for participatory development practitioners (as does, of course, “sustainable development” with its inherent tensions). The thinking on “stakeholders” seemed to promote the idea of equal partners participating in a round table discussion to identify solutions and “win–win” situations. Stakeholders were “organizations, agencies and citizens having a stake in the outcome of the decision” (Dale, 1995, p. 5). The responsibility to participate is placed with the stakeholders who self-identify their interest in the process. This is problematic because it is based on an underlying assumption that all stakeholders, whether individuals or organizations, hold similar power. Promoting the idea that all stakeholders share in a process creates the illusion that they all have equal capacity and opportunity to influence that process.

The idea of “ownership” and participants as “owners” of the process, has begun to emerge as a partial response to the above. In the context of development aid, Moore *et al.* (1996) write:

“Ownership” refers to the relationships among the stakeholders in a development project.

Ownership is high when:

- (i) the intended beneficiaries substantially influence the conception, design, implementation and operations and maintenance of a development project;
- (ii) the implementing agencies that influence the project are rooted in the recipient country and represent the interests of ordinary citizens;
- (iii) there is transparency and mutual accountability among the various stakeholders. (Moore *et al.* 1996, p. 9)

Implications for Community-Based Conservation

For conservation activities, the implications are obvious: the concern for the urgency of conservation activities cannot preclude the importance of

community control over these activities. To locate the community into a passive, object-like role in the discourse on conservation will directly undermine long-term sustainability of conservation activities.

For example, a project by UN-FAO was initiated to conserve and protect the Shivapuri watershed area, which is the source of water for the city of Kathmandu, Nepal. In order to conserve this area, a wall was erected around the watershed area to give local residents notice that this was indeed a protected area. Problems arose because, apart from being the main water source for Kathmandu, Shivapuri was also the source of livelihood for some 30,000 people living either in (3,000) or in the immediate vicinity of (27,000) of the protected area. The local community depended on this area for fuelwood, leaf litter, and forest herbs. They also needed to control the population of wild boar that had recently been introduced into the area and were now causing problems for local farmers. The simple conservation solution resulted in the exclusion of the local community from any decision making process, weakened their economic base and thus their opportunities for developing alternative sources of income and made illicit subsistence livelihood activities basic to survival. The consequence of this alienation of the community was the loss of any sense of responsibility the community had for the conservation of the Shivapuri watershed. Only after considerable efforts were made to bring the community into the process of both planning and managing conservation in the area, was the commitment of the local community to conservation achieved (Wilde and Vainio-Mattila, 1995).

External Agents and Community-Based Conservation

Wainwright and Wehrmeyer (1998) identify participation by local people as the core principle of community-based conservation, the mechanism that allows communities to regain control over resource management, strengthens decision-making, increases involvement in development, and improves their welfare. Wells and Brandon (1993) point out that participation should occur at all stages of project implementation: information gathering, consultation, decision making, initiating action, and evaluation. Bottom-up participation that gives a voice to local people stands in contrast to the “top down” traditional approach to conservation planning.

For some, the next step from participation is devolution of control and decision making. Hackel (1999, p. 727) suggests “Decentralization of resource management from the central authority to local communities is considered a linchpin for a successful community-based conservation program.” While participation may take on a variety of forms, decentralization is explicitly about devolving the responsibility for natural resources held as commons to local communities (Lundy, 1999). The premise behind devolution is

that local communities have greater interest in sustainable resource use than governments or corporations (Brosius *et al.*, 1998) and that, with devolution, communities will develop a sense of proprietorship over wildlife (Hackel, 1999; Wainwright and Wehrmeyer, 1998).

The emphasis on participation and devolution in community-based conservation can be linked to the preceding discussion of subject–object relationships. Via these mechanisms, communities are not passive bystanders to conservation projects, but are actively engaged in the negotiations that determine what these conservation projects look like. However, explicit attention to “external agents” and subject–object relationships has been virtually absent in community-based conservation, beyond basic statements regarding the stakes that communities hold in conservation activities. In the actual experience of community-based conservation, local participation has been criticized. While community-based conservation talks about participation, this can take on many forms. Campbell (1997, 2000) found that a group of conservationists advocate participation by local people, but at very low levels, often equating local peoples’ participation with being educated regarding the necessity for conservation. This interpretation has also been evident in practice. In their review of 23 ICDPs, Wells and Brandon (1993) found that few projects specified what participation means, nor how they expected participation to reduce threats to protected areas. Participation was not a consistent or principal emphasis, and in the majority of the case studies, there had been very little participation at all:

Most ICDPs have treated local people as passive beneficiaries of project activities and have failed to involve people in decision making related to the process of change and their own development (Wells and Brandon, 1992, p. 160)

While Wells and Brandon’s review was undertaken in the early days of community-based conservation, later reviews find similar problems. In a review of seven instances of wildlife community-based conservation in Africa, Songorwa (1999, p. 2062) concludes that all seven failed in principle and practice to involve local people. One community, following implementation of the community-based conservation scheme, “had no more rights than they had before the introduction of the program.” In some cases, projects had adverse affects on village livelihoods (for example through increased crop raiding by wildlife).

Devolution of control over resources and their management, the furthest extreme on Arnstein’s participation scale (Arnstein, 1969), is one of the contested elements of community-based conservation. Those opposing devolution point to the danger in instances when community-based conservation loses its appeal or fails to generate revenue, or when a more lucrative economic activity gains wide support in the empowered community (Hackel,

1999). Thus, devolution of control to the local community becomes problematic when the local community's goals are not in line with those of conservationists (Campbell, 2000). This suggests that a shift from subject-object to subject-subject relations in community-based conservation is conditional on the former objects (i.e., local communities) agreeing with the former subjects (i.e., conservation practitioners).

One shift in "agents" under community-based conservation has been the partnership role assigned to NGOs rather than states (Songorwa, 1999). NGOs, and specifically ENGOs, have been some of the most enthusiastic promoters of the community-based conservation concept (Brosius *et al.*, 1998), and their partnership role is assigned based on qualities often associated with them. NGOs are seen as participatory, less bureaucratic than state institutions, and able to meet needs of poorest and most vulnerable groups in society (Carroll, 1992; Ekins, 1992; Fisher, 1993; Princen and Finger, 1996). Their popularity has also arisen as scepticism about the ability and willingness of state institutions to address the needs of local people has increased (Macdonald, 1995; Wapner, 1995). However, the extent to which environmental NGOs represent the interests of local communities can be questioned (Brosius *et al.*, 1998; Lundy, 1999). Like participatory development, community-based conservation promises cooperation and partnerships, but assumptions of "partnerships" may be unrealistic given the unequal power relations among rural communities, their national governments, and NGOs and international organizations interested in community-based conservation (Songorwa, 1999).

DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION

We suggest that there are two, perhaps obvious but nonetheless important, sources of disconnect between participatory development and community-based conservation: the end objectives and the (related) expertise of the promoters.

End Objectives

In almost all of the case studies reviewed for this paper, community-based conservation was used to "get people on side" with conservation programs. Conservation programs are usually predetermined and are often tied to traditional parks and protected areas. While community-based conservation is not by definition associated with protected areas, and its real

value may lie in its ability to encourage or enhance conservation *outside* of protected areas, there are few documented case studies of community-based conservation outside of protected areas and even fewer analysts who acknowledge this as a possibility. Most of the articles reviewed for this paper were written in a protected areas context (e.g., Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Hackel, 1999; Matose, 1997; Mehta and Kellert, 1998; Songorwa, 1999; Wells and Brandon, 1992). Thus, the continued existence and expansion of protected areas appears to be the end objective of community-based conservation, and participation a means of achieving it. This sets community-based conservation in sharp contrast to participatory development.

Furthermore, the end objective of having a protected area limits the scope of community-based conservation efforts. According to Wells and Brandon (1993, p. 161), "people can only be empowered in aspects of development that do not lead to overexploitation or degradation of protected areas." Thus, achieving community-based conservation's two goals of enhancing wildlife/biodiversity conservation and providing economic gains for local people may be seen as a best-case scenario. If forced to prioritize, biodiversity conservation comes first. Songwora (1999, p. 2076) suggests "outsiders/initiators are more interested in wildlife than in them [local communities], and that the outsiders intend to put as much of the communities' land as possible under protected area management." Hackel concludes that, in the enthusiasm for community-based conservation, protectionism is being underestimated (Hackel, 1999). He recommends reconceptualizing community-based conservation as "simply as a set of tools that serve to promote greater acceptance of conservation efforts by rural people" (p. 733). Rather than set unreachable objectives of meeting human development needs, the tools of community-based conservation can be used to "ameliorate the restrictions people must endure" (p. 733). This view resolves problems with participation in community-based conservation by restricting its purpose from the outset.

Expertise of Promoters

As discussed above, ENGOs have been key promoters of the community-based conservation concept. In their review of 23 ICDPs, Wells and Brandon (1993) found that barriers to participation included, among other things, the limited experience of ENGOs with projects aimed at poor rural people and their inadequate understanding of local socioeconomic context. There is a wider sense in the literature that, in the desire to find a conservation formula that works, there has been an oversimplification of socioeconomic issues (Hackel, 1999; Songorwa, 1999). One such issue is that of communities, which community-based conservation has treated as self-evident or generic (Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Brosius *et al.*, 1998; Derman,

1995; Leach *et al.*, 1997b; Wells and Brandon, 1992; Western and Wright, 1994). Communities are assumed to be homogenous entities, acting collectively to achieve common environmental goals. Little consideration is given to individuals within communities and the motives they might have to work against community-based conservation programs (Hackel, 1999; Wainwright and Wehrmeyer, 1998). The assumptions about homogeneity mean the possibility of conflict over resource use by groups in a given area is overlooked (Lundy, 1999). Furthermore, while community-based conservation can function in heterogeneous communities, an understanding of community structure is necessary in order to determine appropriate and realistic incentives for conservation (Campbell, 1998).

From an economic perspective, the assumption has been that revenues from community-based conservation programs will offset their costs (Hackel, 1999; Songorwa, 1999). However, while practitioners see community-based conservation as a compromise that should be appreciated by local people (the alternative is outright protection), local people may still see opportunity costs in community-based conservation (the alternative is further exploitation). This raises the assumptions made about minimum sustainable livelihoods. Community-based conservation activities have often focused on income substitution, e.g., substituting new income earned as a tourism guide for meat formally procured by hunting. That income substitution may not be appropriate in areas of high poverty is rarely considered (Hackel, 1999). Furthermore, while economic gains are clearly important in garnering community support for conservation, their provision alone does not ensure such support. Other issues like control over resources and community empowerment have sometimes proven almost equally important (Campbell, 1998; Heinen, 1993; Parry and Campbell, 1992). These types of economic and social issues are more often recognized in participatory development.

Some of the problems faced in implementing participation in community-based conservation may be due to the normal professionalism (see Chambers, 1997) of traditional wildlife conservation organizations, their objectives and practitioners, historically dominated by natural scientists. While the critique of mainstream development arose among development practitioners themselves, much of the critique of conservation arose from nonbiologists studying impacts of conservation on communities (e.g., Anderson and Grove, 1987; Marks, 1994).

CONCLUSIONS

Community-based conservation arose from pragmatic, philosophical, and environmental justice concerns related to a traditional parks and protected areas approach to conservation. While there is some evidence of

all three elements in case studies of community-based conservation, the pragmatic concerns appear to have dominated their implementation. The review above suggests that community-based conservation has not used lessons learned in participatory development, partly due to different emphasis on means versus ends in community-based conservation and participatory development and partly due to different training and expertise of community-based conservation versus participatory development practitioners. The latter problem is more easily addressed than the former. People with training in the social sciences, and more specifically with participatory development, can be added to community-based conservation implementation teams. However, that projects conceived, implemented, and evaluated by outside agencies and their teams of experts are ever given the title “community-based conservation” is a reflection of the problematic nature of the term, and emphasis on the end objectives of, rather than the means for achieving, community-based conservation. Nevertheless, a more explicit and deliberate dialogue between conservationists promoting community-based conservation and development agents promoting participatory development may move the former away from the goal of “getting people on-side” with conservation towards including local people in a meaningful discussion of what conservation should look like in their particular context. As Hackel (1999, p. 474) states, “no matter how much protection is needed, . . . it cannot be the protection of the past.” Community-based conservation continues to represent a potential alternative, currently unrealized.

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