People-Oriented Approaches in Global Conservation:

Is the Leopard Changing its Spots?

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Biographical Note

Sally Jeanrenaud is an independent researcher and consultant on development and environmental issues. She has degrees in Development Studies (BA), Forestry and Land Management (MSc) and Development Studies (PhD), and has worked in Nepal, Rwanda and Cameroon on rural development forestry and conservation projects. Dr Jeanrenaud has recently compiled a profile of community involvement in forest management in Europe for IUCN. She is also a member of the FAO/ECE/ILO team of specialists providing advice on public participation in forestry to the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. Dr Jeanrenaud is based in Switzerland.

Preface

Large-scale participatory natural resource management (NRM) often includes national governments, large NGOs and donor agencies as major actors. The scaling up of participation to include more people and places constantly challenges these large organisations to become more flexible, innovative and transparent. The emphasis on diversity, decentralisation and devolution of decision-making powers in the adaptive management of natural resources for complex livelihoods implies procedures and organisational cultures which do not impose 'participation' from above. How can organisations facilitate and support the participation of local actors throughout the participatory management process – from appraisals and preparing for partnerships, planning, developing and negotiating co-management agreements, implementation, sharing costs and benefits and monitoring and evaluation, to reviewing and revising the means and ends of the participatory process? Under what conditions can bureaucracies be refashioned or transformed to ensure that their outcomes (policies, programmes, resource allocation and projects) actually facilitate, rather than inhibit, participation and the adaptive management of natural resources? How do roles, rights, responsibilities and the distribution of costs and benefits need to change among actors in civil society, government and the private sector?

These are some of the questions guiding a collaborative research programme designed to examine the dynamics of institutionalising people-centred processes and participatory approaches for natural resource management in a variety of settings. Coordinated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), this action research programme includes case studies in West Africa, India, Indonesia and Mexico as well as analysis of some international organisations and institutions.

This case study report focuses on the world's largest conservation organisation – the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – and examines the dynamics of mainstreaming people-oriented approaches in the conservation of biological diversity. Part of this study was commissioned by WWF UK and WWF International in the mid-1990s to help promote better people-oriented forest conservation practices. This paper takes the study further to explore the influences of contemporary social theory in this field.

Whereas local people were once considered a threat to nature and were often removed from protected areas, global conservation organisations like WWF and The World Conservation Union (IUCN) now promote a wide range of people-oriented conservation approaches, such as integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), community-based conservation and collaborative management. But despite these changes, this paper suggests that it is important to exercise caution in claiming that 'participation' has been mainstreamed in global conservation programmes. An analysis of people–conservation narratives identifies contrasting ways in which 'nature', 'problems' and 'solutions' are framed, revealing competing sets of moral values and scientific approaches within conservation organisations. A review of WWF forest project interventions in the 1990s indicated that while some 75% had social as well as conservation objectives, people were generally considered a resource for conservation ends defined by experts. An exploration of organisational structures and processes reveals some of the institutional dynamics that influence the uneven uptake of participatory approaches within conservation programmes.

Based on a review of 35 years of field and policy documents, an analysis of over 2000 conservation projects undertaken since 1961, an evaluation of 150 contemporary forest conservation projects, seven field case studies and a wide range of interviews, the author argues that there has not been a paradigm change within WWF policy and practice. Rather, WWF has begun using the language of participation and people-centred processes without significant organisational change and realignments of political, scientific and bureaucratic powers. Nevertheless, in contrast to earlier conservation styles, many new projects and policy processes do provide people with more room for manoeuvre in environmental decision-making. In many cases projects and local people manage to negotiate a middle ground of shared interests. The paper explores the idea that change is conditioned by complex, reflexive relations between dominant conservation narratives, western environmental values and fundraising and organisational structures, which can work against the 'leopard changing its spots'.

Beyond possible lessons for conservation agencies, this study highlights several questions and issues of wider interest to organisations involved in participatory natural resource management. These are discussed below under four headings: methodological issues; organisational culture; participation as a fundraising construct; and promoting a learning culture.

Methodological Issues

Evidence of the degree of institutionalisation of participation in NRM was derived by studying three dimensions of paradigm change: policy narratives; organisational structures; and field projects. The choice of methods for analysis was guided by underlying assumptions that are likely to be valid in other study contexts. The following assumptions in particular may be of broad relevance for methodological design in future research.

Field projects

i) Field projects can be seen as carriers of dominant conceptions of nature, people and natural resource management.

ii) Outcomes are often unpredictable, and only partly and indirectly related to natural resource management policies. They are mediated by structure/agency interactions.

iii) Both project personnel and populations who are affected use projects creatively for their own ends.

Organisations

i) Organisations can be seen as institutionalised structures of power, knowledge and control.

ii) Organisations are not monolithic.

iii) Organisational patterns and change are products of an interplay between agency and structure.

Policy narratives

i) Policy narratives embody beliefs, values, knowledge and power. Competing narratives understand 'nature', environmental 'problems' and 'solutions' in very different ways, and serve different social and institutional interests.

ii) Competing policies are promoted by policy communities which cut across organisational boundaries.

iii) Policy development is mediated by internal and external institutional structures.

Organisational Culture

Detailed analyses of the political economy of competing worldviews within organisations highlight the fundamental importance of organisational culture and the coalitions of power that sustain it. Organisational culture is the combination of the individual opinions, shared knowledge, values and norms of the members of an organisation, and 'knowledge' about people–environment interactions is a central element of this in conservation organisations. Dominant views on interactions between the environment and people give rise to – and legitimate – particular organisational procedures and professional practice that either constrain or encourage popular participation in natural resource management. Most theorists argue that organisational culture is the most fundamental level at which transformation needs to take place. No matter how radically structures and systems are reformed within bureaucracies, if environmental 'knowledge' and other dominant aspects of organisational culture are left untouched, the changes will remain superficial and ultimately without effect. However, as this paper suggests, it would be false to present monolithic or inflexible interpretations of organisational cultures, or to see organisations simply as authoritarian controllers of social action.

'Participation' as a Fundraising Construct

Institutionalising participation cannot be viewed outside the dynamics of fundraising and public relations. There can be major structural constraints to change in organisations primarily set up for fundraising purposes. The search for market advantage in today's highly competitive environment tends to favour dialogues with donors and the mass media in which nature and people are treated as resources. The rhetoric of people-oriented natural resource management is often reworked and absorbed in fundraising strategies, with global fundraising images outdoing local definitions of nature and well-being. The language of participation and people-centred approaches may be institutionalised to enhance material gains and public image – but not necessarily tied to changes in organisational procedures, resource allocations, incentives, professional skills and practice.

Promoting a Learning Culture

The case study examines different epistemologies (theories of knowledge) in conservation and natural resource management, and their implications for policy and practice. It discusses critiques based on alternative epistemologies, which raise a number of questions: Can diverse worldviews be negotiated and accommodated by international programmes? Do changing discourses and practices represent socially

progressive trends? Or are they new ways of legitimising global access and control of nature, making people-oriented conservation and natural resource management an enhanced form of control, concealed behind language (community, participation, livelihoods, and so on) that implies the opposite? The author argues that while such perspectives deeply challenge participatory approaches, it is important to remain critical of generalised arguments and extreme positions. The critiques need not imply that such approaches and their institutionalisation are neither worth pursuing nor trying to improve.

The author of this remarkable case study concludes by calling for more open fora for debate and learning to enhance mutual understanding between different actors, organisations and practices. This report is published in the hope that it will encourage more critical reflection, learning for change and accountability in both conservation and development organisations.[†]

Michel Pimbert (Series Editor)

IIED and IDS

[†] The Series Editor has added footnotes and annexes to update the information given on WWF.

Introduction: Changes in Conservation and Social Science

This paper explores changing people–conservation discourses and practices in the light of contemporary social perspectives, and reflects critically upon developments in both fields. The phrase 'people-oriented conservation' is a generic term, covering policies and projects that claim a simultaneous interest in the welfare of people and nature. It encompasses a wide range of activities, including community-based conservation, integrated conservation and development, primary environmental care and collaborative management. While each of these terms has its own assumptions, history and contested meanings, they all represent practices which seek to integrate rather than separate nature conservation and development. 'People-oriented conservation' includes, but is not limited to, participatory approaches to natural resource management (NRM). People-oriented approaches have been developed and widely promoted by international conservation agencies since the beginning of the 1980s.[1]

Caution should be exercised when attempting to pinpoint changes and trends in global conservation and development. For example, Grove's (1987) research into early themes in African conservation suggests that conservation ideologies which identify with the basic needs of peasant populations were widely accepted in the Cape by 1860, inspired by humanitarian scientists. Similarly, Kitching (1982) indicates that quite radical agendas and strong social ethics often underlay early colonial land policy in both Africa and India. The first half of the twentieth century, however, saw a hardening of attitudes towards indigenous peoples, and the implementation of many policies which alienated them from their lands, including the establishment of a large number of national parks and reserves in developing countries. This continued in the post-World War II era, when rural peoples were often perceived as a threat to 'wild nature'. But from the late 1970s, significant changes can be discerned in international conservation discourses and practices. These days, rural people are frequently seen as a resource for the conservation of biological diversity.[2]

This paper explores several themes related to these changes. Firstly, it seeks to understand the ideological content of these broad shifts in approach, particularly ideas about people–environment relations, and contrasting views of 'nature', environmental 'problems' and 'solutions'. These are discussed in the section on conservation communities and people–conservation narratives. Secondly, it explores some of the new principles promoted within recent conservation literature. Conservation programmes frequently advocate working with communities, facilitating participation, building on local institutions, supporting livelihoods, involving women, learning from indigenous knowledge and so on. However, many of these prescriptions are built on problematic and often unstated assumptions about the meaning of concepts such as 'community' and 'participation'. This paper examines some of the problems with these terms in order to understand better how community participation is framed by conservation organisations in practice. These are discussed in the section on project interventions. Thirdly, the paper seeks to understand some of the wider institutional contexts which mediate change. Changing conservation policies and practices cannot be understood without an understanding of the institutions within which they are designed and practised. Thinking and practices are not free-floating, but are embedded in particular institutional contexts, constraints and opportunities. This paper focuses on WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), the world's largest independent conservation NGO (non-governmental organisation), in order to make sense of some of the institutional dynamics mediating change. This provides an opportunity to reflect on some of the important reflexive relationships between the imperatives of fundraising, which takes place in a predominantly northern context, and conservation approaches. These are discussed in the section on organisational structures and processes.

The paper draws on several post-modern themes which have influenced both social science analysis and development and environmental debates over the last five years, and have significant implications for interpreting changing conservation practices.[3] These include Foucault's idea of 'power/knowledge' and, in particular, his view of 'progress'.[4, 5] Although conservation groups seem to have become more people-oriented in their thinking and practices over the past fifteen years, the story charting the progress of people-oriented conservation is open to many interpretations. Do new approaches represent progressive social trends within international conservation, or are they new ways of legitimising global access and control of nature? Is people-oriented conservation in fact an enhanced form of control, concealed behind language (participation, community, livelihoods and so on) that implies the opposite? This is an argument worthy of scrutiny, but how defensible is it? One objective of this paper is to explore the credibility of this perspective.

Part of this research was commissioned by WWF UK and WWF International in 1992 and 1994 respectively to help the organisation understand and promote better people-oriented conservation practices (Jeanrenaud, 1992; 1997a, b; 1999). This paper takes the research further and explores some of the influences of post-modern thinking in this field, particularly on the constructions of people–environment discourses, institutional dynamics and different interpretations of changing practices. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine contemporary social science perspectives in detail, but the endnotes include brief theoretical and methodological descriptions.[6, 7]

The paper begins with a short introduction to WWF. Subsequent sections explore three key components of changing conservation approaches: conservation communities and people–conservation narratives; project interventions; and organisational structures and processes. It then discusses the competing epistemologies (theories of knowledge) in which different people–conservation narratives are rooted, and considers their implications for practice. Finally it draws some conclusions on people-oriented conservation in WWF.

Introduction to WWF

WWF is an international charitable organisation, with 4.7 million supporters (WWF, 1995). The priorities of WWF's Global Conservation Programme are to conserve forests, freshwater ecosystems and oceans and coasts.[a] Each biome has its own policy goals and strategies. In general:

> WWF's Mission is to achieve the conservation of nature and ecological processes by preserving genetic, species and ecosystem diversity; ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable both now and in the longer term, for the benefit of all life on earth; promoting action to reduce to a minimum pollution and the wasteful exploitation and consumption of resources and energy. WWF's ultimate goal is to stop, and eventually reverse, the accelerating degradation of our planet's natural environment, and to help build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
> (WWF, 1990:1)

One of WWF's guiding principles for achieving its Mission is to 'involve local communities and indigenous peoples in the planning and execution of its field programmes, respecting their cultural as well as economic needs' (WWF, 1996c). They support a participatory approach in all their biomes and in their ecoregional-based conservation (WWF, 1999). For example, the joint WWF/World Conservation Union (IUCN) forest conservation policy states: 'The principle of participation of local and indigenous people in forest conservation and management … underpins all forest conservation objectives' (WWF & IUCN, 1996: 32).

The WWF global conservation programme consists of about 600 field projects, as well as policy and advocacy work.[b] It is divided into four regional programme areas: Africa and Madagascar; Asia/Pacific; Europe and Middle East; Latin America; and the

a. WWF has identified six Global Priorities for its conservation programme: Forests, Species, Freshwater, Climate Change, Oceans and Coasts, and Toxic Chemicals. (WWF, 2001. *Annual Report* 2000. Gland, Switzerland.)

b. 'WWF is currently carrying out around 1200 projects a year, employing more than 3700 people, and investing some US$280 million in its global conservation programme and campaigns.' (WWF, *Annual Report 2000*, p. 3). The total number of projects includes field and policy projects, plus some other administrative and implementation arrangements that are called projects for financial and reporting reasons. WWF's March 2001 Fact Sheet indicates that the number of actual projects is 700.

Caribbean.[c] WWF also runs global campaigns, such as the Forests for Life and Endangered Seas Campaigns, and co-funds the TRAFFIC network, which monitors wildlife trade.[d]

WWF was established in Switzerland in 1961, and is currently composed of an International Secretariat based in Switzerland, 27 affiliated National Organisations (NOs) worldwide, 24 Programme Offices (POs) in different countries and several Associate Organisations, which are groups that share WWF's Mission but operate under a different name.[e] Total WWF network income in 1995 amounted to about 336 million Swiss francs (US$270 million) (WWF, 1995a), making WWF one of the best resourced environmental NGOs in the world.[f] The main source of income is from individual donations, which constituted about 61% of network income in 1995. Other sources include: government and aid agency income; earned income; corporate income; trusts etc.[g] The total expenditure of the WWF Network in 1995 was just over 313 million Swiss francs. In 1995 the conservation programmes constituted about 48% of expenditure (WWF, 1995a).[h]

c. North America, although not formally a regional programme, is managed de facto as such, through regular coordination mechanisms between WWF US and WWF Canada.

d. 'WWF's long-term conservation goals are supported by its international campaigns to spotlight crucial environmental issues and influence national and international policy decisions. Currently there are four such campaigns: Forests for Life – to protect the world's forests; Living Waters – to ensure adequate freshwater for people and nature; Endangered Seas – to protect marine areas and stop the depletion of fisheries; Climate Change – to lobby for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.' (WWF, *Annual Report 2000*, p. 4).

e. As of August 2001, WWF has 28 National Organisations, 28 Programme Offices, and four Associate Organisations.

f. In 2000, WWF registered an income of US$360 million. (WWF, *Annual Report 2000*).

g. Income sources in 2000 were as follows: individuals 44%; government and aid agencies 20%; legacies 11%; financial income 8%; royalties 6%; trusts and foundations 5%; corporations 4%; others 2%. (WWF, *Annual Report 2000*).

h. In 2000, WWF total expenditure was US$364 million, of which US$204 million was accounted for by National Organisations and US$160 by WWF International. National Organisations' expenditure breaks down as follows (% of total WWF expenditure): conservation 16%, fundraising 13%; education 9%; administration 8%; awareness raising 7%; conservation policy 3%. The breakdown of WWF International's expenditure is as follows (% of total WWF expenditure): conservation 39%; conservation policy 3%; education 0.2%; awareness raising 1%; fundraising 0.6%; administration 0.2%. In total, therefore, conservation expenditure amounts to 55%. (WWF, *Annual Report 2000*).

Conservation Communities and People–Conservation Narratives[8]

How have ideas about nature, rural peoples, environmental problems and solutions changed over time within conservation organisations? Who promotes these ideas and why? These questions are discussed in the following sections.

Conservation Communities

Organisations are clearly not monolithic entities, but consist of various groupings and activities, both formal and informal. Within conservation organisations, there are coexistent but divergent conservation narratives, which are promoted by different groups in the organisation with an influence on policy. These groups are part of wider social networks which extend beyond particular organisational boundaries, and are used by individuals to guide their opinions and judgements. For example, at least four main groups with an influence on people–conservation discourses and practices could be distinguished within WWF in the mid-1990s, on the basis of their different conceptions of nature, policy goals, backgrounds and social commitments. While different groups may all share a commitment to 'a future in which humans may live in harmony with nature' (WWF, 1990), their ways of framing issues can be quite distinct. Like other communities, they are made up of individuals with plural and overlapping interests, and group composition changes over time. In certain circumstances divergent views can be subsumed in collaborative approaches to particular issues. While ideologies alone are not the sole forces shaping policies, the differential power and influence of various groupings within the organisation help shape its complex identity, and may be considered an important variable in the evolution of new approaches within conservation. Many of the competing values are rooted in fundamentally different worldviews (see Box 1).

A first group within WWF, which one might call 'cosmocentric' using the terminology in Box 1, promotes ecosystem, ecoregional and biodiversity conservation. This group consists of individuals with a background in ecological and biological sciences. They champion global conservation planning and management based predominantly on positivist scientific values, but many hold deep green views. While some view rural

BOX 1

Nature, People and God in Different Worldviews

Cosmocentric/Ecocentric:
The view that humanity and God are contained in nature. From this perspective it is nature that mediates culture and God. Such views largely underpin current thinking in the ecological and biological sciences. Cosmocentrics assume the sovereignty of nature, asserting its objective and ontological reality. Humanity is seen as a part of the natural ecosystem, as a product of evolution, subject to the same biological laws as the rest of nature. To some, nature is no longer seen as 'wilderness', but in terms of ecosystems or biodiversity, and environmental problems and solutions are framed according to current 'objective' scientific understanding of nature. On the other hand, some 'deep greens' start from an ethical concern about non-human nature and the whole ecosystem, rather than from humanistic concerns. Taken to an extreme, the cosmocentric perspective can eclipse concerns for humans and lead to charges of biological determinism.

Anthropocentric:
The view that nature and God are contained in humanity. From this perspective it is culture that mediates nature and God. Some anthropocentrics claim that we cannot perceive nature independently of a cultural lens. Anthropologists point out that what we consider to be 'nature' or 'natural' varies across cultures. We ascribe meanings to nature and interact with it on the basis of those meanings. Culture also fashions science and policy. The anthropocentric view does not objectify nature outside human perceptions, values and needs. This standpoint within conservation gives rise to a different outlook on environmental problems and solutions. Rather than relying on narrowly defined scientific understanding, it incorporates diverse cultural values and perceptions. An extreme anthropocentric view can lead to over-socialised views of nature, and justify the pursuit of human interests at the expense of other life forms.

Theocentric:
The view that nature and humanity are contained in God. From this perspective it is spiritual consciousness that mediates culture and nature. Theocentrics assume the primacy of God or 'Mind', a reality expressed in, but beyond, physical appearances, and, unlike positivist anthropocentric and cosmocentric traditions, accepts the knowledge of spiritual intuition. Theocentrics value nature as an expression of God, and see problems in terms of our spiritual transgressions, and solutions in terms of a spiritual challenge to transform our inner selves in order to transform the outer world. Extreme theocentric views can result in a continued deferral to God, undermining human responsibility for nature. An over-emphasis on changing our own nature can be used to excuse passivity in the face of environmental problems.

peoples as a threat to nature and advocate the cessation of all activities in protected areas, others acknowledge the importance of integrating social concerns into conservation, and have reworked traditional conservation thinking to incorporate development concerns. Some have been field practitioners, but many work at a research level and network mainly with others from biological research institutions. The values and ideas of this group currently predominate within WWF, from the most senior management levels to field programmes. They are broadly associated with the people–conservation narrative 'people can't be ignored', which will be outlined shortly.

'Anthropocentric neo-liberals' within WWF promote a politically distinct conservation agenda, emphasising economic and political processes, such as the role of the market, structural adjustment, world trade and policy lobbying at the highest levels. Members of this group often have backgrounds in economics, politics and law, and network with others in similar professions. They often have influential allies in government, policy and financial institutions, such as the World Bank, Club of Rome and the European Parliament. This is a smaller group within WWF. While it has been represented at the most senior management level, it lacks wider field-based support. In terms of social commitment this group is also broadly associated with the 'people can't be ignored' narrative.

'Radical anthropocentrics' emphasise human rights issues in natural resource management and participatory approaches to conservation. They focus on the livelihood needs and rights of marginalised groups and indigenous people. This group consists of individuals from social anthropological, development and new ecology backgrounds, and some grass-roots practitioners. The group has been influenced by critiques of orthodox development and conservation models which point out the inequalities of the capitalist system and emphasise the effects of unequal power structures and relations. While members promote biodiversity conservation, some have incorporated the broader critique of orthodox science into their work. The group has sought alliances with promoters of human rights and indigenous peoples' issues, social justice and development and environmental issues. Their views are influential and appeal to many dissatisfied with failures of traditional conservation in the field, but they do not predominate within WWF. This group is associated with the people–conservation counter-narrative 'conservation for whom?', described shortly.

'Anthropocentric elites' promote a more traditional conservation agenda underpinned by anthropocentric (and formerly theocentric) values. Historically, local people were seen as a threat to nature, and their removal from protected areas was traditionally unquestioned. This group consists of socially privileged individuals from both North and South, from aristocratic, business, political and land-owning circles. They have

often legitimised protected areas on the grounds of 'nation building'. Many early supporters of the global conservation movement came from this group, and many continue to have influence at senior executive levels, particularly in former colonies and Commonwealth countries. Historically, they have been broadly associated with the earlier crisis narrative 'people are the threat', outlined next.

People–Conservation Narratives[9]

This section identifies three people–conservation narratives on the basis of the social thinking embedded within them: 'people are the threat'; 'people can't be ignored/people are a resource'; and 'conservation for whom?'. These discourses are broadly associated with different eras of thinking about people–nature relations within international conservation, and different policy communities and networks, but reflect and resonate with much wider intellectual debates across many disciplines. While particular discourses may dominate at any one time, different elements have always coexisted in contradictory ways.

'People are the threat': early crisis narratives

Early crisis discourses, which dominated conservation thinking up to the 1970s, were rooted in imperial concerns about the environmental impacts of colonial expansion (Anderson & Grove, 1987), but were reinvigorated by the so-called 'doomsday syndrome' which was characteristic of the environmentalism of the 1960s and 1970s. There are many examples of such crisis narratives throughout the early conservation literature. Most began by referring to the dangers of uncontrolled population growth and ended with the necessity of protecting nature from people by separating the two.

Early conservationists often perceived nature as being 'spriritually charged', and expressed explicit theocentric values and perspectives, that is, conceptions which frame nature as separate from humanity but with value as an expression of God. Literature in the 1960s frequently makes use of religious metaphors, extolling the 'wisdom of wildness', and its 'infinite capacity to uplift the human spirit'. The titles of WWF's first two annual reports, *The Launching of a New Ark* (WWF, 1965), and *The Ark Underway* (WWF, 1967), also rely on the appeal of religious metaphors which were widely used at the time. Anthropocentric values, which prize nature for its contribution to mankind, also prevailed within the early literature and have provided an important basis for later people-oriented approaches to conservation. As WWF stated in 1965, 'The Fund's campaign is not a case of animals versus man. Conservation is *for* man, and for the long-term benefit of humanity' (WWF, 1996: 23,

PLATE 1

Credit: Tanzania National Parks (reproduced from World Wildlife Yearbook 1976–7)

Toyota landcruisers provided by WWF to Tsavo National Park to combat poaching, c. 1973

original emphasis). Such explicit anthropocentric views are probably unacceptable to many activists today, and are increasingly challenged by contemporary nature ethics.

Early anthropocentrism was often elitist in character. Although conservation was widely promoted in the name of all people, for the benefit and enjoyment of all, such talk often disguised who was actually benefiting from conservation projects. To some early preservationists protected areas were designed to provide 'a cultured persons' playground' (Giles, 1992) and were seen as 'unparalleled places of rest and refreshment for people of the developed nations of the world' (WWF, 1967: 28). There was a sincere belief that, even in poor countries, where it was difficult for conservation organisations to '... say "No" to an increasing population when they ask for land ... we all know that [they] must go on doing so, no matter what, if the wild plants and animals are to stand a chance' (WWF, 1971: 233). Establishing protected areas was also tied to ideas of nation building in the post-colonial era, as the term 'national park' itself suggests. Even though early preservationist and utilitarian values coexisted, preservationist approaches tended to eclipse early sustainable use arguments. They were closely linked to the values, interests and power of the socially privileged.

Threats to nature in developing countries were widely framed in terms of the ignorant behaviour of rural peoples, who were thought to indulge in 'senseless multiplication like crazy rabbits' (Nicholson, 1981: 10). The environmentalism of the so-called 'Prophets of Doom' (McCormick, 1995: 83) clearly influenced the conservation crisis discourses of the late 1960s and 1970s. These included Paul Ehrlich, a self-professed Malthusian, who was an influential speaker at the WWF Annual Conference in 1973, and Dr Aurelio Peccei, founder and President of the Club of Rome (famous for the book *Limits to Growth*), who was elected as a WWF Trustee during the same year. People's activities were viewed as the principal threat to stable, climax vegetation systems. Key ecological thinkers had outlined the characteristics of such systems, including plant succession (Clements, 1935), the ecosystem concept (Tansley, 1935) and ecosystem development (Odum, 1969).

While early conservation initiatives were not organised according to well-defined strategic programmes (Martin, undated), projects supported largely preservationist policies as solutions to perceived problems, financing protected areas and reserves, animal and plant surveys, removing local populations from reserves and parks and supplying anti-poaching equipment. Many post-war conservationists were interested in creating a 'new international order for conservation', a 'big league' of global environmental management (Nicholson, 1981). As Norman (1981: 24) explains, WWF founders believed that, with money raised by the fund, 'large reserves and

refuges could be bought and safeguarded, and experts and leaders could be sent out and maintained in action at danger spots'. In the early years, alliances of the socially privileged were deliberately harnessed for global conservation benefits. The use of 'high-level representations', 'moral prestige' and 'conservation diplomacy' were effected through letters to heads of state, official missions and frequently by royal visits (WWF, 1977). These were considered effective in helping to establish international conservation. Some conservationists and WWF trustees, such as Bernhard Grzimek, used political influence and lobbied hard and successfully to promote nature preservation. Early narratives and approaches were also institutionalised through support to wildlife colleges and clubs throughout Africa and Asia. Conservation practitioners frequently saw themselves as preservers of nature for the benefit of 'all mankind'; they dedicated their whole lives to it, and their sincerity cannot be doubted (Adams & McShane, 1992). Conservation was an unquestioned good. As Crowe put it: 'Conservation is about as safe a subject in which one can possibly be interested. Like God and Mother, nobody can really hate it' (cited in WWF, 1967: 198).

Early conservation discourses have been widely criticised on several grounds. They have been considered ethnocentric, because they favoured western ideas of nature (Anderson & Grove, 1987); elitist, because they overlooked resource management by indigenous inhabitants (Colchester, 1994); ecologically outmoded, because the early models are ones that 'freeze-frame' the ecological status quo (Zimmerer, 1994); and self-defeating, because outside pressures eventually impinge on protected areas and generate conflict (Adams & McShane, 1992; Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997). These and similar critiques helped develop new thinking from the late 1970s.

'People can't be ignored/people are a resource': conservation and development narratives from 1980

Since the end of the 1970s, the international conservation movement had adopted various 'conservation with development' narratives, promoting the idea that conservation and development are mutually interdependent. Such views are articulated by both the *World Conservation Strategy* (IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1981) and *Caring for the Earth* (IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1991). As WWF's then Director-General put it, '… never before has conservation been so clearly shown to be an aid, rather than a hindrance to development; never before has development been put forward as a major means of achieving conservation; never before has there been such consensus between representatives of developed and developing countries and between representatives of differing political persuasions as to what action should be taken' (WWF, 1981: 15).

A number of external and internal influences prompting the evolution of more people-oriented approaches from the 1980s can be identified, including: a growing concern for livelihoods, particularly among field practitioners; a growing emphasis on sustainable use; a recognition of indigenous knowledge and management systems; and, lately, the influence of participatory development and donor funding requirements. At the end of the 1970s, many conservationists had begun to question the classic 'fire-fighting' responses to perceived conservation problems, and began to move away from earlier preoccupations with species and special areas, to more strategic, programmatic work with an emphasis on ecological processes and life support systems. A number of the WWF National Organisations were also beginning to examine some of the underlying causes of environmental degradation in greater depth in the 1980s, which helped reorient conservation thinking (Martin, undated). Concern over the media attention given to a 25-year external review of projects in 1987, known as The Phillipson Report (WWF, 1989), also helped propel changes within the organisation. The report concluded that, despite short-term successes, emphasis on parks and species conservation was neither effective nor efficient in the long term. It also drew attention to problems of asymmetrical power relations between the centre and the field within international conservation: 'Without a doubt, a major barrier to the furtherance of nature conservation worldwide is the "us and them" syndrome. Paramount is the suspicion of "western colonialists" be they ex- or economically and politically potential colonists' (Phillipson cited in WWF News No. 66, 1990: 5). The wider reorientation of thought, internal concern over bad publicity and record levels of income in the late 1980s helped prompt a restructuring of the organisation and lent support to the development of a more socially progressive Mission and programmes (WWF, 1990; 1994). It was around this time that members of new social networks were employed by WWF to help develop community-based approaches to conservation.

However, the new orientations have sometimes been resisted by the more traditional staff within conservation, who argue that the emphasis on sustainable development is at the expense of wildlife preservation. Ian McPhail (1990), WWF's first campaigns manager, comments that the *World Conservation Strategy* would be more aptly entitled the *World Conservation Tragedy*, and others within the international conservation movement claim that tackling social concerns is only a means to an end – that of nature conservation.

According to Hannigan (1995), the framing and incorporation of ecology and ecosystems into environmental narratives constitutes the second major reworking of 'nature'. This has been reflected in conservation organisations since the 1980s. 'Nature', previously framed as 'wilderness', has now been reframed in terms of

PLATE 2

Credit: WWF US (reproduced from WWF Conservation Yearbook 1985–86)

Scientist working on a WWF-supported project with Kamsa medicine man, Sibundoy, Colombia, c. 1980. Ethnobotanical studies in the 1980s were justified on the grounds that rainforest plants were of economic benefit to mankind.

ecosystems, biodiversity and, more recently, ecoregions (Olson & Dinerstein, 1998). New ways of thinking about nature were reflected in the change of WWF's name from the World Wildlife Fund to the World Wide Fund For Nature in 1986. This was considered to reflect the shift in the scope of conservation from a focus on flagship species to a focus on nature and natural resources. It was also acknowledged that the new name translated better into other languages and was more acceptable to developing countries, which did not see wildlife conservation as a priority. For WWF, this certainly did not mean abandoning its older interests but rather adding new ones (WWF News No. 53, 1988). The biodiversity extinction crisis has also developed into a central theme of conservation biology and an important claim among conservation scientists and activists since the 1980s. The reinvigoration of old problems with new labels, along with the growing influence of deep green values, has served to enhance the authority of the ecological expert and manager within international conservation.

Conservation and development narratives have recast the role of local people in two important ways. Firstly, it is now widely accepted that it is neither politically feasible nor ethically justifiable to exclude poor people from parks without providing alternative livelihoods (Brandon & Wells, 1992). Poor people are no longer regarded as the principal agents of destruction, or, if they are, more attention is given to the poverty which forces people to depend on non-sustainable resource use. Secondly, new narratives have begun to extol the virtues of local people, who have lived for generations in harmony with nature. In contrast to earlier discourses, they are considered to make important contributions to global understanding of sustainable use and conservation (McNeely & Pitt, 1985; Kemf, 1993). Despite important variations, both new narrative themes frame local people as a resource for achieving conservation objectives identified by global conservation experts.

Solutions have focused on introducing buffer zone management; integrated conservation and development approaches; sustainable use; and forms of community-based conservation. However, a standard view within conservation organisations is that 'conservation projects should be more people-oriented – but not people projects ... . Conservation organisations should always be looking for ways to ensure the long-term success of their protected area projects by linking them with integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), but conservation organisations must remember that they are not development agencies' (response in a Field Staff Survey, 1992).

The development of conservation and development policies and practices has been widely criticised on several grounds, including, among others, the global presumptions of international conservation planning (Anderson & Grove, 1987);

poorly conceived linkages between conservation and development (Redclift, 1989; Adams, 1990); lack of attention to equity and 'trickle down' (Ghimire, 1991, 1994; Ghimire & Pimbert, 1997; Utting, 1994, 1996; West & Brechin, 1991); extending coercive power relations (Peluso, 1993; Hill, 1996); and exacerbating ecological destruction through contributing towards the economic growth process (Brandon & Wells, 1992; Noss, 1997). The narratives are different because they acknowledge human needs and absorb local people's knowledge and practices into conservation discourses. They constitute a repackaging of conservation but not a radical redefinition of the field (Adams, 1990). The narrative 'people are a resource for conservation' continues to underpin the authority of orthodox scientific claims in defining problems and solutions, and informs how participation is framed in conservation practice, as will be discussed shortly.

'Conservation for whom?': counter-narratives from 1990

Alternative people–environment perspectives have been promoted by new groups since the beginning of the 1990s, influenced by much wider intellectual currents broadly associated with the post-modern influence on natural and social sciences and the growing prominence of southern scholars and perspectives in debate. These clearly challenge traditional conservation thinking and, unless they are addressed, they threaten to haunt modern approaches in a number of ways. While not dismissing scientific approaches, they do not start with the assumption that science generates a single, definitive set of objective facts about the environment, nor do they simply appeal to the laws of ecology in defining environmental problems or solutions. Rather, they are more inclined to ask: 'What *counts* as an environmental problem?' and 'For whom?' (Redclift & Benton, 1994), and to show that there is a continuous struggle over the definition and meaning of the 'problem' itself (Hajer, 1997). These perspectives draw attention to the power of language, social interests and networks in defining 'truth' and how regimes of truth get institutionalised through practices. Some of the effects of these viewpoints are to deglobalise older concepts of nature and environmental problems and solutions, and to undermine faith in the authority of orthodox science.

For example, the 'alternative environmentalism' in the South expresses its objectives in terms of ecological requirements for livelihoods, social justice and spiritual values (Guha, 1989; Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997; Sochaczewski, 1996, 1997; Peet & Watts, 1996; Apffel, Marglin & Mishra, 1993). Counter-narratives promote alternative eco-cosmologies which destabilise the dominance of culturally elitist and orthodox scientific views of nature. It is increasingly recognised that local populations

find western ideas of nature, conservation and parks perplexing and unintelligible (Alcorn, 1994; Colchester, 1994; Weaver, 1991).

Many of the perspectives of people-environmental change, which underpinned early crisis narratives, have been falsified by new research since the mid-1980s. Rather than destroying nature, local people may have actually enriched biodiversity and landscapes in many areas (Posey, 1985; Gilmour & Fisher, 1991; Gomez-Pompa & Kaus, 1992; Fairhead & Leach, 1995, 1998; Pimbert & Pretty, 1995; Poffenberger & McGean, 1996). While older narratives declared that nature could only be protected by removing people, others now claim that the absence of local management may actually cause biological simplification in some areas (WWF India, 1996; Western & Giochio, 1993; Adams & McShane, 1992; Chase, 1987; Pimbert & Gujja, 1997). Other research has served to undermine simplistic theories concerning the role of population growth and pressure in land degradation and deforestation (e.g. Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Colchester & Lohmann, 1993). Contrary to popular opinion, forest cover and diversity actually increases in some areas as population density increases, because there are greater incentives to use resources more efficiently (Sayer, 1995; Tiffen et al., 1993). The new narratives are also inspired by developments in 'new ecology', which regards nature as a product of both social and ecological history, and emphasises spatial and temporal variability and dynamic, non-equilibrial processes and histories (Zimmerer, 1994). As Fairhead & Leach (1996) ask, 'Is it time for new definitions of nature that allow people their history?'. In themselves, the counter-narratives do not necessarily imply new approaches to people, but rather provide new frames within which people's activities can be better appreciated.

Other critiques have come from research into scientific method itself. Recent studies of environmental science and risk assessment indicate that orthodox science fails to address the degree to which scientific analyses and projections are sensitive to crucial framing assumptions; in other words, how scientists frame the debate in the first place. Scientists' different but equally reasonable starting assumptions can radically affect their analyses (Thompson & Warburton, 1985; Mann, 1991; Wynne, 1994; Stirling & Mayer, 1999). This research emphasises that there are no final sound scientific answers to many questions of environmental concern. This implies that conservation may not be a matter of sound science alone. In the context of scientific uncertainty, it is increasingly recognised that the best way forward is to greatly expand the number of participants in the decision-making process to ensure that a much wider spectrum of values and interests are represented in debate. Participatory approaches are increasingly supported by new scientific communities because they can include a greater range of issues than orthodox scientific assessment.

PLATE 3

Credit: Hasan

Involving women in a participatory management plan for Keoladeo National Park, India, 1996

These developments have inspired new starting points for some conservation practitioners within WWF and other organisations. They have generated new questions such as: 'Nature conservation for whom and for what?'; 'Species of special concern to whom?'; and 'Who decides?' (Shiva, 1990; Lohmann, 1991; Pimbert, 1993; Freeman & Kreuter, 1994). They have justified participatory approaches to conservation planning which support local definitions of problems and solutions, and they have promoted the role of indigenous knowledge and management in conserving and enhancing biodiversity for local needs. They also embody a new social commitment which promotes human rights as an end in itself.

Counter-narratives are broadly aligned with a philosophy of 'reversals' in learning, locality and roles, and a 'new professionalism' in development and conservation (Chambers, 1993, 1997; Pimbert & Pretty, 1995), and imply different principles of action, choices, behaviour and alliances of power. At a research and policy level, discussions within WWF concerning a new professionalism and alternative perspectives on protected areas (Pimbert 1993; Pimbert & Pretty, 1995) have been contested by other conservation communities on various grounds – for paying insufficient attention to nature ethics; for portraying conservation professionalism in historically inaccurate ways; and for emphasising changing professional behaviour at the expense of wider political change. The new professionalism also seemed to irritate some by appearing to assume the moral high ground (PASSC, 1993). Other actors promoting new windows of conservation perception, such as Life Reserves as new models of protected areas, based on southern environmental ethics and religious values (Sochaczewski, 1997), also met with resistance from the mainstream in the mid-1990s.

In so far as the counter-narratives articulate local voices and constructions of nature, they approach what Croll and Parkin (1992) consider to be a third phase of culture and environment distinctions. This phase recognises that 'the environment is ontologically part of the people ... . Thus people's own dichotomies and their respect for the attributes and capacity of their own environment at least have parity in status with those of the outside development specialist and may even become the starting point of any plan, project and analysis' (ibid.: 32). In challenging notions of nature and conservation as defined from above, and by providing space for plural definitions from below, the counter-narratives echo the post-modern dismissal of meta-narratives. This approach has generated a 'debate over fundamentalisms'; a 're-evaluation of prior facts'; and provided a 'new view of the field' (Kuhn, 1970), which seems to represent a new paradigm for understanding people–nature relations.

However, the application of reversals and counter-narratives in conservation is not without its problems. Many of the new themes help to dissolve received wisdoms and create space for new social commitments, but they may generate other dangers. Roe's (1991, 1995) ideas of generating compelling narratives to replace the old narratives risk promoting a new brand of received wisdom. The goal of reversals is usually to understand and promote local complexities and diversities. However, ironically, generating new discourses may caricature development and conservation histories in simplistic and historically inaccurate ways which obscure diversity in policy and practice (Grillo & Stirrat, 1997). Politically, emphasising reversals frequently serves to crystallise latent opposition, making it even harder to create room for alternative policies. Furthermore, the deconstruction of global crisis narratives, and the focus on local definitions of nature, may conceal the extent to which wider environmental threats do exist.

In general, southern environmental ethics, alternative definitions of nature and bottom-up approaches are not the usual starting points of global conservation action because the latter is shaped largely by the perceptions and values of articulate first world elites and their adherents in developing nations. Mainstream conservation discourses have been reworked in less radical ways, framing people as a resource for conservation defined from above. The challenge presented by the new thinking is not simply to redraw the map of conservation, but to change what that map is actually about. The challenge of divergent epistemologies is discussed more fully in the final sections of this paper. Table 1 summarises and compares the three people–conservation narratives discussed in this section.

TABLE 1

Summary of People–Nature Problematics in International Conservation, 1960–1999

Variable	1960+	1980+	1990+
Perception of nature	Wilderness	Ecosystems; biodiversity; ecoregions	Culture in nature and nature in culture
Environmental values	Theocentric and anthropocentric	Anthropocentric and cosmocentric	Anthropocentric and cosmocentric
Diagnosis of environmental problems	Overpopulation; exceeding the land's carrying capacity	Poverty; overpopulation	Power relations; North-South inequalities; what *counts* as a problem, and to *whom*?
Representations of local people	People are the threat	People can't be ignored; people are a resource	Align with rural people
Solutions and technologies	Exclusionary protected areas	Buffer zones; ICDPs; sustainable use; community-based conservation	Alternative protected areas; participatory natural resource management; human rights
Power relations	Alliances with elites	Technocratic alliances	Alliances with grass-roots
Key influences	Colonial conservation; elitist interests	Sustainable development debate; growing concern for livelihoods	Democracy / human rights movement; participatory development; post-modern influence on natural and social sciences

Project Interventions[10]

Analysis of project numbers, styles and budgets indicates a rapid rise in a wide variety of people-oriented conservation projects within WWF.[11] Figure 1 indicates that such projects are a relatively recent phenomenon within WWF, but their numbers have been growing steadily since the early 1980s. People-oriented projects constituted about one-third of WWF project interventions in 1995.

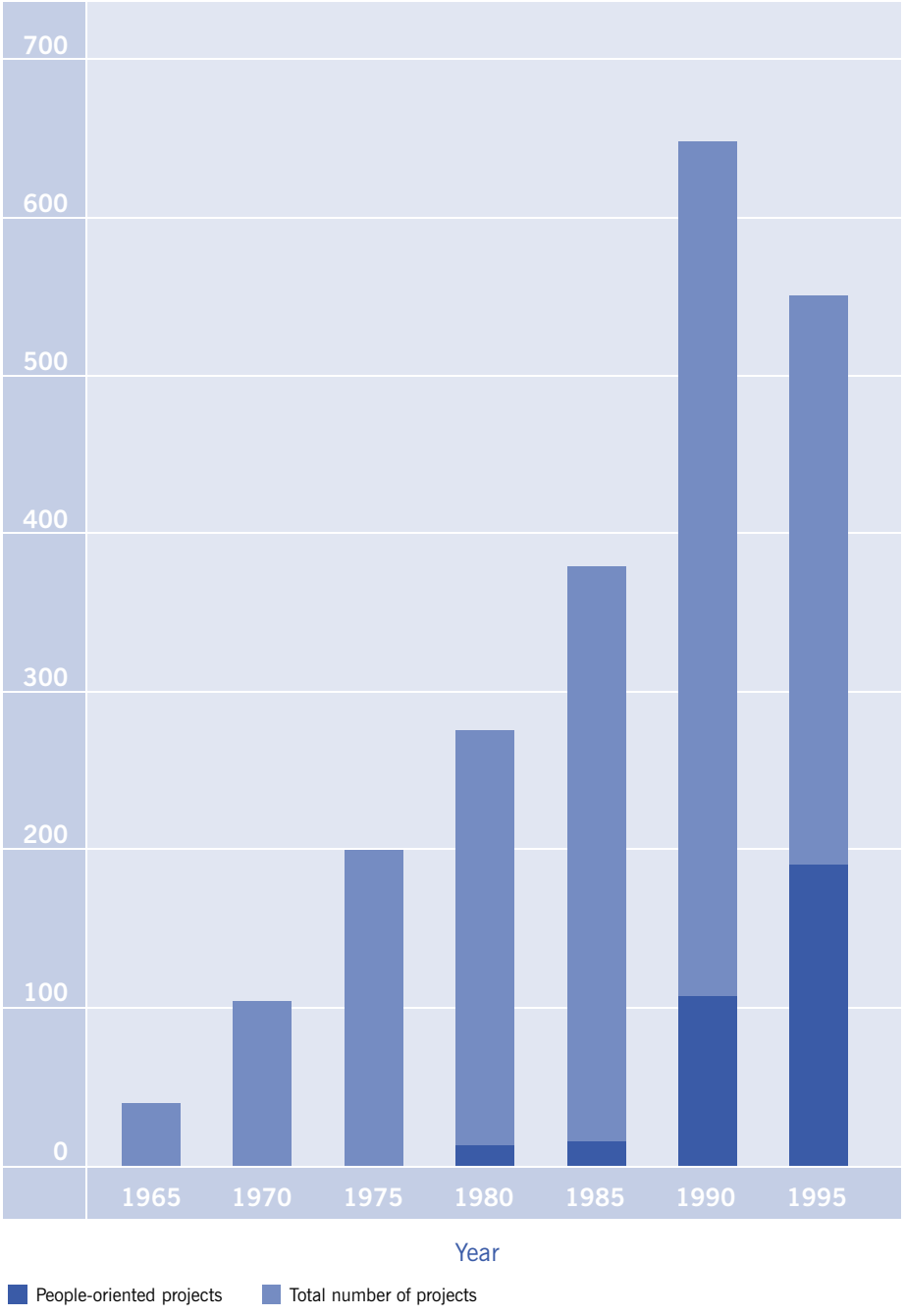
A sub-sample of 179 forest conservation projects in 1995 indicated that some 75% of projects combined social and livelihood objectives with those of biodiversity conservation. Most undertook activities such as sustainable agriculture and forest use, conservation education and local institutional support. A small number of forest projects have also sought to build on indigenous conceptions of nature conservation, and some have used participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques in project planning. Analysis of how new thinking is translated into conservation practice is undertaken through a brief exploration of the terms 'community' and 'participation'.

'Community' in Conservation Practice

The new conservation literature makes extensive reference to the notion of communities (WWF, 1993c, 1994, 1996a; Borrini-Feyerabend, 1997; Western, Wright & Strum, 1994; Kemf, 1993; IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1991: 57). It is frequently assumed that communities do indeed exist; that local people have collective or shared interests and consensual decision-making processes; and that they are conservation-minded. Where social differences are recognised it is increasingly assumed that diverse perspectives, priorities and goals can be negotiated and promoted through stakeholder analysis. However, as numerous analysts point out, attempts to implement these ideas generate many complex questions for both conservation and development agencies (Leach et al., 1997; Agrawal, 1997; Guijt & Shah, 1998). What is a community? What is the difference between local, indigenous and traditional communities? Do communities actually exist at all, or are they just fictitious abstractions that serve the needs of policy makers? Ideas about what constitutes a community in natural resource management are frequently disputed and are often tied to dominant political

FIGURE 1

Numbers of People-Oriented Conservation Projects
WWF International Programme



interests at local levels and beyond. The idea that communities share similar goals to conservationists is frequently challenged by anthropological studies (Ellen, 1986; Croll & Parkin, 1992; Milton, 1993).

A review of how notions of community were understood by WWF in the mid-1990s has some important project management implications. The term 'community conservation' was only incorporated into its project database in 1992 in response to field experience, but also to pressure to include the label in project proposals to donors because, post-UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), it was becoming increasingly important for fundraising purposes. The term was used in inconsistent and unclear ways in much of the international policy and project literature. It was used to describe rural peoples selected by experts in prescriptive planning for activities in buffer zones around protected areas, as well as support to self-defined and self-mobilised groups. The label was often applied in ways that overlooked crucial social differences at local level, such as gender, age, ethnicity, ideas and values. These differences affect access to and control of resources, and who bears the costs and reaps the benefits of protected areas. Projects tended to produce blanket prescriptions for communities which, when implemented, had a differential impact at a local level, as indicated by some IDCPs (Metcalfe, 1996). Many projects also failed to identify how indigenous community institutions may represent vested interests of elites, or how they break down under commercial pressures. Evaluations of some community livelihood initiatives indicated that poorer groups may not benefit from project interventions at all, and that 'community-based' interventions could serve to further marginalise vulnerable groups (Rosendo, 1996; Adams, 1996). It is clear that far more attention should be given to social differences in rural areas, and that in seeking solutions to environmental problems, addressing socially different needs should play a key part.

Stakeholder analysis has emerged largely as a response to problems with the notion of community. However, while acknowledging plural interests, it often fails to consider the effects of unequal power relations and processes. Some co-management institutions for protected areas raise important equity concerns. Formalised collaboration systems risk becoming another stage on which power relations are played out; another forum for the already powerful to extend their influence (Laidlaw, 1996). It is thus important to understand the dynamic processes of interaction between groups, and the means people use to pursue their goals. This may mean considering positive discrimination in favour of poorer sub-groups (landless, near landless and women) in stakeholder planning and management because such groups frequently bear the cost of conservation interventions but have less power to defend their interests.

Self-mobilised environmental initiatives are internally rather than externally catalysed processes. They require groups which are highly motivated and organised, with strong local leadership and the potential to be socially sustainable in the long term. While they may not share the same final goal as conservationists, they often share many common interests and approach agencies for financial and technical assistance. In the mid-1990s, only a minority of WWF forest projects supported locally defined needs, for example, interventions to secure the tenure and usufruct rights of self-defined rural peoples, such as the rubber tappers of the extractive reserves of Brazil. This suggests that the priorities of rural peoples are not generally the accepted starting points of global conservation interventions.

'Participation' in Conservation Practice

The participation of local people was formally acknowledged in international conservation policy in the *World Conservation Strategy* (IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1981); and further elaborated in *Caring for the Earth* (IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1991), and is now promoted throughout much of the new conservation literature.[12] It is widely assumed that it is necessary for effective conservation and sustainable resource use, and that local people can secure greater economic and social benefits through participatory processes. Some acknowledge, however, that whether participation enhances biodiversity remains inconclusive because the necessary ecological data over time is unavailable (Little, 1994). However, although it has been part of conservation policy for about twenty years, it is only quite recently that conceptual models of participation in conservation have been developed, and participation experiences in the field analysed and critiqued.[13]

Much of the recent theoretical literature highlights the importance of understanding the plural meanings of participation. For example, Arnstein (1969) recognises eight types of public participation planning, from manipulation to citizen control. Other analysts point out different qualities and degrees of participation, highlighting the importance of qualifying what we mean when we use the term. Other literature draws out important distinctions between participation as a means and as an end. In the former sense, participation is seen as a means or tool for realising objectives which have already been set externally; whereas in the latter case, participation is seen as an end or fundamental human right. In this sense, participation invites long-term, broad-based social determination in processes of decision-making that affect wider society and the environment.

These distinctions can be problematic for global conservation programmes. Much of the mainstream conservation literature understands participation as 'a means'. For

example, MacKinnon et al. (1986: 99) recognise the need for rural people to be involved around and within protected areas, but stress that in decision-making, 'Managers must know where to draw the line'. Similarly, Wells (1995: 1019) argues that for conservation to achieve its basic objective – the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity – 'People can only be empowered in aspects of development'. Participation as 'a means' opens conservation to charges of social engineering. It tends to raise the values of ecological experts over the rest of society's, and to exclude wider civil society from decision-making processes that affect their lives. However, whether conservationists can wield such authoritative power is open to question. How plausible is the image of the conservation practitioner as an authoritative decision-maker, determining priorities and manipulating people to participate in achieving conservation objectives? This image portrays conservationists as controllers of social action. It implies concepts of absolute power and powerlessness and of insider-outsider divisions, and it overlooks the strategic roles of individuals and communities in complying with and subverting conservation and development projects. It tends to exaggerate the power of experts and underestimate the responses of rural peoples, who creatively respond to project interventions and even capture them for their own ends (Jackson, 1997b).

Participation as 'an end' also contains difficult dilemmas for conservation organisations. Promoting self-determination and empowering rural peoples to take control of their lives does not guarantee care for the environment. There are many examples where communities have negotiated away their land rights by leasing them to logging or mining companies in exchange for royalties.

Evidence from WWF in the mid-1990s suggests that participation has generally been framed as a social tool for achieving objectives already defined by conservation scientists, rather than as a human right. For example, the review of people-oriented forest conservation projects in 1995 suggested that many projects undertook work with local people because there were no preferred alternatives: 'The cooperation of the villagers is essential for the protection of the conservation area, due to lack of government staff to act as wardens' (WWF, 1995b: 3122). Similarly, 'Local people have been granted sustainable use rights in the park in exchange for their active participation in its protection' (ibid.: 3144). At the Annual Conference in 1997 it was emphasised that, 'For WWF, participation is not an end in itself, but a *means* to achieving conservation' (WWF 1997: 5, original emphasis). This reflects an instrumentalist view of people as a resource for global conservation planning and management, in contrast to those who view participation as a basic human right or means of self-determination.

However, there are important qualifications to this assertion. Information from WWF projects indicates that different activities involve different degrees of participation, and that project approaches and modes of participation evolve over time. An example of this is the ICDP approach in Kilum in Cameroon, which is also beginning to support self-mobilised initiatives (Newby, 1996). Moreover, the idea of participation as a means is not universally subscribed to and is contested by some local project staff, as disclosed by research in Indonesia (Laidlaw, 1996).

In general, projects in the 1990s failed to acknowledge the politics of participatory processes – for example, how local institutional bias affects local representation, entitlements and incentives to speak about resources. Participation may be constrained by the cultural and political context, for example, resistance to collective endeavour in some former Soviet bloc countries (Buhler, 1997), and to the involvement of groups such as women and the landless in conservation projects (Adams, 1996). In other cases, there is a preoccupation with formal PRA events, tools and methodologies, and this may obscure an understanding of informal political processes such as lobbying and strategic alliances which are crucial for securing change (Jeanrenaud & Jeanrenaud, 1997). Other research indicates that people participated in conservation initiatives and collaborated with outside actors to fulfil a variety of private aspirations. Groups used WWF's community interventions to endorse customary power relationships at the expense of less well-off groups (Adams, 1996; Newby, 1996; Laidlaw, 1996), while others borrowed environmental discourses to fulfil a variety of locally defined goals (Jeanrenaud & Jeanrenaud, 1997). In this sense it is WWF that is participating (perhaps unwittingly) in local projects rather than local people participating in WWF projects. This serves to deconstruct the notion of conservation projects as authoritarian controllers of social action. Rather, conservation projects can be viewed as sites of multiple meanings, which both impose ideas, but can also be captured by local people for their own ends.

Although there is evidence to support the view that there has been a reorientation of WWF conservation practices during the last two decades, the social benefits arising from an apparent shift in project styles should not be overestimated. It appears that notions such as 'community' and 'participation' have been absorbed by WWF, but often as a means of achieving pre-defined objectives. Concern for equity or the significance of power relations are rarely identified within project planning documents or evaluations. In general, it is difficult to see how the new participatory conservation narratives translate into the flexible agendas, time frames and processes of negotiation characteristic of projects that try to take community participation seriously. This reflects the contradictions of trying to marry global conservation planning with participatory approaches in natural resource management.

There is a danger that such words as 'community' and 'participation' can become rhetorical devices or confer an aura of authority on conservation organisations, which is then used to legitimise access to and control of resources, with little relation to local interests or goals (Brosius et al., 1998). However, although often idealised, notions of community and participation should not be dismissed altogether (Agrawal, 1997; Li, 1996). Participatory, community-based conservation discourses are important means for articulating, negotiating and legitimising local interests and concerns, thus providing local groups with more room for manoeuvre.

Organisational Structures and Processes[14]

This section briefly explores some of the institutional dynamics which mediate changing conservation narratives and practices. How are organisations structured to deliver conservation? How are new values and approaches institutionalised? Do funding relationships and organisational marketing influence change? This section explores the idea that, despite a number of important institutional innovations in the 1990s, reflexive relations between organisational structures, fundraising and dominant narratives can work against the 'leopard changing its spots', and help explain the uneven development of participatory approaches within global conservation.

Origins

The original objective in founding WWF was to raise money for international conservation initiatives (Huxley, 1993; McCormick, 1995). Huxley (ibid.) describes how many of WWF's founders and early trustees were drawn from European, North American and Asian aristocracy and royalty, government, premier business, finance and advertising companies. Business contacts and tactics were (and still are) strategically employed to raise WWF's profile and funds for conservation. While there have been important changes in the organisation's identity since the beginning of the 1990s, its origins highlight the fact that it was established primarily as a fundraising organisation, and its success in raising funds helps to explain its neo-corporatist identity which persists today. As Jordan and Maloney (1997) argue, the influence of business interests within contemporary environmental organisations helps explain the logic of many of their corporate structures and processes. This in itself does not preclude the institutionalisation of new approaches to conservation, but it has a number of implications, discussed further below.

WWF was constituted and registered as a foundation under Swiss law in 1961. It is governed by an International Board of Trustees, which oversees four main board committees and various sub-committees, which in turn constitute the primary decision-making units. The Board of Trustees decides on its own procedures and issues by-laws governing the organisation, administration and activities. Members of WWF's International Board and committees are nominated from within and coopted to join committees. This confers a basic hierarchical organisational structure on

WWF. This is in contrast to associations, or other democratic membership organisations associated with new social movements and/or the environment, which prefer more open, democratic and decentralised structures that are more in tune with the participatory tendencies of their supporters (Dalton & Keuchler, 1990; Dalton, 1994).

Structures and Decision-Making

The International Board consists of the WWF International President, and about 20 other members.[i] It oversees the network, delegates responsibilities to committees and ratifies proposals made by those committees. In practice, the Board and its members do not usually play an active role in decisions concerning conservation policies. Industry and business interests have always been very strongly represented on the Board, although trustee composition has changed considerably over the last 35 years to accommodate the interests of WWF's National Organisations. Top WWF positions frequently go to those with political or business acumen, such as the former directors of WWF International and WWF UK. While they successfully raised millions for conservation, many employees believe they fail to reflect the underlying beliefs of their staff and supporters, and align the organisation with the wrong social networks and sources of income (Barker, 1990; McPhail, 1990; Hudson, 1995). Attitudes towards WWF's relationship with business and industry vary widely within the organisation. To some, the alignment strongly connects WWF to the corporate sector, which sometimes seems to be at odds with WWF's other goals of lobbying in opposition to the corporate system. Others view it as a means of influencing business practices for the better.

The hierarchical organisational structure of WWF has helped it raise money and mobilise supporters and other resources efficiently, but it confers a decision-making structure which can make it difficult to institutionalise new patterns of representation and accountability in global conservation. For example, the Programme Committee, along with its various regional sub-committees (which advise the International Board and National Organisations on WWF's conservation programme and policies) has generally consisted of northern representatives, from the WWF National Organisations, helping to institutionalise northern perceptions, values and interests in planning. During the 1990s, attempts to rectify this pattern of representation were initiated by the current Director-General. For example, the first Asian head of the WWF Asia regional programme was employed in 1994, while the first African head of the African regional

i. WWF International President and 24 other members as of February 2001. See Annex 2 for a list of members.

programme was employed in 1998 (WWF, 1998). To redress the balance further, revision of the programme committee membership is planned from the year 2000.[j]

There can also be pressure on committees to align themselves with the interests of richer WWF National Organisation donors from the North. Where these interests are responsive to more traditional values and target-driven activities, such relationships can override the development of more participatory approaches at both policy and field level. On the other hand, participatory approaches to conservation are increasingly supported and funded by a number of National Organisation donors, such as WWF Switzerland.

WWF's basic organisational structure does not preclude broader-based decision-making. For example, forest conservation policy within WWF is based on the participation of members of a forest advisory group of some 100 members distributed throughout the network, along with participation from organisations such as IUCN and independent advisors. The group is regionally balanced, and the chair of the group rotates to avoid regional bias. The development of regional forest policy has also been devolved to regional-level teams. However, problems of representation do arise if there are limited funds to travel; when discussions are dominated by a core group; or when national offices develop policy recommendations without broader consultation. In general, broader-based decision-making helps ensure buy-in to policy, and greater legitimacy than if it were defined by a few northern experts alone. International forest policy development is also characterised by much inter-NGO networking and collaboration with other environmental and human rights groups. For example, WWF has been closely involved with, and supportive of, some participatory initiatives in global forest conservation, for example, the Forest Stewardship Council, which puts more emphasis on local and regional participation in deciding good forest management.

At a regional and country level, strategic plans are drawn up with the heads of the WWF Programme Offices (often expatriate) in collaboration with local staff and other specialists. Since the mid-1990s, WWF has undergone a process of reorganisation and decentralisation in order to develop more participatory conservation programmes. It has increased its staff capacity in countries where it works, and given them more responsibility in developing, negotiating, funding and administering the programme. Part of the thinking is to allow the organisation to

j. See Annex 1 for a description of the Programme Committee (PC) membership as of February 2001. As per its Terms of Reference, approved in 1999, the main role of the Programme Committee is to 'set priorities and targets for the Global Conservation Programme; provide strategic advice on conservation policies to the WWF International Board; approve WWF programme priorities proposed by Subcommittees, Advisory Groups and Campaigns; and review major Network developments. Additionally, the PC advises the WWF International Board and National Organisations (NOs) on the WWF Network's development and support activities and provides input to the WWF Annual Conference programme'. (Programme Committee, Terms of Reference approved by the Board in June 1999).

engage more actively with local communities, governments and NGOs, and to be more responsive to local needs. However, the provision for decentralised and participatory planning is sometimes difficult to square with WWF's more top-down approaches, inherent in its campaigns with target-driven activities, and its ecoregional-based approach to planning, which underpins views of what should be conserved, where and how. It is also possible for WWF National Organisation donors to fund only their preferred elements of local programmes, leaving locally perceived priorities unfunded. This can constrain effective institutionalisation of participatory approaches at a country level.

At the field project level, WWF is increasingly adopting a stakeholder approach in conservation planning (Hails, 1996), and promotes working with many partners, including government officials, donors, business and industry, local NGOs and communities. However, international conservation organisations often assume the role of facilitator in these initiatives, despite having their own particular conservation interests, when in many cases neutral mediation is needed. The language of 'partnerships', while well intentioned, tends to portray all partners as equal, and thus obscures and de-politicises the conflicting interests of different actors in nature. Unless they address the effects of asymmetrical power relationships between partners, stakeholder approaches may serve to marginalise weaker groups further, making it more difficult to institutionalise participatory approaches to conservation planning and management.

In the past, recruitment policies in WWF have been biased towards northern personnel with natural science backgrounds. The organisation's historical emphasis on animal species conservation has been influenced by and reflected in the staff composition of its field programmes. For example, based on a 15% sample of field staff in 1993, some 75% of field staff were natural scientists (Pimbert, 1993). While these skills do not preclude an understanding of social, political and economic issues, it appears that social science skills have been undervalued, despite the incorporation of development concerns into conservation policy and practice in the early 1980s. Since the beginning of the 1990s WWF's International Secretariat has been far more attentive to the national composition of its personnel. However, despite its international staff profile, some southern employees claim that it can be difficult to get their voices heard in policy debate because decision-making is still dominated by fluent, white anglophones. Moreover, employing a wide range of nationalities does not necessarily provide an adequate context for ensuring that alternative approaches are reflected in policy, particularly those associated with social and environmental movements in the South. Southern employees are usually drawn from elite groups with language

skills, and are as distant from the poor as any northern employee (Oviedo, 1996). Language skills and cultural patterns of discourse can continue to be powerful tools for excluding alternative views.

The institutionalisation of new skills to address the demands of new approaches has developed unevenly during the 1990s. Examples include the establishment of a WWF ICDP training programme in the Asia/Pacific region in 1995 to help integrate social concerns into project planning and management in that area; the development of a new portfolio of ICDPs for tropical forests in 1996, with an explicit objective of being more open about problems and promoting an adaptive learning culture; and the establishment of People and Conservation Units at the International Secretariat and at WWF US since 1998. However, some claim that the human resources and financial support necessary to institutionalise socially oriented practices is inadequate to date, constraining the evolution of participatory approaches within the organisation. Ways of enhancing the institutionalisation of new approaches include: further improvements in staff recruitment policies to ensure more social science graduates, with the aim of balancing bio-science skills; the provision of more long-term core funding for units which address conservation with development approaches, and which often rely on short-term project money; the identification and support of (re) training needs of current and incoming staff; ensuring a better North-South personnel balance in policy and project positions; the development of equal career opportunities and reward systems for those with natural and social science skills; and the development and promotion of a more adaptive learning culture throughout the organisation.

Funding Conservation

Changing conservation approaches cannot be viewed outside fundraising and public relations concerns. Conservation organisations, like other organisations dependent on fundraising, are highly responsive to their dialogues with donors. As Soutter (1996: 165) puts it, 'Finding financial support for conservation is far more than the acquisition of funds. It defines, promotes, and perpetuates conservation itself'. Some fundraising experiences discussed below point to important reflexive relationships between fundraising strategies, organisational politics and policy development, which mediate the uptake of participatory approaches to conservation.

Analysts point out that many environmental groups prefer to have a large number of individual contributors or unrestricted funds, rather than government or corporate money, because this provides more room for manoeuvre, and frees the organisation

from donor control over how and where the money is spent (Bosso, 1995; Jordan & Maloney, 1997). The greatest source of income throughout the WWF network is individual donations, which in 1995 amounted to over 206 million Swiss francs (US$166 million). However, reliance on a large supporter base renders organisations extremely sensitive to the effects of negative publicity on subscriptions and donations, and may constrain the uptake of policies which support rural peoples. For example, there were fears about negative publicity generated by the Cook Report, a controversial television documentary broadcast in 1990. This criticised WWF's apparently non-committal stance on hunting and the ivory trade, and investigated WWF support of Safari businesses which killed wildlife. WWF argued that the money raised from hunting was ploughed back into helping people save the animals. The report attracted enormous publicity and generated widespread media coverage, not least because the then WWF President, Prince Philip, asked the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to intervene to prevent criticisms of its management being aired (Thynne, 1990). WWF was extremely worried about the potential negative implications of the bad publicity on fundraising, and about attacks from animal rights activists. WWF UK set up a ten-strong 'Greenline', a telephone hotline to reassure supporters after the criticisms, and sent out information packs in efforts to offset concern. A public relations consultant was hired at the time of the Cook report to preserve the image of WWF, and WWF UK went on the attack and put stories in the press explaining the complexities of conservation (Bateman, 1990). One charity consultant predicted that WWF could lose up to half its annual income through voluntary contributions (McCarthy, 1990). It should be noted, however, that some post-Cook Report media coverage within Britain actually supported WWF's sustainable use policies. This and many similar experiences highlight the important point that conservation groups are susceptible to the pressures of the northern media and animal rights supporters, who tend to equate environmental ethics with non-use. These pressures can work against the interests of local peoples, and can constrain the uptake of more people-oriented conservation approaches.

WWF has increasingly turned towards development aid money since the beginning of the 1990s in an attempt to secure funding for conservation. Government Aid Agency (GAA) income to WWF International has increased from less that 1% in 1989 to about 24% in 1998.[k] The funding criteria of various aid agencies (multilateral, bilateral and private) suggest that donor philosophy is increasingly people-centred and process-oriented. Donors frequently make funding for conservation dependent on

k.See footnote g for 2000 figures.

projects having clear poverty alleviation objectives. However, funds with strings attached are often resisted in WWF. For example, there have been complaints that some GAA funding schemes are 'completely under the control of fundamentalist social scientists', and that the emphasis on social policy issues marginalises the goal of ecosystem protection (Gartlan, 1997a: 3). While this does not represent the view of all WWF programme staff, it highlights a tension and a need to work towards greater mutual understanding and better negotiation of the divergent objectives of conservation and development agencies.

Contrary to public perception, WWF does not receive a high percentage of corporate finance. Income from corporate sources amounted to 7% in 1997.[l] WWF has two main objectives in working with industry: firstly it hopes to influence behaviour in corporations; secondly, it seeks relationships with industry to help finance conservation programmes. WWF is currently making concerted efforts to raise funds through major corporate sponsorship, which provides unrestricted funds. Some of the funds resulting from such deals go to support community-based conservation initiatives. However, such partnerships do raise important ethical questions for international conservation groups.

The environment–corporate relationship relies on and builds a mutual dependency between conservation and industry, and implicates the former in global capitalist growth. This relationship can be seen as providing a route for capital to enter its 'ecologic' or 'conservationist phase', which, according to some analysts, encroaches further on nature and people (Escobar, 1996). It can divert attention away from underlying economic processes and the consumerism that exacerbates environmental problems. It also has implications for how people and nature are marketed, discussed in more detail below.

Other patterns of resource mobilisation within WWF came under scrutiny in the 1980s and early 1990s. It was revealed that investments, supplying earned income, had not taken into account social and ethical concerns (Brown, 1990a, b, c). WWF's association with less reputable political figures through membership of its private nature trust, the 1001 Club (Ellis, 1994; Bonner, 1993), also called into question the social principles of its funding policies. While such patterns of funding may not have a direct effect on the development of people-oriented conservation practices, they highlight the fact that it is no longer acceptable for charities to make funding decisions in a moral and social vacuum. Since the beginning of the 1990s WWF has been reviewing its investment policies.

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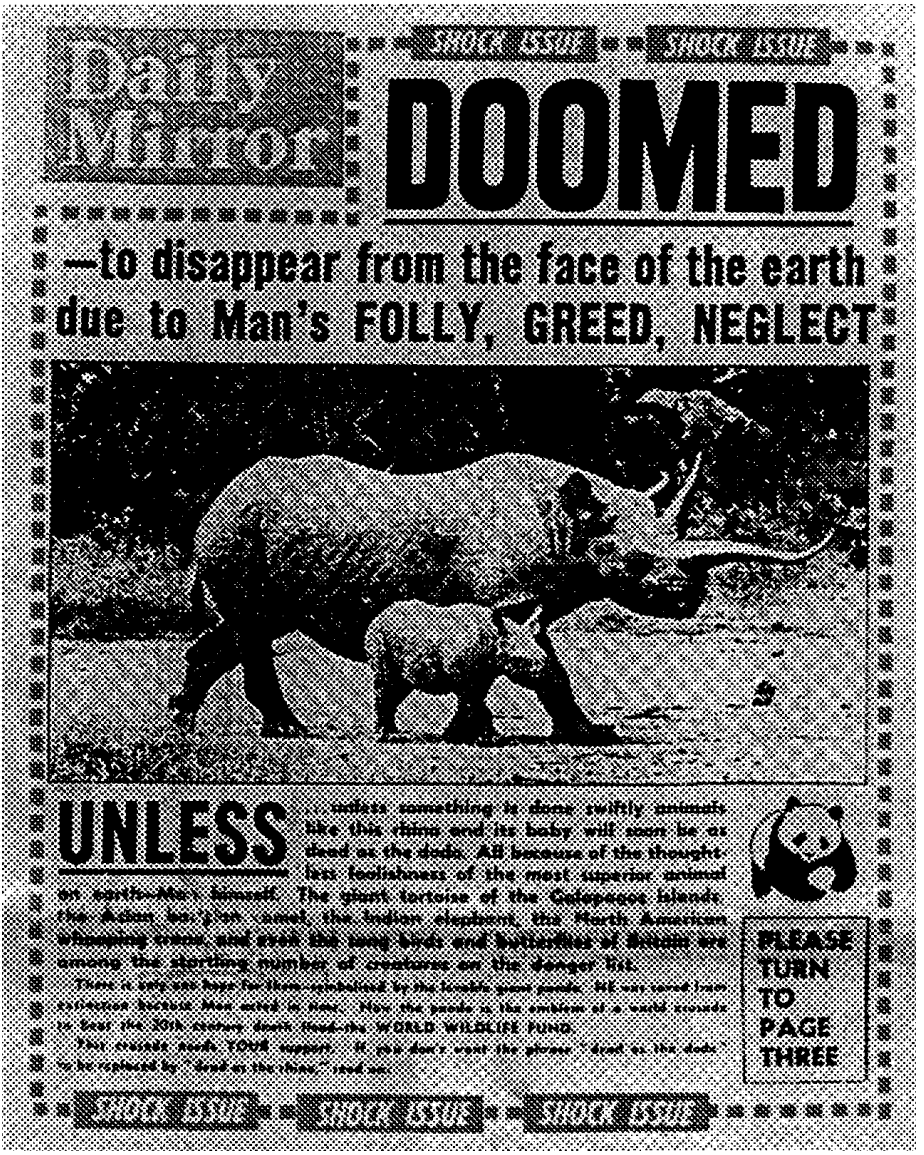
l. See footnote g for 2000 figures.

PLATE 4



Shock Issue of the *Daily Mirror* which launched WWF in 1961

Marketing Conservation

To mobilise large funds, conservation groups need to appeal to public interests and values in the North. In a feature entitled 'How they made a Million' (WWF News No. 2, 1979), a former WWF UK Director argued, 'WWF is a business like any other – except what is being marketed is a concept rather than a product'. Fundraisers and campaigners acknowledge that some representations of nature work better than others, and in the past they have deliberately used disaster stories and images to raise money. In the WWF's first appeal, business contacts were strategically used to launch a 'shock issue' of the *Daily Mirror* in October 1961. Seven pages were devoted to the threat to wildlife. The front page featured a picture of a rhino and her calf, with the headline 'DOOMED to disappear from the face of the earth due to man's FOLLY, NEGLECT AND GREED' – unless readers supported WWF. The *Daily Mirror* appeal raised £50,000 (approximately US$75,000 at 2001 exchange rates), which helped launch WWF in 1961. Similarly, a WWF conservation film in 1986 entitled *A film about your future* included images presenting the continent of Africa overlaid with a picture of the extinct dodo. Such images epitomise and help reproduce the classic crisis narratives discussed earlier. Crisis images and narratives are often preferred because they have a market advantage – they are good for business. In explaining their financial success, the former WWF UK Director claimed that Britain is an animal-loving nation, and that WWF should not move too far away from the 'cuddly panda' image to achieve its goals (WWF News No. 2, 1979). Although some fundraisers know about the conflicts of interests between local people and animals, and care about the human dimension, they are not convinced that the public in the rich world do; hence the panda image (North, 1990).

Since the 1980s fundraisers have often used glamorous and sometimes misleading images of indigenous peoples for marketing conservation, reflecting important changes in the way local people are inserted into conservation narratives. However, new tactics are contentious in other respects. Rather than being presented as destroyers of nature, local and indigenous peoples are now often shown as resources for, or intermediaries in, the new phase of global conservation. The images continue to imply western (but decentralised) control and management of the global environment.

The new heterogeneity of conservation constructions and expressions is a positive marketing advantage to fundraising groups. The multiple assemblages and conceptualisations of nature and local people are produced and packaged for different audiences who consume and participate in different meanings. Nature and people are treated as resources for these constructions, but the images are not necessarily

anchored to specific rural groups articulating their own needs or moral demands. From this perspective 'nature', 'conservation' and 'indigenous people' may be considered a post-modern collage or hyper-real montage, which is subject to the different and changing interpretations of audiences.[15] The meanings are never fixed or stable. Conservation can mean protected areas, or livelihoods, or flagship mammals, or indigenous people. The collage is vulnerable to interpretations of exploitation, but also of emancipation of both people and nature. The very incoherence of different conceptualisations allows for mass market manipulation. Many of the images are contested by indigenous people themselves because they obscure alternative meanings about nature, and environmental problems and solutions are framed in ways which fail to acknowledge their land claims and human rights (Lasimbang, 1995; IWGIA, 1996) – see Box 2 and Plate 5.

WWF has successfully drawn attention to nature conservation and the organisation itself through a remarkable series of advertising, fundraising, campaigning and communications events. They have launched international stamp and coin collections; coopted well-known celebrities onto WWF boards to serve as 'panda diplomats'; sponsored national and international walks, marches, treks and rally drives; borrowed religious values for conservation through the Assisi Declarations at WWF's 25th Anniversary in 1986; commissioned musicals and concerts and developed partnerships with pop groups; sought connections with famous artists, sculptors, musicians, film makers and landscape gardeners; and promoted school education and teacher training for conservation. For example, in WWF's Panda Campaign in 1981, newspapers and international magazines donated a quarter of a million dollars in free advertising space, reaching an readership of well over 15 million. Advertising space was made available in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Playboy*, *International Herald Tribune*, *National Geographic*, *Scientific American*, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *Geo* and *Africa Now*. WWF conservation campaigns received nearly US$6 million in complementary advertising placements in the same year. The placement of advertisements was coordinated by Ogilvy and Mather International Media, Ltd (WWF News No. 14, 1981), and Ogilvy himself was a WWF Board member in the 1980s.

Images of nature and conservation in photography, film and television are intricately bound up with our patterns of environmental knowledge in the West (Beinhart, 1998). The marketing strategies of well-resourced conservation organisations enable these images, which appeal mainly to European and American audiences, to be brought into the heart of popular culture and to play an important role in mediating our knowledge. However, it is important to ask how far conservation fundraising images, supported by corporate sponsorship and globalised through media networks,

BOX 2

Participatory Initiatives in Conservation: Indigenous Peoples and Conservation

WWF's statement of principles on indigenous peoples (WWF, 1996b) is the first official conservation publication explicitly to endorse and promote indigenous peoples' rights as set out in international and national law and other international instruments. It addresses rights to resources, lands, territories, intellectual property, cultural heritage, self-development, self-government, technologies, and partnerships between WWF and indigenous peoples. WWF has been actively involved with indigenous peoples groups for a number of years, particularly in Latin America, the South Pacific and the Arctic, and funded representatives of some groups to attend ITTO (International Tropical Timber Organisation) conferences in the early 1990s. However, the policy work underpinning the statement of principles in the mid-1990s was largely catalysed by concerns over widespread bad publicity resulting from advertisements using images of indigenous people, which interrupted WWF's work in the Amazon. It is acknowledged that the motive for policy development was driven by a need to revamp the image of the organisation, as much as by an institutional desire to address these issues. Nevertheless, the incident provided a window of opportunity for various staff to extend social policy commitments in this sphere. Policy development consisted of regular meetings with representatives of the indigenous peoples alliance, extensive networking with other groups involved with social and indigenous peoples issues, as well as a consultation process throughout the WWF network. The statement has been welcomed by indigenous peoples, although the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples continues to express concern about a number of international conservation projects which are resented by indigenous peoples, and are not being developed in conformity with WWF's new principles (IWGIA, 1996: 158). However, the negotiation process and promotion of the statement continues to provide space for creative dialogue between WWF and indigenous peoples. This work helped prompt other innovations, such as the establishment of a People and Conservation Unit in 1998 at WWF International.[m]

m. In 1999 WWF also adopted a policy statement, jointly with IUCN and WCPA, on indigenous and traditional peoples and protected areas (WWF, IUCN & WCPA, 1999. *Principles and Guidelines on Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and Protected Areas*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN).

PLATE 5

'Our Man for Conservation'

outdo local representations, making it more difficult for alternative voices to be heard, and to what extent this works against the interests of rural peoples. An alternative and more participatory approach to fundraising and marketing might be to provide support for rural peoples to speak for themselves.

The discussion above reflects a further axis of difference within WWF, particularly between those in the conservation programme and the fundraisers and communicators. Fundraisers have different objectives and also very different criteria of success. They value income, donations, numbers of supporters, quotes in newspapers and maintaining the high profile of WWF. Their principal fears are losing resources and supporters. From their perspective, conservation must be marketed and packaged to secure income, and thus must appeal to (mainly) northern donors. As one director put it, 'Rule number one is: don't upset the donors'.

In contrast, many programme staff are concerned that policy is driven too much by the demands of donors and pressure to maintain a good public image, rather than by field issues. According to others, the internal organisation of WWF is still structured around outdated views of conservation because of its dependency on and strong links with individual and business funders. Many feel that their ideas are filtered out, and that the communicators are 'selling conservation products off the shelf that aren't actually available or doable in practice'. This tension highlights the difficulty of reconciling the divergent realities and demands of different groups within the same organisation. But it also highlights the need for more discussion concerning the roles and responsibilities of modern conservation organisations in representing alternative conservation perceptions and models through their media outlets.

In summary, it is important to situate changing conservation practices within the structural context of WWF as a 'nature' conservation organisation dominated by scientific and cosmocentric people–conservation narratives, supported by wider social networks. The fundraising and marketing objectives of the organisation also condition change. Orthodox, but financially lucrative, crisis narratives are deeply embedded within fundraising strategies, partly because they are good for business. These fundraising strategies help reproduce mutually reinforcing relationships between western environmental values and knowledge, organisational structures and processes and policy discourses. However, as the case study has attempted to show, organisations are neither monolithic nor inflexible, and alternative narratives, patterns of decision-making and project styles have been adapted and reworked to the advantage of WWF and some rural peoples.

Discussion: Conservation Futures? In the Mind, On the Ground

The classic conservation narrative and the radical counter-narratives discussed earlier reflect and are steered by epistemological differences. These are concerned with how environmental 'knowledge' is and should be generated, evaluated and legitimised, and they have a number of practical implications for project interventions.

Classic conservation and its more recent transformations have developed on the basis of a positivist epistemology. This treats nature, biodiversity and ecological problems as objects existing in their own right, which can be researched and explained by objective scientific principles and general laws. Conservation solutions to these perceived environmental problems are seen to be outside ideology and independent of culture. There is currently a powerful tendency within conservation organisations to retreat to scientific orthodoxy. There is a clear desire to augment and to revamp conservation as a scientific enterprise, and to re-establish the authority of the conservation biologist over that of the social scientist (Gartlan, 1997a, b; Guha, 1997; Janzen, 1986). When combined with nature ethics, natural science and its positivist method generates formidable intellectual and moral power against alternative approaches and knowledge systems. Why should this powerful knowledge acknowledge other epistemologies? Other approaches, whether aesthetic, moral or intuitive, seem to threaten the professional cultures of many conservation staff.

Alternative epistemologies, on the other hand, challenge the 'truth' claims of orthodox science and the classic conservation approaches. Counter-narratives are disposed, instead, towards a constructivist ontology of nature and problems. Nature and environmental problems are viewed as socially conditioned and contingent, and as artifacts which can only be understood in terms of dynamic local, ecological and social histories and meanings. This perspective challenges global crisis narratives and celebrates diversity, calling for more questions, uncertainties and plural definitions of nature. When combined with radical anthropocentric values of self-determination and social justice, it creates an equally robust intellectual and ethical case against global systems of knowledge and management.

These differences are also reflected in questions concerning the level or scale at which environmental and development analysis, planning, interventions or support are, or should be, framed. International conservation programmes are more inclined to begin with global or macro levels of analysis, seeking to understand global biodiversity and extinction patterns, global ecological systems and so on. Conservation solutions are framed in terms of our global heritage, planetary health and concern for our common future, which provide a justification for centralised planning and global environmental management systems. Conservation and development counter-narratives, on the other hand, developed on the basis of new epistemologies, tend to favour a focus on the micro or local levels. They celebrate the subjective and diverse, and emphasise the role of culture and local meanings, thereby undermining the dominant global approaches to planning and management. In conservation they emphasise the prerogatives of local right holders, and downplay or even oppose the interests of global stakeholders.

Approaches based on macro, global scales often obscure the extent to which ecological and social processes are mutually constituted at local levels. Emphasis on the common future of mankind subordinates the difficult political questions of who benefits and loses from centralised management systems. To date, local knowledge, meanings and southern environmental ethics have not usually counted in global conservation planning. Local definitions of nature have rarely formed a basis for an alternative conservation. Rather, international groups have played an important role in the proliferation of global environmental meanings through their international programme of projects and links with governments, the business community, scientific research institutes and media outlets. The slogan 'think global, act local' has all too easily become the means whereby the local has been harnessed to support global interests, as epitomised by the conservation and development narratives described here. But it is important to recognise that there are also contested environmental meanings at a local level, and problems with 'green-washing' local environmental practices. An exclusive focus on local levels of analysis generates narrow interpretations of nature and makes it difficult to reach beyond local sites and practices to explain the intricate and complex interrelationships between local practices and global systems. Such restricted views may fail to perceive the extent of global environmental destruction. As Jackson (1997a) has asked, in exploding the myth or cannon of global understandings, why only explode one cannon?

Neither perspective is without its problems, and it is important to adopt a critical stance towards the extremes of both. Research into scientific method, uncertainty and risk has shown that there are no single, definitive, sound scientific answers

to environmental problems. Results and analyses are highly sensitive to how debates are framed. It seems unscientific to simply reassert the authority of conservation science in the context of so much uncertainty. On the other hand, unqualified epistemological and cultural relativism, with diverse and often polarised visions of nature, alongside the view that 'anything goes', could be biologically harmful in the long run. It is simply not known whether such radical relativism is biologically good enough to sustain adaptive evolution. To ask: 'Is there a global ecological crisis?' or 'Will the tiger go extinct?' is to pose defensible modernist questions, requiring a global knowledge of habitats, gene pools and reproductive rates, and modernist criteria of testing hypotheses against the evidence. The alternative questions: 'A crisis for whom?', 'Who is defining the problem?' and 'Whose knowledge counts?' are equally valid, but difficult to reconcile with the former.

Can there be mutual learning and collaboration between such diverse epistemologies and approaches? This is primarily an intellectual and philosophical question which, in practice, is determined politically, and requires sustained pressure from those who believe that various environmental knowledge frameworks should be considered and arbitrated democratically, even if they are difficult to integrate epistemologically. However, the future of conservation could be enriched by learning from the dialectic between local and global levels of analysis, and working towards a constructive, rather than a polarised, dialogue across the divide. Promoting the democratisation of science and systems for negotiating knowledge may allow an accommodation of different perspectives (Leach & Mearns, 1996). Whether international conservation can help facilitate a more equal or level playing field on which different scales of analysis and types of knowledge can be brokered and negotiated in the future remains to be seen.

People-Oriented Conservation: Progress or Enhanced Control?

This question, raised in the introduction, arises from radically different interpretations of conservation policies and practices, and is equally pertinent to development organisations involved in participatory natural resource management. Do changing conservation discourses and practices represent socially progressive trends, or are they new ways of legitimising global environmental and development interventions, making new policies and practices more refined forms of technocratic control over people and nature? The latter perspective suggests an insidious development because control is concealed within and behind notions and labels which imply the contrary: community-based initiatives, participation, improved livelihoods and so on. The Foucauldian view of progress, referred to earlier[4], is a powerful argument worthy of

scrutiny, but how defensible is it? I would argue that the sceptical view of progress in people-oriented conservation provides opportunities for critical analysis, but also constrains future action.

Various post-modern themes such as the power/knowledge concept and the critique of progress provide a powerful analysis of people-oriented conservation. Such perspectives draw attention to how social, political and historical factors play a role in constructing conservation knowledge. They indicate how conservation knowledge has acquired authority and served particular social interests, and how it is institutionalised within organisational structures and practices. They draw attention to how scientific and technical knowledge, which treats nature as being objective, natural and neutral, leads to the instrumentalisation of people, who are perceived as a resource for conservation defined from above. They help examine how alternative narratives can be resisted and subordinated. Since the loci of power are seen in everyday relationships, post-modern notions of power also provide a critique of populist approaches to conservation and development, since no project, however participatory, can be seen outside the field of power relationships.

However, many post-modern themes bring with them their own inconsistencies and paradoxes, and are increasingly criticised by those dissatisfied with post-modernism's lack of direction and ethical anchorage. Some post-modernists focus on the dark side of the Enlightenment, its exclusions and the concealed effects of reason and progress (Rosenau, 1992; Reed, 1996; Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). It is not a question of who participates in it – post-modernists see the entire project as being wrong. They suspect replacement of old illusions with new ones. They reject reflection upon modernity and the possibility of advancement. They cannot provide an agenda for a constructive alternative. The application of these ideas to people-oriented approaches to conservation is subject to the same constraints. On their own, post-modern interpretations imply the absence of a thinkable future for conservation. So-called improvements in policy and practice are characterised by, and degenerate into, further forms of oppression. Without attempting to reconstruct some modern elements, the more sceptical post-modern themes lack direction and social relevance.

This negative interpretation of progress is also characterised by other problems. Paradoxically, while celebrating alternative plural meanings, it appears to provide only one totalising account of change. All initiatives are cast in the same light. It sees only failed modernity and more technocratic control. But are we seriously to accept that there are no differences between exclusionary conservation, and that which promotes local involvement and participatory decision-making? Is the entire project flawed?

An alternative perspective is to see modernity (or progress) as a paradox itself. While also critical of modernity, the influential social philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, sees the modern project as sick (Habermas, 1985, 1987) but works for its reconstruction. In his own critique of Foucault, he argues that progress is double-edged – and that the process of securing freedom also endangers it. In terms of conservation, this suggests that the very means for improving conservation practices and relationships with local people may also reproduce subtle ways of coopting people and extending dominant power/knowledge configurations. But while critical, this perspective does provide a basis for future action. It does not mean that it is not worth trying to improve.

Conclusion: Working Towards Mutual Understanding

There have been many significant changes in global conservation discourses and practices within the last twenty years, but these do not imply that conservation has radically changed its goals. Indeed, many personnel working in global conservation would adamantly defend the position that they should not change their goals. Rather, the case study suggests that, in general, conservation has absorbed the language and approaches of participatory natural resource management into its own narratives. To borrow Burrell's (1996) phrase, there has been a 'paradigm translation' or appropriation within international conservation. The new developments have been prompted by many internal and external factors, and have allowed international conservation organisations to re-legitimise their global programmes. Further institutional reorientation is opposed on ideological and epistemological grounds, constrained by organisational structures and influenced by the reflexive relationships between the imperatives of fundraising and conservation approaches. In other words, to use the metaphors provided by Kipling's (1958) story 'How the Leopard got its Spots', the leopard developed spots as a necessary camouflage to hunt its prey, but it is unlikely to change them again because it is quite content as it is. However, in contrast to more sceptical post-modern interpretations, I argue that the paradigm translation cannot be viewed as strictly technocratic or insidious. Many practitioners deliberately attempt to redress the social inadequacies of older conservation styles, and seek to integrate social concerns into conservation at both a policy and field level. Compared to the approaches of the 1960s and 1970s, the new approaches provide many more opportunities for rural peoples in negotiating a middle ground of shared interests. The critique does not imply that these approaches should not be pursued or improved.

Is there a way of steering a course between what Reed (1996: 51) refers to as the 'blandishments of globalism' and the 'limitations of localism' implied by the different conservation narratives and epistemologies discussed earlier? Reed suggests that there is a need to build on the intellectual pluralism that the post-modern critique has made possible, but that incommensurability between different worldviews must be avoided. It is increasingly important to work for interaction and mutual learning between traditions. From this perspective, the critique of orthodox natural science is necessary but does not mean that the latter is unimportant, or that global knowledge

is worthless. The deconstruction of classic perceptions of people–environment change is important, but does not mean that serious environmental degradation does not exist. The critique of modernity is crucial but does not mean that progress is not worth pursuing. Sceptical views of people-oriented conservation are valuable but should not prevent efforts to improve. In short, we require ways of thinking about both modern and post-modern themes at once.

One of the goals of Jurgen Habermas is to recover a broader conception of rationality. He calls for the inclusion of more groups in social determination, and the provision of more open fora of expression to enable mutual understanding. As so much research into scientific method has illustrated, conservation issues cannot be treated as a matter of sound science alone. They involve debate on public values and interests as well as expert opinion within many different fora. There are some signs that conservation planning is adopting broader-based social determination, which orthodox approaches have found hard to accommodate. This will continue to provide a socially legitimate basis for conservation approaches in the future. This development will depend on a deliberate attempt to build bridges between a wide range of disciplines and scientific approaches, organisations, donors, programmes and projects and rural people, as well as developing an adaptive learning culture within organisations. However, the goal is not simply to make decision-making more legitimate or effective, but to help reclaim reason itself from the limitations of technocracy, and to help establish more integral worldviews.

Annex 1:
Membership of WWF's Programme Committee (PC) as of February 2001

Category	Description	Current/Proposed Member
1.	The Chairperson of PC, who is appointed by the International Board	Chair
2.(i)	International Board (up to three members or Board nominees)	Fundacion Vida Silvestre, Argentina
2.(ii)	Four National Organisations (NOs) which have made the most significant contribution to the International Programme over the last two years (excluding Government Aid Agency funds)	WWF NL WWF US WWF UK WWF Germany
2.(iii)	One representative from each NO (excluding those qualifying in (ii) above) elected by, and from among, the NOs in each of the four geographical groupings	Group A: WWF Finland Group B: WWF Switzerland Group C: WWF South Africa Group D: WWF Australia
2.(iv)	Up to two further NO/PO (Programme Office) representatives coopted by PC to achieve better regional representation	WWF India WWF Pakistan
2.(v)	Up to two further NO/PO representatives coopted by PC to provide conservation advice and/or management and financial advice	WWF Canada WWF Thailand PO
2.(vi)	One representative may be coopted by PC from among the Associate Organisations	Nigerian Conservation Foundation
2.(vii)	One representative may be coopted by PC from the Council of the PO Representatives	WWF Madagascar PO
2.(viii)	Sub-committee Chairs (if not already member of PC)	Europe and Middle East Sub-committee
3.	Director-General, who serves as an ex-officio member	WWF International

Annex 2:
WWF International Board of Trustees 2001

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Endnotes

(1) For examples of people-oriented approaches to international conservation since the 1980s see: IUCN, WWF & UNEP (1981); IUCN, WWF & UNEP (1991); WRI, IUCN & UNEP (1992); IUCN (1993); Robinson (1993); WWF (1993a, b, c); WWF (1994); WWF (1996a, d); WWF (1997); Borrini-Feyerabend (1997). Contemporary thinking about people-oriented conservation has several of its roots in wider traditions of populist thought (see Sandbrook, R. in Pye Smith & Borrini-Feyerabend, 1994). Detailed histories of conservation in India and South Africa also reveal several conflicts between the more humanitarian thinkers and others within colonial regimes (Grove, 1987, 1992; Kitching, 1982). Within the international conservation movement people-oriented approaches were important themes in the Stockholm Conference in 1972, the Bali Conference in 1982 and the Ottawa Conference in 1986. For examples of earlier articulations of people-centred conservation see Dasmann (1976, 1977).

(2) As used in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the term 'biological diversity' has the following definition (IUCN, 1994): 'the variability among living organisms from all sources including inter alia, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems'.

(3) See, for example, Redclift and Benton (1994); Escobar (1995, 1996); Crush (1995); Blaikie (1996) and Leach and Mearns (1996).

(4) Foucault's (1980) power/knowledge concept expresses an interdependence of knowledge and social power. It challenges the idea that objective reality can be impartially observed, measured and known. Rather 'truth' and 'knowledge' are seen to be socially negotiated and constructed, are related to underlying social interests and power, and become institutionalised through practices. As Foucault explains about his work, 'I have been trying to make visible the constant articulation I think there is of power on knowledge and knowledge on power … the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information. One can understand nothing about economic science if one does not know how power and economic power are exercised in everyday life. The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power' (ibid.: 51–52). As Hoy (1986: 129) explains, 'The "is" connecting power and knowledge does not indicate that the relation of power and knowledge is one of predication such that knowledge leads to power. Rather, the relation is such that knowledge is not gained prior to and independently of the use to which it will be put in order to achieve power (whether over nature or over people), but is already a function of human interests and power relations …. . Foucault accordingly labels what he is studying "power/knowledge". The slash suggests that for his purposes power and knowledge are not to be studied separately'.

(5) Foucault does not impose a progressive perspective on the writing of history. In fact he reverses the commonly perceived notion of progress. Instead of seeing history as the 'rise of freedom', so-called progress has had the effect of increasing repression, social normalisation and domination of people and nature. These new forms of oppression are concealed behind concepts which imply the contrary (Hoy, 1986). Critiques of Foucault are addressed in the paper and help steer conclusions away from the more monolithic representations of progress to reclaim more positive interpretations of people-oriented conservation.

(6) Contemporary social science perspectives are characterised by several features broadly associated with post-modernism, which emphasises, among other things, the deconstruction of 'modern' worldviews or meta-narratives; discourse analysis; the relationship between power and knowledge which challenges the authority of orthodox science; alternative discourses and the processes by which they are resisted or appropriated; the challenge to 'modernity' as a progressive liberating force; simulations and hyper-reality; and questions of legitimacy and identity (Rosenau, 1992; Alvesson & Deetz, 1996; Blaikie, 1996). This paper draws on many of these perspectives to provide insights into changing conservation discourses and practices. Post-modern thought has also brought new challenges, inconsistencies and areas of contestation which are drawn on in the paper.

(7) Research has included: a wide range of interviews with conservation staff from both WWF and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) (within the text, statements in speech marks indicate responses in interviews); a review of over 2000 WWF conservation projects since 1961; a survey of field staff attitudes; an evaluation of 150 contemporary forest conservation projects; and seven field case studies. For the sake of clarity, this paper refers to 'WWF' projects within the main text. However, it is important to note that many field projects consist of several institutional associates, including partnerships between WWF and other international and national conservation and development NGOs; government aid agencies; and national protected area and national forest agencies. While this paper develops a social critique of changing conservation practices, it is not my intention to challenge the sincerity and dedication of individuals to their ideals, nor to undermine the final goals of WWF's Mission. The paper focuses on policy discourses, communities and practices in the mid-1990s, and does not explore changes after 1995 in detail. I have attempted to capture a range of views, rather than complete representation. This paper does not seek to recommend systematically how people-oriented conservation may be better practised. For more specific recommendations, see Jeanrenaud (1997a, 1999).

(8) The exploration of policy groups in this section draws upon notions used by Hass (1992) who develops the idea of 'epistemic communities'; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) who examine policy coalitions; and Hajer (1997) who refers to discourse coalitions.

(9) This section draws on insights from contemporary policy analysis, particularly Roe's (1991, 1995) concepts of policy narratives; Hoben's (1995) cultural policy paradigms; and recent sociological theory about the global environment (Redclift & Benton, 1994; Leach & Mearns, 1997). Such ideas help explore relationships between policy, knowledge and power relations. Policy narratives constitute identifiable bodies of belief and knowledge which stabilise decision-making and inform policy and practice, but which are often simplistic, misleading or incorrect. Crisis narratives are policy discourses which legitimise the claims of experts in managing resources, while counter-narratives aim to reverse old patterns of thinking. Attention is also given to discourse analyses, drawing on Wood's (1985) investigation of the power of 'labelling' in policy, and Apthorpe and Gasper's (1997) explanations of policy analysis tools. The basic assumptions of my interpretation are that: (i) Beliefs, values, knowledge and power are embedded in policy narratives. Narratives embody competing ideas about nature and environmental problems and solutions, and serve different social and institutional interests. (ii) Competing policies are promoted by policy communities which cut across organisational boundaries. (iii) Policy development is mediated by internal and external institutional structures.

(10) The project section draws on insights from contemporary development studies which challenge development interventions as legacies of the modern project (Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995; Blaikie, 1997; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Projects can be seen as patterns of institutionalised knowledge (Ferguson, 1990; Chambers, 1997; Porter et al., 1991); and as political arenas in themselves (Long & Long, 1991; Biggs, 1996; Jackson, 1997b). This section also draws upon critical reflections on notions of community and participatory development (Leach et al., 1997; Peters, 1996). The basic assumptions of the interpretation are that: (i) Conservation projects may be regarded as carriers of dominant conceptions of nature, people and conservation. (ii) Project outcomes are often unpredictable, and only partly and indirectly related to conservation policies. They are mediated by structure/agency interactions. (iii) Both project personnel and populations affected by conservation creatively use projects for their own ends.

(11) Projects which include social as well as environmental objectives and activities, such as rural development in the buffer zones of protected areas; ICDPs; community-based conservation; ethno-conservation; projects supporting land restitution; research into indigenous knowledge and practices; sustainable use programmes; conservation and development workshops; ethno-botanical surveys; and international policy projects with social objectives. This definition of people-oriented projects includes but is not limited to participatory approaches. It consequently uses a wide sieve, and the data probably give a more generous view of trends, compared with stricter interpretations of participatory natural resource management and conservation.

(12) For example: Dasmann (1984: 670); IUCN, UNEP & WWF (1991: 59–60); IIED (1994: 64); Little (1994: 347–372); Pimbert & Pretty (1995: 35); Borrini-Feyerabend (1997).

(13) For example: Drijver (1992); Brown & Wycoff-Baird (1992); Little (1994); Pimbert & Pretty (1995); Borrini-Feyerabend (1997).

(14) This section draws on insights from contemporary organisational analysis (Clegg et al., 1996). It makes use of Dalton's (1994) analysis of environmental organisations, which outlines how the identity, history and ideology of conservation organisations structure action and behaviour, Jordan and Maloney's (1997) conceptualisation of pressure groups as neo-corporate businesses and perspectives which view organisations as institutionalised patterns of knowledge and power (Reed, 1996). The basic assumptions of my interpretation are that: (i) Organisations are institutionalised structures of power, knowledge and control. (ii) Organisations are not monolithic. (iii) Organisational patterns and change are products of an interplay between agency and structure.

(15) Hyper-reality consists of constructed images which replace, rather than represent, the outside world. The model becomes more real than the reality it is supposed to represent, and people interact on the basis of images, illusion or simulation. It is a model 'of a real without origin or reality' (Baudrillard, 1983: 2).

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