Problematizing Neoliberal Biodiversity Conservation: Displaced and Disobedient Knowledge

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An Executive Summary for the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
>
> UN Declaration of Human Rights, article 19

Abstract

This workshop brought together a global network of scholars, applied practitioners, and community activists (recognizing that these are not mutually exclusive categories), who are concerned about the ways in which nature has been commodified and appropriated in the context of biodiversity conservation, and the ways in which local people and their livelihoods have been displaced and transformed in the process. Members of this group have documented these processes in many different parts of the world, but have experienced significant obstacles to making our analysis part of mainstream conversations about biodiversity conservation. We came together in order to more effectively conceptualize and communicate the global nature of the phenomena that we have researched, experienced and documented. The three-day workshop revolved around the experiential narratives of participants, structured according to key questions agreed upon prior to the event. From these narratives we identified common themes, as well as

significant differences, and sought to identify variables that might account for these. We also worked together to think through the most effective avenues for highlighting these problems and considering solutions. These included strengthening existing networks of scholars, practitioners, activists, and local people who are concerned with the displacement effects of conservation policy and practice, as well as the creation of new ones. We also hope to build on the unique skills and perspectives of network members to explore solutions to environmental problems that are holistic, inclusive, equitable, and ecologically sound. A major element of this vision is a multifaceted publication and information-sharing strategy, including the creation of an interactive online forum to allow for freer and more inclusive exchanges of information and ideas. Our vision is that these networks and forums will inform and influence a convergence of biodiversity conservation and environmental justice in which equity and ecology are inextricably linked.

Preamble

We wish to disseminate and receive information, ideas, and opinions about the intersection of environmentalism and social justice in the context of global biodiversity conservation.

Our ability to do so is significantly and systematically impeded by conditions and interests related to the ways in which biodiversity conservation is currently imagined and implemented.

We think that the free dissemination and reception of information is not only a basic right, but also is crucial for the sustenance of healthy ecosystems.

People are part of ecosystems, but arguably we are manifesting our relationships with global ecosystems in increasingly destructive ways, linked with rapid globalization processes and accompanying inequities in land and resource distribution, as well as the reduction of diversity in all spheres of organization (biological, cultural, linguistic). More complex thought and information is needed in order to adjust our relationships with the non-human world, involving all human beings as teachers and learners in the effort to affirm the indispensability of both diversity and democracy for planetary socio-ecological health.

Workshop and Network History

All the participants in the *Disobedient knowledge* Workshop have significant background and direct experience with biodiversity conservation in diverse settings around the world (Appendix 1 lists the workshop participants). Some are researchers who have documented and analyzed specific conservation interventions and the BINGOs (Big Conservation NGOs) that sponsor them, others have worked for these organization and government agencies or for smaller NGOs funded by them, and others are community activists. Several participants have occupied more than one of these categories in the course of their careers.

Almost all the workshop participants reported a key common experience, which was an essential reason for them becoming part of the *Disobedient Knowledge* Workshop. We had become involved in conservation as researchers, practitioners or activists because we were and are deeply committed to the sustenance of environmental health. Over time, however, we began to see that our observations and values seemed to be radically out of step with the conservation organizations/agencies we were working for and/or observing. This was especially true at the intersection of conservation policy and practice with local human needs and desires, since much conservation work seemed to be undermining and displacing local communities, livelihoods and lifeworlds. As Juanita Sundberg pointed out in the course of the workshop, conservation consistently is associated with the perpetuation of inequality in almost every part of the world. We also had become concerned that BINGOs appeared more focused on institutional growth and the capture of funding than with actual conservation outcomes, and that conservation increasingly was associated with capitalist expansion and the spread of extractive enterprise. From these observations we independently arrived at a view that mainstream conservation ironically was contributing to conditions and relationships that actually are harmful to the environment.

Another experience that the workshop participants shared was finding our voices silenced and censured when we talked and wrote about these concerns in public forums. In some cases this silencing involved threats of legal action, and in one case being contacted by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. It also involved threatened and actual loss of employment and/or funding. Several workshop participants related stories of receiving aggressive and abusive mail,

as well as experiencing various forms of verbal harassment and abuse, including at public meetings and being 'flamed' on online listserves. Many of us also experienced various forms of character defamation. In some cases the attacks were so numerous, and came from so many different quarters, that the recipient felt certain they were orchestrated in some way. Over time these attacks frequently had the effect of isolating and demoralizing their recipient, eliciting sustained self-questioning regarding what they had observed and been told in the field.

These common experiences are important on at least two levels. First, they reveal the extent to which vested interests operating in the context of global conservation will go to protect themselves from critical perspectives and damaging information. Second, they were an essential catalyst for both this workshop and for the network/working group that is thereby materialising. Two initiatives in particular were especially important antecedents to the Washington workshop:

1) In Autumn of 2004, Mac Chapin published an article in *Worldwatch* entitled "A Challenge to Conservationists". The article was the first major public airing of the concerns briefly outlined above. It revealed in very specific terms the inconsistencies and paradoxes plaguing the conservation industry. It generated more written responses from readers than any article in *Worldwatch*'s history, and also helped many of us who were writing and talking about these problems to realize the we were not alone. Chapin was a key participant in the Washington *Disobedient Knowledge* Workshop.

2) In Spring of 2006, Sian Sullivan, Tor Benjaminson and Hanne Svarstad organized a small workshop at the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, entitled *Community-based conservation and protected areas in Africa: exertions of sanctions against 'disobedient' knowledge producers* (for the workshop call-out, see Appendix 2). At this event, several of us recounted and analyzed our experiences of effectively being disciplined as 'disobedient knowledge' producers in the context of biodiversity conservation, thereby beginning a process of drawing parallels and patterns between disparate experiences in this arena.

Throughout 2006 and 2007 these two initiatives were beginning to catalyze larger networks of people concerned with these problems. Chapin's article, although studiously ignored and censored in the context of mainstream conservation[1], was generating significant networking between concerned critics. A number of these individuals contacted Chapin directly, who in turn put them in touch with Igoe. Meanwhile, the ideas of the original disobedient knowledge workshop were continuing to brew. A number of conversations and correspondences suggested that it was time to try again, and in autumn 2007 Igoe and Sullivan submitted a proposal to the Wenner-Gren Foundation asking for funding to bring together a group of anthropologists concerned about these issues. Of course, our concerns always extended beyond the realms of academia and anthropology, and ultimately we hoped to bring together a much more diverse group. Fortunately funding from IIED's Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program helped to make this vision a reality, allowing us to include applied practitioners and community activists from around the world. At future events we hope that funding will become available to include more community members.

By all of the standards we set ourselves, the event was a tremendous success. First, it allowed us to spend time together, comparing notes, and identifying key variables that emerged from our diverse experiences and endeavors. This included 20 diverse and empirically rich presentations on the challenges of biodiversity conservation (see Appendix 3). From these we were able to identify key themes that define these problems around the world, and which represent essential areas for future research, action, and policy-making. Finally, we were able to use these conversations to begin thinking about strategy and making concrete plans regarding the next steps to be taken in documenting and addressing the problems with which we are collectively concerned, as well as in promoting transparent and participatory conversations about these issues and what might be done by this network to intervene. All of these matters will be explained in brief in the remainder of this summary and elaborated in detail in future publications and web projects that we hope will be produced and distributed in part by IIED.

[1]For instance, when Dan Brockington, Jim Igoe and Kai Schmidt-Soltau submitted an article to *Conservation Biology* entitled 'How Has Mac Chapin's Challenge to Conservationists Influenced Biodiversity Conservation", they were informed that the title was too inflammatory for the journal. The article ultimately appeared under the title 'Conservation, Human Rights, and Poverty Reduction', *Conservation Biology* 20: 250-2 (2006).

Workshop Philosophy and Agenda

Knowledge concerning mainstream biodiversity conservation is for the most part currently produced by experts, and these experts are for the most part employed by BINGOs and other agencies that promote biodiversity conservation, design and implement conservation interventions, and raise funds to these ends. Success stories are the necessary stock and trade of these organizations and agencies, who thus have worked hard to deflect critique, in part through controlling public image messaging and though the sponsoring of studies regarding relationships between conservation, human rights and poverty. Dense and extensive networks of people, ideas and money tied to specific agendas and interventions frequently constrain independent perspectives and voices. These networks include people from government agencies, BINGOs, Foundations, and Universities. Foundations that fund BINGOs also fund the creation of research institutes at major universities. Thus certain types of research are funded over others, and graduate students are trained in paradigms and perspectives that are not overly critical of mainstream conservation. What this amounts to in practice is that people speaking and writing against the consensus can find it difficult to get their research funded, and to publish and disseminate their findings. When they do publish, they are faced with deconstructing and challenging hegemonic and mutually reinforcing accounts of what is going on in the world before they can actually begin to explain their findings; and publication of findings and views that are strongly counter to the hegemony of ideas in this area frequently become subject to various disciplinary or censorship activities (as noted above).

Discursive and ideological struggles take place around these issues at public forums such as the World Conservation Congress, professional meetings, workshops, colloquia, roundtables and seminars. In these contexts, mainstream conservationists can find themselves faced by a diverse array of detractors – from representatives of local people to those who have conducted relatively independent research in an area. An outcome can be attempts to close the conversation and/or discredit the critic, rather than engaging with the actual substance of what the critic has to say. Five key aspects of these forums are especially undermining of free exchange and critique, as well as of the possibility for effective collaboration regarding these issues to emerge:

1) They are radically deductive: They begin with assumptions about what is going on in the world and they set out to prove those assumptions. Being deductive in and of itself is not problematic, but arguably becomes problematic when it disallows information about the world that fundamentally challenges the assumptions that are in the business of being proved. In our experience the radically deductive approaches of mainstream conservation rarely allow in information that challenges the assumptions on which mainstream conservation is based. Since these assumptions are usually not made explicit, they become even more difficult to name and challenge.[2]

2) They are competitive: Just as conservation BINGOs are in intense competition with one another, researchers whose work addresses conservation issues also are in intense competition with one another. This makes us far less likely to compare notes and collaborate with one another. It also means that each of us individually has a great deal of incentive to line up around specific agendas and conservation paradigms that will support our work, thereby allowing us to outcompete other scholars. Public events thereby become opportunities for each of us to go onstage to show who is the smartest person in the room, rather than to rally together in solidarity with the more problematic justice issues we might be speaking of.

3) Consequently they involve a great deal of instrumental communication: What is actually being said in the context of instrumental communication is often less important than other unstated messages that are being sent around the room. Thus in the context of public forums related to conservation, it is often the case that speakers use various forms of instrumental communication to cast doubt on critical information or perspectives that are being presented. This rarely involves mentioning specifically what is problematic about the information and perspectives that are being presented. Indeed, the substance of such information and perspective is rarely addressed. Some examples include sitting in a prominent place and then staring at the ceiling with a 'here-we-go-again' look on one's face, or simply asserting that there has been enough critique and that it is time for social scientists to be more constructive. These kinds of communication require very

[2] For a thorough analysis of this problem at the most recent meetings of the Society for Conservation Biology see Büscher, B. 2008 'Conservation, neoliberalism and social science: a critical reflection on the SCB 2007 Annual Meeting, South Africa', *Conservation Biology* 22(2): 229-231.

little work, and in some contexts they can be highly effective at derailing critique. Unfortunately, they also make it difficult to have productive conversations about difficult issues.

4) They revolve around an assumption that a small group of powerful people and enlightened experts and advocates are able to define and implement changes required to solve the socio-ecological challenges presented in the contemporary moment. This aspect of these events is problematic on at least two levels: 1) it is in many ways undemocratic, since the ideas, aspirations, and actions of the majority of people are essentially irrelevant to them; 2) they often entail a kind of self-censorship, since influencing powerful people entails 'speaking a language that they understand', which can be a euphemism for not saying anything that might upset them on any level. It is the experience of members of this groups that social scientists, or anyone, who go against the grain of prevailing discourses and paradigms are regarded as being 'out of script', this in itself being used as a reason for dismissing critique out of hand.

5) They are heavily oriented towards accessing funding: Many of these events revolve around issues and perspectives that are important to the philanthropic community. The American Museum of Natural History's 2008 symposium 'Sustaining Cultural and Biological Diversity', for instance, included a session featuring representatives of various funding Foundations explaining, among other things, what kinds of things they were funding and why. These kinds of conversations of course are important, since nothing can ultimately happen without funding. It is important to note, however, that this heavy orientation to funding not only determines who will do research about problems related to biodiversity conservation, but also the language in which the problems will be conceptualized and discussed.

To distinguish the Washington *Disobedient knowledge* workshop from these mainstream public forums and their constraints to solidarity-building and collaboration, one of our central goals with this workshop was to create and structure an enabling environment for noncompetitive exchange and communication. We thus attempted to inform and infuse the workshop with the following principles and philosophy:

1) Instead of coming together around a funding opportunity, we came together around our affinity for one another, derived in large part from our common experiences. As such we attempted to stretch the funding we had in order to involve as great a number of participants from disparate localities as possible, even though this presented some significant logistical challenges [e.g. using cheap accommodation some distance from the seminar rooms that were available to us; holding the workshop over a weekend so as to access seminar rooms for free, (for which we are extremely grateful to the Department of Anthropology at American University and especially Professor Brett Williams].

2) We are committed to collaboration instead of competition as the most productive way of thinking about and finding solutions to the pressing problems that threaten our collective future;

3) We strove as much as possible to communicate in ways that were direct, sincere, and constructive. We recognized that this was an ideal that would be difficult to achieve given our socialization and training in more competitive and instrumental forms of communication, but we worked to keep this goal in sight throughout the workshop and in communications preceding and following it;

4) Our approach was intentionally inductive. We talked about our experiences, observations, and analysis for two days, while paying attention to the themes and patterns that emerged from what we said;

5) We were, and remain, committed to an approach that is inclusive, democratic, and as non-hierarchical as possible. This begins with our interactions with one another, but it extends to a larger philosophy that solutions to socio-environmental problems be defined and driven by all those implicated and affected, not just a small group of powerful people and enlightened experts.

We are firmly committed to the idea that articulating and enacting these commitments to the extent that we can is essential for the convergence of environmentalism and social justice, which in turn is essential to finding lasting solutions to the problems of ecology and economy that harm our planet's ecosystem(s) and all its inhabitants.

Within this broad set of goals we set out to run this three day workshop according to goals and agendas discussed and agreed upon through e-mail conversations prior to the event.

> **For day one** we planned to: 1) build rapport and trust; through 2) presentations of our respective experiences and observations; and finally 3) to identify common themes and issues that emerged from these presentations.
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> **For day two** we planned to identify our respective philosophies and theories concerning the production of knowledge as it is related to bringing about desired changes. The goal of this exercise would be to identify theoretical commonalities and differences. This exercise was structured around two presentations: 1) A discussion led by Annette Lees of the Austral Foundation about setting codes of conduct for nature conservation in the Pacific; and 2) a viewing of the documentary film *Suits and Savages: Why the World Bank Won't Save the World*, followed by a discussion led by film maker Zoe Young. From this exercise we sought to identify equitable and effective ways to produce knowledge, disseminate knowledge, and bring about desired change.
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> **The goal of the third day** was to convene working groups dedicated to initiating specific workshop outcomes. On this day a small group of workshop participants also addressed donors and policy makers at USAID through a round table called *Socially Sound Conservation: Why We Are Not There Yet*.

Themes and Patterns that Emerged from the Workshop Presentations

During the first two days of the workshop, participants made short presentations that outlined their experiences working in the realm of biodiversity conservation (see Appendix 3 for a list of presentation titles). Taken together members of the group have over 200 years of collective experience. Four workshop members deserve special mention here:

1) Antonio Diegues, who began documenting conservation-induced displacement in Brazil in 1969. Diegues was directly involved in the scaling up of conservation in Brazil in the 1980s and the arrival of conservation BINGOs in that country;

2) Mac Chapin, who has worked on conservation related issues in Latin America since the 1980s, and later in both Africa and Papua New Guinea;

3) Annette Lees, who has worked on biodiversity conservation issues in the pacific for the past twenty years;

4) Dianne Russell, who has worked to promote environment and equity issues inside USAID for over a decade, and who organized a roundtable for our group at USAID.

Most of the other members of our group have approximately ten years of experience.

In this section we will outline the main themes and problems that emerged from our collective presentations. This discussion is necessarily cursory, as these issues are complex and will soon be published in full detail, including in publications produced and distributed by IIED.

Foundationally we found that conservation BINGOs and government agencies sponsoring conservation interventions - often through BINGOs - are concerned first and foremost with putting as much land as possible under protected area status (either no-use or low-use). This is a central criterion for how conservation interventions are measured, defined, and reported. We found that this criterion is almost universally given priority over the impacts of conservation interventions on local livelihoods and lifeworlds, as well as over more holistic approaches to protecting and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Measures, maps and other images of land/ecosystems protected land in this way are valuable to BINGOs and government agencies because they allow them to graphically represent and report the places that they are protecting or want to protect, as well as to provide supporters and donors with measures of how productive they are as conservation agents gaining conservation estate.

Combined with video and still photographs, maps of conserved areas are particularly important fundraising tools for conservation. Protected areas, whether in maps or actual landscapes, also represent tangible (or at least quasi-tangible outcomes), which can be used in reporting success in how money is used. The drawing of maps related to the ways in which actual landscapes are carved up and placed under the auspices of particular BINGOs is increasingly significant in the scaling up of conservation activities into large landscape conservation (as noted by Diane Russell and Kai Schmidt-Soltau for Congo).

We also found that conservation BINGOs spend a great deal of energy chasing money, which fosters an approach to conservation that changes according to donor agendas, instead of one that is formulated according to long-term strategies, tangible outcomes, and carefully considered priorities (preferably ones that are directly concerned with community needs as well as conservation outcomes) As a result: 1) they often wind up having little or no flexibility in how they design and implement interventions. If an intervention turns out to be inappropriate to the context it is more likely that they will seek to change the context (or appear to change the context) than to change the intervention or to return the money. We also observed that the pursuit of money often occurs in contexts that are poorly connected, both culturally and geographically, to the actual context in which the interventions will take place. As a result, 2) these interventions are often informed by priorities that are only tangentially related to conservation objectives.

In most extreme cases the logic of conservation fundraising get reversed entirely. Thus, instead of asking 'how much money do we need to fix a particular problem?', organizations approach the situation from the perspective of 'how much money can a particular problem be used to raise?' In the process, specific types of problems and solutions, as well as charismatic animals and environments, become essential to a BINGO's branding, and to the ways in which specific conservation BINGOs distinguish themselves from the rest of the pack in a highly competitive funding environment. A successful branding strategy may thus become more important to an organization than any other outcome. Organizations are unlikely to abandon successful branding strategies even if they can be shown to be environmentally and/or socially harmful.

These problems are compounded by the fact that governments in the Global South are often dependent on conservation NGOs for access to funding, technology and expertise. As such, they are unlikely to go against particular conservation interventions. Of course they sometime do, though not always for reasons of concern about the environment or local livelihoods.

These conditions in turn create situations in which it is very difficult for local people to say no to specific conservation interventions, or for governments to defend them when they do say no. At the same time, these processes and relationships have very important implications for states, state sovereignty, citizenship, and rights - as state systems become increasingly impoverished but remain central players in how conservation and related activities are conceived and achieved.

Many countries in the Global South, and increasingly the global North, lack resources to undertake their own protected area projects. As protected area projects are an important source of aid money, private investment, and legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, they become highly dependent on conservation BINGOs if they hope to undertake protected area projects. In many cases, protected areas thus are established and managed (either directly or indirectly) by conservation BINGOs. In extreme cases this involves a carving up of conservation landscapes that is reminiscent of the carve up of Africa by European powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884.

Conservation BINGOs also play a central role in drafting conservation related legislations. For instance, WWF played a central role in drafting the protected area law for the Democratic Republic of Congo. BINGOs also play a central role in drafting bio-diversity related legislation in both the United States and the European Union. As such, the drafting of legislations and regulations becomes a kind of service that BINGOs provide for states. Increasingly defunded states cannot afford to pay for the services of technical and legal experts. This presents a win-win situation for conservation BINGOs and cash-strapped states, wherein states are able to outsource law making and conservation BINGOs are able to draft legislation that is most amenable to the kinds of interventions that they wish to undertake. This defunding of states results in large gaps in national sovereignty accompanied by a relocating of sovereignty in beyond state networks, organizations and corporations whose power to exert influence is dependent more on the capture

of financial resources than anything else.[3] Conservation BINGOs and other outside interests have the resources, connections, and expertise to insert themselves in these gaps and use them to their own ends.

Of course this sort of thing cannot be undertaken with impunity and requires the cooperation of well placed state actors, who must also benefit from the arrangement. Through their interactions with BINGOs, private enterprise, and other powerful outside agencies, local government officials increasingly are becoming what Goldman (2005) refers to as hybrid actors.[4] These are government officials who continue to occupy the offices of the state and wield the power of sovereignty, but who also receive salaries, contracts, and other valuable resources from BINGOs, corporations and other powerful non-state entities. Their loyalties thus are divided between the interests of their citizens who are their ostensible constituents and those of the non-state entities that pay their salaries, etc. If these individuals use the power of state sovereignty in the pursuit of the interests of non-state entities, especially if they do it with a high degree of regularity, then this can result in what Ferguson (2006) calls 'the privatization of sovereignty'.[5]

In extreme cases, such as the Solomon Islands and the Central African Republic, these kinds of arrangements can result in the creation of parallel/extra-legal governments. These are networks of state, for-profit, and NGO interests that undertake the business of governing in the absence of effective state structures.

These processes frequently have benefits for other outside interests in addition to conservation BINGOs. So, for instance, conservation landscapes can be ways of extending state control over marginal rural communities -- or keeping immigrants out of state controlled spaces. They can also become highly valuable for individuals and firms seeking new investment and extractive opportunities. Conservation estate thus is expanding significantly in poor countries, which also have major deposits of mineral and hydro-carbons, while key international conservation

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3 Cf. Hardt, M. and Negri, A. *Empire*, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2000.

4 Goldman, Michael, *Imperial Nature. The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

5 Ferguson James, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

organizations are consolidating relationships with resource-extractive industry. Thus Shell entered into an official relationship with the IUCN in 2008[6], and in 2009 Shell representatives are helping Rio Tinto Mining Group to pursue a similar arrangement.[7] These agreements face strong resistance both inside and outside the IUCN.

A central aspect of these relationships is the idea of mitigation, which proposes the possibility of offsetting the ecological damage of extractive enterprise in one context with conservation interventions in another context. Biodiversity conservation thereby becomes an essential element of capitalist expansion, at the same time that capitalist expansion becomes an essential element of biodiversity conservation. The ultimate expression of this situation is that it appears possible to optimize and synchronize the ecological and economic functions of the entire planet, thus transcending the contradiction between economic growth and earth health that has plagued industrial capitalism since the late 18th century. We maintain, however, that this is a fiction that supports hegemonic interests while being disconnected from the ecological and social impacts of these interests in specific material contexts. This disconnect is a matter of significant concern for the entwined domains of ecological health and justice.

In addition to justifying and supporting consumerism and facilitating the spread of extractive enterprise, we are concerned that global conservation also is having the effect in many contexts of undermining grassroots social movements and local environmental initiatives. Thus we have observed in many contexts that capacity building sponsored by BINGOs is predominantly geared towards the needs and aspirations of BINGOs, rather than the needs and aspirations of local people. We have also observed that BINGOs often overwhelm other local and national initiatives, out-competing them and capturing their funding in the process. In extreme cases that we have documented, BINGOs have used local social movements and environmental initiatives to raise money for specific environmental causes, then reallocated the money to other concerns and/or abandoning the local actors and their movements/initiatives.

6 http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bbp_our_work/bbp_shell, accessed February 16, 2009.

7 http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/?2584, accessed February 16, 2009.

We have also observed that local people are consistently defined as threats to biodiversity, as a problem to be managed rather than as communities to be engaged and considered. In extreme contexts the status of local people as rights-bearing citizens are being redefined in terms of ownership and participation. Local people are expected to participate in conservation initiatives as owners/investors, who understand and appreciate the economic value of nature and who will thus protect it for their own benefit. This approach/perspective ignores and erases existing ways of valuing and relating to nature. It also renders disposable any local people who are not owners according to narrowly defined market definitions and/or cannot perform the necessary criteria of being good 'eco-rational subjects' as shaped significantly by conservation interests.[8]

In summing up, we noted that BINGOs and related institutions/enterprises are engaged in a global 'space-making' project, which can be understood on at least the following levels:

1) They are creating the kinds of spectacular and pristine natures, where elites who run and fund them like to spend their time. These spaces are essential to the identities of these people;

2) They create virtual and physical openings for the work of NGOs themselves;

3) These spaces often also become spaces, or create spaces for extractive enterprise such as mining or oil exploration. Images of these kinds of spaces are also a comforting distraction from the social and ecological costs of big capitalism. Rather than the difficulty, complexity, and discomfort of engaging with the big interests that perpetuate these models of extractive wealth, let alone examining how their own lives might be implicated in these problems, consumers are offered the possibility of mitigating over-simplified versions of these problems by supporting nature conservation and/or purchasing so-called green commodities.

Finally, we all agreed that the systems and conditions we had been talking about were operating almost completely without any epistemic checks. While conservation organizations create the

8 This term comes from Goldman 2005.

illusion of epistemic checks, this is presented almost always in terms of pre-analyzed material and media spectacle, which the viewer must simply accept as true (e.g. the ways in which community benefits are generated by for-profit enterprises, which have putative conservation outcomes, thus getting local people to see that wildlife is valuable to them). As such, the ways in which BINGOs and related enterprises talk about and represent their work is for the most part a self-laudatory monologue. There is little space for critical analysis or for other kinds of information-feedback-loops essential for institutional learning.

We all agreed that the issues briefly outlined here are a matter of significant concern, both from the perspective of global conservation achieving its own stated goals and from the larger perspective of human equity and ecosystem health beyond the boundaries of narrowly defined, and largely imagined, pristine natures.

We think that these points all represent essential areas for further investigation, teaching and learning, public oversight, democratic engagement, and strategizing for futures that are both equitable and ecologically sound.

Outcomes and Future Strategies

In his presentation, Michael Dorsey pointed out that our future strategies will need to revolve around the following key points: 1) insight (which members of our network already have); 2) information (much of which we have and more of which we seek to gain, produce, and disseminate); and 3) institutional intelligence, which entails having that information matter to institutions and actors involved in conservation and social justice issues. Ultimately it also means that information should influence public opinion (we are still a very long way from this goal). At the end of our second day we spent two hours distilling a list of themes that emerged from our work and strategizing how best to proceed in this area. We agreed that when it comes to point 3, institutional intelligence, we still have a long way to go, and that in almost any context the burden of proof would be on us in achieving point 3.

The full details of our discussion regarding how to move forwards with this initiative are beyond the scope of this executive summary, but the following aspects of what we decided are important:

1) Any information we produce must be well substantiated;
2) The persons it concerns should have the opportunity to review it for accuracy and make comment;
3) There is a need to increase the scope of this network and find resources for it to do its work over the long term; and
4) This network is flexible and based on affinity: thus it will change over time, and its members will strive to work with existing networks and institutions wherever possible to avoid replication of work effort.

The following day we began with a presentation by Annette Lees regarding her involvement to create a binding set of principles for nature conservation in the Pacific. This presentation, and the discussion that followed, became the basis for much of what we did for the rest of the day.

Following Lees presentation, we broke into three groups. The first group discussed how members of our network would address the audience at USAID that afternoon; the second group discussed the drafting a statement of principles and how that would be distributed; the final group discussed the concept and design of an interactive web-based forum.

The outcomes of the workshop, both achieved and planned, are as follows:

1) The workshop was followed by round table discussion at USAID entitled *Socially Sound Conservation: Why We Are Not There Yet* – organized by Diane Russell. It was attended by over 40 people from USAID and major conservation organizations including the World Wildlife Fund; Conservation International, and Wildlife Conservation Society;
2) All the workshop proceedings were a) videotaped by Zoe Young and b) recorded by our Rapporteur Jimi Yuma. The raw video is being posted to a password protected web site to be viewed by participants before editing for future products. Jimi Yuma's report is completed and is the basis of this executive summary;

3) two other products, emerging themes and strategies for change, were drafted by volunteer participants, these will soon be distributed for future distribution and discussion;
4) The web site working group discussed the possibility of creating an interactive web based forum as described in the original proposal. We are interested in perhaps collaborating with IIED in creating this forum, which we hope to have up and running by the end of 2009;
5) The principles working group is drafting a set of working principles that will be available on this forum.
6) We will also be producing workshop proceedings later in the year, which we have agreed to publish and distribute in both English and Spanish through IIED;
and 7) Other publications will be appearing as a series in *Conservation & Society* and *Current Conservation*. Additional publication projects are in the works.

We are grateful to IIED's Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program for its generous support of this event and emerging network.

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Appendix 1: List of Participants

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17) Mr. Osvaldo Mungia, Honduras, MOPAWI (www.mopawi.org/)
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21) Ms. Beth Croucher, USA, Graduate Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado

22) Mr. Jimi Yuma, USA, Rapportuer
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The following participants were unable to attend due to medical emergencies

23) Professor Robert Hitchcock, USA, Michigan State University, Department of Anthropology
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24) Professor Liza Grandia, USA, Clark University, International Development & Social Change*
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* Professor Grandia is undergoing treatment for Lymphoma. Although unable to join us in Washington, she prepared a video presentation in advance of the event, which we viewed in the course of the workshop. Her insights and experiences contributed significantly to our discussions and analysis, and will be included in the primary data from the event.

Appendix 2. 2006 workshop call-out for participants in a workshop entitled *Community-based conservation and protected areas in Africa: exertions of sanctions against 'disobedient' knowledge producers*, drafted by Sian Sullivan, Hanne Svarstad and Tor Ave Benjaminsen. (Reproduced here with some minor edits).

> 'Community-based conservation is today well-established as the mainstream approach to conservation in developing countries. In coherence with the win-win message of the World Conservation Strategy (1980), the Brundtland Commission (1987) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), this approach is believed to lead to local participation and poverty alleviation in addition to biodiversity conservation. Almost all major conservation organisations describe their activities as in line with these ideals. Their adherence to this approach may constitute a sincere conviction, but presentation of success stories regarding community-based conservation also seems to be a prerequisite for donor support from governmental and intergovernmental agencies, and it is important for their image in relation to private supporters.
>
> 'We want to invite you to a small workshop to address the following question: How do conservation organisations and conservation biologists respond to researchers who conduct studies that arrive at conclusions that there are serious discrepancies between rhetoric and practice in cases of community-based conservation? This discussion will be based on the experiences of invited participants who have all published studies with conclusions contrary to the win-win narratives produced by actors organising or involved with the establishment of community-oriented conservation practice in various forms, both linked with and outside protected areas. We hope that the workshop will provide an effective basis for one or more co-authored publications in which these phenomena are described and incorporating discussion of explanations.'

Appendix 3: List of Presentations

Sian Sullivan	A Genealogy of the Washington Meeting and Issues
Jim Igoe	The Philosophy and Practice of Disobedient Knowledge
Mac Chapin	Background to the World Watch Article: a Challenge to Conservationists
Antonio Diegues	Conservation Displacement in Brazil: Long-Term Perspectives and Recent Developments
Dan Brockington	Rhino Conservation in Tanzania's Mkomazi Game Reserve: Reflections on the Pitfalls of Social Science Activism
Dianne Russell	The Challenges of Landscape Conservation in the Congo Basin
Kai Schmidt-Soltau	Finding an Appropriate Park: World Bank Funding for Landscape Conservation in the Congo Basin
Jeff Kinch	Social Visibility and Community Engagements with Conservation NGOs in Papua New Guinea
Hassan Sachedina	The Impacts of Scaling Up: Accountability and Program Impact of International Conservation Organizations in Tanzania
Saul Cohen	Community Co-optation and the Gudigwa Camp in Botswana
Crystal Fortwangler	Learning and Teaching through Research on Conservation Organizations

Jim Igoe	Swimming Against the Stream in Tanzania: the Binds and Dilemmas of Doing Inductive Social Science Research on Community-Based Wildlife Management Areas
Beth Croucher	See no Evil, Hear no Evil, Speak no Evil: Fundamental Obstacles to Engaged Correspondence with Large Conservation NGOs
Annette Lees	Conservation and Local Communities in the Pacific
Katja Neves-Graca	A Great Big Fluke: Azorean Whale Watching, Neoliberalism, and Environmental Politicking
Kartik Shanker	Sea Turtles in India: Flagships or Gunboats?
Michael Dorsey	Neoliberal Conservation in the Carbon Offset Market
Liza Grandia	Video Presentation: Silent Spring in the Land of Eternal Spring: Searching for Rachel Carson in Guatemala
Juanita Sundberg	Border Politics and Environmental Politics: the Recasting of Undocumented Immigrants as a threat to Nature and U.S. National Security
Hanne Svarstad	From Social Science Research on Namaqua National Park in South Africa to Public Debates with the World Wildlife Foundation in Norway
Annette Lees	Principles for Nature Conservation in the Pacific: Lesson Learned
Zoe Young	The Making of Suits and Savages: Why the World Bank Won't Save the World