Your Biosphere is my backyard— the story of Bosawas in Nicaragua

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Despite efforts to establish protected areas around the world, the authority of government remains weak in forested areas. We examine here the largest protected area in Central America, 'Bosawas' National Natural Resource Reserve in Nicaragua, to demonstrate how overlapping systems of governance have encouraged rapid ecological destruction and social differentiation, as well as corruption and violence. We will conclude that Migdal's observation about forest governance as being guided by 'strong societies and weak states' (1988) is unlikely to change and must be the starting point for future efforts in decentralized natural resource management.

With one fell stroke of the pen, on October 31, 1991Nicaragua's President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro created the largest protected area in Central America, the 8,000 square kilometers 'Bosawas' National Natural Resource Reserve. Or at least so it appeared to the government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, international conservation agencies, and representatives of the press. There was only one small catch. Nicaragua's central authorities did not really govern the area they had just declared a reserve, probably did not own it, and certainly did not 'possess' it in any real sense. A few years earlier, the government handed over much of its authority over the eastern portion of the reserve to a regional government. Theoretically, at least, it had also recognized the rights of indigenous communities living in the area, none of whom were consulted about the decree. Equally importantly, the national government had little effective control over any of the reserve area.

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This situation illustrates the contradictory and partial nature of many government efforts to establish protected areas, especially where they coincide with policies that 'devolve' control over natural resources to local authorities and communities. Protected areas advocates who continue to view conservation needs from a 'top-down' perspective, greatly overestimate and over simplify the central government's ability to control protected areas. From a local or regional perspective, it quickly becomes apparent that central governments are only one of many actors and often not among the most powerful. As 'non-state spaces', i.e., places beyond the effective control of government[1] many forested areas have been too impenetrable and remote, rebellious, sparsely populated, economically irrelevant or hard to tax to justify the central government's presence. Under such circumstances, it is misleading to talk about central governments managing protected areas. Our key message for policy analysts and conservationists is that they should stop assuming that policy documents and laws reflect reality on the ground. A decree is not a park. Management plans generally have little to do with how things are managed. Just because a ministry or project has fancy brochures and a large office in the capital does not mean it influences daily life in the interior.

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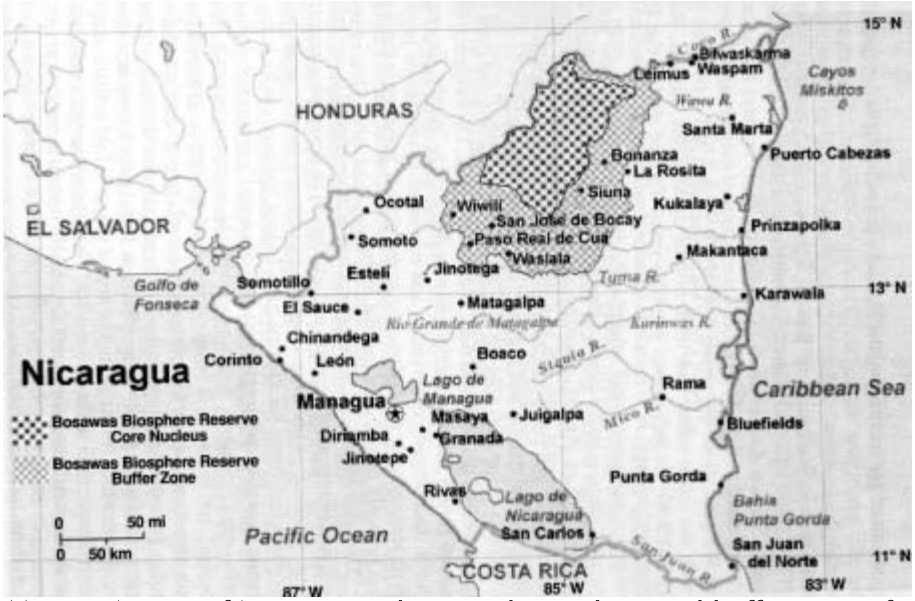
This paper traces the history of the Bosawas Reserve to illustrate these points. The area provides a good example because it involves numerous failed government efforts to exert centralized control. The paper covers the period until 2001. We begin by offering some background about the region. For convenience sake, we refer to the area of the Bosawas Reserve as Bosawas. Following that we analyze aspects of the region's history that explain why the government's rule over the area and its perceived legitimacy there remain tenuous. Then we focus on the government's current ability to govern the reserve. We end with a few concluding remarks.



Map 1. A map of Nicaragua showing the nucleus and buffer zone of the Bosawas biosphere reserve

Cowboys and indians in the humid tropics

When the government finally measured the Bosawas Reserve several years after 'creating' it, the area within the boundaries it had defined was only 7,400 square kilometers, not the 8,000 it first imagined. About half the area belonged to three municipalities of the Northern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAN), Bonanza, Siuna, and Waspam. The other half fell under the jurisdiction of the municipalities of Cua-Bocay and Wiwili in the Department of Jinotega[2]. Historically and culturally, most of the RAAN forms part of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, while most of Jinotega forms part of Nicaragua's predominantly mestizo "Interior" Region. As we explain below, the history, government institutions, production systems, and ethnic composition of these two regions are markedly distinct.

As one moves from the southwest portion of Bosawas to the northeast the elevation slowly descends from over 600 meters down to almost sea level. The highest elevation is in the reserve's southeast corner where the peaks of Saslaya and El Toro are each above 1,600 meters. Smaller mountains surround them and contribute to a landscape that ranges from rolling hills to quite rugged terrain. The rest of Bosawas is rather flat.

A dense network of rivers, streams, and creeks flows down from the mountains out to the Atlantic Sea. Historically, the Amaka, Bocay, Coco, Lakus, Wina, and Waspuk Rivers formed the central axes of traditional indigenous settlements in the area. The name Bosawas itself, invented by Incer and his colleagues, takes the first letters of the Bocay River, the Saslaya Mountain, and the Waspuk River. The Coco River demarcates Nicaragua's northern border with Honduras. Both it and the Bocay River are navigable over long stretches. The climate gets wetter as you move east or go into higher elevations. Yearly rainfall averages 1,600 to 2,000 mm in the western areas, but rises to over 3,000 mm in some eastern areas and higher locations[3].

As of 1996, humid tropical broadleaf forest still covered 77% of Bosawas, with most of the remainder already converted to crops and pastures[4]. Together with the adjoining area on the Honduran side, this constitutes the largest remaining more or less continuous forest area in Central America. These forest still house a large percentage of the country's 2,500 tree species, including highly coveted species such as mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla),* royal cedar (*Cedrela odorata*), and "blond cedar" (*Carapa guianensis*). They also constitute the habitat for a diverse and colorful collection of animals, including jaguars, monkeys, deer, tapirs, crocodiles, parrots, toucans, and hawks.

About 250,000 people live in Bosawas, more or less equally divided between indigenous people and mestizos. Due to rapid in-migration, in recent years on average the mestizo population has grown 17% each year. Over two-thirds of them moved into the area after the end of Nicaragua's civil war in 1990 and most arrived after the 1991 Bosawas decree. Most mestizos settled in the south, along the Bocay, Iyas, and Wina Rivers. The only increase in the indigenous (Mayangna and Miskito) population comes from natural fertility, which amounts to some 3.5% yearly. The Mayangnas live chiefly to the north of the mestizos along the Waspuk, Lakus, Bambama, and Wawa Rivers as well as to the north of the mestizos on the Bocay River. Most Miskitos dwell along the banks of the Coco River[5]. Mestizo farmers have lain claim to the bulk of Bosawas' southern quarter, most of which is in Jinotega. Even though a great majority lacks 'valid' legal titles, their informal property rights carry a great deal of weight locally. These farmers grow corn, beans, and rice and raise cattle. Although at present, the region still has less than 2,000 heads of cattle, most mestizo farmers aspire to own more cattle in the future[6]. Some communities rely on logging for an important part of their income but reliable data on timber extraction are not available.

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Mayangna and Miskito households have much more diversified livelihood strategies. They grow a wider variety of crops including more plantains, tubers, and rice; they hunt and fish more; they harvest timber and they pan for gold. Although a few families own cattle, it plays a minor role in village life[7]. Outside loggers regularly enter the area, mostly looking for mahogany and cedar. In the Miskito areas along the Coco River, a large Dominican company practically monopolizes the timber trade. Sometimes it logs itself; more often it purchases timber from local farmers. Wealthy Nicaraguan timber merchants dominate the trade in most of the rest of Bosawas. They generally buy boards cut with chain saws from small farmers who live near the reserve and log inside it. On occasion, the merchants also hire their own logging crews or purchase wood from the reserve's inhabitants.

A Miskito kingdom, a forgotten hinterland, and a couple of wars

For most of their history, the indigenous people of what is now Bosawas largely governed themselves. Even under the colonial regime of the British, the British crowned a Miskito leader as king around 1680 and recognized the Mosquito Kingdom as the government of the Atlantic coast, acting under British rule[8]. After Nicaragua gained sovereignty over the region in 1860, the Nicaraguan government's only real attempt to govern the Atlantic coast occurred in 1894 when President Jose Santos Zelaya sent troops to occupy the region and created a new department called Zelaya. But in 1909, the United States government forced Zelaya out of office and for the next twenty-five years, the country was racked by civil war. Between 1928 and 1934, only the troops of Nicaraguan guerilla leader General Augusto Cesar Sandino maintained a regular presence in Bosawas. Under the Somoza regime (1934 to 1979), although

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the National Guard maintained a regular presence only on the Jinotega (mestizo) side of the present-day Bosawas Reserve, they met with fierce resistance in several locations.

When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979, the government's policy shifted from (not so benign) neglect to (perhaps even less benign) massive government presence on the Atlantic coast. The Sandinistas created dramatic improvements in education, health, and rural credit, however imposed many measures and authorities without taking into account the region's cultural characteristics. The Miskitos subsequently developed a militant ethnic consciousness and with other indigenous groups on the Atlantic coast began to demand regional autonomy. MISURASATA (Miskitos, Sumos, Ramas, and Sandinistas United), an indigenous organization formed just months after the Sandinistas came to power, gave political expression to these demands. The Sandinistas, however, jailed and harassed their leaders[9] and sought to repress the Miskitos generally, who had begun receiving arms, money, and training from the Reagan Administration in the United States. Within a few years practically the entire Miskito and Mayangna population, including those living in Bosawas, had fled to Honduras or been forcibly or voluntarily relocated to resettlement camps by the Nicaraguan government[10].

In the mid-1980s the Sandinistas sought to regain political support of these groups and offered the Atlantic coast's leaders major concessions, includng regional autonomy under the 1987 Atlantic Coast Regional Autonomy Law. The law established two separate autonomous regions (RAAN and RAAS), each with its own multi-ethnic government (CRAAN and CRAAS), and gave those governments substantial authority over their affairs. Together, the two regions covered an area of 57,000 square kilometers, 43% of the national territory. Of the 186,354 inhabitants of the RAAN, where Bosawas was to be located, 42% were mestizos (a large portion of whom lived in Siuna), 40% Miskitos, 10% Creoles, and 8% Mayangnas[11]. As part of this same process, the government recognized the communal property rights of the regions' villages over the 'lands, waters and forests that traditionally belonged to the communities'. According to the new law, communal property could not be sold, seized, or taxed. The government also acknowledged the communities' rights to 'use and enjoy the waters, forests, and communal lands for their own benefit'[12]. This reflected a broader concurrent trend in Latin America towards greater recognition of indigenous territorial rights[13]. A new Nicaraguan constitution promulgated by the Sandinistas in 1987 further strengthened the legal principles of regional autonomy and indigenous peoples' communal land rights.

The implicit deal was that TNC would support the indigenous peoples' rights to their territory and provide financial support for the fledging indigenous organizations as long as indigenous leaders adopted TNC's conservationist rhetoric and helped prepare management plans based on their traditional land uses and practices.

These and other reconciliation measures contributed to a more favorable atmosphere for negotiations between the Nicaraguan government and the insurgent Miskito organizations. (By then, MISURASATA had evolved into several separate factions, the largest of which was called Yatama.) By the time the government held the first regional elections in 1990, most of the indigenous population had returned to their villages. The mestizo portion of Bosawas followed a surprisingly similar path. The Sandinistas lost local support when they imposed controls on markets for food and basic manufactured goods and expropriated the farms of landholders with local ties[14]. The Reagan Administration exploited the growing discontent by supporting local armies, thereby setting off another cycle of insurgency and repression and transforming the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) or so-called 'contras',

Figure 2. A household in a Mayangna community in Bosawas *(Courtesy Ralph Buss)*

into a veritable peasant army. As the years passed, and a severe economic recession hit in 1987-88, the population became increasingly war worn and desperate and the Sandinista leadership again recognized they had to seek a negotiated solution. This culminated in the 1990 elections, where opposition candidate Violeta Barrios de Chamorro defeated Daniel Ortega, and shortly after assumed the presidency.

Under the Chamorro government, 22,000 former insurgents and their families were resettled in a number of 'development poles' and security zones[15], mostly near the agricultural frontier in the large expanses of unclaimed forest. These included Ayapal in Cua-Bocay and El Naranjo in Waslala, both near what would later become the Bosawas Reserve[16]. The government also resettled many of the tens of thousands of army officers and enlisted men in the frontier areas. A large number relocated in Siuna, particularly in El Hormiguero, adjacent to the reserve, taking advantage of the available land there[17].

The result was extremely problematic. In the early 1990s, Bosawas was full of heavily armed indigenous and mestizo ex-combatants. The regional government of the RAAN had significant legal authority over the region's natural resources, but little institutional capacity. The region's indigenous communities had never felt particularly attached to Nicaragua, nor received services from its government, and now had a constitution and an Autonomy Law that legitimated their rights over the territory. Several thousand indigenous combatants in the region had fought the Nicaraguan government to a standoff and returned to their villages with pride and a strong sense of independence. The mestizo farmers had fought a war of their own, on both sides of the barricades, for the right to command respect and determine their own destinies. The central government in Managua offered little in the way of schools, clinics, credit, or infrastructure; and was about to declare all these peoples' land a reserve for monkeys, parrots, trees, and foreign tourists.

To complicate matters further, Chamorro systematically undermined the autonomy process. The new president created a new quasi-ministry, the Institute for the Development of the Autonomous Regions (INDERENA) to implement policies in the autonomous regions. Her government avoided developing implementing regulations for the Autonomy Law and openly flaunted the Autonomy Law by naming regional delegates for its different ministries without regional government approval. For the first five years of its six-year term it also avoided demarcating and titling indigenous territories. Then, in 1996 it created a National Commission to Demarcate Indigenous Lands, with Swedish financing[18] in part a response to pressure from the Swedish Government and the CRAAN, and in part to identify non-indigenous public forest that could be sold as forest concessions.

Who rules Bosawas?

Even though the central government in Managua claims to govern Bosawas, anyone who actually *went* there might find that hard to

believe. For most of the 1990s, the army co-existed in Bosawas with several autonomous armed forces, each of whom established regulations, charged 'taxes', and imposed 'order' in the areas under its control. The Ministry of Environment's (MARENA) and Forestry Institute's (INAFOR) presence in Cua-Bocay, Waslala, and Wiwili consisted of a handful of unarmed local delegates, who preferred seeking opportunities for petty corruption than open confrontation with local armies[19]. As of 1999, the entire Bosawas Reserve had only 12 paid park guards and most of the Bosawas project's senior staff had their offices in Managua, several hundred kilometers from the zone[20].

On the ground, a variety of overlapping local authorities and individual producers made most decisions about who lived where, how much land they could claim, what they could produce, and how they could produce it. In the indigenous villages, governance was largely in the hands of the traditional indigenous authorities (council of elders, *sindicos*, and judges), the Yatama commanders, and church leaders. In the mestizo areas, municipal governments, community 'peace commissions', commanders of armed bands, priests, NGOs, the farmers union (UNAG), and donor projects with little connection to Managua were all important in different ways. These groups maintained a shifting set of alliances and used a complex mixture of financial, ideological, military, legal, organizational, and technical means to achieve their goals. Bonanza has an active natural resource commission and other municipalities have had them in the past. The NGOs and donor projects provide credit and technical assistance and get involved in local politics. Various groups give 'permits' to harvest timber and transport logs. While the central government has internationally recognized sovereignty over the Bosawas Reserve, these people actually 'possess' the area. If they want a mining company or a logging company out of their area, they usually managed to get rid of it. If there are conflicts between farmers or communities over boundaries, they resolve them.

Autonomy and indigenous territories in practice

The Bosawas Reserve got off to an inauspicious start. For the first two years the reserve's technical secretariat (SETAB) had practically no resources. In addition, "*the indigenous people felt that the designation of the reserve was a violation of their historical rights to their land*" and insisted that they manage the reserve themselves[21]. The reserve idea might have collapsed completely if it were not for the fact that TNC decided to seek a strategic alliance with the Mayangna and, to a lesser extent, Miskito Indians. The implicit deal was that TNC would support the indigenous peoples' rights to their territory and provide financial support for the fledging indigenous organizations as long as indigenous leaders adopted TNC's conservationist rhetoric and helped prepare management plans based on their traditional land uses and practices. Underlying this alliance was TNC's belief that the indigenous peoples' traditional livelihoods were compatible with conservation of the reserve and that the best way to protect those resources would be by helping the indigenous people defend their territorial rights against outside intruders.

Much effort to create protected areas focuses on central government policies and ignores issues of local governance. In Bosawas both indigenous and *mestizo* inhabitants and their leaders have created local governance systems far more powerful in the reserve than the central government.

TNC's efforts to strengthen indigenous territorial rights focused on: 1) participatory land use planning exercises that including mapping and preparation of management plans based on traditional practices and land uses; 2) legal assistance and lobbying to convince the Nicaraguan government to title indigenous territories; 3) technical and financial support for indigenous organizations; 4) support for voluntary patrols to monitor and dissuade intruders in indigenous

areas; and 5) assistance in establishing dialogues between indigenous organizations, Mayors, the CRAAN, the Parish of Siuna, the police, MARENA, GTZ, and the agrarian reform institute (INRA)[22]. TNC organized its activities around six separate – and partially artificial - indigenous territories. Geographically, the Bosawas Reserve and the indigenous territories did not fully coincide. The six proposed territories covered 6,239 square kilometers. The majority of this area fell within the Bosawas Reserve, but some did not. Similarly, parts of the reserve fell outside the six territories[23].

The Nicaraguan government reacted ambiguously to these initiatives. MARENA reportedly did not want to 'give up' its control over the reserve to indigenous authorities and was not convinced indigenous people would conserve the area's natural resources[24]. Despite this reluctance, TNC persistence and strong lobbying from the US Embassy eventually allowed it to make headway. By June 1996, SETAB had produced a set of general norms and conceptual principles for land use in Bosawas that recognized 'the claims of the Mayangna and Miskito ethnic groups over the lands they had historically occupied, based on the legal doctrine of the right of ancestral possession'[25]. Around that same time, MARENA, the CRAAN, the national territorial institute (INETER), the Attorney General's office, and community leaders all signed an agreement to support the demarcation and titling of the indigenous territories within Bosawas.

The complex negotiations that ensured were brought to an abrupt halt when in 1996 a World Bank study concluded that the laws regarding indigenous land rights were vague and contradictory and that Nicaragua needed a new law[26]. The Bank made their $US 7.5 million dollar donation for an Atlantic Biological Corridor project contingent on the drafting of a new law. In October 1998 President Aleman sent a draft law to the Assembly without consulting the main stakeholders on the Atlantic coast, who all considered it unacceptable. The World Bank then responded to pressure from indigenous organizations and their allies and insisted the government sponsor formal consultations. As of 2001, when this analysis was prepared, no titling had taken place.

The Mestizos 'devolve' power to themselves

By 1998, mestizo farmers occupied around one-quarter of the Bosawas Reserve and more farmers poured in each week. These farmers' production systems were less environmentally-friendly than those of their indigenous neighbors[27]. The central government and their foreign allies, helpless to prevent the mestizos' arrival, largely ignored it. This first became clear when the bilateral agencies and international NGOs decided where to work. Both GTZ and TNC concentrated on Bonanza, Siuna, and, to a lesser extent, Waspam. None of these municipalities had many mestizo farmers in the reserve, although Siuna had a large group outside the reserve that harvested timber there. The Germans stayed away from Cua-Bocay, Waslala, and Wiwili, the main focal points for mestizo entry into the reserve. They financed roadblocks to control illegal log shipments and invited the mayors to a few meetings, but little more. TNC surveyed the mestizo areas and worked for a while with one of the mestizo organizations in Ayapal around 1995. Then they left.

The reserve includes an autonomous and a non-autonomous region, five municipalities, six indigenous territories, an area in dispute between indigenous people and *mestizos*, and other areas of *mestizo* settlement. If one overlays on all this the areas of influence of the different ethnic groups, the armed bands, and powerful churches and donor projects one can sense the amazing complexity of power relations on the ground.

Initially, security considerations drove the decision to stay out of mestizo areas with active

agricultural frontiers inside the reserve. As noted earlier, the Army either could not or would not control the Northern Front 3-80 and its offshoots that operated there. GTZ, TNC, and MARENA personnel feared they would be killed or have their vehicles burnt if they entered the area. Howard (1997, p. 132) reports that when she did her research in 1995 the only two forest guards in the Bocay area '*stopped working after receiving death threats from Mestizo settlers*'.

Early on, TNC identified an area of 762 square kilometers, roughly 10% of Bosawas, which indigenous communities claimed but mestizo farmers occupied. Given all its other problems, TNC decided that to focus on these areas would be too conflictive and concentrated instead on the other indigenous territories. It hoped that if the first six territories received title it could shift to the more conflictive areas. As of 2001, this had yet to happen.

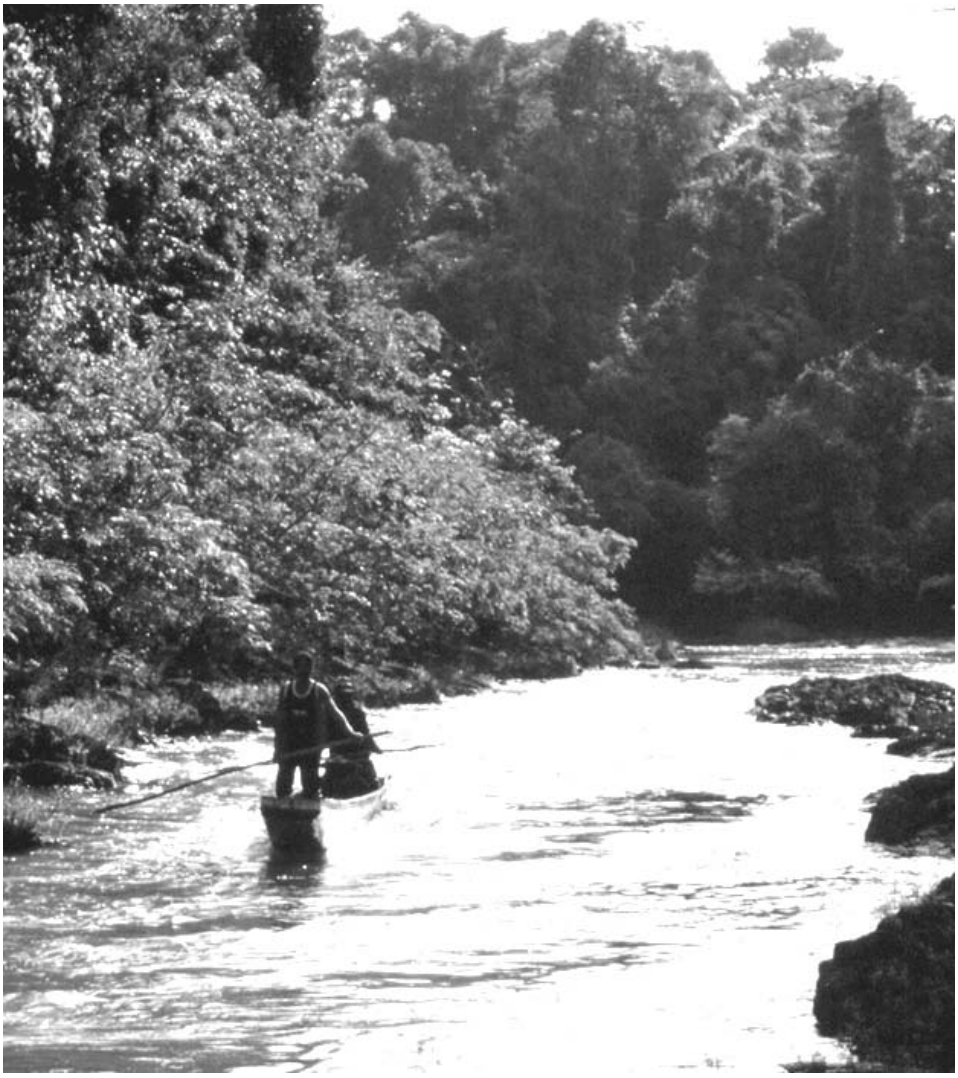

Figure 1. The river is very important for the Mayangna communities in Bosawas. *(Courtesy Ralph Buss)*

In mid-1997, a large portion of the Northern Front 3-80 supposedly disarmed after lengthy negotiations with the government[28]. Nevertheless, MARENA, GTZ, and TNC still did not move into the area because the local population was too hostile. Howard 1997 notes that of the 42 mestizo farmers she interviewed in Tunawalan, a village inside the reserve, only one supported the idea of a reserve. The rest either opposed it or did not know what it was. The agencies had nothing concrete to offer the mestizos.

Devolution from below

Much effort to create protected areas focuses on central government policies and ignores issues of local governance. In Bosawas both indigenous and mestizo inhabitants and their leaders have created local governance systems far more powerful in the reserve than the central government. They have derived their power from direct knowledge about and possession of the resources on the ground, the local legitimacy of their governance structures, the balance of military power, their organizational capacity, their ability to obtain favorable press coverage, and their alliances with international NGOs and national political parties. Indigenous communities and the residents of the RAAN can also appeal to legal arguments based on the 1987 Constitution and Autonomy Law.

A second interesting aspect of the Bosawas case is the overlapping nature of the governance structures, involving regional governments, municipal governments, indigenous territories, and the Bosawas Reserve itself. The

indigenous territories span various regions and municipalities and only portions of them are contained within the reserve. Similarly, the reserve includes an autonomous and a non-autonomous region, five municipalities, six indigenous territories, an area in dispute between indigenous people and mestizos, and other areas of mestizo settlement. If one overlays on all this the areas of influence of the different ethnic groups, the armed bands, and powerful churches and donor projects one can sense the amazing complexity of power relations on the ground.

Some proponents of local management commonly suppose that local groups' claims over forest resources and their local governance institutions are somehow inherently more just, legitimate, or environmentally-friendly than the rules imposed by the central government. The Bosawas case, however, lends only partial support to that idea. Strengthening Mayangna land rights and institutions probably would help conserve the forest and certainly would be more democratic than allowing other ethnic groups to completely dominate and marginalize them. This also applies to the Miskito Indians, although not as strongly. But even in these cases one cannot ignore the rampant corruption and undemocratic features common in many communities, nor the underlying tensions between the two groups. The argument is even less evident in the mestizo areas, where local control may lead to rapid ecological destruction and social differentiation, not to mention corruption and violence. Although centralized control may have equal or worse repercussions, appealing to or favoring "*the less of two evils*" is a weak foundation for sustainable development, conservation, or social justice. Thus, we argue that in most forested areas one confronts what Migdal (1988) refers to as '*strong societies and weak states*'. That is unlikely to change and must be the starting point for future discussion.

Some readers may shrug the Bosawas case off as a curious exception. Nicaragua is famous for its political instability and military conflicts and one might certainly question whether it represents a 'typical' case. Surely, central governments must not lack territorial presence and political hegemony in all heavily forested area and not all have free-roaming armed bands or other strong local authorities. As one looks across the humid tropics it quickly becomes apparent that situations where the central government lacks authority in forested areas are far more common than generally recognized. In many, though by no means all, of these situations, autonomous armed groups have sprung up to fill the vacuum. The Peten in Guatemala, the Colombian and Peruvian Amazon, South Para in Brazil, the two Congos, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, Burma, Aceh in Indonesia, Mindanao in the Philippines, Nagaland in India, and parts of Thailand appear to fit into this model. Even in countries with more apparent political stability, central governments often lack operative governance structures in forested regions, much less effective control. In these situations devolution must be understood not as a process through which governments hand over authority to local groups, but rather a means to try to gain some minimal authority in contexts where they traditionally have had none.

The same things that historically have allowed tropical humid forests to persist are those that have limited the political hegemony and authority of the central state.

There are, of course, exceptions; countries with 'strong states' in forested areas and well-meaning devolution policies that transfer authority from central governments to local actors. Many central government decisions regarding whether to place forest and mining concessions, dams, roads, troops, settlement projects, and even national parks have direct impacts on the ground. We would argue, however, that these are the exceptions; the rule is the contrary. The same things that historically have allowed tropical humid forests to persist are those that have limited the political hegemony and authority of the central state. If

efforts to protect forests on the ground lose sight of this fact, they will be little more than wishful thinking.

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Notes

1 Scott, 1998.
2 The Nature Conservancy, 1997.
3 GTZ/DED, 1992.
4 Anonymous, 1999.
5 Stocks, 1996.
6 Stocks, 1998.
7 Stocks, 1998.
8 Hale, 1994.
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14 Bendaña, 1991.
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Gouvernance des aires protégées—— l'importance des «normes pratiques» de régulation de la gestion locale pour la faisabilité des réformes dans le Bassin du Congo

Jean-Claude Nguinguiri

La gouvernance est aujourd'hui une notion très floue. Dans la définition normative donnée à ce concept par la Banque Mondiale vers la fin des années 1980, la gouvernance correspond à une situation idéale de bonne administration. C'est la raison pour laquelle elle est assortie d'un adjectif qualificatif - bonne gouvernance. Cette perception implique un changement de la "gouvernance" telle qu'elle est, vers la "gouvernance" telle qu'elle devrait être. Dans ce raisonnement, les aires protégées seraient aujourd'hui (tout comme les Etats africains) dans une situation soit "d'ingouvernabilité" soit de "sous administration" ne favorisant pas une gestion des ressources naturelles.

L'équipe chargée de gérer l'aire protégée se situe à l'interface d'un certain nombre de "mondes" .... Il y a le "monde des populations locales", le "monde de l'Administration des eaux et forêts", le "monde des donateurs et des bailleurs de fonds", le "monde des ONG", le "monde des grands groupes industrielles" qui exploitent le bois d'œuvre en périphérie de l'aire protégée...

Dans cette contribution, nous essayerons d'évaluer la faisabilité de la bonne gouvernance à partir d'une analyse des comportements des gestionnaires des aires protégées. Nous emprunterons pour cela, le modèle exploratoire proposé par Olivier de Sardan (2001). Ce modèle tente d'interpréter les comportements des agents publics comme renvoyant à des normes pratiques et non comme un simple écart par rapport aux normes officielles. On esquissera d'abord, l'image d'une aire protégée supposée faire l'objet d'une bonne gouvernance. Ensuite, nous opposerons à cette image les mécanismes concrets par lesquels les aires protégées sont gérées au quotidien. Enfin, les normes pratiques révélées par cette lecture nous permettrons de discuter de la faisabilité des pistes d'action privilégiées pour améliorer la gouvernance des aires protégées dans le Bassin du Congo.

Représentation normative de la gouvernance

L'idéologie de la "bonne gouvernance" a été à l'origine centrée sur la bonne administration publique à l'échelle nationale. Sa transposition du niveau national au niveau local se fait aisément, comme dans le cas de la gouvernance urbaine ou de la gouvernance d'une aire protégée. Certaines initiatives tentent aussi de "verdir la gouvernance" ou de conceptualiser la gouvernance environnementale. Au delà de ce schéma conceptuel, le design de bonne gouvernance d'une d'aire protégée répondrait aux caractéristiques suivantes:

1- Une politique de proximité qui insiste sur la décentralisation et le mode de gouvernement par délégation. Dans cette perspective, de la gestion des ressources naturelles est de mise. Une loi (comme la GELOSE - Gestion Locale Sécurisée des ressources naturelles renouvelables à Madagascar) précise les règles du jeu, définit les obligations et les devoirs de chaque partie prenante et veille à ce que la sécurisation de l'aire protégée n'entraîne pas l'insécurisation des populations locales, et vice versa. Un plan d'aménagement est élaboré et mis en exécution.

2- Une autorité dans laquelle chaque partie prenante se reconnaît veille au respect du cadre légal. Elle est représentative de tous les groupes d'intérêts, de tous les modes de représentations. Elle est non seulement légitime, elle est aussi légale. Elle respecte les lois en place et les fait respecter, s'il le faut au moyen de la force publique. La corruption ou les abus de pouvoir, qui caractérisent les rela-

tions de connivence entre braconniers et Conservateurs des aires protégées relèvent du passé; un code d'éthique est appliqué à la lettre.

3- La responsabilisation de toutes les parties prenantes est effective. Celles-ci participent à l'émergence d'une forme de citoyenneté locale en rapport avec un référent identitaire commun qui est l'aire protégée. Les populations locales et les autres groupes d'utilisateurs participent à la prise de décisions et à la répartition des coûts et des bénéfices de la conservation.

4- Toutes les parties prenantes ont accès à l'information disponible. Les lois sont vulgarisées, le plan d'aménagement est connu, bref, les parties prenantes savent où elles vont, comment elles vont procéder, quels résultats ont déjà été obtenus. En définitive, la transparence est totale.

Cette image "virtuelle" apparaît comme une vision; elle oriente les réformes de la gouvernance des aires protégées.

Figure 1: Chef Traditionnel, Nord du Cameroun. *(Courtoisie Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)*

La gouvernance des aires protégées au quotidien

L'aire protégée est considérée dans son acceptation normative, c'est à dire un espace classé avec des objectifs spécifiques de conservation des ressources naturelles et de développement durable. Elle est administrée par une équipe qui comprend des fonctionnaires (le Conservateur, les gardes forestiers, les éco-gardes, etc.), des Conseillers techniques affectés dans le cadre des projets de conservation/développement et parfois des bénévoles (ONG, Comité de gestion multipartite, Comité consultatif, etc.). Son fonctionnement est régie par des normes officielles (lois et règlements, plan d'aménagement, document de projet, règlement intérieur de l'aire protégée, etc.) qui sont appliquées dans un contexte caractérisé par:

La gouvernance des aires protégées est assez proche des résultats escomptés lorsque les normes pratiques sont produites en tenant compte des objectifs officiels mais aussi de la présence des autres "mondes".

- la diversité d'acteurs: autour d'une aire protégée plusieurs acteurs et groupes d'acteurs entrent en confrontation, chacun défend des intérêts particuliers;

- la pluralité des normes: normes officielles (étatiques) qui ne sont pas toujours claires, normes locales (dites traditionnelles), normes internationales (conventions), etc.;

- un empilement des centres de pouvoirs et des centres de décisions: le Conservateur, mais aussi le Chef de lignage propriétaire d'un territoire clanique situé à l'intérieur de l'aire protégée, le Chef du village riverain dont le terroir est recouvert par une partie de l'aire protégée, le Commandant de Gendarmerie, le Sous-Préfet, etc.

Dans ce paysage, l'Equipe chargée de gérer

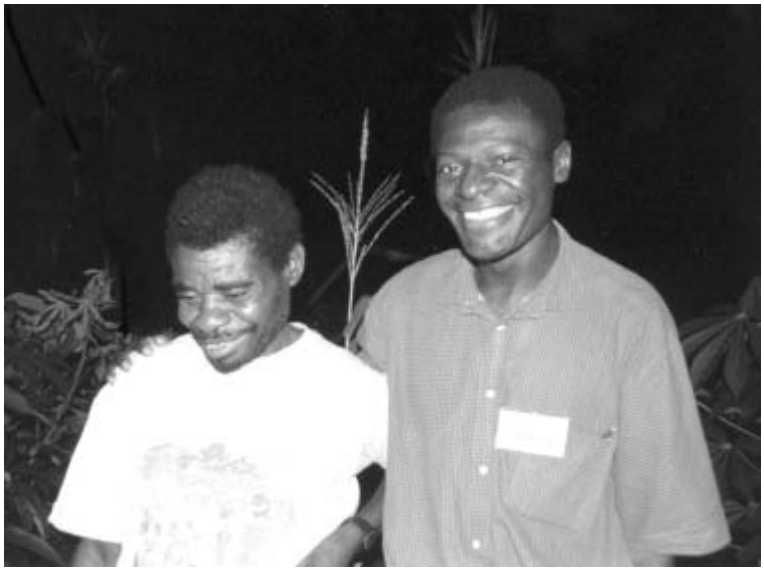


Figure 2: Les relations humaines sont un des éléments clés de la bonne gouvernance. *(Courtoisie Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)*

l'aire protégée se situe à l'interface d'un certain nombre de "mondes" ou mieux de configurations de représentations. Il y a le "monde des populations locales", le "monde de l'Administration des eaux et forêts", le "monde des donateurs et des bailleurs de fonds", le "monde des ONG", le "monde des grands groupes industrielles" qui exploitent le bois d'œuvre en périphérie de l'aire protégée, etc.

Dans un tel contexte, l'application des normes officielles ne dépend pas seulement du recours à l'autorité publique dont le Conservateur et ses collègues sont dépositaires. Au contraire, elle renvoie aux enjeux de pouvoir, c'est-à-dire à la capacité d'influer sur la décision des acteurs qui font partie des "autres mondes". Les résultats réels sont, dans ce cas, étroitement liés au "savoir faire" personnel de chaque membre de l'équipe de gestion, c'est-à-dire à l'art d'ajuster les éléments du modèle officiel au contexte local, bref aux normes pratiques, si l'on veut reprendre les termes de Olivier de Sardan (2001). Trois cas de figure vont nous permettre d'illustrer ces propos (voir schéma 1).

Le changement s'effectue par la capacité des acteurs à manipuler des systèmes différents de règles et à construire de nouvelles bases institutionnelles sans éliminer les anciennes.

Le premier cas de figure se rapporte aux gestionnaires des aires protégées qui se sont distingués par une conduite que l'on peut qualifier de consciente. Ils sont agents des Services des eaux et forêts, Conseillers techniques ou membres du Comité multipartite de gestion de l'aire protégée; ils ont eu le mérite de déployer des efforts particuliers pour faire appliquer les lois et règlements au pied de la lettre. Les observations menées au Congo et au Cameroun ont montré que ces individus finissent dans des conflits, d'abord avec leurs collègues qui les traitent de naïfs et ensuite avec les acteurs "des autres mondes". Humiliations et bien d'autres maux ont été affligés à ces gestionnaires "rigoureux". La position de victime dans laquelle se retrouvent ces gestionnaires, contribue à accroître la vulnérabilité de l'aire protégée et compromet ainsi les objectifs de "bonne gouvernance".

Les arrangements institutionnels (accords de gestion) ne sont appropriés par l'ensemble des parties prenantes que si le processus qui a permis de les générer a été "démocratique" et légitime.

Le second cas de figure se situe à l'opposé du premier. Il correspond à une situation caractérisée par des pratiques illicites liées à la mise en négociation des normes officielles par le Conservateur ou les éco-gardes. Les arrangements pratiques conclus ainsi entre braconniers et gestionnaires de l'aire protégée s'inscrivent dans le registre de la corruption. Ces comportements qui consistent à monnayer l'autorité publique dont les gestionnaires de l'aire protégée sont dépositaires vont à l'encontre des objectifs de "bonne gouvernance".

Le dernier cas de figure est lié aussi à une situation de mise en négociation des normes officielles par les éco-gardes ou le Conservateur, mais en veillant aux objectifs de la planification normative. En d'autres termes, ils essaient d'atteindre les objectifs poursuivis en manipulant les normes officielles et en consolidant leur pouvoir sur des nouvelles bases. Nous pouvons citer ici, l'exemple de ce Garde forestier qui au lieu de sanctionner le braconnier pris la main dans le sac, décide de fermer

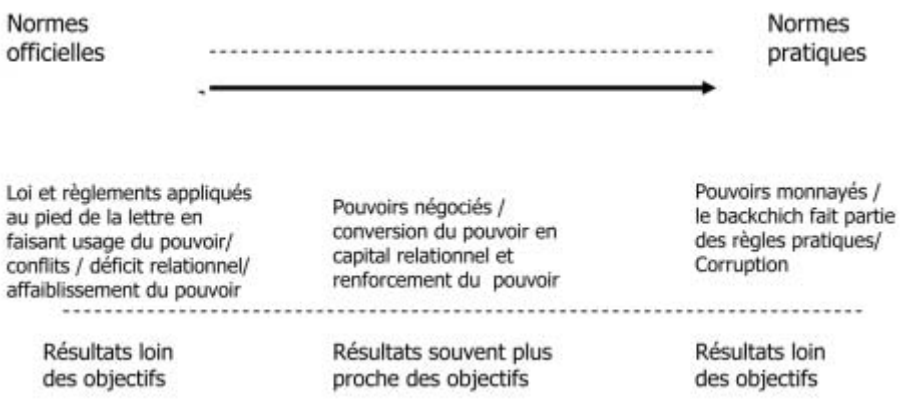
les yeux parce qu'il juge que la faute n'est pas aussi grave . Il privilégie un règlement à l'amiable et selon le principe de l'oralité. Il ne fait pas prévaloir ses pouvoirs, mais au contraire les met en négociation. En procédant ainsi, le Garde forestier convertit le pouvoir qu'il détient des normes officielles, en capital relationnel (recrutement des clients dans les "autres mondes") qu'il pourra ensuite mobiliser pour renforcer son pouvoir et donc pour atteindre les objectifs professionnels. Dans cette perspective, les cas d'humiliations cités précédemment sont la marque d'un déficit de capital relationnel.

La mise en place d'institutions de cogestion n'étant qu'une étape du processus, ces performances sont étroitement liées à la capacité personnelle des leaders à faire usage des règles pratiques dans un environnement incertain et fluctuant.

Dans ce registre d'échange généralisé de biens donnés et de service rendus, on peut citer d'autres exemples, comme le bon de carburant offert de temps en temps au Sous-préfet ou au Commandant de brigade, les indemnités payés aux autorités locales pour leur présence à la cérémonie d'ouverture d'un séminaire de formation des éco-gardes, ou encore l'implication des chefs locaux dans la désignation des futurs éco-gardes. Ces normes pratiques contribuent à l'insertion du Conservateur dans les réseaux sociaux existants et donc lui permettent d'acquérir plus de pouvoir que celui conféré par les normes officielles.

Ces trois cas de figure introduisent l'idée d'un continuum dans la lecture de la gouvernance. Les extrémités sont occupées respectivement par les normes officielles et par les normes pratiques. Le premier cas de figure correspond à une situation dans laquelle les normes pratiques se confondent aux normes officielles. Le second cas de figure renvoie à une situation caractérisée par des normes pratiques qui sont assez distinctes des normes officielles. Nous avons vu que les résultats réels en terme de gouvernance au sens normatif laissent à désirer dans l'un ou l'autre cas extrême. A l'inverse, il est apparu que la gouvernance des aires protégées est assez proche des résultats escomptés lorsque les normes pratiques sont produites en tenant compte des objectifs officiels mais aussi de la présence des autres "mondes". Ces effets, ainsi que la manière dont ils sont produits, nous rappellent les observations antérieures sur le changement des formes économiques et dans le domaine politique. Le changement s'effectue par la capacité des acteurs à manipuler des systèmes différents de règles et à construire de nouvelles bases institutionnelles sans éliminer les anciennes.

Schéma 1: La gouvernance des aires protégées. un continuum



L'analyse qui vient d'être faite montre que la gouvernance est un processus en construction permanente. Elle adhère ainsi à la définition de la gouvernance telle qu'elle est utilisée en sociologie politique et notamment à ses quatre propriétés.

1. la gouvernance n'est ni un système de règles ni une activité mais un processus;

2. la gouvernance n'est pas fondée sur la domination mais sur l'accommodement;

3. la gouvernance implique à la fois des acteurs privés et publics;

4. la gouvernance n'est pas formalisée et repose sur des interactions continues.

La compréhension de ces normes pratiques est capitale pour la réflexion sur la gouvernance des ressources naturelles.

Implications pour les réformes sur la gouvernance des aires protégées

La gouvernance des aires protégées dans les pays du bassin du Congo est au centre de plusieurs initiatives nationales et régionales faisant usage de la gestion participative . En termes d'action, cela renvoie à la création d'une nouvelle institution de gestion multipartite de l'aire protégée qui s'ajoutent aux institutions préexistantes. Toutefois, toutes ces initiatives ne partagent pas la même approche. D'une manière générale, on peut distinguer celles qui procèdent par une offre d'innovation institutionnelle de celles qui privilégient l'émergence d'arrangements institutionnels à partir d'une logique de négociation.

L'offre d'innovation institutionnelle est la pratique la plus courante. Elle est facile d'utilisation et consomme peu de temps et de ressources. D'une façon caricaturale, elle consiste à plaquer un modèle d'organisation élaboré par une agence d'appui (projet, bureau d'étude, consultants, etc.) sur la base des résultats d'enquêtes socio-économiques . L'application de ce modèle d'organisation se fait souvent en mettant en avant des incitations (promesses d'appuis multiformes) et parfois des menaces (conditionnalités). Des mécanismes de contrôle sont également mis en place. Contrairement au secteur forestier , on n'assiste pas encore dans les aires protégées, à la présence d'observateurs indépendants imposés par les institutions internationales pour garantir la bonne gouvernance.

Cette approche qui relève d'une logique technicienne prédispose les gestionnaires des aires protégées à appliquer les lois et les règlements tel qu'illustré dans le premier cas de figure analysé précédemment. Cette approche a permis, certes, de faire avancer les réformes dans certaines aires protégées et dans la gestion forestière , mais la question de l'appropriation (ownership) du processus de réformes par les parties prenantes n'est pas encore résolue.

La seconde approche privilégie une logique de renforcement des capacités des parties prenantes à construire leurs propres systèmes de gestion. Elle s'investit dans le processus de définition des règles par l'ensemble des parties prenantes et dans leurs capacités à les faire appliquer, les modifier au besoin et les adapter aux évolutions du contexte. En pratique, le cheminement suivi comprend trois phases : organiser le partenariat, négocier les plans et accords, et apprendre par l'action. Ensuite, il se poursuit dans le cadre d'un cycle d'apprentissage qui s'organise autour des deux dernières phases.

Cette dernière approche a été privilégiée sur un certain nombre sites . Il est apparu que les arrangements institutionnels (accords de gestion) ne sont appropriés par l'ensemble des parties prenantes que si le processus qui a permis de les générer a été "démocratique" et légitime. Cependant, l'efficacité de ces nouvelles institutions n'est pas garantie d'avance; les résultats sont plus intéressants lorsque le leader dispose des capacités personnelles de négociation d'une partie de ses pouvoirs avec les institutions préexistantes. Cela sous-entend que le leader bénéficie d'une marge de manœuvre lui permettant d'exprimer sa créativité. Ces conditions renvoient à l'aménagement d'un "espace d'anarchie" dans les arrangements institutionnels, si l'on veut reprendre l'expression de Borrini Feyerabend (1998). Cette approche correspond à la situation décrite dans le cas de figure 3.

Conclusion

Dans cette contribution, nous venons de montrer que les normes officielles, considérées isolement, ne peuvent pas garantir la gouvernance des aires protégées. La gouvernance, en

effet, ne se décrète pas. Au contraire, elle est la manifestation de l'usage syncrétique des règles officielles et des normes pratiques. Ces dernières ne peuvent être observées directement, mais sont reconstruites à partir de l'analyse des comportements qu'elles régissent. Ces comportements peuvent aller à l'encontre des objectifs attendus (cas de la corruption) tout comme ils peuvent produire des résultats proches de ces objectifs. Dans cette perspective, la connaissance de ces règles pratiques est indispensable pour la bonne gouvernance des aires protégées. Elle permet de cibler les règles pratiques sur lesquelles l'action peut être organisée et d'appréhender celles qui peuvent annihiler les effets de cette action.

Cette lecture a permis d'évaluer la faisabilité de la gestion participative des aires protégées, notamment des deux principaux chemins empruntés dans les initiatives en cours dans le bassin du Congo. Il est apparu que la gestion participative, perçue sous l'angle d'arrangements institutionnels façonnés par les parties prenantes peut permettre d'obtenir de bonnes performances. La mise en place d'institutions de cogestion n'étant qu'une étape du processus, ces performances sont étroitement liées à la capacité personnelle des leaders à faire usage des règles pratiques dans un environnement incertain et fluctuant.

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Notes

3 Expression empruntée à Peter Veit (1999), éditeur du n°2 du volume 6 de la revue Innovation (octobre 1999) qu'il a intitulé " Greening governance ".

4 Ribot, 1999.

5 On peut souligné ici la prépondérance du droit positif.

6 Il peut aussi décider de le sanctionner mais tout en s'arrangeant sur le montant de l'amende

7 Chauveau et Jul-Larsen, 2000.

8 cf. Smouts (1999)

9 Aucune initiative ne se réclame aujourd'hui de non participative.

10 On cherche à rendre participatif l'application d'un modèle " prescrit ".

11 Au Cameroun, notamment, le contrôle est assuré par une ONG (Global Witness) qui joue le rôle observateur indépendant dans les commissions d'attribution des titres d'exploitation forestière et dans le contrôle des opérations d'exploitation forestières.

12 Voir Brunner et Ekoko (2000) en ce qui concerne le secteur forestier au Cameroun, par exemple.

13 Karsenty, 2002.

14 Voir Borrini Feyerabend G. et al. (2000).

15 Conkouati et Lossi au Congo, Waza, Nta ali, Bomboko, etc. au Cameroun.

16 Entendre par leader ici, le coordonnateur ou les membres de l'organisation de gestion (ou comité mixte de gestion).

17 Au sens de " crafting institutions " (Ostrom, 1992).

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Injustice and conservation—— is "local support" necessary for sustainable protected areas?

Dan Brockington

Local support is not necessarily vital for the survival of protected areas. Conservation can be imposed despite local opposition and protected areas can flourish notwithstanding resistance to them. Rural poverty and injustice do not undermine the foundations of conservation. Indeed they can underpin them.

The thesis proposed here is that conservation can be imposed because the rural poor are weak, and resistance to conservation, though constant, may be ineffective [...] local groups can be ignored by protected areas and with impunity!

These are shocking ideas, unwelcome in many quarters. The new (and welcome) ideology is that the rural populations living around places of high wilderness and biodiversity must be encouraged, and supported to value these places as their own and desire their protection. Otherwise protected area policies will fail. By embracing these challenges conservation has acquired a human face. In doing so it has become firmly established in the range of development options facing rural people and governments.

Denying a current fundamental tenet of conservation may be unpopular. But doubts need to be voiced lest the ideology's unexamined repetition undermines the entire project. The argument proposed here is that conservation can be imposed because the rural poor are weak, and resistance to conservation, though constant, may be ineffective. We have to understand the forces that make conservation powerful if we are meaningfully to meet the needs of protected areas' neighbours and win their support for conservation.

I should declare my allegiances. I believe that the goals of community conservation deserve support but that its necessity for the success of conservation has been over-rated. Protected areas do not all require the backing of their neighbours in order to survive in the long run. Instead local groups can be ignored by protected areas and with impunity; ignoring them may make no long term threats to protected areas' security.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the reasoning behind this argument, to present data which have informed this thinking and the limitations to generalising from this experience. First I will examine the vigour of ideas insisting on the requirement of local support for protected area's survival. Second I will outline the circumstances in which local opposition may not matter. Third I will discuss one case study, the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania, which illustrates the contingency of opposition. Finally I will discuss the consequences of this argument for the practice of community conservation.

Power, inequality, resistance and the "principle of local support"

The importance of local support for the survival of protected areas has been expressed in the strongest terms. David Western writes that "*a fallacy of protectionism is that we can ignore costs locally*"[1]. Ed Barrow and Christo Fabricius state that *"[u]ltimately, conservation and protected areas in contemporary Africa must either contribute to national and local livelihoods, or fail in their biodiversity goals*"[2]. Adrian Phillips, when asked to name one key lesson to be gleaned out of interactions between protected areas and their neighbours found the answer "*very simple*", it was "*the iron rule that no protected area can succeed for long in the teeth of local opposition*"[3].

Opponents of community conservation may vigorously deny the effectiveness of development programmes in achieving conservation's goals ...[but]...they do not provide a challenge to the "principle of local support" i.e. the belief that local support is necessary for protected areas to be sustainable.

In this essay I will call this idea 'the principle of local support'. It is a principle to which there is little

Figure 1. A resident in the vicinity of Bwindi National Park (Uganda) *(Courtesy Richard Nuwasasira)*

opposition. Sceptics of community conservation may vigorously deny the effectiveness of development programmes in achieving conservation's goals[4]. They urge conservationists to continue to preserve nature as they did when protected areas first flourished, to not get side-tracked into development. But in their frustration over the challenges to protected areas they do not provide a challenge to the principle of local support. Indeed many admit the importance of winning local people to the cause, preferring education programmes, and perhaps some benefit sharing, to the more radical measures of community empowerment in conservation.

Nor is the principle challenged in social scientists' criticisms of community conservation. Observers of the CAMPFIRE project in Zimbabwe have found flaws in the project's intent that wildlife revenues will encourage local people to treasure wildlife. They have found that people's expectations of development meant that they wanted wilderness to be tamed, the wildlife to withdraw, more people to come in, and the tangible benefits of development and modernity to be made available. Denser settlements meant better shops and more services[5]. This is a possible consequence of participatory approaches, namely that people who do not value the existence of wild fauna and floras are empowered to rejectthem. But the principle that local support is needed for conservation measures is not challenged. Rather the difficulty of winning support and changing values is emphasised.

Indeed the principle of local support seems precisely the sort of idea which ought not to be challenged. If protected areas perpetrate injustices by meting out inequality, poverty, homelessness and rootlessness on their neighbours, should they "get away with it"? Questioning the necessity of community empowerment in conservation may appear to deny it as a moral imperative. On what grounds can it be challenged?

The nub of the argument is this. The local communities that oppose the existence and policies of their neighbouring protected areas tend to be relatively weak. They can face powerful alliances of central and local government, the police, park guards and paramilitary units, and national and international NGOs raising money and awareness for the cause of the protected areas. These are contests that the rural communities may be ill-equipped to win. Asserting the "necessity" of their co-operation simply ignores the realities of power. Weak actors can be ignored.

To put it another way, there are countless examples throughout history of inequalities and injustices being perpetrated and perpetuated despite resistance to them, and despite the opposition and hatred they generated. The Roman Empire was not brought down by its slaves, enclosure in England was not prevented by the people who lost their rights to the commons, nor were the iniquities of England's factory system overturned by a workers' revolt. Indigenous peoples in Latin America, North America and Australia have been removed from their lands, discriminated against and violently treated for hundreds of years. Why should the injustices perpetrated by conservation be any different?

Numerous responses are possible to this argument, which I will summarise below. But I feel that none suffice to refute it. I will deal with two weak and two strong objections below.

The first weak objection is that the examples I have offered above are simply invalid. It is outrageous even to suggest that the establishment

of protected areas, which is a right and proper cause, could be compared to the ills of slavery; this invidious comparison does not deserve consideration. But this argument does not deal with the point made here. Slavery and conservation have occasioned misery on different scales, but the point I raise is whether the consequences of this misery will be visited upon the perpetrators. Indeed, the fact that societies can get away with perpetrating such severe injustices as slavery strengthens my argument. Why should they not get away with perpetrating milder injustices imposed in the name of conservation?

A second objection is that the importance of equitable development is not just found in conservation circles. It is common in all of sustainable development. Many experts from all sorts of disciplines constantly reiterate that inequity is unsustainable, and the search for a more sustainable planet must involve a search for a more equitable world. But does this common link with sustainable development defend the principle of local support or incriminate it further? Sustainable development is a ridiculously broad notion, meaning all things to all people. It is hardly a useful analytical tool. For reasons I find hard to understand, the mantras of equality rarely acknowledge the fact that inequality is inevitable in our economies. All economies are divided between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour. Without that fundamental inequality they could not function. It was the economies aspiring to socialism, those trying to establish themselves on a more equitable basis, which proved unsustainable. When people talk about limiting inequality they are really asking how much can be kept, not trying to do away with it altogether.

Adherents of the principle of local support make two more substantial challenges. First, they object that the alliances described above– of governments, enforcement agencies and international support – are weak and fickle. Their strength has never been denied, but it has proven too unreliable too often to form the basis of a credible conservation policy. The history of national parks is replete with examples of paper parks for which there is little government support, where there is no enforcement of the conservation law and about which the international community has forgotten. Local groups will have their way in these places, often to the detriment of conservation. Oppression now will therefore just store up trouble for the future.

Figure 2. Urban squatters in Brazil have often lost their land in the country, for a variety of reasons. *(Courtesy Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)*

This cannot be denied, but nor is it the complete story. Just as there are failures there are also successes, places where the alliances which have sustained fortress conservation have persisted for a long time. Our theories of power and local resistance must be able to incorporate both. Where things have broken down it is wrong to assume that the resulting damage to the protected area is entirely locally driven or locally endorsed. Much serious elephant and rhino poaching in Africa is driven by international gangs not local people. Locals may be disinclined to resist them, but this may be because they are violent and heavily armed as much as because

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of popular opposition to the protected area. Further, breakdown of the state alliance does not necessarily mean the irreversible destruction of a protected area. Nature's resilience can provide some cushion; there are many examples of restored Reserves which have been saved from the brink of disaster and restored to new life.

In short this response does not quite meet the point I am making. The argument is not that all protected areas' neighbours can be ignored with impunity. Rather it is wrong to assume that doing so will *necessarily* be unsustainable. We will need to look at the circumstances and politics of oppression and resistance to understand how resistance arises, whether or not it mounts a credible threat to protected areas, and the conditions under which it could.

The second objection posed by the principle of local support is that even where the alliance between the government, the guards and the international community remains strong it is not equipped to guard against the seething mass of resentment of numerous hostile neighbours. These conflicts will not be expressed so much in direct confrontations, but rather in the 'weapons of the weak', in the numerous opportunities to express their opposition on the landscape, flora or fauna of the protected areas through acts of vandalism and sabotage[6]. Few systems of oppression and surveillance are sufficient totally to extinguish these weapons. And around protected areas their expression can mean the slaughter of valued animals, attacks on tourists, fires and mass disobedience that are simply beyond the ability of the state and its international allies to control. The archetype here is the opposition to Amboseli National Park, described by David Western, where local Maasai herdsmen expressed their opposition to conservation measures through the large-scale slaughter of wildlife[7]. In the face of such disturbing violence it may seem downright perverse, to put it kindly, to suggest that local people can be ignored.

As before, this is sound reasoning, but again before we draw our conclusions on the basis of this experience we must consider more carefully how local resistance to a specific park came to be so united and focused. What were the politics of this relationship, and what might have made it unusual? What were the factors that allowed people near Amboseli to find common cause in their opposition to the Park, and to overcome all the divisions and diversity found in 'communities'? We cannot assume that opposition will always be so united. Rather I suggest the opposite: that it is in the divisions and diversity within protected areas' neighbours that the means to a political alliance in support of conservation may be found.

Fortress conservation will be strong not despite the misfortune it causes, but because of the way in which this is misfortune is *distributed* amongst its neighbours. This can be seen in the case of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, in north-eastern Tanzania which demonstrates this mix of power and injustice.

All societies distribute misfortune unequally, the least powerful people tending to experience it most. Misfortunes inflicted by protected areas may be concentrated upon a minority, who in their weakness and want of numbers will be unable to do anything effective about it. In such situations, even if the protected area generates few benefits, the unaffected majority may be able to ignore the ill effects of its presence. Fortress conservation will be strong not despite the misfortune it causes, but because of the way in which this is misfortune is *distributed* amongst its neighbours. This can be seen in the case of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, in north-eastern Tanzania which demonstrates this mix of power and injustice. Mkomazi is noteworthy because it illustrates the two-fold exclusion of people, materially and symbolically, because of the patent injustices involved and because of the failure of local resistance to these policies and the contrasting success of fortress conservation policies[8]. It provides an interesting counterpoint to Amboseli particularly because it is located quite close to it and involves some of the same ethnic groups.

Mkomazi – a conservation fortress

Mkomazi borders Kenya and the Tsavo National Park[9] (Map 1). It is valuable for its diversity of vegetation, birds and insects, its beautiful landscapes of hill and plain, and for the wet season dispersal it provides to large mammals from Tsavo[10]. In conservation circles Mkomazi is famous because it is a black rhino sanctuary (set up in the late 1990s) and for a wild dog breeding programme established a few years earlier. It is also well known as a place where space has been won back for Nature from increasing human presence. It is celebrated as a fragile wilderness that was once threatened with destruction by people but has now been restored[11].

Myths are powerful. They guide and structure our world views. In Bourdieu's words, they 'obtain belief'. Myths shape our thoughts and interventions, they determine our interpretations about what is wrong with the world and what needs to be done about it. Myths are, in short, incredibly influential. Indeed policies with things as powerful as myths behind them may be bound to succeed

But with the success story there exists a story of deprivation. Mkomazi is also known for the several thousand pastoralists who were turned out of the Reserve in the late 1980s. The consequences of the evictions were severe on pastoral livelihoods and the regional livestock economy. Milk yields and stock performance are low compared to pastoralists elsewhere, average herd size crashed, and livestock markets lost considerable business. The effects have been felt especially by women, whose income-earning activities are now required to feed families once sustained by livestock sales. Court cases were launched to contest the evictions but they were unsuccessful.

Fortress conservation policies preserve not just wilderness, but also a dream of Africa, and in the process they reproduce and sustain its supporters…

The Reserve has a long history of human residence. When it was first established in 1951 several hundred pastoralists and their stock were allowed to continue living in it in recognition of their traditional presence. But the government, both before and after independence, was always uneasy about the consequences of these herders' presence on the environment. After herders' and livestock numbers drastically increased evictions were ordered because officials felt that they were causing degradation and desertification.

There are good grounds to dispute the inevitability of degradation caused by livestock in semi-arid environments like Mkomazi[12]. The relationship between cattle and vegetation change is far from clear, but suggests much more resilience than has hitherto been supposed. Compromises that could accommodate people's needs, and allow some use of some of the Reserve, could still be reached.

But there has been little need to do so. The politics of the Reserve mitigate against compromise. On the one hand the ethnic groups who make up most of the pastoralists (Maa-speaking Parakuyo and Maasai) are a minority in the area. The Reserve, which is generally dry, makes for excellent pasture but is not so suitable for agriculture. Although more than 50,000 people live within a days walk of the Reserve, families without stock have been less severely affected by the evictions and have not felt the need vigorously to oppose them. This is despite the fact that there are no tourist hotels at the Reserve and it therefore earns almost no revenue. Indeed some of the more numerous groups in the area resent the pastoralists' presence. The pastoral NGOs working with the evictees did not link with these other groups.

On the other hand the alliance of international interests and the state at Mkomazi have had no cause to negotiate with the evictees. Instead there has been an extraordinary process of erasure and diminishment of evicted pastoralists. At one point the fund-raising literature of the Trusts supporting the conservation of Mkomazi claimed that the people evicted from Mkomazi were not indigenous to the area[13]. In other literature the

needs of the Reserve's neighbours and the vital importance of projects such as primary and secondary schools, are highlighted, but the costs of the evictions are not mentioned. There is no assessment of whether the gains offered by school support match the losses to livelihoods and cattle markets.

Indeed to some extent the success of the international programme and the marginalisation of the herders are interdependent. Mkomazi's restoration was in part facilitated by the herders' marginalisation. When the rhino sanctuary was first planned, two South African rhino specialists concluded that

Figure 3. A family in the heart of Conkouati National Park (Congo Brazzaville)—allowed to stay, for now. *(Courtesy Christian Chatelain).*

"*There appears to be limited resentment towards the Mkomazi Game Reserve by the Msaai [sic], as they were well aware that their permission to graze within the reserve was only a temporary one (Harrie Simons and Truus Nicolson pers. comm.) ... it would appear that the introduction of black rhino into the MGR would be ... little affected by the limited to dwindling negative feelings towards the reserve by surrounding communities.*" [14]

The nonsense of this assessment is apparent from the fact that it was written just three months after aggrieved pastoralists met with lawyers to prepare their court cases, claiming rights to Mkomazi and compensation. When concern over the move of South African rhino to Mkomazi resurfaced in 1998 the Tanzanian government was able to allay South African fears by assuring worried conservationists that the court cases brought against the government were from "*a group of Maasai who originally came from Kenya*"[15]. This was not true. But the international presence of Mkomazi's conservation success was well served by the absence on the ground, and in people's imagination, of its former residents.

There are many injustices which remain unsolved in the world. The daily abuses of structural power and inequality wreak unanswered havoc on the lives of millions of people every day. The belief that oppression and injustice is inherently unsustainable is [not only] ahistorical… [it is] also apolitical, and indeed naïve

The point is that the misfortune caused by conservation policies at Mkomazi has been visited upon people who are marginal to Mkomazi's local, national and international politics. In such circumstances it is possible for conservation policies which cause impoverishment and injustice to survive. Indeed they thrive. Mkomazi is now a considerable "conservation success story".

Conclusion

What is the significance of this case for the debate about community empowerment in conservation? I suggest that there are four lessons.

First, writings by conservation progressives appear to suggest that injustice is inherently unsustainable. In doing so they attribute too much power to weak rural communities. They overlook some of the ways in which fortress conservation can be successful, and the way in which oppression works. For example Stuart Marks wrote that:

"*The romantic vision of keeping Africa as an unchanged paradise teeming with wildlife is a foreign nonsense, for to ask East Africa to perpetuate such an image is to ask it to stay poor and undeveloped.*" [16]

But does this mean that poverty will cause the

vision to fail? If the poverty is unequally experienced, and if the benefits are experienced by elites at home and abroad, then the vision has a good chance of success. East Africa is not one unit with the sentience to accept or reject protected areas. It is profoundly divided. The distribution of misfortune and benefit from protected areas is therefore vital to conservation's prospects in the region.

Similarly Jonathon Adams and Thomas McShane argued that a more realistic understanding of Africa's history and the role of people in its landscapes is necessary because they believe that "*conservation based on myth is bound to fail*"[17]. But why should projects fail because they are historically wrong? If they can generate money, gain the support of foreign and political elites and widespread public sympathy ('global' opinion), then these provide enough grounding for their success.

Indeed there is a double meaning to the word 'myth' which makes it even more unlikely that policies based on myth will fail. Myths can refer to ideas which are simply and totally wrong. But myths are also powerful. They guide and structure our world views. In Bourdieu's words, they 'obtain belief'[18]. Myths shape our thoughts and interventions, they determine our interpretations about what is wrong with the world and what needs to be done about it. Myths are, in short, incredibly influential. Indeed policies with things as powerful as myths behind them may be bound to succeed[19].

Citing 'unsustainable inequality' as the motivation for community conservation is limited. It does not adequately engage the causes of the inequality nor the ethical dilemmas involved.

The idea of wilderness and wild Africa is an example of this power[20]. The wilderness myth is powerful because it invokes ideas of pristineness, purity, unspoilt origins, a time when the world was not marred by people. When fund-raising literature for Mkomazi invokes an image of a wilderness restored to its former glory (and implicitly or explicitly writes people out of the Reserve's history) it does not matter that the account may be a poor reflection of the area's recent history or people's place there. It works because it invokes a Great Idea, it responds to a powerful need in the West, and it raises money that can make the idea a reality. This sort of literature, and the great mass of novels, coffee-table picture books, films and popular literature that Adams and McShane were attacking, live in symbiosis with the protected areas they describe. Each shelters the other. Fortress conservation policies preserve not just wilderness, but also a dream of Africa, and in the process they reproduce and sustain its supporters[21].

Adams and McShane called for people to pay attention to the realities of the world in which conservation works and to understand the facts, histories and processes which are really operating and with which conservation has to deal in order to succeed. I would endorse their call, but add that one of these realities is the power of myth. The inequalities that accompany conservation policies may not threaten conservation areas if there are myths to sustain them.

Second, the presence of social injustice perpetrated by conservation does not mean that, automatically, these injustices will be rectified and conservation values suffer as a result. It is perhaps in our human nature to absorb abuse as much as it is to challenge it. There are after all many injustices which remain unsolved in the world. The daily abuses of structural power and inequality wreak unanswered havoc on the lives of millions of people every day.

The belief that oppression and injustice is inherently unsustainable is ahistorical. There are many examples when justice has won out – such as the ending of slavery, the successes of the US civil rights movement, the ending of apartheid. But we cannot conclude that these causes were successful because they were right. This would not only be ahistorical, but also apolitical, and indeed naive. Where such change occurs it is not always the struggles of the oppressed which drive it. The abolition of international African slavery was brought on by the moral decisions of English politicians, not the battles of slaves. Nor can we assume that progress is permanent,

as the re-occurrence of slavery shows. The battle for civil rights in the States had been pursued for a long time before concessions were won, and even then these were vulnerable to a renewed white backlash[22].

The point is not to accept that these just causes were successful, but to ask how and why, to establish what configuration of circumstances lead to these changes. If conservationists are to challenge inequality and injustice then this will require a pro-active engagement with the political, social and economic forces that cause and reproduce them. Citing 'unsustainable inequality' as the motivation for community conservation is limited. It does not adequately engage the causes of the inequality nor the ethical dilemmas involved.

The social injustices of conservation do not become tolerable if they cease to hinder conservation. The iron rule does exist, but it is a moral necessity, rather than a practical problem. [...] We will have to insist that social injustices are addressed because they are unjust, not because they are inconvenient.

The social injustices of conservation do not become tolerable if they cease to hinder conservation[23]. Adrian Phillips'iron rule does exist, but it is a moral, not merely a practical necessity. This is the third point. The statements endorsing the principle of local support quoted at the start of the paper were all pragmatic. They argued that we have to take the principle of local support seriously or lose that which we value as conservationists. But this stance means that the imperative to reform is lost should conservation values not be threatened by injustice. It would be possible for these statements to be interpreted to mean that we can worry less about injustice if it does not impede our goals. I doubt this is their authors' intention. We will have, therefore, to insist that these social injustices are addressed because they are unjust, not because they are inconvenient.

Fourth, and most importantly, is the practical lesson drawn from this discussion. The politics of inclusion, participation, and distribution of conservation benefits will be similar to the politics of distributing conservation's costs and misfortunes. Both will consist, in John Lonsdale's words, of peoples' attempts "*to deflect the costs ... onto their fellows and to appropriate its benefits as their own*"[24]. Community empowerment for conservation may even consist of a myriad of marginalisations and inequalities enforced on smaller and smaller scales. Men and large animals might be included but women and the products they value may be left out[25]. Local government is empowered – but only to district level and not to ward level[26]. Inequality, injustice and exclusion will be inherent in the solutions to larger scale injustices that protected areas have imposed. There is no way out of them. This is what participation entails. The challenge, therefore, is to understand who will win and who will lose from whatever solutions conservation offers.

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Notes

1 (Western 2001: 202)

2 (Barrow and Fabricius 2002: 78)

3 (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* 2002: 11)

4 (Kramer *et al.* 1997; Struhsaker 1998)

5 (Alexander and McGregor 2000)

6 (Scott 1985; Neumann 1998)

7 (Western 1994)

8 This summary is principally based on the following: (Homewood *et al.* 1997; Kiwasila and Homewood 1999; Brockington 2001; 2002)

9 The Reserve is technically composed of two Reserves – the Umba Game Reserve in the east, and the Mkomazi Game Reserve in the west – and is properly known as the Mkomazi/Umba Game Reserves. Both are commonly called 'Mkomazi', but the distinction between the two is important. I shall refer to the two halves as 'east' and 'west'.

10 (Coe *et al.* 1999)

11 (Watson 1991)

12 (Brockington and Homewood 2001)

[13] The main organisations involved are the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust registered in the UK, and its sister trust in the USA the Tony Fitzjohn/George Adamson African Wildlife Preservation Trust. There are also supporting groups registered in Germany and Holland.

[14] (Knight and Morkel 1994: 6-7). An updated version of Knight and Morkel's report has since appeared (– see http//www.georgeadamson.org /projects/mkomazi/rhino/1994/sanctuaryassessment.htm viewed 13th February 2003). It was written sometime (at least 2 years) after the weaknesses of the original had been pointed out. Curiously, however, the new version is just dated 'June 1994 – updated version'. This revised version corrects some of the spelling mistakes of the section quoted above and makes the source of these ideas clear. But it repeats the statement that the introduction of black rhino into the Reserve will be 'Little affected by the limited to dwindling negative feelings towards the reserve by surrounding communities.' I doubt whether negative feelings to the Reserve are limited to dwindling. They were certainly not dwindling while the court cases were in progress between 1994 and 1999. But my argument is that Knight and Morkel could have made their case more aggressively. Even if there is strong and active resentment to the rhino reintroductions, this will not pose a significant threat to the rhinos' security. This has proved the case so far, and the animals' re-introduction has served to strengthen the government's support for the Reserve and its sanctuary. .

[15] (Koch 1997: 109)

[16] (Marks 1984: 130)

[17] (Adams and McShane 1992: 245)

[18] (Bourdieu 1998)

[19] The phrase is Stephen Tuck's.

[20] (Anderson and Grove 1987; Cronon 1995)

[21] (Brockington 2002)

[22] (Tuck 2001)

[23] (Brown and Kothari 2002)

[24] (Berman and Lonsdale 1992: 71)

[25] (Sullivan 2000)

[26] (Murombedzi 2001)

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Mobile pastoralism in West Asia—myths, challenges and a whole set of loaded questions...

M. Taghi Farvar

Despite important differences in climate, culture and contemporary political history, pastoral communities in Asia still have much in common. These communities include the *"kuchi"* of Afghanistan, the *"ilaat-o-ashayer"* of Iran, many tribal peoples of Pakistan and Anatolia, the *Bedouin* of the Arab regions of West Asia and hundreds of other tribes in Mongolia and Central Asia. In Iran alone there are some 700 nomadic pastoral tribes totalling some 200,000 tentholds (households) that qualify as nomadic pastoralists according to the following conditions:[1]

Having a common territory and recognisable rangeland zones for their seasonal migration;

Possessing a social structure consisting of typical tribal levels of organisation;

Each member of the tribe being conscious of his or her place within this system and having a feeling of belonging to it;

Having a cultural domain common to each major tribal grouping, and

Reliance on more or less traditional migratory animal husbandry as a main mode of subsistence.

Attitudes towards nomadic pastoralists differ widely. During the Pahlavi regime in Iran (1921-1979) there was an irresolvable enmity between the state and the nomadic pastoral peoples. The entire two decades of rule of Reza Shah, and over two-thirds of the reign of his son Mohammed Reza Shah were spent at war and conflict with the tribes. While Reza Shah's main weapon for sedentarisation of nomads was brute military suppression, his son was more clever, employing a mental alienating system of mobile schools with an urban curriculum in Persian (a language most of the tribal populations did not know), coupled with physical alienation from rangelands—the very base of pastoralists' subsistence and economic strength—through the nationalisation of natural resources. The disdain for tribal peoples was replaced with admiration and moral and even material support during the time of the late Imam Khomeini who called them the "reserves" of the revolution, and referred to them in his political will as the fourth branch of the armed forces of Iran (on a par with the Army, the Revolutionary Guards and the Police). This brief period of exaltation, however, was soon replaced by single-minded—and equally unsuccessful—renewed attempts to sedentarise and control the nomadic pastoralists. The mental and physical alienation methods employed by the Pahlavis continued and at times intensified under the Islamic regime. With the encouragement of the World Bank, a dual policy of support (with subsidies and services) and a relentless effort at sedentarisation has been the main government policy for years. With variations regarding means and intensity of efforts, sedentarisation has been promoted, among other countries, also in Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.

Figure 1. The Qashqai women accompanying their tents and belongings in their seasonal migration. *(Courtesy Ali Aghili)*

Myths

Myths and misunderstandings concerning nomadic pastoralism abound, at times with a touch of schizophrenic attitude. On the one

hand, the culture of nomadism is exalted and praised to epic proportions. Films and TV series play on the virtues of the *Ashayer* (Iran) and the *Bedouin* (Arab countries). The local languages are full of proverbs and epic stories of the simple, honourable, hospitable, valiant, gallant, tough and indomitable *Bedou* or *Ashayeri*. On the other hand, they are considered by many, and certainly by the administrative branches of government, to be backwards, out of place, uncontrollable, eking out a miserable living out of meagre and marginal resources of the degraded rangelands, for the deplorable condition of which they are held responsible. The nature conservation establishments hold the pastoralists and their animals, especially their goats and camels, to be the enemies of wildlife, and the departments of range management in the ministries of agriculture usually think the nomads are overgrazing their land. The planning departments' staff is constantly alienating their lands and deploring that they do not settle down to "benefit" from nationally designed programmes such as schooling and human and animal health services. Some of these prevalent myths will be examined below from the perspective of the greater West Asian region.

Throughout West Asia and the Sudano-Sahelian region, a system of community conserved areas of both range and woodlands has been practiced by nomadic pastoralists from time immemorial. Such systems—which are known to pre-date Islam and are sanctioned by it—are called *hema* (from the Arabic word *hemaya*= conservation or protection), *mahmiyya* (conserved area), *mahjar* (protected area marked by stone border marks) and qoroq (exclosure in Turkish and Persian), and have an associated set of customary laws regarding community benefits, responsibilities and sanctions.

Myth 1: Pastoralism is an archaic form of production not adapted to modernity

This is simply not true in West Asia. The rangelands are seasonally productive and need to be grazed seasonally. Many experiments to settle nomadic pastoralists have resulted in disaster because the environment of the rangelands is not suitable for animal production on a sedentary basis. Many valuable breeds of animals are possessed and maintained by nomads which would not survive a settled life. At times this myth is based on a bias for modern amenities such as electric lights, television sets and telephones. In fact, advances in technology have now made these claims themselves to be outdated and not adapted to modernity, as modern amenities are all available in portable versions. For instance:

Figure 2. A Qashqai elder in Iran *(Courtesy CENESTA)*

In Mongolia and Iran experiments with the provision of solar energy through the use of portable photovoltaic equipment has made it possible for students to have electric lights to do their homework, and for adults to receive visitors after sunset without having to settle for dim lights. An effective alternative is also paraffin (kerosene) fuel lamps.

Liquid gas in bottles, same as those available in towns, has been made available to nomadic pastoralists in Iran through programmes that have established distribution networks and local storage points. Training of nomadic pastoralist women for use of gas-burning equipment, including safety training, has made it possible for this system to be met with enthusiasm.

Mobile refrigeration run by solar panels has been available for a long time for health centres, for example to store vaccines for human and livestock, thanks to the development of 12 volt systems.

Television is now available relatively easily, and

the coverage for many TV stations is constantly improving. In some regions satellite TV has started to be more commonly available in nomadic tents and houses.

Myth 2: Mobility is inherently bad

This great myth of our region has been created by government sponsored propaganda, formal school systems with urbanised teachers, false modernisation and misinformation.[2] It is taught in nomadic schools, planning ministries and bought and spread by "first generation sedentarised" folks, who, like first generation immigrants, do their best to get away from their origins and their past. A recent session with a mobile primary school group of students in Iran showed these tribal youngsters (and their teachers) had developed great disdain and contempt for their parents' way of life. Every one of the students wanted to become a pilot, doctor, engineer or lawyer. When asked who would then do animal husbandry and agriculture for the country and their region, they responded: "*These occupations are for the dumb and the stupid! We are educated.*" This is the ethos of a society that has gone through a forced transition, to the point of internalising the ideology of the more powerful oppressive system.[3]

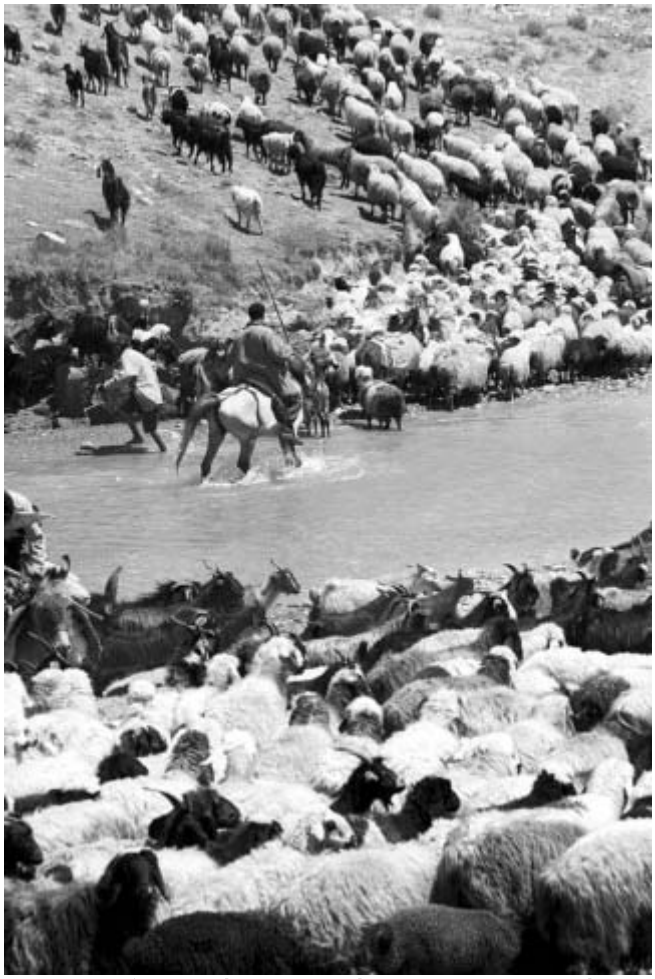

Figure 3. Nomadic pastoralist men crossing the river at a natural ford with their flocks. *(Courtesy Ali Aghili)*

Myth 3: All conflicts are caused by pastoralists

In fact most conflicts are caused by the fact that sedentary rural populations, the private sector and government moved into the land traditionally owned and used by pastoralists. "Protected areas" have been set up without consulting them, military bases and oil and gas extraction or refining outfits have been placed in the middle of their pastoral routes, roads have been crisscrossing the same routes without regard to the need of passage for the animals and the inevitable accidents going to be caused, housing developments have been set up as if urban people were going to use them, and so on. A thousand impediments exist to nomadic lifestyles simply because planners are usually sedentary people who do not understand the mobile peoples and their needs. In addition, when conflict happens, instead of the traditional systems of conflict resolution, the police and urban courts (usually well linked to settled people) are now called in as arbitrators. Their judgements often leave the pastoral nomads spellbound, as their rights are stripped away without any meaningful recourse to remedial action.

The old systems were based on a complex understanding of the ecosystems and their varying carrying capacity coupled with a fine-tuned opportunistic approach to using available resources in micro-environments, and moving away from them before they are destroyed.

Myth 4: Rangelands are degraded because of over-stocking and overpopulation

The very concept of degradation of rangelands has been called into question by modern range

ecology and management schools. If there is one feature that sets out the traditional *ashayer, bedouin or kuchis* from the rest of the crowd, it is their superb and meticulous ability to use the rangeland resources sustainably and maintain their productivity and biological diversity. As an example, in the Bahmaee tribe of south-western Iran, it has been documented that the clan elders have had a system of range management that has worked like clockworks. Following scouting information ahead of the season of migration, the elders do an accurate assessment of the carrying capacity of the range expected to welcome them and decide the size and composition of the flocks that it can nourish. The size of the human population to follow the flocks is determined by the labour needs for the flocks, starting with one woman per 35 lactating ovine (sheep and goat) population. For each woman, of course, a number of children and male members of the tenthold and camp are needed to service the grazing and protection of the whole flock. Among the Qashqai pastoralists, sophisticated manoeuvres have been planned and carried out to cope with seasonal climatic variation (droughts, abundant rainfall) and equally sophisticated marketing decisions are made in the summering grounds—based on the expected carrying capacity of the rangelands in the wintering grounds during the following season. The Lurs of the Zagros Mountain range have had elaborate techniques of rangeland rehabilitation including reseeding with wild germplasm and manuring, using both ovine and human power.

Can we help nomadic pastoralists mitigate the impact of the climate change upon them by allowing them to regain access to the entirety of their migratory landscapes, including the special ecological niches and buffer zones so important for the functioning of their overall livelihood and management strategies?

Throughout West Asia and the Sudano-Sahelian region, a system of community conserved areas of both range and woodlands has been practiced by nomadic pastoralists from time immemorial. Such systems—which are known to pre-date Islam and are sanctioned by it—are called *hema* (from the Arabic word *hemaya=* conservation or protection), *mahmiyya* (conserved area), *mahjar* (protected area marked by stone border marks) and *qoroq* (exclosure in Turkish and Persian), and have an associated set of customary laws regarding community benefits, responsibilities and sanctions.

The landscapes under the use of the nomadic pastoral groupings (Camps, Lineage Groups, Clans, Subtribes and Tribes) include their wintering and summering grounds as well as the migratory paths in between. Under traditional management, there are special areas used only in time of severe climatic stress or special conditions, wetlands of crucial importance, etc. In their original indigenous form, the total landscape of each tribal group is well qualified to be considered a Protected Landscape according to IUCN Category V.

As for population growth, this is not an issue for the pastoralists in the west Asian region. Following a long standing pattern, as a pastoral population grows beyond the carrying capacity of the rangelands that support them, the excess population stays behind, or gets into what the late Nader Afshar has called "nomads on the waiting list" until the climate and carrying capacity improve. These people busy themselves with handicrafts, grain production, seasonal wage labour, etc., waiting for their turn to travel. If the population increases beyond the overall absorptive capacity of the region, the excess population migrates more permanently into other zones and pursues different livelihoods. Some believe that most of the villages and urban civilisations of West Asia developed this way. The statistics about the number of migratory pastoralists, where available, seem to confirm this fact. In Iran, while the percentage of nomadic pastoralists in the country has steadily declined from at least a quarter of the total population a century ago to some 2% today, their absolute number has remained dynamically constant, ranging between some 1.2 to 2.5 million depending on climatic and political factors. This is estimated to be the real carrying capacity of

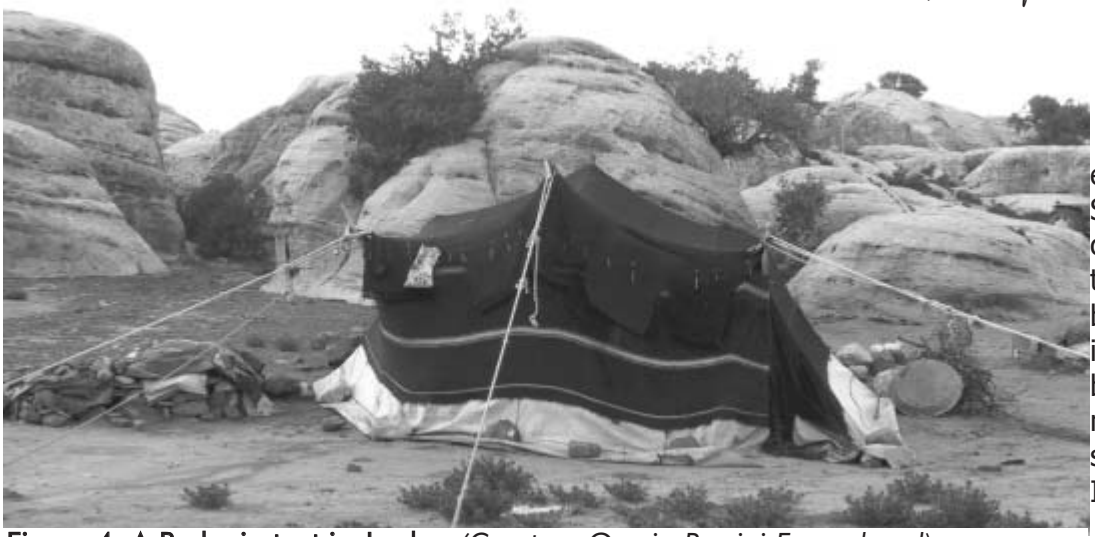

Figure 4. A Bedouin tent in Jordan *(Courtesy Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)*

the rangelands of the country. This marvellous self regulation of nomadic pastoralism in the region renders any advocacy of policies for population or even flock reduction in the rangelands of this region devoid of any grounding in objective data.

Myth 5: Pastoral production has very low productivity

By almost all standards, rangelands are considered generally best suited for animal raising, and a nomadic lifestyle renders the highest possible productivity in the region, averaging between 1/3 and 3/4 of livestock productions in given countries. Where other livelihood and land tenure systems are substituted to nomadic pastoralism, it is usually by groups with political power in the country. Examples of the latter include the sedentary landlords of Iran. At the time of the land reforms of the 1960s, they took advantage of a loophole in the law exempting "mechanised lands" from being distributed. They ploughed up marginally productive rangelands in order to lay claim to them. In the Iranian Province of Fars alone some 20% of the rangelands were lost to this loophole. This trick is actually known even outside Asia. In Sudan powerful politicians mechanised huge tracks of land that belonged to the pastoralists of eastern Sudan to bring them under very marginally productive staple grain cultivation. In most cases, they abandoned a heavily degraded land after a few growing seasons and moved on to other areas. This same land, under a pastoralist production system, was highly productive for longhorn cattle and camels, including some of the most expensive racing breeds that fetch extremely high value in export.

Now that many governments have experienced the futility and tragedy of taking away lands from the careful management of nomadic pastoralism, can they decide to reverse their nationalisation policies, give back the rights and ownership of land to the tribal groups on a common-property basis, and make them responsible again for its maintenance and sustainable use?

Myth 6: Pastoralists have to settle down in order to benefit from modern services

This is one of the most baseless allegations, and experiences amply show the contrary. In Iran, a system of mobile schools using tents and trained teachers recruited from the nomadic tribes has operated with success for nearly a half-a-century and achieved high educational standards. Many of the graduates of these tent schools have gone on to higher education and today occupy places of prestige in government, politics, education, literature, academia, medicine, engineering, law, the arts, and private services.[4] The now-pervasive national system of *behvarz* (front line rural health workers) had its first pilot experience among the Qashqai pastoralists in the early 1970s. Mobile veterinary assistants in Iran and Afghanistan have been trained and supported by the government and universities (Iran) and NGOs (Afghanistan). Likewise, work in support of mobile handicrafts (such as the highly valued wool rugs, carpets and kilims) has been carried out in many areas.

Myth 7: Pastoralism destroys biodiversity and leads to desertification

Far from being a destroyer of biodiversity, pastoralist range management systems are a *pre-*

requisite of biodiversity. Most range that does not receive the benefits of livestock stomping, gentle ploughing, browsing, seed spreading and fertilisation will turn into lower biodiversity wooded shrub land.[5] The highly diverse vegetation of the rangelands of the region has evolved together with the livestock and land management systems of the pastoralists. The sophisticated techniques of using scouting and early warning systems to predict droughts, take preventive measures and adopt coping strategies are well known among the nomadic pastoralists of the region. In fact, pastoralists value much more highly than either villagers or urban folks the biological and genetic diversity of their landscape. Most know by name and properties every single botanical species and can give long descriptions of their medicinal, food, feed and industrial properties for animals and people, as well as their place in the ecosystem. They have developed irreplaceable techniques of habitat management and rangeland rehabilitation for maintaining the diversity of the bio-ecological systems. Their lifestyle has made them understand the ways of nature. Under their indigenous management systems, the cutting of living trees, other than in extreme need and with sustainable use in mind, would be considered a cardinal sin. Only fallen and dried or sick trees or parts of the branches the removal of which does not harm them would be considered legitimate uses. Sustainable use of non-timber products (gums, medicinal and veterinary plants, vegetable dyes, mushrooms and other edible herbs and fruits) are relied on for subsistence and only occasional commerce. Literally every nomadic pastoral woman, man and youngster can recount with fascination the ways and habits of the wildlife in their territories, and their love of nature and its diversity. Undisturbed, their hunting habits have preserved wildlife for centuries. The *hema* systems are intended to protect the health and sustainability of the ecological systems on which they depend. The pastoralists are, in short, practicing ecologists who understand sustainable use and environmental protection better than many modern ecologists and conservationists. A survey of pastoral tribes in what was before South Yemen by an FAO consultant in the early 1990s showed that most of the elders of the tribes considered it a pity that the *mahjar* system had been abolished by the Socialist Government, and believed this to be the major contributor to the degradation of the rangelands in their territories. They favoured the re-establishment of this powerful traditional tool for the conservation and sustainable use of rangeland resources.

Given the success of the traditional pastoral systems in the conservation of landscape and species biodiversity of the rangelands, can we learn from their experience and help them re-establish and manage community conserved areas and, where necessary and feasible, co-manage with the government and others specific areas for biodiversity conservation?

Myth 8: Pastoralists do not take care of the land because of the "Tragedy of the Commons"

I nearly get sick hearing again this concept, so much abused and wrongly applied. When Garrett Hardin introduced this notion he meant the tragedy of lands and resources under open access, which is the opposite of the well functioning common property systems the pastoralists usually have in place. Pastoral common property systems are shared by a limited community of users and governed by an extensive set of rules, customary laws and sanctions, excluding non-user communities except under strict procedures. Tribal elders will judge very severely any intrusion and damage to community rangelands, woodlands and water resources, and punish the violators with everything from deprivation from sugar quotas (a serious deprivation indeed for the hospitable tea- or coffee-drinking nomads!) to community imprisonment and public shame.

Myth 9: Pastoralists are poor, in ill health and food insecure

Studies by researchers (such as at the University of Tehran) have shown very low helminthic parasitism (some 10% infection rates

Box 1. RESTORING VITALITY OF NOMADIC PASTORALISM— Livelihoods, nature conservation and cultural identity

The Qashqai nomadic pastoralists have realised that to organise themselves for reversing the dominant trends leading to their disappearance, they need to re-habilitate their historic social organisations, albeit in a civil society mode. This is the case with the Kuhi Subtribe, and they plan to spread the approach to the rest of their kinfolk in the larger tribe.

With the support of the Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA), a national NGO in Iran, and enabling help of the Organisation for Nomadic Pastoralists (ONP, a government institution), a landscape was selected as a natural resource management unit comprising the summering and wintering grounds of the Kuhi nomadic pastoralists, and their associated migration routes in between. The Kuhi are one of about 20 sub-tribes of the Shish Bayli Tribe of the Qashqais. With the sponsorship of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), IUCN/CEESP's Working Group on Sustainable Livelihoods, and FAO (interested, among other things, in coping strategies of nomadic pastoralists in the face of drought), the Kuhi subtribe started a participatory action research project on sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation.

Figure 5. The Kuhi people and their community-conserved wetland. *(Courtesy Ahmadreza Siapoush)*

Several participatory planning workshops were held between January and August 2003. The first concern was to involve the whole community. For this, the approach of problem identification and analysis with group exercises was selected. The problems thus identified by the community were grouped by them and the groups were prioritised. The obtained priority list determined quite rapidly some major action by the sub-tribe. One of the major problems identified was the breakdown of the traditional organisational strength of the tribes. For this to be remedied, they decided to analyse their governance situation in some depth. It was recognised that the top levels of organisation and leadership of the tribe were decimated by previous governments. The task was thus to recreate these levels of organisation in a manner that would be able to respond to modern challenges, including notions of participatory democracy. The highest level of tribal organisation that still existed and was functional was the *oba* (or camp), consisting of a number of tentholds migrating and living together. A joint team from CENESTA and trusted leaders from the subtribe went around from *oba* to *oba* consulting them on whom they considered to be their leader(s) at the level of each *bonku* (clan). Leaders acceptable to the *obas* in each *bonku* were thus identified and records were taken to provide a point of reference in case of dispute about the legitimacy of the process. Around 60 leaders from the 14 clans of the *Kuhi* subtribe were then gathered in a workshop to decide the leadership structure of the subtribe. It only took a day for them to settle on who should be the 14 representatives (elders) for as many clans, and a further 14 were selected as alternates. In March of 2003, for the first time since the Pahlavi Regime started to decimate the tribal organisation, a Council of the Kuhi Subtribe was born in the tribal wintering township of Farrashband in the province of Fars.

Early April saw another development, the elaboration of the bylaws for the Subtribe and the election of the leadership committee of the Council. It was decided that the Subtribe would create a parallel structure named "Sustainable Livelihoods Fund for Kuhi Nomadic Pastoralist." The membership of the Fund deliberately excludes those households in the tribe who are considered sedentarised. Sayyaad Soltani was elected unanimously to head the "Council for Sustainable Livelihoods of the Kuhi Migratory Pastoralists" and its associated Community Investment Fund. A Deputy-Chief, Executive Director, Treasurer, and Secretary were also elected.

Preliminary project plans were also pursued for a number of initiatives in each of the 5 categories of problems/needs of the Subtribe referred to earlier. Some of these initiatives include:

1. A project to supply supplementary feed to pregnant and lactating ewes (the term includes both sheep and goats). Expected benefits include lower miscarriage rates, higher twinning and double pregnancies (spring and autumn);

2. A project to empower women to take charge of the supply of wool and natural dyes for their rugs, *gabbehs* and other much appreciated handicrafts as well as the marketing of these products domestically, and ultimately internationally.

3. A project to streamline access to health care of the best quality in the Province using a referral service and female community health volunteers;

4. A project for participatory development of appropriate designs for solar equipment for use of the mobile tribal tentholds, including solar water heaters, dryers, solar electricity and solar cookers;

5. A project to establish a tribal legal support service with three functions: a) elaboration and legalisation of customary laws for the management and use of natural resources, especially rangelands, forests, wildlife and water supply; b) legal education; and c) legal aid;

6. A project to set up a mobile library of books and video programmes of an educational nature for all age and gender groups in the subtribe.

7. Restoring the natural resources of the tribe to common property ownership/control. One such unique opportunity is the Chahar-Tang e Kushk-i Zar wetland, extending some 9 kilometres in length, shared between the Kuhi and the Kolahli subtribes. This area has been a community conserved wetland from time immemorial. The Kuhi realise they obtain many "ecosystem benefits" from this wetland, including water reserves, reeds for handicrafts and tent making, fish, medicinal plants, micro-climate control, and wildlife. The government had earmarked part of the area in a controversial plan to be divided up among households for agricultural use. The Subtribe thinks it is better to preserve this area as a *"qorukh"* or *"hema"*—a community conserved area. A petition has been submitted to the relevant governmental authorities to formally declare the wetland and the surrounding rangelands as a community conserved area with use rights being regulated by the elders. In terms of IUCN categories, the overall CCA could be considered as a category V, with the wetland as a portion under category II (key objective of ecosystem management).

This project is showing important ways in which nomadic livelihoods can fully reconcile with conservation. Both can thrive together.

for ascaris and other intestinal parasites) in nomadic pastoralists in the areas where settled village populations suffered from 90% prevalence. Mobile pastoral populations rarely suffer from ecto-parasites such as the hair or bed lice and ticks that afflict settled villagers. They enjoy a higher standard of hygiene, especially in the summering grounds where fresh water from mountain springs and wetlands is plentiful. They usually take baths with warmed up water or stream water at least once a week, a high standard with respect to rural practice. Pastoralists also enjoy richer diets in terms of protein (mostly from the dairy products at their disposal), stored foods (using high protein dried buttermilk, grains and pulses and dried vegetables), as well as fresh mushrooms, wild fruits and berries and herbs most of the year, as they are always in areas of greener nature. Their mobile lifestyle protects them from such diseases of settled people as heart problems and hypertension. A study by WHO of the impact of cholesterol-rich diets in the 1960s showed that the nomadic pastoralists of Somalia, who had the world's highest consumption rates for cholesterol in their diet, had virtually no incidence of heart attacks thanks to their nomadic lifestyle. On the contrary, hypertension, heart diseases, nervous problems and even high rates of suicide among women are common afflictions among sedentarised pastoralists.

Most pastoralists keep their wealth in livestock for the household and gold and jewellery for their women. These represent their mobile capital and savings accounts. Pastoral women are nearly always elegantly dressed and possess a large wardrobe of expensive clothes. If pastoralists are protected from encroachment and intrusion from outside, they can have rich and healthy lives.

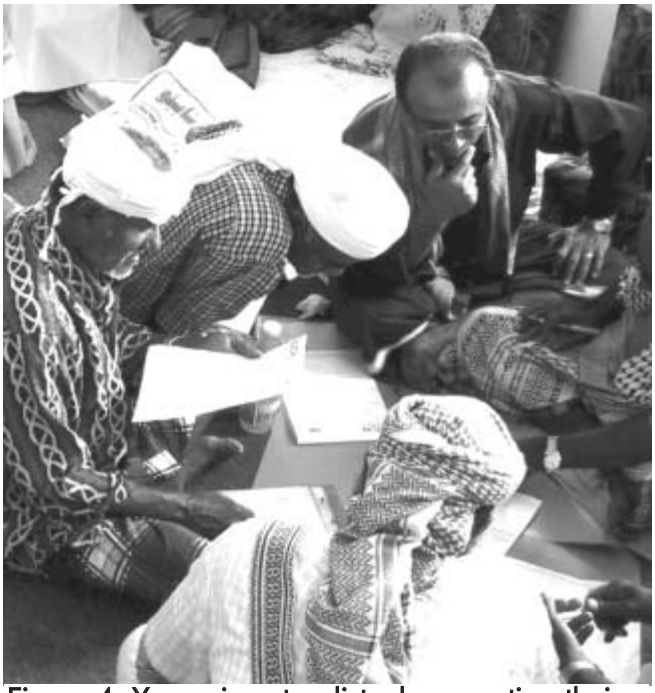

Figure 4: Yemeni pastoralists documenting their natural resource management system *(Courtesy Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)*

Myth 10: Pastoralists overgraze their land

It is now well known that most drylands are non-equilibrium ecosystems (not least because of unreliable and highly variable seasonal and annual rainfall) requiring a different kind of management than equilibrium ecosystems. This concept, however, is relatively recent and has revolutionised the thinking and practice of range management and ecology in the past couple of decades. The conventional carrying capacity calculation for rangelands—too often still practiced—is no longer scientifically valid. The traditional practices of the nomadic pastoralists themselves are finally understood as much more technically correct than the calculations of conventional range management experts. In some countries, the single most important negative impact on the ecological health of the rangelands is related to the nationalisation of rangelands and their ensuing control by technocrats and bureaucrats. The old systems were based on a complex understanding of the ecosystems and their varying carrying capacity coupled with a fine-tuned opportunistic approach to using available resources in micro-environments, and moving away from them before they are destroyed. A good deal of research in specific local situations is still needed to better understand the ecology and responses of the drylands in this region, as most of the research has been made in other environments, such as African dry lands.

Challenges

This brief exploration of some pervasive myths about nomadic pastoralism leaves us to assess the opportunities and constraints faced by sustainable pastoral development. The questions outlined below spell out such challenges while offering a vision of a hopeful future. Bold new initiatives are needed to take up the challenge of helping pastoralism survive and do well in the region. In some places these initiatives are already proving themselves in practice (see Box 1).

Livelihoods

When supported by enabling national policies, the mobile pastoral systems can provide for sustainable livelihoods, well adapted to the social, political, economic and ecological realities of drylands. The determinant questions, in fact, are:

Can state governments abandon once and for all the policies of persecution, discrimination, alienation, oppression and deprivation from the most fundamental human rights of mobile peoples?

Can they recognise the achievements of pastoralists and their contribution to national economies, food security, sustainable use of marginal lands, conservation of biological diversity and health and conservation of natural resources and protected areas? Can they recognise their sophisticated management capacity and their right to cultural identity, which enriches the national bio-cultural diversity?

Can we integrate in what we understand as democracy some innovative styles of governance based on decisions by consensus and on preserving the integrity of the community?

Can they take much needed action to have supportive and protective policies for a segment of the population that produces much and demands little?

Can pastoralists be perceived as whole communities, rather than atomised individuals, and

can such communities be involved in the planning of their own development, the provision of services, the management of finance for investment and credit, and others?

Can we all recognise the uniqueness of the pastoral mode of production as a legitimate way of life and attempt to improve the conditions of life of these communities?

Can we all learn from the experience of nomadic pastoral societies in coping with uncertainty, risk, survival, and conservation of nature?

Poverty reduction strategies

Pastoral communities have their own systems of social organisation. Most poverty eradication programmes, being externally inspired, if not imposed, are individually oriented, such as the micro-enterprise and micro-credit schemes. These innovations can result in the weakening and atomisation of the pastoral community. They should always be preceded by a prior empowerment of the nomadic pastoral tribes as whole communities and by support to their endogenous organisation to take charge of managing their own investment and credit programmes. There are endogenous examples of community organisation for sustainable livelihoods based on the pastoral tribes' own traditions, which avoid imported models such as "associations", "cooperatives" and "micro-finance schemes". Can we learn from these endogenous experiences (such as the one illustrated in Box 1, above)?

Advancing climate change

Time and again pastoral nomads have survived droughts and other environmental disasters. They have managed to keep the integrity of their tribal organisation and have benefited from the uniting and mobilising influence of the traditional elders. Can we learn from these experiences and strengthen the nomadic communities and their traditional and indigenous knowledge of coping with these challenges? Can we help nomadic pastoralists mitigate the impact of the climate change upon them by allowing them to regain access to the entirety of their migratory landscapes, including the special ecological niches and buffer zones so important for the functioning of their overall livelihood and management strategies?

Figure 6. Man and lamb in Iran *(Courtesy Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend)*

Key legal issues

The most important factor in the revival and strengthening of pastoral systems is likely to be the rediscovery and full understanding of customary laws regarding the management of natural resources (range, forest, wetland, water, wildlife and their management). Can we help pastoralists to study and record their own customary laws? Can we organise to have formal recognition of these systems? Can we learn from the experience of some West African countries that have passed quite progressive and empowering pastoral laws (*"Codes pastorales"*) that recognise the primacy of the rights of pastoral people over the legitimacy of their traditional systems of communal property and access to natural resources? Now that many governments have experienced the futility and tragedy of taking away lands from the careful management of nomadic pastoralism, can they decide to reverse their nationalisation policies, give back the rights and ownership of land to the tribal groups on a common-property basis, and make them responsible again for its maintenance and

sustainable use? Can the states confide the management of conflicts over natural resources back to the traditional systems that demonstrated themselves to be more effective and honest than modern court and police systems?

Social and economic services

Much has been learned in terms of effective and efficient ways of providing mobile services of all kinds (health, schooling, veterinary care, marketing, information systems, etc.) to the nomadic populations. This knowledge, however, is often not shared and not even brought to bear in national—let alone regional—practice. Will it be possible to envisage a regional initiative in each pastoral region of the world and mutual learning linkages among regions around a series of demonstration/ learning sites and including ways to provide basic services?

Conservation

Given the success of the traditional pastoral systems in the conservation of landscape and species biodiversity of the rangelands, can we learn from their experience and help them re-establish and manage community conserved areas and, where necessary and feasible, co-manage with the government and others specific areas for biodiversity conservation?

Participatory democracy

Unlike what some believe, traditional systems can be internally democratic and change according to fair processes. Today, as in the past, tribal chiefs can be selected and/or impeached by lower ranking popular community elders. Can new governance systems of nomadic pastoralists be rooted on their traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices? Can their re-enabled community organisations be entrusted as key decision-makers and agents for their own livelihoods and sustainable development? Can we all graduate from the imposition of western democratic systems in traditional societies? Can we stop imposing the alienating tyranny of the majority or, in fact, the tyranny of those with money to buy publicity and votes? Can we integrate in what we understand as democracy some innovative styles of governance based on decisions by consensus and on preserving the integrity of the community? Can we learn from community-based governance systems about how to render more meaningful and participatory the governance system of the rest of society?

Can decentralisation mean anything other than extending the interfering arm of the central government to the outlying areas? Can state governments devolve authority and responsibility to the communities and their endogenous organisations rather than imposing top-down governance models? Can state governments balance this with re-centralised representation of empowered community organisations—"rebuilding the top" on a logical extension of the structures at the base?

The answers provided, or not provided, to the questions above will spell out much of the future for the nomadic pastoralists in West Asia, the integrity of their living landscapes and the wealth of dryland biodiversity in the region.

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Notes

1 Put forth by the Iranian Organisation for Nomadic Pastoralists Affairs (ONPA).

2 At times royalty from colonialist countries have affected the attitudes. Prince Phillip of the UK, for example, is reported to have admonished the presence of "unseemly" nomadic pastoralists in or near the protected areas of southern Iran in the 1970, when he was looked up to by Iran's royal family as the source of inspiration for anti-people conservation programmes (Colonel Beizai, D.G. of DOE in Fars Province, personal communication, 1974). This sort of conservation without, despite and against local communities and indigenous peoples survived the anti-Shah Revolution of 1979 and is still the bulk of the protected area system approach in Iran. Conscious of the ultimate futility of this approach, the Department of the Environment in Iran is now setting up new experiments that empower Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) and Co-Managed Protected Areas (CMPAs). The influence of statist advice, such as from the Soviet Union and others, seems also to have influenced anti-nomadic policies in such countries as Afghanistan, Algeria, Ethiopia, Syria, and Tanzania.

3 To use the words of Paolo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

4 There have been many criticisms made of these tent schools and their political intent, such as their rote learning methods and their content alienating the students from their own cultures and livelihood systems, but the basic idea that a school can be *mobile* has proved sound and deserves much credit as an adapted model.

5 Much like Alpine meadows, whose extremely rich biodiversity has evolved with, and often depends on, cattle grazing.