

## **Community-based conservation: Intrinsic versus extrinsic values**

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### ***Introduction***

This article commences with an examination of the reasons for the enormous increase in areas under state protection worldwide, and proceeds to discover two incompatible value systems that inform this expansion. The tension between these value systems informs the entire discussion and the article closes with an attempt to gauge the degree to which they can be reconciled.

After a brief look at what is entailed by the conventional approach to conservation the focus shifts to the tension between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ which seems, partially, to provide the rationale for the community-based conservation (CBC) philosophy having arisen.

Parks authorities are sometimes presented as being held hostage by local communities, metaphorically if not literally, and their response to this situation is found to consist in either one of two options. Each of these options carries a set of implications which are spelt out. The underlying motives and modus operandi for CBC are subjected to a variety of criticisms which suggest that CBC should only be implemented, if at all, with considerable circumspection.

After an examination of rights, entitlements and priorities, the two sets of conflicting values are examined in greater depth, as are the practicalities and logistics of community participation in conservation. The discussion closes with a critical analysis of what really drives CBC and finds that it is not necessarily in accord with the long term interests of conservation. It is suggested that, before serious consideration be given to establishing partnerships

with communities, these communities first supply some evidence of their conservationist bona fides within their own villages and territories. It is also suggested that local authorities, with the assistance of conservation personnel, should do all within their power to educate communities accordingly.

### ***An overview of conventional conservation management***

The need to care for, and conserve, the natural environment is one that has increasingly focussed the minds of practitioners across the development spectrum for at least the last 30 years since the publication of the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* in 1972<sup>1</sup>. The reasons for this are quite plain. Patterns of untrammelled consumerist-led consumption in the developed world; unequal power relationships between the 'north' and 'south'; allied with the demands occasioned by the burgeoning populations of the developing countries; and the resultant ongoing destruction of natural resources, have had the effect of exerting a 'triple-whammy' on the environment.<sup>2</sup>

The urgency of the situation gave rise to the notion of 'sustainable development' whereby nature's limited resources should not be depleted to the degree that they can never be renewed. Such was the rapidity with which the environment was being destroyed, in the post-World War Two-era, that humankind's confidence in the never-ending bounty of nature was severely shaken. The shock to the collective psyche, once the realisation that certain environmental resources were finite had sunk in, should not be underestimated. For millennia humankind had lived in the secure knowledge that, come what may, nature would always provide.<sup>3</sup>

It was partly in response to this dawning realisation that there occurred an explosive proliferation worldwide in the number of parks, reserves and sanctuaries that were subject to some or other form of protection. Ghimire<sup>4</sup> details a positive mania for conservation that seems to have erupted in the 1970s with the establishment of 1300 reserves in that decade alone. A United

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1 DH Meadows, DL Meadows, J Randers and WW Behrens, *The limits to growth* (New York, Universe Books, 1972).

2 J Martin, *The meaning of the 21st century* (London, Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 22-132.

3 S Postel, *Last Oasis* (New York, WW Norton & Co., 1992), pp. 17-24.

4 KB Ghimire, "Parks and People: Livelihood issues in National Parks management in Thailand and Madagascar", D. Ghai (ed.), *Development and environment: Sustaining people and nature* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994), p. 197.

Nations suggestion, that protected areas (PAs) should constitute roughly ten percent of the world's surface, in fact saw this target exceeded in many developing countries. Seeing as conservation concerns had originally been mainly confined to developed countries, the question arises as to why the developing world should have exhibited such fervour in rising to meet the environmental crisis that faced the world.

The developing countries' newfound enthusiasm for conservation must be attributable, at least in part, to the realisation that it might make good business sense. The concomitants of globalisation, namely the vastly increased mobility of people and capital; an opening up of countries to the outside world; a preoccupation with 'multiculturalism'; unprecedented efficiencies in air travel and telecommunications; the fact that environmental campaigns became socially approved and were endorsed by the rich and famous – all of these factors combined to lend a considerable impetus to worldwide tourism and its eco-tourism offshoots.<sup>5</sup> Developing countries must have realised that in some senses their very 'undevelopedness' might be converted into a lucrative asset. Here was a means of attracting foreign exchange earnings<sup>6</sup> without having to spend huge sums of scarce capital on bulk infrastructure or imported machinery, and one which was moreover warmly applauded by the West.<sup>7</sup>

### *A Question of Values*

Thus arose a mismatch of values which will be explored in greater detail later in this paper, but which underpins the dilemmas presented by community-based conservation. This mismatch sees environmentalists (typically, though not exclusively, those embedded within a 'Western' orientated value system) ostensibly attributing an intrinsic value to the environment whereas the developing nations are arguably more inclined to attribute an extrinsic or instrumental value to the environment.<sup>8</sup> In the short term these differently grounded values may both simultaneously inform an environmental project

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<sup>5</sup> Z Bauman, *Globalization: The human consequences* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> KB Ghimire, "Parks and People...", D. Ghai (ed.), *Development and Environment: Sustaining people and nature*, p. 197.

<sup>7</sup> See United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2003 United Nations list of protected areas available at <http://www.unep.org/PDF/Un-list-protected-areas.pdf>

without there being any friction between them, but they are fundamentally incompatible over the longer term and are likely to lead to serious conflict if not skilfully negotiated. This incompatibility of ultimate values will strike at the heart of any full-blown CBC initiatives and is not conducive to sustainable partnerships or relationships.

### ***The 'conservative' approach***

Karen Arms sums up the conventional approach to conservation (the 'preservationist management regime'<sup>9</sup>) well enough when she writes: 'The usual reason that a species becomes extinct today is that its habitat has been destroyed. Therefore the best way to save an endangered species is usually to set up a preserve, an area where the species' habitat is saved from destruction and the species can breed and endure'.<sup>10</sup>

The implication is clear that the very reason for this precaution having to be undertaken in the first instance is that human encroachment has led to a destruction of habitat. Human access to the threatened habitat has therefore to be severely restricted, and strictly supervised, if the process of destruction is to be halted. In developing country contexts, where many governments are relatively authoritarian to begin with, the conservation imperative may have been enforced with an unacceptable degree of brutality<sup>11</sup>.

### ***The great divide***

The preserved areas thus created have a marketable value in terms of tourism, and in terms of the natural resources protected within their bounds, and this is arguably their greatest vulnerability. This is especially so where protected areas are situated within a context of extreme poverty and need. The more adequately protected the reserves are, the more they flourish, and the greater becomes the all too visible contrast between their abundance and the deprivation that is a feature of their peripheries. If the *raison d'être* for the protected areas' existing is not well understood, or accepted, by their surrounding communities, it is inevitable that the parks will give rise to a sense

<sup>8</sup> For an extensive treatment of this phenomenon see R Padel, *Tigers in red weather* (London, Abacus, 2005), especially pp. 104-105, 173.

<sup>9</sup> M van Ameron and B Büscher, "Peace parks in Southern Africa: bringers of an African Renaissance?", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43(2), 2005, p.171.

<sup>10</sup> K Arms, *Environmental science* (New York, Saunders, 1994) p. 358.

<sup>11</sup> KB Ghimire, "Parks and people...", D. Ghai (ed.), *Development and environment: Sustaining people and nature*, p. 215.

of grievance on the part of their neighbours. Van Ameron and Büscher cite the ‘immense pressures on the [Great Limpopo Transfrontier] Park created by the millions of people living on’ its borders.<sup>12</sup> This resentment is of course greatly amplified where people have been evicted from such protected areas without proper consultation or compensation. The gross disparity between the protected area and its surrounds will inevitably lead to attempts to breach the protective security and an untenable situation may result where the park authorities have to sink more and more resources into protection strategies to the detriment of more constructive activities within the park itself.

Ideally then, one would like to see protected areas being appreciated, and perhaps even nurtured, by people who can be given a vested interest in their continued existence. If such a compromise arrangement could be reached neighbouring communities might be co-opted into becoming true stakeholders in the preservation of natural resources, as opposed to potentially predatory, disgruntled onlookers who equate conservation with ‘dispossession’.<sup>13</sup> It is doubly unfortunate that these areas, in order to pay their way, are often seen to be conspicuously enjoyed by elites, and by the wealthy for recreation, as this must only go to aggravate the local peoples’ negative perceptions.

It does not seem to be generally disputed that different types of reserve should be accorded differing degrees of protection, or that some habitats may be so threatened that only a total ban on access is appropriate. What is not clearly articulated, however, is the point at which protection has become so compromised by concessions to neighbouring communities that it can no longer be described as anything more than nominal protection<sup>14</sup>. Once this point has been reached the baby will have been thrown out with the bathwater and only strict authoritarian measures will suffice to save the situation. It need not come to this if, in all good faith, a negotiated solution can be arrived at with adjacent poor communities.

### ***Two rationales underlying community involvement***

There are two schools of thought on why it should be desirable to harness the active engagement of communities in conservation initiatives. These may

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<sup>12</sup> M van Ameron and B Büscher, “Peace parks...”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43(2), 2005, p.176.

<sup>13</sup> P Ngobese and J Cock, “Development and the environment”, P Fitzgerald, A McLennan and B Munslow (eds.), *Managing sustainable development in South Africa* (Cape Town, OUP, 1997) p. 258.

<sup>14</sup> See R Padel, *Tigers in red weather* for numerous Asian examples of this phenomenon.

be distinguished as the voluntary and the involuntary options.

The involuntary option seems to imply that unless neighbouring communities are given some stake in the benefits to be derived from protected areas, they will sooner or later exact these anyway – by force if necessary. Kothari et al. make the point that *de facto*, if not *de jure*, interaction by locals with protected species and areas is widespread. They go on to assert that: ‘All over the world, it is being realised that central agencies are simply not able to carry out the task of conservation, being under-funded, [and] under-staffed... Public support for conservation therefore becomes a necessity’<sup>15</sup>.

‘Public support’ is a vastly more amplified concept than ‘local community support’, but the reasoning is that conservation agencies should submit to the inevitable and, rather than continue to antagonise adjoining communities by their very presence, look for a mutually beneficial way of accommodating them. Material incentives given might even be such that these communities, too, come to subscribe to the conservation ethic. Although this makes perfectly good sense on the face of it, it is nonetheless a solution that smacks of expediency, and it provides only a shaky foundation on which to build good working relationships. It is also seriously flawed in that it tacitly endorses what amounts to extortion. The material benefits that the communities derive become the equivalent of the gangster’s ‘protection money’. The implication is that the communities will not help themselves to the reserve’s resources for just so long as the state is prepared to buy them off by giving them a stake in what is, after all, the state’s (and by extension the taxpayers’) business.

It is to avoid this kind of unsavoury trade-off (more characteristic of the political realm) that it is essential that state agencies bargain from a position of strength (or, at worst, a show of strength) and make it clear that any overstepping of the mark will lead to a rigorously enforced resumption of the status quo. Concessions to communities should never be allowed to cover for weakness, or to function as the thin edge of the wedge that leads to a free-for-all plundering of the resource in question. As Padel puts it: ‘Saving wildlife is now a last-ditch battle: police the wild or it will fray away’.<sup>16</sup>

The objection to this no doubt Machiavellian gambit, of negotiating from strength, will be that communities’ usage of resources is in any event usually

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15 A Khotari, N Pathak, RV Anuradha and B Taneja (eds.), *Communities and conservation: natural resource management in South and Central Asia*. (New Delhi, Sage, 1998) p. 26.

16 R Padel, *Tigers in red weather*, p.356.

sustainable.<sup>17</sup> But were this truly so, it should arguably not have been necessary to protect the resources they want access to in the first instance.<sup>18</sup> Another common assumption that commentators make is that they equate many individuals each harvesting in a sustainable manner, with a collective sustainability - but this does not necessarily follow. It is only with hindsight that the last surviving member of a species can be identified as having been the last one. No one knowingly shot the last dodo. Because the true extent of a species' depletion can never be precisely determined, a point must come when all 'harvesting' of the species is forbidden. Thus even if people undertake to exercise great restraint by picking, say, only every tenth plant they come across, if there are a thousand of them engaged in this pursuit, and only 10 000 plants still extant, their individual efforts at sustainability will be in vain. It may well have been the case that, in past ages of plenty, certain indigenous peoples conducted their harvesting sustainably,<sup>19</sup> but one cannot gainsay the unfortunate fact that nowadays the ratio between demand and supply has changed radically for the worse.<sup>20</sup>

The second school of thought referred to above, the voluntary option, holds that, even if state agencies can successfully defend their turf against intrusion, they have a moral obligation to concern themselves with the economic upliftment of their neighbours. This would appear to be the thinking that informs South Africa's Protected Areas Act of 2003<sup>21</sup> and it is the ethos that animates analysts such as Cock and Fig.<sup>22</sup> The more pragmatic voluntarists such as Sondergaard<sup>23</sup> suggest that it makes good 'business sense' to cultivate the goodwill of the neighbouring communities. Any farmer, or indeed any

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17 J Botha, "Developing an understanding of problems being experienced by traditional healers living on the western border of the Kruger National Park: Foundations for an integrated conservation and development programme", *Development Southern Africa*, 15(4), 1998, p. 629; KB Ghimire, "Parks and People...", D. Ghai (ed.), *Development and environment: Sustaining people and nature*, p. 195.

18 P Glyn, *Footling with Sir Richard's ghost* (Johannesburg, Sharp Sharp Media, 2006), pp. 164-176; 182-3 provides a sobering account of the environmental devastation caused by uncontrolled access to wilderness areas in Botswana. See also J Clarke, *Coming back to earth* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2002), pp. 193-196.

19 See WF Ruddiman, *Plows, plagues and petroleum* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005) for a dissenting view.

20 J Martin, *The meaning of the 21st Century*, pp. 53-54.

21 L Olvitt and T Hamaamba, "Identifying Needs and Opportunities for Local Government Environmental Education and Training in South Africa", *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 23, 2006, p. 125.

22 J Cock and D Fig, "From colonial to community based conservation: environmental justice and the national parks of South Africa", *Society in Transition*, 31(1), 2000, pp. 22-34.

businessman, would endorse this outlook and one cannot fault this reasoning just so long as the responsible officials act in the enlightened best interests of the resources which they are supposed to be preserving for posterity.

Whether there is in fact any moral obligation on the part of parks authorities to engage with local communities is, in the final analysis, a matter of opinion,<sup>24</sup> perhaps dependent on local histories. The CBC literature is sometimes inclined to romanticise what might be called the ‘noble peasant’<sup>25</sup> and can be vague when it comes to the hard specifics of tenure rights, the legitimacy of claims on resource usage, and entitlements in general. The importance of obtaining clarity on these issues is stressed by both Bhatt<sup>26</sup> and de Villiers<sup>27</sup> - as is the need to be very clear about who, or what exactly, constitutes a ‘community’.

### ***Rights and entitlements***

Advocates for CBC should not, in their enthusiasm, lose sight of the fact that an orderly, predictable and enforceable regime of property rights is a precondition to growth and development, as well as being a good ‘marker’ for the observance of a number of associated human rights.<sup>28</sup> Ghimire, in an analysis of the Khao Yai National Park in Thailand, is never explicit about whether the ‘many settlements [that were] within its boundaries’, some of which had apparently been there ‘long before the government had begun promulgating any forest protection legislation’, were there legally or not.<sup>29</sup>

Presumably if these settlers were squatters the Thai government of the time

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23 J Sondergaard, “Implementing people and parks projects: Perspectives and constraints”, Paper delivered at the ‘Towards best practice Conference: communities and conservation’, South African National Parks, 15-19 May 2000.

24 See FA Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 85 for a related discussion.

25 WF Ruddiman, *Plows, plagues and petroleum*, pp. 60 and 184. Ruddiman provides a detailed exposition of the deleterious effects of pre-industrial cultures on the environment.

26 S Bhatt, “Conservation through community enterprise”, A Khotari, N Pathak, RV Anuradha and B Taneja (eds.), *Communities and conservation: natural resource management in South and Central Asia* (New Delhi, Sage, 1998), p. 281.

27 B de Villiers, *Land claims and National Parks: the Makuleke experience* (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1999), p. 74.

28 D Landes, *The wealth and poverty of nations* (London, Abacus, 1998), pp. 31-36; 217-218; H de Soto, *The mystery of capital* (London, Black Swan, 2000) pp. 42-62.

29 KB Ghimire, “Parks and people”, D. Ghai (ed.), *Development and environment: Sustaining people and nature*, pp. 202-205.

was acting within its rights to evict them. If they were renting, the state was within its rights to terminate these leases. If they had title to the land the state would have had the authority to expropriate the land for whatever purposes it deemed fit. None of these scenarios is such as to confer entitlement to the use of forest resources on the displaced villagers, and yet Ghimire seems to want to intimate as much.

If the state expropriates land for a nuclear plant, or for an airport, it is not necessarily under any obligation to see to it that those so displaced somehow come to acquire a stake in the nuclear plant or airport. Frequently they must shift for themselves and derive whatever benefits they can which may flow from the 'rezoned' land. The same presumably applies to farms expropriated under the aegis of 'land reform'. Farmers thus removed from their farms cannot then claim some kind of usufruct over the land.

The state is charged with acting for the good of the common weal and, no matter what it does, certain groupings of its citizens are bound to be disadvantaged. If the state fixes import duties on a commodity for example, it does so because it believes this would be in its best interests. It is not obliged to consult the populace about this, and may consult as widely or as narrowly as it chooses. That certain individuals may make a personal fortune due to the import duty being levied, and that others may be ruined, is of little concern. The state operates in terms of 'pools of utility' – it looks at trade-offs and at net effects. Thus if the state goes to war it is accepted that 'some must die that others may live'. Individuals who, it just so happens, find themselves disadvantaged by a decision of state have no ongoing claim against the state, over and above whatever discretionary reparations the state chooses to make.

If the Thai government had considered that, all things being equal, the creation of a national park out of state or crown land was going to boost the economy, help Thailand to modernise, and create however many jobs in the services sector, then it was presumably fully entitled to do so. No right necessarily accrues to displaced villagers to continue to regard the state's resources as their own personal property, just as one's dependants have no grounds on which to sue the state should one be killed in the cause of national security.

The Thai government may have decided to exercise a policy of benign neglect towards subsistence farmers in that it considered that such a lifestyle only perpetuates poverty. It might therefore have used its Protected Areas policy

deliberately to discourage villagers from pursuing their traditional livelihoods. Perhaps it hoped the villagers' children would avail themselves of opportunities opened up by the tourism industry and that they would thereby break their generations-long dependence on the land. It might have calculated that these children would do sufficiently well, on average, to support their parents who had been deprived of their means of income. We do not know, however, because Ghimire is silent on this score.

The point is that Ghimire and others rarely make sufficient provision for the 'big picture', the macro perspective, but prefer to confine themselves instead to narrow localised particulars. These are not adequate grounds for establishing entitlement or state conferred rights to a livelihood. As it so happened Thailand, in the period 1970 to 2000, experienced a dramatic turnaround in its fortunes away from being an agrarian economy to one based on services, and GDP per capita responded accordingly to rise, in constant US\$ 2000 terms, from US\$530 in 1970 to US\$1998 in the year 2000.<sup>30</sup> That this entailed a measure of hardship and dislocation for certain of its citizens was, unfortunately for them, a sacrifice their citizenship demanded they make for the greater good.

The foregoing leads to the issue of priorities. De Villiers is quite correct to assert that, 'For the park managers the protection of an area in its pristine form is the ultimate purpose'.<sup>31</sup> It would be ill-advised to undermine this 'mission statement'. South African National Parks (SANP) is not a social welfare agency, even if it is expected to be sensitive to social issues, and any attempt to 're-invent' itself along these lines may precipitate the sort of dysfunctional confusion that often befalls government agencies who stray too far from their 'core competencies'.

### ***Intrinsic versus instrumental values***

Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy was grounded in his 'Practical Imperative' that one should treat one's fellow beings as ends, and not as means.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that human beings have a value in and of themselves, without reference to how they may be used to acquire some other good. If one only values one's friends for their 'contacts' then that does not say much for the quality of

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<sup>30</sup> World Bank World Development Indicators Online, (<http://publications.worldbank.org/wdi> as researched on 10 April 2007).

<sup>31</sup> B de Villiers, Land claims and National Parks, p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> P Vardy and P Gosch, The puzzle of ethics (London, Fount, 1999) p. 58.

the friendship or for one's integrity. Similarly with the environment, the true environmentalist wishes it protected simply because it is<sup>33</sup>. This is to place an intrinsic value on conservation and it is the ultimate value which underscores all conservation in the 'old paradigm', which is sometimes maligned for being too authoritarian.

There is another value placed on conservation. This is an instrumental one which dictates that conservation will only be tolerated for as long as it yields material benefits which can then be converted into some other good. This is the stance of 'human needs' advocates such as Cock and Fig<sup>34</sup> who are disinclined to question whether immediate social issues may be transient phenomena which should remain subservient, and may be quite inimical, to broader humanity's longer term needs (cf. Gillespie<sup>35</sup> for an extended treatment of these dilemmas).

The instrumental and the intrinsic can operate side by side for only so long – inevitably the day will come when they clash and a choice has to be made. As Gillespie puts it: 'if the piece of Nature [to be conserved] can be substituted by something else with a higher economic value, then under the economic [instrumental] approach this is a legitimate choice'.<sup>36</sup> The intrinsic, as long as it is dominant, can always accommodate the instrumental however. This is because, whereas conservation for its intrinsic worth is to do the right thing for the right reason, conservation for its instrumental worth is at least still to do the right thing, albeit for purely self-serving reasons. The instrumental approach (the transient), if it is held as an ultimate, can however never subsume the intrinsic (the timeless) but must betray it eventually.

An example of accommodation, by the intrinsic of the instrumental, would be where a self-sustaining conservation effort also generates a revenue stream. One normally attaches an intrinsic value to conservation, but if it happens also to earn the conservationists an income, so much the better – the conservation project also exhibits instrumental value. If however the conservation project should, for whatever reason, no longer generate an income, this eventuality should not provide grounds for abandoning it unless it was in fact of purely

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33 A Gillespie, *International environmental law, policy, and ethics* (Oxford, OUP, 1997) p. 43.

34 J.Cock and D. Fig, "From colonial to community based conservation", *Society in Transition*, 31(1), 2000, pp. 23-24.

35 A Gillespie, *International Environmental Law...*, p.43.

36 A Gillespie, *International Environmental Law...*, p. 47.

instrumental value.<sup>37</sup>

However unfortunately, many societies seem to attach little, if any, intrinsic value to the environment. They are prepared to play along with the conservation game for as long as it pays.<sup>38</sup> This is an essentially pragmatic, egoistical approach and it bodes ill for the day when the 'investment' in conservation ceases to deliver up an adequate return, or when an opportunity cost comes to be attached to the land (for example if precious minerals are found within a reserve).

It is this clash of ultimate values that dictates that so-called 'joint management' or 'joint ownership' schemes entered into between environmentalists and communities are doomed to conflict sooner or later. If partners in business, or indeed in any enterprise, do not assent to the same animating values, the day must come when they go their separate ways. Thus those communities, whose attachment to conservation values do not, with the passage of time, graduate from the instrumental to the intrinsic, will invariably betray the conservationist ethic when it no longer pays them to remain loyal to it. Such communities are the equivalent of 'fairweather friends' – they can be bought, and they can be brought on board, but it has to be in the clear knowledge that when the going gets rough they will 'jump ship'. While this type of partner may profitably be consulted, and even be allowed to benefit from the conservation endeavour, such 'partners' should not be given any absolute power over the management of a Protected Area.

The difference lies between their having an interest in the continued existence of the Protected Area, and having an interest in the Protected Area itself. If an entrepreneur establishes a game park near a town that has none, the local guesthouses are likely to experience an increase in turnover. The guesthouses therefore acquire a vested interest in the profitability of the game park and the continuity of its operations. This is well and good, but it is a far cry from the guesthouse owners somehow acquiring an interest in the game park itself, that is becoming shareholders. This though is precisely the sort of confusion seems to characterise the position of CBC advocates who do not take sufficient care to spell out clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Put bluntly – at the end of the day somebody has to be the boss. Will it be a park manager or will it be

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<sup>37</sup> M van Ameron and B Büscher, "Peace parks...", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43(2), 2005, p. 177 predict a disenchantment with 'sustainable development' on the part of villagers due to the 'economic benefits from Peace Parks' not meeting their expectations.

<sup>38</sup> R Padel, *Tigers in red weather*, p. 270-80.

an amorphous community?

### ***The practicalities of community participation***

Although De Villiers<sup>39</sup> and Sondergaard<sup>40</sup> sound notes of caution, it seems to be generally assumed that nothing could be easier than for the SANP to go into partnership with communities and set up lucrative small businesses. Cock and Fig for instance speak approvingly of the Skukuza Alliance Arts and Crafts project which ‘increased sales from R2000 to R4000 per month, with membership increasing from 69 to 400 artists’.<sup>41</sup> They pass over the fact that this implies a reduction in monthly sales per head from R29 to just R10 a month – hardly a sustainable situation and precisely the sort of problem that typifies open-ended Local Economic Development (LED) schemes.

Before entering into joint commercial ventures with communities, the SANP would do well to take a look at what is happening to municipal commonages that have been given over to communities to manage.<sup>42</sup> It might also want to investigate the indifferent outcomes of the two hundred or so LED projects, mostly community run, financed by the Department of Provincial and Local Government’s (DPLG) erstwhile LED Projects Fund. The point is not necessarily that such initiatives should not be attempted, only that valuable lessons have been learnt in other spheres. LED is best left to Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) who have some experience of it and to local government which has been mandated, however optimistically, to give effect to LED. Community liaison is very draining on resources and requires specialist skills, the more so with LED (cf. Botha).<sup>43</sup> These are resources and skills the SANP has limited amounts of, and this is not likely to change.

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39 B de Villiers, *Land claims and National Parks*, p. 79.

40 J Sondergaard, “Implementing people and parks projects: Perspectives and constraints”, Paper delivered at the ‘Towards best practice Conference: communities and conservation’, South African National Parks, 15-19 May 2000.

41 J Cock and D Fig, “From colonial to community based conservation”, *Society in Transition*, 31(1), 2000, p. 30.

42 A Cartwright, A Benseler and T Harrison, “A developmental approach towards municipal commonage management”, *Journal of Public Administration*, 39 (1.1), 2004; MK Ingle, “Municipal commonage in South Africa: A public good going bad?”, *Africa Insight*, 36(2), 2006.

43 J. Botha, “Developing an understanding of problems being experienced by traditional healers living on the western border of the Kruger National Park...”, *Development Southern Africa*, 15(4), 1998, p. 625.

The somewhat cavalier attitude many theorists have towards community participation is well illustrated in Ngobese and Cock's<sup>44</sup> ambitious notions of 'social disaggregation'. The two researchers from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) who drew up the St. Lucia Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are taken to task on account of their having 'excluded local people from full participation'<sup>45</sup> and that they 'failed to achieve any deep and extensive process of consultation' [own emphases].<sup>46</sup> This is notwithstanding that the researchers managed to reach 'employed workers, traditional tribal authority structures, and one Inkatha official [via] community meetings convened by the chief'. Ngobese and Cock should have been so fortunate had they undertaken the EIA. Perhaps they can be forgiven for having little understanding of the tortured protocols state-appointed researchers have to observe in accessing tribal communities in Kwa-Zulu-Natal, but the notion that two researchers on their own should have 'socially disaggregated' such a community in pursuit of 'inclusivity' is unrealistic. As Ngobese and Cock reveal towards the end of their article, this was after all a community of 850 000 people!

### ***The development/environment nexus***

Claassen claims that 'Development and conservation of the natural environment are... intrinsically interdependent. But these are all facts well known...'.<sup>47</sup> This cannot be a well known fact because it is not, strictly speaking, correct. Development is indeed dependent upon the conservation of the environment. Conservation of the environment is, however, not in any sense necessarily dependent on development although it could be threatened by it. The interests of conservation would be very well served if the human race were reduced to just a few million, and all development ceased. The most that can be said for conservation's relationship with development is that it is contingently (and not 'intrinsically') related to development. Claassen can therefore say that development and conservation are inter-related but this is a trivial truth (everything can be shown to be inter-related with everything else) and it is crucially different from their being inter-dependent.

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<sup>44</sup> P. Ngobese. and J. Cock, *Managing sustainable development in South Africa*, p. 264.

<sup>45</sup> P. Ngobese. and J. Cock, *Managing sustainable development in South Africa*, p. 266.

<sup>46</sup> P. Ngobese. and J. Cock, *Managing sustainable development in South Africa*, p. 267.

<sup>47</sup> PE Claassen, "Can the conflict between development and conservation be resolved? A critique of efforts at sustainable development in South Africa", P Styger, S Meyer and A Saayman (eds.) *Conflicting challenges in development* (Pretoria, Development Society of Southern Africa, 1996), p. 320.

The above has far reaching implications which will be spelt out below. Conservation does not, ultimately, need development, but development does need conservation. It is easy to see which of these imperatives could hold the other hostage.

Claassen proceeds, plausibly enough, to identify two different groupings operating within the development sphere, namely, that constituency concerned with environmental conservation, and another focussed on the development of disadvantaged communities. Can these two be reconciled or must they always be at loggerheads with each other? Claassen attributes a 'biocentric ethic' (all life) to the environmental camp and an 'anthropocentric' (human life) ethic to the development camp. For the sake of argument this will, for the moment, be assumed to be valid. It corresponds neatly with the intrinsic/instrumental duality outlined earlier. Once again it should be noted that just as the intrinsic can accommodate the instrumental (but not vice versa), the biocentric (life considered as such) subsumes the anthropocentric (life considered insofar as it is human life). Again this does not apply the other way round. The anthropocentric is a sub-set of the biocentric outlook.

It would seem to be very clear that the conservation camp wields the upper hand but then Claassen comes to a curious conclusion, namely: 'The anthropocentric ethic allows for development and conservation to be reconciled, whereas with the biocentric ethic development must always be in opposition to development (sic) [conservation]'

Precisely the reverse is true! The anthropocentrists (instrumentalists) can only be reconciled to environmental conservation insofar as it feeds their humanly denominated needs and suits their human-centred purposes. The biocentrists (intrinsic), on the other hand, can always accommodate development but only until development moves to destroy all life in the cause of sustaining human life – that is until the instrumentalist ethic, which is dominant and overriding, is given full effect to. At the point at which the human race, consistent with an instrumentalist ethic, and no longer subordinating this ethic to the intrinsic ethic, moves to gratify its needs, it will self-destruct. It will destroy the very life force that is its sustenance. The moral is very plain. It is this: People need the world – the world does not need people.

For 'people' one may substitute 'development' and for the 'world' one may substitute 'conservation'. This is a simple reformulation of what was outlined above, that is, that the environment is not dependent on development. Those

who claim otherwise (the instrumentalists, the anthropocentrists) are guilty of a human-centred hubris that can only lead to the ultimate downfall of humankind (if taken to its logical extreme). The point that must be made is that human life, while infinitely precious to humans, is a subset of something bigger – the perpetuation of human existence is not the be all and end all of creation.<sup>48</sup> To express the same point in philosophical terms – human existence is contingent and not necessary.<sup>49</sup> Human beings do not have to be – humans endure at nature's pleasure. It would take just one large asteroid colliding with Planet Earth to demonstrate the truth of that.

### ***Conclusion***

Good neighbourliness is one thing. Giving one's neighbour a say in the running of one's affairs is quite another. By all means the SANP should do everything within its limited powers to educate, employ, and engage with its neighbouring communities. But this should not happen at the cost of its autonomy. This would lead to a loss of focus which would result in the slow but steady erosion of the conservation ethic.

CBC might be a viable option in a reasonably developed setting but it is difficult to see it taking root successfully in a context of extreme deprivation, until that deprivation has been properly addressed. Responsibility for doing this cannot be laid at the door of the SANP – the ball is fairly and squarely in the court of South Africa's local authorities<sup>50</sup> who are both mandated and funded to address poverty issues.

To mandate the SANP to divert its attentions away from its core mission towards propping up unsustainable communities will be to court disaster for protected areas. Community-based conservation, if it is to happen at all, must begin within the geographically situated communities themselves. Until such times as communities have internalised good environmental practice<sup>51</sup>, the best that can be hoped for is that natural sanctuaries, maintained pristine and inviolate, will continue to be there to meet the transcendent needs of humanity at large.

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<sup>48</sup> For a related argument see J Lovelock, *Homage to Gaia* (Oxford, OUP, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> A similar assertion is developed by J Monod, *chance and necessity* (London, Penguin, 1997) first published in 1971.

<sup>50</sup> See L Olvitt and T Hamaamba, "Identifying Needs and Opportunities...", *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 23, 2006, p.131 for pioneering thinking in this regard.

<sup>51</sup> A need identified by certain respondents.