

WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY  
AND POLICY ANALYSIS  
EIGHTH ANNUAL  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47406-5196

*Bald*

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Discussion

Paper

## Community in Conservation: Beyond Enchantment and Disenchantment

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with responses by  
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ISBN 0-9662380-0-1

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Published and distributed by

Conservation & Development Forum  
P.O. Box 115531  
Gainesville, FL 32611-5531 USA

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# Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

Disillusionment with decades of intrusive resource management strategies and planned development has forced a recognition that community may play a critical role in meeting the goal of conservation. No longer is community seen as an impediment to progressive social change. It now has become the focus of thinking on devolution of power, meaningful participation, and cultural autonomy. Yet, the resurgence of community in writings on conservation lacks a critical edge.

The mission of this paper is to underscore some of the elements vital to equitable and sustainable conservation. The paper emphasizes that *community-based conservation is unavoidably about a shift of power as well as about how power is exercised, by which loci of authority, and with what kinds of resistance*. An adequate understanding of community-based conservation must focus, therefore, on political processes within and outside of the community, on how politics shapes conservation, and on the critical role of institutions; all of which the paper takes up.

The paper begins with a historical survey of the main actor in community-based conservation: the community. Current writings on community-based conservation have borrowed extensively from historical analyses of community and social change. Stereotypical visions of community as an organic whole, as small and territorially fixed, as being eroded by a host of external forces, as standing in opposition to markets and states, can be traced directly back to writings of the 19th and early 20th centuries. By viewing community through a historical lens, we discover the need for caution before embracing it too uncritically and quickly as a general solution for conservation-related dilemmas.

The history of community in conservation is one of revisionism. Images of pristine ecosystems and innocent primitive societies yield to those of despoiling communities out of balance with nature because of intrusions by the market and the state. Efforts by indigenous and local groups to restore the reputation of community are counterbalanced by new anthropological and ecological research suggesting that communities are not necessarily synonymous with sustainable environmental protection.

Strong oscillations in the value and recognition accorded the community, in conservation literature and more generally, require consideration. The current valorization of community should be seen as signaling a general loss of faith in theories of progress and in the promises of development. Disenchantment with the state and the market as agents of conservation, the spread of democratic political systems, new historical-ecological research, and contributions from scholars of the commons have contributed significantly to the revival of community. Conservationists, academics, NGOs, policymakers, democratizers, and aid agencies have all found community.

The celebration of community is a move in the right direction. But the implications of turning to community-based conservation have not been thoroughly explored. Analysis of the existing literature on conservation reveals a widespread preoccupation with what might be called "the mythic community": small homogeneous groups using locally evolved norms to live with nature harmoniously, managing resources sustainably and equitably. Such a vision of community provides its advocates substantial symbolic resources to pose it as an alternative to state-centric, and market- and private property-oriented prescriptions for conservation.

But persistent clichés regarding community undermine policy-relevant analyses of community-based conservation. Few existing communities conform to the commonly-held visions of community. More importantly, preoccupation with the mythic community disregards the multiple interests harbored within communities. It neglects the fact that different actors within communities have differential access to resources and channels of influence. Finally, it prevents recognition of the possibilities for "layered alliances" that community groups must forge to successfully conserve and manage resources.

The paper proposes a shift away from mythic vision of the community. We need to recognize as a beginning point that the local community is intimately connected with external actors, including those within the market and the state. This recognition must remain central as we turn our focus to the divergent interests of multiple actors within communities, the political processes through which these interests emerge and different actors negotiate with each other, and the institutions that influence political outcomes.

That multiple actors within and outside communities have divergent interests implies that they would engage in uncertain political negotiations in the absence of institutions. Institutions, as the rules that structure interactions among humans, promote stability of expectations *ex ante* and consistency in actions *ex post*. They are the social glue that allows actors with different interests and capacities to work together.

Effective conservation requires institutional solutions to three domains of action: (1) creation of rules and practices around conservation, (2) implementation of these rules to monitor user behavior and to sanction those who break rules, and (3) adjudication of disputes arising in the interpretation and application of rules. Typically, government agencies have reserved for themselves the rights to make rules and adjudicate disputes, and devolved only the responsibilities of implementation to community groups. Such approaches to conservation, for the most part, have failed. A communal orientation to conservation requires, however, that local groups gain far greater authority than they have previously possessed in each of the three listed domains of action, and that their members contribute substantially to the creation of mechanisms for governing resource use.

Greater autonomy for communities also means that externally placed actors (government officials, NGOs, aid agencies) must relinquish the desire to control and predict the outcomes of community-based conservation. The content of conservation, once communities gain control over and begin to manage local resources, can be regulated externally only to a limited extent. *Conservation outcomes are, and always will be, unpredictable.* They can only be roughly assessed.

Ultimately community-based conservation is not about providing guarantees; it is more about experimenting on the basis of a set of appealing ideas. The paper takes up four such interlinked issues.

First, community-based conservation would be founded more profitably on principles of checks and balances among various parties—local groups, government actors, even NGOs and aid agencies—than on faith in the regenerative capacities of any one of them. Unchecked authority in the hands of community-level decision makers is as likely to lead to perverse conservation outcomes as when external actors possess unbridled power.

Second, it is evident that local groups are the least powerful among the different parties interested in conservation. Community-based conservation would require, therefore, a channeling of greater authority and power to local groups. Only then can such groups form effective checks against

arbitrary actions by other powerful actors. Critical to such attempts is the need to forge federated structures of community user groups that can negotiate with government officials and aid agencies on more equal terms than those prevailing today. Negotiations on equal terms are fundamental to holding government actors accountable and ensuring that gains made by community groups are not lost as soon as opinions shift in conservation circles. Networked structures also may prove more effective than distant, time-consuming legal mechanisms in resolving intercommunity conflicts and addressing challenges to the authority of community groups by local elites.

Third, those interested in community-based conservation, and in conservation more generally, should seek to implement reasonable processes of decision making rather than focus on guaranteed outcomes. "Reasonable" implies several things: (1) that different interests, especially those that are marginal, be represented in decision making, (2) that outcomes of current decision processes feed back to influence decisions made in the future, and (3) that those who make decisions submit to periodic performance reviews.

This last point is perhaps the most important. Local representatives of communities, and those elected as officials in federated structures of community groups, must themselves be accountable to their constituents. Regular and open elections in which decision makers submit to choices made by their constituents are indispensable to ensure such accountability. Otherwise, instead of being agents for decentralizing power to the local level, federations of community groups may become yet another channel for centralizing tendencies.

Lastly, effective community-based conservation requires that local groups have access to adequate funds for implementing the rules they create. The sources for these funds should also be local, raised through contributions of users rather than granted by central governments. Over time, this would mean that government agencies not just cede their authority to make rules about conservation, but that community groups also gain control over a large proportion of renewable resources currently managed by the state.

The points outlined above do not provide a blueprint for community-based conservation. Rather, they emphasize the importance of institutions, the ubiquity of political processes, the need to institute checks to contain arbitrary exercise of power, and the impossibility of any escape from an uncertain future.



**Community in Conservation:  
Beyond Enchantment and Disenchantment**

"The complexity of community thus relates to...on the one hand the sense of direct common concern; on the other hand the materialization of various forms of common organization... Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term."

Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 1976.

## 1. Introduction

For more than a century, analyses of social change have positioned modernity opposite community. The ghost of the traditional community hovered over the positivist sociology of Auguste Comte. For Marx and Engels, capitalism as the handmaiden of modernity threatened to dissolve all existing social relationships. In current writings on environmental conservation and resource management, however, the figure of community occupies center stage. Disillusionment with decades of intrusive resource management strategies and planned development has forced a recognition of the possibility that community may play a critical role in meeting desired social goals.

No longer is community, then, the refuge within which tradition lurks to shackle progressive social trends. Instead it has become the focus of thinking on devolution of power, meaningful participation, and cultural autonomy—all of these believed, in turn, to be critical to successful resource management and development (Bulmer, 1985; Chambers and McBeth, 1992; Chitere, 1994; Etzioni, 1996; Phifer, 1990). Despite undergoing a resurgence in writings on conservation, the notion of community continues to lack a critical edge. It requires rescue.

The mission of this paper is to underscore some of the elements critical to equitable and sustainable community-based conservation. Its normative slant, thus, is obvious and open to challenge. The paper uses the terms "conservation" and "resource use and management" interchangeably. Renewable resources such as forests, pastures, wildlife, and fisheries have been and always will be used by people; those who wish to conserve must incorporate use and management in their strategies (Robinson and Redford, 1991: 3).

The paper begins by examining the main actor in the phrase "community-based conservation"—the community, and the process through which community has found a common yoke with conservation. The constituent terms of the phrase possess many referents, and their meanings have undergone many revisions. One of the ambiguities of the phrase results from the dilemma at its heart—the possible conflict between conservation and consumption by communities supposed to accomplish conservation. Others come into focus when we question the notion of community to point out the existence of multiple actors and shifting interests within communities, or examine the relationship between the autonomy of communities and the achievement of externally defined goals.

The example of joint forest management in India illustrates the conflicts that can emerge in the context of community-based conservation (see Box 1.1, Joint Forest Management in India), especially when government agencies such as the forest department attempt to collaborate with communities.

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### Box 1.1. Forests, Politics, and Governance: Joint Forest Management in Bengal, India

Many of the outcomes of the joint forestry management (JFM) policy in Bengal appear strange. A forestry department that favors commercial timber species now also promotes the planting of indigenous species with little timber value. Local communities invite greater state government involvement as they simultaneously demand more autonomy. International organizations pour money into a "participatory" development scheme which, like most development schemes, greatly restricts participation. Local elites use populist idioms to advance a program they see as advantageously exclusionary. And different communities and forest managers, while participating in the same JFM, employ very different strategies and tactics.

These paradoxes begin to make sense only in light of the long history of government involvement in forest management in India. Because of this history, JFM is not simply a means of creating and implementing new institutions and principles. Individuals and groups with differing interests in forestry resources and shifting alliances, and the continually changing contexts of local-, state-, and national-level politics, mean that JFM defies easy interpretations or policy execution. Rather than a mechanism for the implementation of static principles of participatory forest management, JFM should be seen as a site of "development": a space for which multiple actors compete. Such competition redefines the goals, activities, and meanings of participatory forest management.

Source: Sivarmakrishnan, 1996.

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When we imagine community only in opposition to the state and/or the market, we are essentially trying to carve out an independent domain within which community operates, insulated from the contaminating influences of power and exchange. Such visions of community cannot contribute to any usable notion of community-based conservation. We must move away from universalist claims either for or against community. In the process, it is necessary to identify ways to negotiate differences within communities, interactions across them, and relations with actors outside specific communities. The local and the community often become entrenched in active dialogue with the external. Power and exchange, in multiple forms, underlie all processes within communities and relationships that extend outward from given communities.

The paper emphasizes that community-based conservation is unavoidably about a shift of power: how power is exercised, by which loci of authority, and with what kinds of resistance. An adequate understanding of community-based conservation must recognize that attempts to empower a community, when they begin to match the ideal of self-determination by the community for its

resources, may transform conservation beyond recognition. When communities possess real power to make decisions about resources they control, their notions of conservation may be radically different from those of NGOs, aid agencies, academicians, and governments.

The ensuing analysis proceeds on the assumption that community-based conservation is an objective sought via policy making, rather than through social movements or fundamental transformations of power relations and asset ownership. Nothing in principle precludes the achievement of community-based conservation through the mechanisms of social movements or the reconfigurations of basic power relations. But these mechanisms are rather more difficult to couple with conservation or community.

The discussion in the paper finds consistent illustration in descriptions of communities in conservation. The included case descriptions concretize theoretical points; they simultaneously indicate that theory, decontextualized, is mystification. The discussion and the cases highlight the importance of process, politics, and institutions over territorial fixity, social composition, and norms. The paper ends with an elaboration of some principles around which community-based conservation may be organized.

"[T]he shape and intensity of the quest for community varies from age to age... the ominous preoccupation with community revealed by modern thought and mass behavior is a manifestation of certain profound dislocations in the primary associative areas of society..."  
Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*, 1953.

## 2. Historical Assessments of Community

A historical perspective on the current widespread preoccupation with community promotes clarity about the larger social currents within which community gains prominence. Such a longer-term perspective also shows the ways in which community has moved in and out of fashion, and prompts caution before embracing community as the panacea to problems of conservation.

Few other concepts in the social sciences have received the kind of persistent attention that community has enjoyed.<sup>1</sup> Its complexity and the heterogeneity of its referents guarantee that it cannot easily be defined or measured.<sup>2</sup> Its obvious relevance to everyday life<sup>3</sup> means that it cannot be easily displaced or dismissed. The combination makes continuing exploration of its meanings necessary, even rewarding.

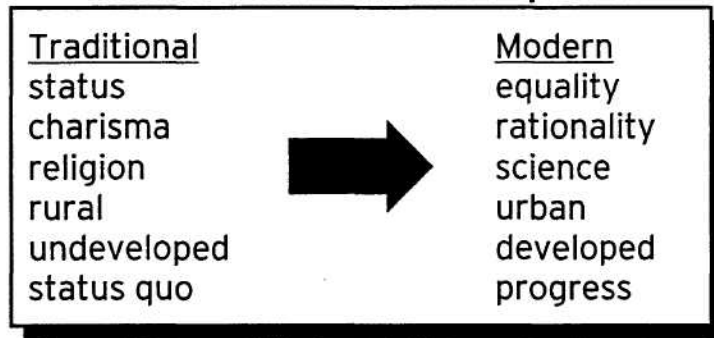
Current perceptions of community are strongly influenced by the analyses of 19th- and early 20th-century scholars who were attempting to understand the portentous transformations rocking their world.<sup>4</sup> The source of these changes was seen to lie primarily in the economic sphere—industrialization, monetization, and greater stress on material needs. Sir Henry Maine saw society moving from relationships based on status, kin networks, and joint property to those based on contract, territory, and individual rights.<sup>5</sup> Maine's underlying image of societal evolution influenced Tonnies' formulation of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* or community and society: a typology Bender calls one of the most enduring and fruitful in studying social change (1978: 17).<sup>7</sup> Tonnies' view of community as an organic whole continues to color present conceptions to a significant degree and accounts for some of the attractions community holds among many conservationists.<sup>8</sup>

Similar polar types also can be found in the writings of other 19th- and early 20th-century scholars who analyzed the changes that consumed their social environments. Durkheim talked of the mechanical solidarity of earlier social and economic systems (where the grounds for a psychological consensus were based in similar tasks carried out by all), and of organic solidarity in industrial societies (founded on the interdependence integral to specialization and division of labor).<sup>9</sup> Community also played an important, if implicit, role in the typological constructions of such other scholars as Weber, Comte, and Spencer.<sup>10</sup>

The second aspect of community that scholars of social change highlighted (the first being its organic nature) was its disappearance and replacement by other forms of social organization.<sup>11</sup> Their theories of classification were also theories of evolution.<sup>12</sup> For Marx and Engels, Spencer and Comte, and even for Weber and Durkheim, society moved along an ultimately irreversible evolutionary path. Status, tradition, charisma, and religion increasingly gave way to equality, modernity, rationality, and a scientific temperament (Box 2.1). This theorization of social change automatically pits community against modernity and the market-marketization and urbanization erode community.

An evolutionary perspective is also evident in later studies of urbanization in the United States and in writings about modernization by many U.S. scholars. Scholars such as Louis Wirth saw urbanization as a powerful force modifying social relations. According to Wirth, communal interactions gave way to a new pattern of life-"urbanism"-that roughly paralleled Tonnie's *Gesellschaft*.<sup>13</sup> Redfield's influential studies of the folk-urban continuum in the Yucatan also drew upon Tonnie's to present the preurban communities as harmonious (1941, 1947).<sup>14</sup> Modernization theorists, under the strong influence of Parsonian structuralism, characterized whole societies using the evolutionary labels of "underdeveloped," "developing," and "developed." The dichotomous pattern variables of Parsons were not only presumed to describe existing realities<sup>15</sup> and a direction of historical change, but also the desirability of movement in that direction. Analytical categories capturing discontinuous social states therefore replaced studies of the real processes of historical change.<sup>16</sup>

**Box 2.1. The Evolutionist Perspective.**



The evolutionary bent of modernization theorists came under attack in the 1970s.<sup>17</sup> Stages of growth and teleological change became the hallmarks of untenable Utopian themes in envisioning social change. The similar orientation of theories explaining urbanization had been challenged even earlier. Lewis (1952) and Morse (1959), for example, found that traditional forms of solidarity persisted in Latin American cities, coexisting with more recent types of associations. Criticisms of both of these theories have resulted in a turn to different frameworks for understanding social change, without the teleological baggage that accompanied them.

Two elements of the foregoing perspectives on community are worth the attention of those interested in community-based conservation. First, even if different scholars of community accepted the ongoing nature and irreversibility of change, their value judgments on the process differed. These judgments also influenced their assessment of community and its essential role in human existence. Second, there is a strong correlation between belief in teleological history and whether community is judged positively or negatively.

Different scholars of community have professed diverse, often radically opposed views on the desirability of community. Marx, Spencer, and the early Durkheim saw ongoing social changes as liberating humanity from the coercive and limiting world of the past, from the "idiocy of rural life" (Marx's words) that community partially embodied. Modernization theorists, writing about change in the nations of the so-called Third World, argued against particularistic affiliations of kinship, religion, and ethnicity.

These arguments were all against community. After all, community was the home of traditional attachments.<sup>18</sup> It was the world to be effaced to bring about progress. Progress was uncritically viewed

as furthering the interests of the poor and marginal because future Utopias would more than make up for the loss of community. In the face of positive theories of social change and the certainty that the "take-off" by traditional societies led toward desirable outcomes, community could only be seen as an obstacle to modernity. Assessments of community, consequently, were negative.

Other scholars viewed things differently. Tonnies, and later Durkheim, did not see any Utopia at the end of the irreversible social changes they described. Instead of liberation from the tyranny of custom, they saw "progress" as dissolving the ties that anchor human beings to their milieu and provide a sense of selfhood and belonging. Dewey, in the 1920s, made a strong plea for reviving community in modern society. He also did not believe that society inevitably evolved toward any particular state or form (1927). Seeing community as a matter of face-to-face interactions, he argued, "unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself" (1927: 216).

Raymond Williams has pointed provocatively and insightfully to the impossible search for community where those who miss its presence believe it existed, fully formed, just prior to the current set of social changes.<sup>19</sup> If Putnam is the most recent scholar to bemoan the loss of community and desire its recovery, he should take heart in being preceded by an illustrious group. Community breaks down in America as early as the 1650s (Rutman, 1965), but is also said to fall apart during the 17th century (Bailyn, 1964), the 18th century (Bushman, 1970), and the 19th century (Handlin, 1959; Handlin and Handlin, 1947; Thernstrom, 1964; Wiebe, 1967); in the 1920s (Stein, 1964; Warren, 1963); and in the 1940s and 1950s (Nisbet [1953] 1990). Putnam, of course, dates the loss of community and civic engagement to an even later period—the 1970s (1995, 1996).<sup>20</sup>

This general discussion on community prefigures some of the elements in writings on community in conservation. Many scholars who view community as breaking down imagine it in opposition to the state or the market and associate it with positive social goods. Few believe history to have an end point. Alarmed by the loss of familiar forms of social organization, they trace the loss to modernity, market forces, and state intrusions. The space vacated by a locus of longing that the future might provide is naturally filled in their writings by community.

When scholars possess teleological theories of change and find the end state appealing, the transformative capacities of community are limited. It becomes an obstacle to history and the Angel of Progress.<sup>21</sup> Much rests then, on one's view of the future.

We need to view the current preoccupation with community in this broader historical context. Images of community have changed remarkably over the past 30 years among those concerned about the environment and long-term ecological sustainability. Although many factors might account for the differing valence of community in writings on conservation, these writings reveal a curious oscillation between enchantment and disenchantment, similar to that experienced by those who study community as an ideal-typical construct and/or as a social formation. It is time to move beyond.

"Indigenous People and their communities, and other local communities, have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests, and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development."

Principle 22 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992.

"There is no pollution but people."

James Lovelock, *Healing Gaia*, 1990.

### 3. Changing Perceptions of Community in Conservation

The history of community in conservation is a history of revisionism. Images of pristine ecosystems and innocent primitives yield to those of despoiling communities out of balance with nature because of the double-pronged intrusion by state and market. A recuperative project on behalf of the indigenous and the local (community) successfully rescues community but comes under attack again by new anthropological and historical research: communities may not after all be as friendly to the environment as some would believe. The practical implications that accompany these changing images are immense.

The basic elements of earlier policy and scholarly writings about local communities and their residents are familiar. People were an obstacle to efficient and rational organization of resource use.<sup>22</sup> Protecting resources meant protecting them from people.

A convincing logic undergirded the belief that the goals of conservation and the interests of local communities were in opposition. Conservation required protection of threatened resources: wildlife, forests, pastures, fisheries, and irrigation or drinking water. Many of these resources, especially at the local level, could easily be overused because they were open to all. The interests of local communities that relied on available natural resources for fodder, firewood, water, food, or income lay in exploiting these. This schematic representation, popularized in no small measure by Garrett Hardin's pernicious influence and bolstered by several theoretical metaphors that served to guide policy,<sup>23</sup> provided a persuasive explanation of how resource degradation and depletion took place.

Empirical evidence about the context of most rural communities helped prop up the view. The populations of most rural areas in tropical countries have grown rapidly, even with out-migration to cities.<sup>24</sup> Demographic growth, it was argued, could only increase consumption pressures. The poverty of rural communities similarly impelled the overexploitation of natural resources.<sup>25</sup>

The poor were doubly doomed. Penetration by market forces, by linking local systems of resource use to a larger network of demand, further increased the pressure on natural resources.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, property rights arrangements, usually communal in nature, did not provide adequate incentives for protecting resources or eliminating externalities.<sup>27</sup>



These factors meant that even if in a harmonious past people and communities had successfully managed and conserved resources, that past was long gone. The way to effective conservation was through exercising the very heavy hand of the state or the equally heavy, if less visible, hand of the market and private property rights.

This vision of the role of community and subsistence users in resource degradation was no innocent academic fancy. While for many, environment and conservation are moral issues, they are also unavoidably political issues. Particular explanations of degradation and depletion are also prescriptions for the kinds of measures necessary to further conservation. If small, growing, poor communities were active participants in resource degradation, conservation required excluding local populations from resource systems or drastically changing their habits, norms, and needs. State policy, where it was concerned with conservation, often aimed to exclude locals; international conservation agencies promoted such state policies.<sup>28</sup>

Some strands of the earlier vision still linger,<sup>29</sup> but new beliefs about community in conservation are radically different. Communities are now the locus of conservationist imaginings.<sup>30</sup> International agencies such as the World Bank, IDRC, SIDA, CIDA, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Conservation International, the Nature Conservancy, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and USAID have all found community. The flow of enormous sums of money and effort toward community-based conservation and resource management is the natural consequence. A flood of scholarly papers and policy-centric reports examines the possibilities of community-based management (Arnold, 1990; Clugston and Rogers, 1995; Dei, 1992; Douglass, 1992; Perry and Dixon, 1986; Raju et al., 1993; Robinson, 1995; Wells and Brandon, 1992). New acronyms for the basic idea of community in conservation have proliferated (Box 3.1).

**Box 3. 1. Acronyms of Concepts and Bodies that Incorporate the Idea of Community in Conservation**

CBM	(community-based management)
CBO	(community-based organization)
CD	(community development)
CO	(community organization)
GRO	(grassroots organization)
GSO	(grassroots support organization)
ICDP	(integrated conservation and development program)
ISO	(intermediary support organization)
LA	(local administration)
LG	(local government)
MO	(membership organization)
PAR	(participatory action research)
PLA	(participatory learning and action)
PO	(people's organization)
PPA	(participatory poverty assessment)
PRA	(participatory rural appraisal)
RRA	(rapid rural appraisal)
SO	(service organization)
VO	(voluntary organization)

The sea change in perceptions about the role of communities uses potent historical imaginings. Despite empirical evidence that communities and indigenous populations have varied and

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complex histories where reverence for nature did not necessarily preclude its overuse and destruction, a recent collection of essays on community-based conservation tells us, "Communities down the millennia have developed elaborate rituals and practices to limit offtake levels, restrict access to critical resources, and distribute harvests" (Western and Wright, 1994: 1).<sup>31</sup>

Another recent analysis opens with the following strong assertion: "The survival and quality of forests in most developing countries depend on the strength of community forest organizations formed by the people traditionally involved in forest use" (Ascher, 1995: 1).<sup>32</sup> Communities and rural users have now become the heroes of resource conservation, rather than being the villains of resource depletion that they earlier were (see also Lynch and Talbott, 1995).

"... [C]onservation and sustainable development are human activities that occur on local levels and almost always within the context of a community; many national governments continue to rely on legal systems that vest the state with ownership over vast amounts of natural resources; state-centric strategies have been marked by widespread failure, in large part due to the lack of appropriate and fair involvement by affected communities..."

*The Baguio Declaration, Philippines, 1994.*

#### 4. Why Community, Why Now?

In looking at the relationship between the valorization of community and the loss of teleological history, this paper has indicated the intellectual climate in which community has come to the fore. The ideologies that told us we are moving toward a better future have become unreliable and discredited. But the erosion of ideologies that renders antediluvian the belief in progress and future Utopias is only the general context for the resurrection of community as the present-day utopia. A host of far more specific factors have aided the voices of those who advocate community-based conservation.

The past several decades of planned development and top-down conservation practice have made one fact amply clear: the capacity of political regimes and state bureaucracies in developing economies to coerce their citizens into unpopular programs is strictly limited. The limits of centrally exercised power are brought home starkly when state actors attempt to discipline resource users distant from administrative centers<sup>33</sup> (Box 4.1). Where fodder, firewood, fisheries, and wildlife are intrinsic to subsistence and everyday livelihood, even well-funded coercive conservation generally fails. But the fiscal crisis of the state in most tropical nations, and reduced aid from overseas, have bankrupted coercive conservation.

Faulty design, inefficient implementation, and corrupt organizations have played an equally important role. They combine with local intransigence, creative indifference, and lack of livelihood alternatives to convert centrally enforced conservation projects into spectacular failures. As Wells and Brandon (1992) point out in their review of 23 conservation and development programs, there are few viable options to community-based conservation.

Other contextual factors have also focused the attention of conservationists on community. With the spread of democratic political structures and the increasing insistence of the rhetoric of participation,<sup>34</sup> nonrepresentative development and conservation projects have become unattractive and impractical. Simultaneously, the increasing prominence of indigenous and ethnic claims about the stewardship role of native populations in relation to nature (Redford and Mansour, 1996) also assists those who believe in grassroots and community participation.<sup>35</sup> NGOs at different political levels have helped further the demand for participation and amplify the voices of local, indigenous, and community groups (Borda, 1985; Borghese, 1987; Bratton, 1989a).<sup>36</sup>

Recognition of the limits of the state and emphasis on popular participation come at roughly the same time that new revisionist ecological research has begun to question the two other main planks of coercive conservation. The first was that there are/have been pristine environments

untouched by human hands until the very recent past. The second was the belief that indigenous and other local communities were once isolated, and therefore able to use their resources sustainably. Questioning these two beliefs has thrown into disarray the romantic image of the "Ecologically Noble Savage" (Redford, 1990).<sup>37</sup>

**Box 4.1. Components of Coercive Conservation**

- initiated by centralized power
- little to no local participation
- inappropriate design
- inefficient implementation
- poor follow-up
- high levels of corruption
- local resistance and/or indifference
- lack of livelihood alternatives
- belief in pristine environments

According to Headland (forthcoming), historical ecologists emphasize that environments have histories from which humans cannot be excluded. There is a false dichotomy between natural and human-influenced landscapes because all ecosystems have been modified greatly by humans for thousands of years.

Many of the more recent studies that question the notion of "virgin forests" received at least part of their inspiration from Darrell Posey's work on the forest islands of the Kayapo (1984, 1985).<sup>38</sup> Denevan (1992) argues that most forests are, in fact, anthropogenic. Scholars have marshalled impressive evidence about how humans manipulate biodiversity and influence the species composition and structure of nearby forests.<sup>39</sup> In Central African forests, purposeful clearings for cultivation may have been occurring since at least 5,000 years ago (Clist, 1989; David, 1982; Phillipson, 1985; see box below).

If extractive projects involving huge investments and capital outlays have often failed (Hecht and Cockburn, 1989), indigenous populations have provided evidence that they can manage their habitats sustainably over long time spans (Anderson, 1990; Denevan and Padoch, 1988; Dufour, 1990; Lamb, 1991; Treacy, 1982). According to others, traditional swiddening, like small-scale disturbances in the forest, can enhance the biological diversity of the forest (Bailey, 1990; Park, 1992; Sponsel, 1992; Sponsel et al., 1996; Yoon, 1993) (see Box 4.2, the Efe in Ituri Forest in Zaire).<sup>40</sup>

The indicated writings above have helped undermine those who see communities as spoilers of natural resources. If humans have shaped and used their environments in a sustainable manner for millennia, it may be possible to establish partnerships today that accomplish the same objectives. Indeed, as anthropologists have paid closer attention to the histories of "people without history" (Wolf, 1982), it has become obvious that if local communities in the past used resources without necessarily destroying them, they often did so in contact with other peoples rather than being caught in isolated time warps. Such contacts may have been crucial for survival.<sup>41</sup> They may also have helped promote

conservationist practices by allowing foragers, hunter-gatherers, and pastoralists to get starches and other foods from farmers.<sup>42</sup>

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#### Box 4.2. Indigenous Communities and the Forest: The Efe in Zaire

There is an ongoing controversy about whether the tropical rainforests contain sufficient resources to permit human habitation. In the Ituri Forest in Zaire, the Efe (Pygmy) set up temporary camps for periods of up to three weeks during which an average of 18 people occupy the area. The Efe clear a small area of the forest, make temporary huts, and discard their refuse near their huts. After three weeks they move on.

Even such small disturbances alter the structure of forest vegetation. The Efe introduce new species into the areas they inhabit, which germinate in the openings that are created. The result is new complexes of biodiversity. Thus the forests of Central Africa have become a patchwork of various successional stages shaped by generations of horticulturists and mobile foragers.

Source: Bailey, 1996.

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In addition to empirical and historical works that have helped resurrect community and local participation in conservation, a theoretical foundation for the role of community in conservation has become available. A respectable pedigree of research on common property institutions highlights the existence of alternatives to state or private management of resources and has provided needed ammunition to the advocates of community (Berkes, 1989; Bromley, 1992; McCay and Acheson, 1987; McKean, 1992; NRC, 1986; Ostrom, 1990; 1992a; Peters, 1994; Pinkerton, 1989; Stevenson, 1991; Wade, 1988).

Not only has theoretically informed scholarship on the commons paid attention to the institutional arrangements that influence local level resource management, it has also emphasized the need for communities to attend to the biological parameters of the resources they use. Although members of communities may have time- and place-specific information about their resources that nobody else possesses, in combination with the information and skills of external experts their management of natural resources may improve still further.<sup>43</sup>

In light of the significant symbolic, theoretical, and intellectual resources available to advocates of community, it is somewhat surprising that claims on behalf of community-based conservation often retain a rather simple quality. One form such claims assume, schematically stated, is as follows: Communities have a long-term need for the renewable resources near which they live. They have greater knowledge about these resources than do other potential actors. They are, therefore, the best managers of local resources.<sup>44</sup>

Refinements can be found. According to some, if communities were not involved in conservation, they would use resources destructively (Sponsel et al., 1996; Western and Wright, 1994). Other writings include the notion of interests, in addition to that of needs. It is in the interests of a community to protect its resources; therefore it will.<sup>45</sup>

In a prescriptive form, the thesis of community-based conservation and resource management uses new beliefs about the suitability of communities to offer policy recommendations. The implicit

assumption is that communities have greater incentives to use resources unsustainably when they are not involved in resource management. Greater involvement would provide higher benefits to a community, alter the incentives of its members in favor of conservation, and increase its stake in resource management and conservation. Communities, then, would become better managers. The logic can founder for a number of reasons (see Box 4.3, Community-based Wildlife Conservation in Zambia).<sup>46</sup>

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Box 4.3. Transforming Rural Hunters into Conservationists: A  
Story from Zambia about Community-based Wildlife Management

A number of conservationists and government officials in Zambia believed that the only way to increase the efficacy of wildlife conservation in this Central African country was to encourage participation by local communities. One program that emerged from this debate in the late 1980s was the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (ADMADE). Under ADMADE, the Zambian National Parks and Wildlife Service instituted a series of incentives and punishments designed to include the local community in decisions regarding wildlife conservation and use.

ADMADE's incentives, however, had mixed results due to the discordant claims that different community members had on local political power and wildlife resources. From the beginning ADMADE identified local chiefs as the links to the local community. Chiefs were given substantial powers by the program, including the rights to select wildlife scouts for training. They were also the dominant voice on local committees that decided how monies generated by ADMADE were spent. These powers augmented the few traditional powers chiefs possessed. Chiefs used their new privileges to hire family members and loyalists as scouts and day laborers and to situate new community projects near their own residences.

Local hunters changed their behavior as a result of the ADMADE program, but not in the intended manner. ADMADE increased the number of scouts—who were paid bonuses based on arrests made in the program's area, making it difficult for local hunters to kill large animals (e.g., buffalo and elephant) without detection. But the economic and social value of game meat to many community members still encouraged them to hunt. Instead of killing larger game with guns, local residents snared smaller game so as to be less conspicuous to scouts. The total amount of game meat obtained by community members varied little, even with an increasing number of arrests.

While ADMADE sought to change hunters' incentives by offering community-level infrastructure in exchange for the cessation of hunting, the program succeeded only in altering individuals' tactics and prey selection. The program rewarded local chiefs (with political powers) and local wildlife scouts (with bonuses) as individuals. Although giving communities some infrastructure to be shared by all, ADMADE targeted nonprogram members of local communities only for punishment

Source: Gibson and Marks, 1995.

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Li points out that the vision of community as the centerpiece of conservation and resource management is attractive. It can be posed in opposition to arguments that favor state control or privatization of resources (1996). "Generalized representations" of community make available "points

of leverage in ongoing processes of negotiation" (1996: 505, 509).<sup>47</sup> Yet generalized representations are also misrepresentations. They can prompt backlashes. More important, they disguise, conceal, eclipse, and erase critical interests, processes, and causal links within communities and between communities and other social formations. By exploring their specifics and questioning them closely, it becomes possible to point toward more equitable, perhaps more efficient, avenues of conservation even as communities continue to occupy center stage. Advocates of community, even if they recognize these issues, need to highlight them.

"In the broadest sense, then, community-based conservation includes natural resources of biodiversity protection by, for, and with the local community... Defining community-based conservation any more precisely would be futile and even counterproductive...(but) if community-based conservation cannot be defined simply, detailed case studies from around the world at least can convey a sense of what it entails..." Western and Wright, *Natural Connections*, 1994.

## 5. What Makes Community?

The vision of small, integrated communities using locally evolved norms and rules to manage resources sustainably and equitably (if only the state and the market would get out of the way) is a powerful myth. It is also tragically flawed. Because it does not withstand scrutiny, it is an uncertain foundation from which to contest privatization, marketization, or centralization. Indeed, such a vision even fails to inform whether contestation is the only strategy in relation to markets and state actors.

Most important, by constructing community as a unified, organic whole, this vision fails to attend to differences within communities: how these differences affect resource management outcomes, local politics, and strategic interactions within communities; possibilities of "layered alliances" spanning multiple levels of politics; and the channels of interaction between actors within and outside communities. Attention to these details is absolutely critical if changes in policy on behalf of community are to lead to outcomes that are sustainable and/or equitable.

Although writings on community-based conservation assert that community is central to renewable resource management, they seldom devote much attention to analyzing community, or to how community affects outcomes. A number of works even refuse to elaborate on what it might mean, preferring to let readers infer its contours in the descriptions of specific cases (Western and Wright, 1994). Other scholars have carefully specified different aspects of community.<sup>48</sup> Conceptually and sociologically, community refers to a bundle of concepts related to space, size, composition, interactions, interests, and objectives. In talking about community-based conservation, it would be important to understand the extent to which these aspects are critical to the emergence of community, how they relate to different types of resources, and the political processes of conservation and management.

To simplify, much of the current literature on conservation and resource use sees community in one of three ways: community as a spatial unit, as a social structure, and as a set of shared norms (Box 5.1). It is on the basis of one or a combination of these three ideas that the advocacy of community rests. But these conceptions of community confuse its surface features with their *potential role* in creating community. Further, in identifying community as one or a combination of these elements, they also present implicit lessons for policy making that are at best hasty, perhaps ill considered.



**Box 5.1. Three Perspectives on Community**

- community as a small spatial unit
- community as a homogenous social structure
- community as common interests and shared norms

Community as a Small Spatial Unit

Small size and territorial affiliation have been proxies for community since the very beginnings of writings on the subject. Tonnies, for example, characterized *Gemeinschaft* by "intimate, private, and exclusive living together" (cited in Bender, 1978: 17). Increased mobility and larger settlements weaken communal bonds.<sup>49</sup> Many current writings on community in conservation also take smallness and territorial attachment to be characteristic features of communities.<sup>50</sup> But we need to analyze the relationship between shared space and small size and the political processes of local conservation rather than *assume* the link between territorial conceptions of community and successful resource management.<sup>51</sup>

As soon as we begin to assess the relationship between spatial location and the formation of community, it becomes important to consider the concomitant negotiations and politics. The relationship between community and space is far more fraught than the simple one of community emerging from the sharing of a space (Carter et al., 1993; Rose, 1997). The simple fact that many small, territorially contained groups do not protect or manage resources, and some mobile, transitional groups do, should make it obvious that other important processes are at work. Migrant pastoralists, for example, can put pastures to far more efficient use when they are not owned privately (see Box 5.2, Raika Migrant Shepherds in India). We need to draw more creatively from work on space and community (Keith and Pile, 1993; Massey, 1994), not assume that territorial fixity leads to community and successful conservation in small groups.

Even for stationary terrestrial resources such as forests and pastures, it is not easy to make allocations to particular communities: a piece of forest or pasture for every community. The territorial attachment of small groups may make them inappropriate managers for particular resources because of the geographical spread of the resource or competition from other users (Agrawal, 1996c). For fugitive resources such as wildlife and fisheries, an added dimension of complexity might be introduced (Naughton-Treves and Sanderson, 1995). Assuming that community is synonymous with shared space and small size, therefore, is necessarily incomplete and possibly misleading in the context of community-based conservation.

The presumption that smallness or territorial attachment creates better conservationists can be questioned on another ground. In conflicts with state actors or when their interests are in tension with market pressures, community-level actors might find themselves hampered and ineffective. Therefore, believers in community-based conservation also must devote attention to how communities can negotiate effectively with powerful external actors.

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### **Box 5.2. The Mobile Communities of the Raika Migrant Shepherds in Western Rajasthan, India**

Starting out from western Rajasthan in India, a large number of raika shepherds trek east thousands of kilometers each year into Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Migration has become increasingly necessary in the face of a combination of factors: declining fodder resources at home, the spread of irrigated agriculture, and changing institutional arrangements over pastures that earlier were considered common property. The migration cycle usually begins after the harvest and lasts between eight and nine months. The merger of agriculture and pastoralism reduces production risks, increases household incomes, and helps utilize scarce fodder resources.

The shepherds migrate collectively in *dangs*, organized groups of 10 to 15 flockowners. Such migrations can contain up to 100 shepherds and their dependents, and thousands of animals. Led by a *nambardar* (literally, the holder of a number), the shepherds eke out a meager surplus from a harsh landscape and a sometimes hostile social environment. Lack of attachment to a particular resource system still allows productive use of a renewable resource—patchily distributed forage along migration routes. Indeed, strong local tenurial rights over the fodder shepherds use would render productive utilization of fallow fields far more costly.

Mobility, to be economically successful, requires a collective orientation. If the shepherds migrated individually, their sheep would likely get stolen, and harassment from villagers and government officials would force them to turn back rather quickly. As they migrate, the shepherds create tightly knit communities whose members spend significant amounts of time, resources, and effort in activities oriented toward community goals. Chats and songs around evening fires, exchanges of stories, and recounting of experiences from earlier migrations play an important role in bolstering community. The community shepherds create with each other, and with friendly farmers along the way, is based most importantly on a careful division of responsibilities within the camp. Community and association go together among the raika, contrary to the "ideal type" conceptions that see them as opposite poles of social organization.

The camp dissolves and forms anew each year. New shepherds join while established members often stay at home. The shepherds create community over short periods of time, with the knowledge that their interactions with others may not last beyond the current migration cycle. In addition, because the *dang* is not fixed to any specific place, community is not dependent upon identification with a particular location. The shepherds' mobile communities also are formed in light of an explicitly economic objective—seeking a higher surplus through collective migration. The usual distinction drawn between market and community relations cannot be made for the raika.

For all of the above reasons, careful analysis of the institutions through which the shepherds organize their interactions yields important insights. Careful monitoring, information sharing, and the ability of ordinary shepherds to sanction their leaders on evidence of wrongdoing are highly significant in allowing the shepherds to function as a collective and as a community.

Source: Agrawal, 1996.

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### Community as a Homogeneous Social Structure

The rhetorical weight of community comes from papering over the differences that might prevail within actually existing communities. Indeed, the feature of community receiving the greatest attention is its homogenous composition. Typically, community is assumed to be a group of similar households (in terms of assets and incomes) with common characteristics (in terms of ethnicity, religion, caste, or language).<sup>52</sup> Such homogeneity furthers cooperative solutions, reduces hierarchical

and conflictual interactions, and promotes better resource management. Outside the community conflicts prevail; within reigns harmony. Such difficult-to-believe notions of community become possible in part because of the conventional separation of market, state, and community, and the presumed erosion of community when external forces impinge upon it.

The notion that community is homogeneous meshes well with beliefs about its spatial boundaries. In rural areas of poor economies—the sites where most advocates of community-based resource management concentrate—people living together may indeed follow similar occupations, depend on the same resources, use the same language, and belong to the same ethnic or religious group.<sup>53</sup> But whether ease of interaction is sufficient to promote cooperative conservation or lead to sustainable management of resources is an entirely different question.

Even if members of a group are similar in several respects, few studies wrestle with the difficulty of operationalizing social homogeneity. All human groups are stratified to some extent.<sup>54</sup> It is important, therefore, to analyze degrees and types of heterogeneity, and those dimensions of it that are important to resource conservation. Such analyses are sadly lacking. Studies of conservation, when they actually deal with the social composition of a community, indicate that within the same group (e.g., Maasai, pastoralists, women),<sup>55</sup> there exist multiple axes of differentiation that call into question the notion of homogeneous communities.

Other recent studies of resource use at the local level have recognized the salience of intra-community differences and conflicts (Agrawal, 1994a; Ilahiane, 1995; Gibson and Marks, 1995; Moore, 1996b). These studies show that within local communities there may exist considerable differences. Communities that were supposed to be homogeneous may sprout conflicts over issues of resource use. And even highly differentiated communities may be able to use local resources sustainably when elites within the community impose their will on weaker factions. In western Rajasthan, for example, land-owning castes have used existing legislation to protect local pastoral resources, primarily at the cost of migrant pastoralists (see Box 5.3 on conflicts among raika shepherds and land-owning farmers).

Examining the processes and institutions through which resources are conserved focuses attention squarely on the negotiation of differences and on how collectively made decisions (even when they are made by communities) are often imposed on those whose voices are softer and whose hands are weaker.

Analyses of community-based conservation must concentrate far more closely on institutions and processes within communities, and on the relations of these with programs and actors intending to shift greater power toward communities.<sup>56</sup> Local politics is ubiquitous. It does not come into existence when self-contained, timeless communities become vulnerable to external pressures. At best, changing relationships with external actors allow different political actors within communities to play out their differences on new terms, create new alliances, and even construct new terrains of conflict. By recognizing that community-based conservation cannot do away with politics simply by using the idiom of participation, we take an initial step toward policies that are more sensitive to the needs of the marginalized within communities.

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### Box 5.3. I Don't Need It but You Can't Have It: Politics on the Commons

In Patawal village in western Rajasthan, the animals of shepherds and farmers graze on the village common, especially during the rainy season. At this time most of the fields in the village have been ploughed and planted, and many shepherds have returned from their annual migrations (see Box 5.2). Consequently, the animal-to-land ratio in the village increases greatly when the rains begin. The shepherds, who own relatively small plots of private land, are especially dependent on the common.

When the state government created a new law permitting village councils to enclose village commons and afforest the enclosed land, the council in Patawal lost little time in taking advantage of this conservationist measure. The council passed several resolutions between 1982 and 1987 that helped fence and plant 70 hectares of the common—a third of its total area. Most of the new trees belong to an exotic species (*Prosopis juliflora*). The council also appointed a government-paid guard to maintain a watch over the planted area. This attempt to conserve and improve the vegetation on the common, however, had a completely unforeseen effect: many of the shepherds are now forced to migrate for longer periods. Unable to find sufficient browse for their sheep on the *oran* during the critical months of the rainy season, they must travel longer, more frequently, and in new directions. The village council has marginally improved the vegetation cover on the common, but the improvement comes at the cost of increased tension among the different groups living in the village. It also creates pressures on resources elsewhere, as the shepherds migrate with their animals.

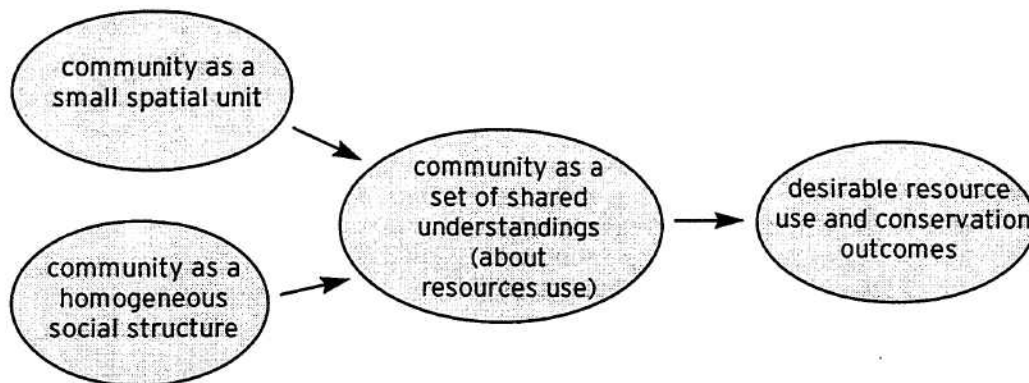
Source: Agrawal, 1994a.

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### Community as Common Interests and Shared Norms

Community as shared norms and common interests depends on the perceptions of its members. It is supposed to grow out of common location, small size, homogeneous composition, or shared characteristics. As Ascher puts it, community exists among individuals who share "*common* interests and *common* identification... growing out of shared characteristics" (1995: 83). Shared common goals are what make successful resource management by communities more likely, because in a community, "individuals give up some of their individuality to behave as a single entity to accomplish goals" (Kiss, 1990: 9).

Internalized norms of behavior within communities can guide resource management outcomes in desired directions. It is this relationship between resource use outcomes and community as an organic body that attracts those who advocate community. Figure 1 uses writings on community-based conservation to summarize the most important connections among different attributes of community and conservation outcomes.



**Figure 1. A conventional view of community and conservation**

Shared community norms can promote conservation in two different ways. First, norms may specifically prohibit some actions. In many villages in semiarid western Rajasthan, such norms impede villagers from cutting *khejri* trees (*Prosopis cineraria*), especially when these trees are present in the local *oran*, a common area set aside for grazing and often dedicated to a deity.<sup>57</sup> In the same region, the Bishnois have strong norms against the killing of wild animal species such as deer. Elsewhere, Carolyn Cook (1996: 279-282) details how the Amung-me in Irian Jaya protect certain groves of trees as sacred, as well as a marsupial (*amat*) that plays a role in the propagation of *pandanus* trees. And Mishra explains how women belonging to Juang and Saora tribal communities in Orissa follow strong norms regarding the timing and season for collecting nontimber forest products (1994).<sup>58</sup>

Second, communal norms of different kinds can promote cooperative decision making concerning resource conservation. If members of a community believe in a shared identity, they also may be willing to cooperate in decisions about more formal rules for conserving resources.<sup>59</sup> The presence of such community norms also can facilitate resource management through external intervention.

Community as shared norms, especially when such norms are about the management of resources or conservation, can be an effective instrument for community-based conservation. Unlike shared space, small size, or homogeneous membership-aspects of community that may or may not promote conservation-widely shared norms may aid conservation more directly.

But this conclusion should not comfort too much. Norms cannot be taken as a set of static beliefs that communities hold, never to give up. They come into being in relation to particular contexts, as an outcome of various interactions and political processes, and even when codified and written they do not cease to change.<sup>60</sup>

Further, widely shared conservationist norms may be present only in few communities. Current research also indicates that conservationist norms cannot be equated with particular identities such as "women," or "the indigenous."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, if imagined shared norms are what best characterize

community, then the notion of community itself emerges and changes over time in interactions within the imagined community and with outsiders (see Box 5.4, Karezai River Protected Area in Zimbabwe).

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Box 5.4. A River Runs through It: The Kaerezi  
River Protected Area in Zimbabwe

In June 1991, 65 local residents watched as a representative of a white fishing club located on the Kaerezi River in Zimbabwe handed a check to the secretary of the Kaerezi River Protected Area, saying, "We can work together. We can help finance (the development of the river) and you can look after it." The otherwise joyous occasion masked the ongoing political battles among multiple groups, each seeking to control this river in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. These groups do not split into the familiar dichotomies of state-local community or European-African. They form a complex array that touches on the politics of race, gender, development, tradition, education, and class. Such complexity defies easy assertions about community interests. The Kaerezi River Protected Area rewarded certain groups at the time of its creation, but contests over the resources in the area continue.

The contestation concerns the lands near and waters of a stretch of the Kaerezi River found in Zimbabwe's most preferred agroecological zone. The Kaerezi also shares a boundary with Nyanga National Park, a major international tourist attraction. The Kaerezi flows from the park through a resettlement scheme, which used to be owned by a white farmer notorious for evicting illegal residents from his titled lands. The farmer also had allowed establishment of a fly-fishing club on his lands, which helped to make the river a spectacular trout-fishing area. It was also from this area that a local chief of the Tangwena helped get then-rebel (later-president) Robert Mugabe safely out of the country.

Reflecting this history, the goals of the salient actors are many, some irreconcilable. The fishing club wants to keep the river as pristine as possible. Local villagers want to extend their farmlands and cattle holdings. The Department of National Parks wants to extend its park into the area. The Department of Agriculture established a wheat farm in the area, which pushed former farm employees into other lands near the river. The Department of Rural Development established a resettlement scheme on the former white farmer's lands. These departments, all part of the same state but with very different interests, call into question the notion of a monolithic state, as opposed to a community.

But the category "community" itself is misleading. Several communities dispute each other's claims to the resources generated by participation in the Kaerezi River Protected Area. In addition, nonelites worry that their communities' traditional leaders-headmen and chiefs may capture the benefits of the area for themselves. Local, nontraditional elites are similarly looked on with suspicion. Each group uses its ties to both traditional and nontraditional institutions to inventively rework its identity and bolster claims over benefits from the program. Competing idioms of historical memory, geographical territory, genealogical descent, ethnic identity, and participation in the liberation struggle become some of the means by which groups seek to control the river and its resources, and produce their versions of community. The meanings of these idioms themselves change over time as local residents form new alliances in the struggles around conservation. Neither community, nor its constituent groups, can be taken as preformed, fixed identities.

Source: Moore, 1996.

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Finally, this aspect of community-as shared understandings-is also probably the one least amenable to manipulation through external intervention. Conservationist norms cannot simply be

introduced into a community because they are desirable. Indeed, we hardly even know which strategies will successfully alter the norms people hold about conservation, when the resources in question are critical to livelihood.

Indeed, although size, composition, and links to a specific territorial space are aspects of community that can be influenced more directly, attempts to change even these aspects often bear bitter fruit. The tragic history of forced settlement of pastoralists demonstrates this.<sup>62</sup> Attention to process, politics, and institutional arrangements, to which we turn in the next section, may prove more fruitful in achieving decentralized conservation.<sup>63</sup>

"Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions. In consequence, they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic."

Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, 1990.

## 6. Process, Politics, and Institutions

Communities that are territorially fixed, small, and homogeneous are more likely to have regular interactions among members and reach collective decisions. But there is little reason to believe that their decisions will lead to conservation. More important, small size may hamper the ability of village or indigenous groups to manage their resources in the face of strong external threats or when resources are spread over large areas. How can the advantages of small size (in terms of easier decisions) be retained, and disadvantages (in terms of vulnerability to outsiders) overcome?

Further, the conventional focus on community as a collective, integrated whole where members follow common norms fails to allow for the fact that norms are difficult to introduce and modify. Such a focus also shifts attention away from several aspects of existing communities that are far more centrally and directly connected to conservation: multiple actors, political processes, and institutional arrangements.

To become more attuned to the ways in which community-based conservation works, we must pay greater attention to (1) multiple interests and actors within the so-called community, (2) local politics and collective decision making and its relationship to nonlocal actors, and (3) institutions that affect decision making processes and political negotiations.<sup>64</sup> These three proposed foci for community-based conservation are closely connected (Box 6.1).

### Box 6.1. Proposed Foci of Community-based Conservation

- heterogenous interests and actors
- local politics and collective decision making
- institutional arrangements as influences on decision making processes

#### Multiple Interests and Actors

Western and Wright hint at one of the dilemmas of community-based conservation. By definition, community-based conservation would fail if it did not achieve its objective: conserving nature and natural resources (1994: 7).<sup>65</sup> But its basis in community requires that communities possess greater autonomy to make decisions about local resources, even if that means ineffective conservation.<sup>66</sup> Opening up the community to expose the multiplicity of interests and actors within it makes the question of community-based conservation far more complex and foregrounds other dilemmas that require attention (see Box 6.2, Forest *Panchayats* in Kumaon).



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Box 6.2. Village Forest Councils and Women: A  
Case Study from the Kumaon Hills in India

The Kumaon and Garhwal Himalaya in Uttar Pradesh, India, have a long history of local community resource management. The rural agricultural economy is still highly dependent on products from forests, and when rights of villagers to forests have come under challenge they have protested, sometimes violently. Because of villager protests against attempts by the colonial British state to take over hill forests, the government was forced to pass the Van Panchayat Act in 1931. The Act has led to the establishment of thousands of formally recognized forest councils (*van panchayats*) in hill villages. The consequent entrenchment of community took place, it should be obvious, in interactions with the state! More recent resentment against outsiders, who had preferential access to forest products, prompted the local *Chipko* movement. In these cases of conflicts over resources, communities asserted their prior rights and control over local forest resources against outside users.

The case of the forest councils, as an instance of communities and government officials cooperating to manage forest resources, is especially interesting. The Van Panchayat Act allows for regular election of office bearers, recognizes substantial autonomy of villagers in day-to-day management of their council forests, provides for administrative support to villagers where rule breaking is endemic, and establishes controls to prevent indiscriminate timber harvesting. Villagers usually craft rules that allocate forest products equitably among resident families. The condition of council forests is far better than that of forests under the control of the Revenue Department, often even better than that of forests managed by the Forest Department.

A number of deficiencies exist in the framework of the Act as well as in its implementation. Village forest councils often do not possess sufficient local political clout, administrative support from government officials, or the financial strength to punish recalcitrant rule breakers. Elections are irregular, and community control over valuable forest products such as resin and large timber is highly attenuated. New forest council rules currently under consideration may alter existing institutional contours in more satisfactory ways.

In terms of daily use of forest products, however, a glaring problem marks the management of council forests. The issue concerns gender inequalities. In almost no instance do women possess the power to design, monitor, or enforce rules. Gendered distribution of household tasks means that women are responsible for collecting forest products such as grass and green fodder, firewood, and leaf litter, all of which the forest councils zealously guard. A predictable paradox results. In the councils most vigilant to protect forest resources, women users in the village are punished most severely. Especially vulnerable are women and households possessing limited private land or few external sources of income. Lower-caste and poorer women bear the brunt of the attempt to conserve forests at the local level. Their names are cited most frequently in lists of rule breakers and of people required to pay fines.

Source: Agrawal, 1994, field notes, *panchayat* records.

Questioning "community" and pointing to multiple groups within it suggests that devolving the power to make conservation-related decisions to community is at best only a beginning. The recognition that communities comprise multiple interests and actors is a useful step forward because it also pushes toward an analysis of how different actors within communities view their interests, and how the interests and identities of actors change over time. A more acute understanding of community in conservation can be founded only by understanding that actors within communities seek their interests in conservation programs and that their interests and identities are often redefined as new opportunities emerge.

The more challenging and critical task, therefore, lies in understanding how devolved decision making would actually work so that marginalized actors could be represented in decision making, and how their representation would influence the character of conservation-related outcomes. Questioning community aids this critical task. It focuses attention on the ways in which asymmetrically placed actors within communities interact with each other and with external actors, the forces that influence their interactions, and the kinds of outcomes these interactions create. It requires explicit analysis of local institutions and the ways in which they shape outcomes when communities manage conservation. It suggests, as the box above shows, that even communities may have to enforce conservation, and that groups within communities may resist attempts to conserve.<sup>67</sup>

The recognition that groups within communities have divergent interests, and that those traditionally excluded also should find representation, is important, therefore, not just on the basis of equity. Excluded groups can make conservation impossible-in the same manner as the noncooperation of communities in top-down coercive conservation made that form of conservation nonviable. If community-level decision making and institutions are dominated by particular factions, allocation of resources is likely to be inequitable and to prompt resistance from those who are excluded. Opening up community thus forces attention toward the ways in which multiple actors and interests influence the processes of conservation and the institutional arrangements that might help address the politics of conservation processes.

#### Local Processes and Collective Decision Making

All local processes take place within the context of larger social forces. They also help construct these larger social forces. Attempts by governments to adopt and implement community-based conservation, and specific projects of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that seek to involve communities, are some examples of directed influences on local conservation. Such initiatives bring into the local context those larger political forces that generated the programs. Other pressures-changes in prices of different resources, development assistance, demographic shifts, technological innovations, institutional arrangements at different levels<sup>68</sup>-also may simultaneously impinge on local processes.

On the other hand, local developments prompt responses from macro-level actors. Local reactions to conservation programs can lead to modifications in the shapes of these programs. Therefore, although it is convenient to talk about the community and the state, or about the local and the external, they are linked in ways that may make it difficult even to imagine where local conservation begins and external conservation (which helps construct the local) ends.

Processes around conservation at the local level include (1) negotiations over how different actors would use, manage, and conserve resources; (2) application and implementation of the terms on which different actors arrive after negotiations; and (3) resolution of disputes that arise in the process of interpreting and applying the terms of agreement.

These three types of local processes are irreducibly marked by the distribution of power and the structure of incentives within the community.<sup>69</sup> Because the exercise of power and incentive-oriented behavior are themselves variable over time and space, and because actors within a community are strategic in their behavior, the effects of different processes are impossible to address completely through planned conservation.

Analysis of community-level conservation processes becomes additionally complex because of what such processes seek to conserve: renewable resources. The dynamics of renewable resource systems, as new ecological research has begun to emphasize, are marked by discontinuous change, multiplicity of interactions, and surprise.<sup>70</sup>

The shift to community-based conservation, in recognizing the semiautonomy of locally based politics and the nonlinear dynamics of resource systems, also must recognize the limits of its own planned interventions. As Chatterjee pithily suggests, beyond the planned exists the politics (1993).<sup>71</sup> In this formulation, politics is only the name given to the unpredictable.

Because actors involved in negotiations, implementation, and conflict resolution have divergent interests, they push at the boundaries established by institutions. It is well recognized that in the absence of institutions to constrain the processes of decision making, outcomes are unpredictable and possibly chaotic (Shepsle and Weingast, 1987). This is true even when decision making takes place by majority rule. Well-defined institutional arrangements, therefore, are critical in producing patterned outcomes. Without institutions to guide interactions, political processes around conservation could produce literally any result, including the most perverse.

#### Institutional Arrangements as Influences on Processes of Decision Making

Institutions can be seen as sets of formal and informal rules and norms that shape interactions of humans with others and with nature.<sup>72</sup> They constrain some activities and facilitate others; without them, social interactions would be impossible (Bates, 1989; North, 1990). Institutions promote stability of expectations *ex ante*, and consistency in actions *ex post*. Therefore they contrast strongly with uncertain political interactions among unequally placed actors, and with unpredictable processes where performances of social actors do not follow any necessary script. Strategic actors may attempt to bypass the constraints of existing institutions and create new institutions that match their interests. But institutions remain the primary mechanisms available to mediate, soften, attenuate, structure, mould, accentuate, or facilitate particular outcomes and actions (Agrawal, 1995b).

Institutions are significant for two reasons when actors do not share goals for conserving resources and are unequally powerful. On the one hand, they denote the power relations (Foucault, 1983: 222, 224) that define the interactions among actors who created the institutions to begin with; on the other hand, they also play a structuring role for the political processes that take place around resources.

Once formed, institutions exercise effects that are independent of the processes and forces that constituted them, even if they remain subject to change. They change because of constant challenges to their form by the actions of individuals whose behavior they are supposed to influence. No actual behavior conforms precisely to a given institutional arrangement. Therefore, everyday performances of individuals around conservation goals possess the potential to reshape formal and informal institutions toward the dominant mode of action. Institutions also can change when explicitly renegotiated by actors.

Institutions should be understood, therefore, as provisional agreements among unequally placed actors on how to accomplish tasks. They are formed and contested in multiple processes marked by an array of forces. Rather than setting the terms of interactions among parties with varying objectives, they help the behavior of actors congeal along particular courses.

Institutional authority to manage resources effectively at the local level requires control by appropriate actors over the three critical domains already mentioned: (1) authority to make rules about the conservation and use of resources, (2) authority to manage or implement the rules that are created, and (3) authority to resolve disputes in the interpretation or application of rules.<sup>73</sup>

Authority to make rules defines who has the rights to access, use, and conserve resources and to exclude others from carrying out these activities. It also includes determination of the ability to transfer these rights. Authority to implement or manage implies the rights and abilities to meter and monitor use of the resources and to specify sanctions against those who violate rules. Authority to resolve disputes includes the rights and capacities to ensure that sanctions are followed and to adjudicate in the case of disputes.

Thus the problem of community-based conservation is a three-step process of institution formation. Two issues must be addressed at each step: (1) who will exercise the authority to make the rules and (2) what will be the content of the rules? Typically, community-based conservation programs devolve to actors within communities the authority to implement rules created elsewhere. Community representatives receive the rights to implement the details of specific programs. Government agencies reserve for themselves the rights to create rules and arbitrate disputes.

There are substantial arguments, however, for recognizing that actors in the local space may be the more appropriate source of rule making for a significant range of problems because of their specialized information about the local context and resources. Government agencies and bureaucracies are unlikely to be familiar with the specifics of local resource systems. Community actors and their representatives may possess far greater knowledge, as a substantial body of literature on "indigenous knowledge" has begun to point out.<sup>74</sup>

Further, vesting the authority to arbitrate disputes in distant government agencies can only increase the costs of dispute resolution. Arrangements to resolve disputes locally by community representatives could be far more effective. Appeals against these decisions and disputes involving individuals from multiple communities could be settled in meetings attended by government officials and representatives from concerned communities. Only when disputes involve substantial infractions, as when a powerful individual encroaches on forest land or clear fells areas of the forest, need government authorities intervene forcefully.

Where enforcement is concerned, there is a case for dissolving the artificial boundaries between the community and the state. At least the implicit support of government officials may be necessary for implementation of rules by community-level actors. Greater attention to how conservation would take place through local processes and actors shows that the optimal degree of coercion cannot be zero.

To say that communities with assistance from state actors should possess the authority to make rules, implement them, and resolve disputes already specifies what the content of these rules should be. It should be what specific communities and their representatives decide. Such an answer to the question, one might argue, leaves very real concerns unresolved. What if communities are dominated by elites? What if they have scant interest in conservation?

To such concerns, one response may be that specifying the concrete content of rules at different stages goes against the very notion of community-based management. That is not very satisfactory.

The second response is more realistic and more pointed. It is precisely because of failure of attempts to implement rules with content-"Communities should protect wildlife!" "Communities should stop cutting trees!" "Communities should stop overgrazing!" "Communities should get out of protected areas!"-that we have now begun to talk about community-based management. Attempts to create egalitarian communities and impose conservation already have failed.

Yet some general points can perhaps be made in posing institutions as solutions. After all, articulating general principles is not the same as micromanaging conservation.

"Institutions are the carriers of movements... for democratic change."

William Gamson, Introduction to *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, 1987.<sup>75</sup>

## 7. Institutions as Solutions

The plea to dissolve the artificial boundaries between the state and the community and facilitate partnerships between them comes with two crucial qualifications. First we must recognize that state officials and community representatives are located within asymmetric organizational structures. They enjoy access to very different levels of resources because of the difference in the relative sizes of communities and states. For community actors to possess some leverage in their dealings with state officials, organizing themselves into larger collectives spanning the gap between the local and the national would be imperative.

Only larger-scale organizations of community user groups can negotiate with state actors in different departments from a minimally equal position. Community actors are likely to need assistance from various departments and ministries of the state for technical, financial, or administrative reasons. If not operating from a position of some organized strength, they are likely to be brushed aside. Nor can accountability of government officials to communities be ensured without some ability to bargain and negotiate. There is not just security but also strength in numbers. Indeed, numbers are one major strength of community-based conservation groups.

There is a second caveat as well. Different actors within a community enjoy differential access to favors that state officials can dispense. More powerful actors and groups within a community can push their agendas further. To tilt the scales against them to some extent, it would be critical to guarantee that representatives of community interests submit to elections. Regular elections would ensure that the performance of representatives is periodically evaluated by those who matter most: their constituents. It would also ensure that community representatives remain responsive to those they represent instead of becoming their leaders or becoming dependent primarily on the networks they create with the machinery of the state.

Regular elections and/or other mechanisms of performance evaluation are necessary not only for representatives within communities but also for those who come to represent them in larger federations. It is only when common users have the power to evaluate the performance of their representatives that they can exercise any control.

Further, the group of individuals exercising authority in community institutions should represent different interests within the community, especially the interests of those who are customarily and summarily marginalized—women, lower castes, the poor, and indigenous populations.<sup>76</sup> If we acknowledge that communities are often internally divided, the issues of representation, accountability of representatives, and periodic performance evaluations by their constituents become paramount (see Box 7.1, Participation without Representation).<sup>77</sup> Creation of such representative and accountable institutions should be treated only as a beginning—a step toward more equitable social relations. We need to recognize that over time, without changes in the asymmetric social relations that provide the context for community institutions, their efficacy can only decline.

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### Box 7.1. Participation without Representation: Chiefs, Councils, and Forestry Laws in the West African Sahel

Several countries in the West African Sahel have initiated forestry programs that include some form of local participation. In Burkina Faso, village-level cooperatives have been formed to make decisions about firewood production. In Mali, new laws give local governments forested areas within their territories and the right to protect part or all of these areas. While superficially laudable, these programs fail either to include individuals who represent local communities or, where such representatives exist, to devolve significant authority over forest resources.

Burkina Faso's participatory forestry program in the Nazinon area allows individuals to form cooperatives regarding forests that are included in larger union structures. A technical office of the union is established by the national Forest Service to approve each cooperative's management plans. This structure places decisions about forests with the staff of the Forest Service and in the hands of a few individuals whose interest in wood is mainly commercial. The Forest Service retains all authority over production and management; local authorities have little or no authority. Communities receive some benefits from a tax on the sale of firewood.

Unlike Burkina Faso, Mali enjoys progressive forestry laws that allow local governments both forest land and the right to its disposition. Each local government determines who may exploit the forest under its jurisdiction. Despite such authority, the structure of political institutions keeps decision-making power out of the hands of the communities in the area. Local governments are elected, but only national level political parties can compete in these elections; independent candidates are disallowed. Members of local governments, therefore, do not feel accountable to local residents. And, as in Burkina Faso, the Forest Service still retains decision-making power about how much, when, and where wood can be cut.

In both countries, profit opportunities from these programs go largely to private individuals in management committees of woodcutting organizations within each village, but especially to merchants outside the village. Membership is either self-selected or influenced by official foresters and village elites. Consequently, participation in these instances amounts to Forest Service management of forests aided by private groups within local communities, with some increases in labor opportunities and profit for private groups. Communities, at best, receive small amounts as funds. Programs for community management of forests in Burkina Faso and Mali, it seems clear, do not devolve significant authority over forest resources to accountable representatives of the community. Rather than being attempts to increase community participation, they might better be viewed as forms of privatization.

Source: Ribot, 1996.

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Regular elections and organization of community groups into larger federations are essential to ensuring that the interests of different actors within communities are taken into account when leaders create rules. To implement the rules community groups create, the critical steps are metering

use of resources, monitoring to verify that users conform to mutually accepted rules, and imposing sanctions on those who break rules.

Metering, monitoring, and sanctioning follow each other in a logical sequence. Once communities have created rules for using and conserving their resources, they need ways to determine whether withdrawals from the resource system are in accordance with those rules. Metering is the creation of mechanisms that can map resource use to prescribed rules.

Metering and monitoring are intimately linked. Monitoring user behavior makes it possible to recognize which users are breaking rules. Without the ability to distinguish those who break rules from those who follow them, it would be impossible to prevent rule infringements.

Imposing punishments on those who break rules is predicated on effective metering and monitoring. Sanctions also make monitoring meaningful, since without the threat of sanctions rule breakers would not care whether they were monitored and caught.<sup>78</sup> (See Box 7.2 Monitoring, Sanctioning, and Arbitration.)

If metering, monitoring, and sanctioning are important elements in the implementation of rules, communities also must have access to institutional arrangements that can help adjudicate disputes. These arrangements must cover both intra- and intercommunity conflicts. Renewable resources such as fisheries, wildlife, and water are mobile. Additionally, more than one local group often harvests products from the same resource. Even larger communities seldom contain more than a few thousand individuals or control more than a few thousand hectares of land or water surface. The resource systems from which they harvest benefits, however, do not respect political or administrative boundaries. Thus even if communities are able to ensure conservation locally, community-based conservation requires mechanisms that can help arbitrate disputes between communities.

Indeed, studies of existing conservation partnerships between the government and local communities covering large areas show that intercommunity conflicts are common.<sup>79</sup> Other studies show the necessity for institutions that consider resource characteristics, especially when resources are mobile or fugitive or there is high variability in the flow of benefits from the resource.<sup>80</sup>

If community actors are to make effective institutional arrangements for creating and implementing rules and adjudicating disputes, they must have adequate access to material resources. For the most part, local governments in developing countries are destitute and lack opportunities to improve their finances. When they do have funds, they usually receive them as grants from central or provincial governments, entrenching relations of dependence that run strictly against the grain of community-based management.



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### Box 7.2. Monitoring, Sanctioning, and Arbitration in Forest Panchayats in the Kumaon

Over the past decades, forest *panchayats* in Kumaon, India, have devised a range of institutional mechanisms to manage their resources. Critical elements in the strategies of successful *panchayats* relate to their ability to monitor user behavior, sanction rule infractions, and arbitrate disputes. Especially successful are those *panchayats* that have striven for equality in the treatment of users, devoted adequate resources to monitor and sanction users when necessary, and paid attention to resolving disputes quickly and satisfactorily.

To ensure that a given household extracts no more than its fair share of fodder, for example, *panchayats* allow users to enter forests with cutting implements only for specified periods during the year, mandate that all villagers use the same kinds of cutting instruments and the same lengths of rope to tie their bundles of grass, and assign specific patches of pasture to households. The total amount of fodder that is extracted can vary from one year to the next depending on growing conditions, but it is distributed equally. In other *panchayats*, where little effort is devoted to ensuring equity, fodder from the entire *panchayat* forest is often sold in annual auctions to the highest bidder.

To solve the problem of monitoring (or who will monitor the monitor), successful *panchayats* devote a substantial proportion of their incomes to monitoring, appoint specific individuals to guard forests, and link rewards of the guards to their performance. *Panchayat* committees often dismiss guards and refuse to pay their salaries if they find a very high incidence of illegal harvesting or if guards fail to report rule breakers. *Panchayats* have solved the monitoring problem in other ways as well: *panchayat* officials monitor the guards, who monitor the users, who monitor the *panchayat* officials. This strategy effectively closes the circle of monitoring. It is interesting that in unsuccessful *panchayats*, the reported incidence of rule breaking is often far lower than is the case for successful *panchayats*. That few incidents of rule breaking are reported is a reflection of careless monitoring rather than rule conformity.

To some extent, the appointment of guards also ensures that rule violators will be sanctioned. Guards are empowered to confiscate cutting implements from those found illegally entering forests. Once a guard reports a violator to the *panchayat* officials, uniform rules determine the level of fines to be imposed. *Panchayats* pursue the collection of fines and, unless the rule breaker is highly influential, are often able to collect the imposed fines.

*Panchayats* are relatively ineffective in collecting fines imposed on rule breakers from other villages or from elites within a village. They also have little power to resolve intervillage disputes. To ensure greater compliance, community representatives need greater authority and more support from government officials, and must network with other *panchayats*.

Source: Agrawal, 1994.

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A more appropriate strategy for raising funds for community-based conservation would focus on local sources, created where possible from the resources community institutions govern. For

community institutions to possess sufficient resources to monitor, sanction, and adjudicate, the resource base they seek to administer also must be sufficiently large. This has two implications.

First, the best group size for community-based conservation is likely to be neither too large nor too small. Very small community groups would find it difficult to raise the kind of surplus necessary to manage and conserve effectively. Extremely large groups would find it difficult to organize. Agrawal (1996a) examines the case of village-level forest councils in the Kumaon hills in India to substantiate this point.

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### **Box 7.3. Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN)**

Under the revised frameworks for community forestry legislation in Nepal (Master Plan for the Forestry Sector 1989, Forest Act 1993, Forest Regulations 1995), the area of forests managed by local user groups and the number of these groups has increased exponentially. HMG (His Majesty's Government) has handed over approximately 360,000 hectares of forests to more than 5,700 community forestry groups. Local groups can now legally use their forests for subsistence, to cultivate nontimber forest products and perennial cash crops, and to harvest forest products for commercial processing and sale.

As the number of user groups expands, the need for sharing experiences, information, and innovations also increases. Simultaneously, there is a recognition of the strength of numbers and of networking possibilities. In early district-level networking activities Forest Department officials focused on gathering information from user groups to refine their annual plans and budgets. External support to user groups from bilateral aid agencies and local "trigger issues" facilitated other forms of early networks. FECOFUN, an association founded by and for community forest users in Nepal, has drawn on these early experiences to address the perceived need to link forest users in different parts of the country and to represent their interests at the national level.

FECOFUN is composed almost entirely of forest users and there are no development professionals on its staff. Its constitution provides for seven tiers of assemblies and committees from the national to the local level. Membership must comprise at least 50 percent women. The Federation is attempting to increase its grassroots strength through such district-level general assemblies.

The objectives of the Federation include lobbying and advocacy for policy change on behalf of forest user groups, publication and dissemination of information about community forestry, training and support for community forestry activities, and conflict mediation. The Federation is also coordinating a regional women's network called "Himawanti" and a struggle against a FINNIDA forest management plan in the *terai* of Nepal.

While FECOFUN is uniquely placed to bring together forest users from different parts of Nepal and to help organize their interests, it still needs to demonstrate that it is capable of becoming a representative body and satisfying the representation and communication needs of its member groups. Because adequate mechanisms for achieving these objectives are not yet in place, the Federation runs the risks of political infighting and becoming a prey to centralizing influences. The story of FECOFUN is still unfolding. It holds a promise of hope.

Sources: Britt, 1997; Shrestha et al., 1997.

Second, effective conservation through communities would also mean that governments decentralize not just the authority to create institutions, but also their control over forests, pastures, wildlife, and other renewable resources. While it is not necessary, perhaps not even desirable, that all renewable resources be managed by communities, the fact remains that a larger resource base than presently available is necessary for local users to gain the surplus necessary to conserve effectively. Yielding control to community institutions may mean that over time departments of forestry and ministries of environment will increasingly assume a more technical and advisory role. They would also exert control over such expanses of resources as would be difficult for communities to effectively control owing to inaccessibility or inadequate productivity. Such developments are unlikely to take place easily or voluntarily.

This is why attempts to create federated organizations of community user groups and institutions are immeasurably important. Without structures that span multiple levels of administration and create the possibility of engaging political arrangements from a position of strength, real devolution of control is unlikely to take place. Only through such devolution can community-based conservation move from being a chimera toward becoming a reality. The example of the Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN), although in its infancy, is redolent with possibilities (see Box 7.3).

In light of the focusing discussion of multiple actors and interests, political processes, and institutional arrangements around conservation, a different conceptualization of the relationship between different aspects of community and resource management outcomes is possible. In contrast to Figure 1, the emphases of this paper on multiple interests, processes, institutions, and outcomes can be summarized as in Figure 2. The figure summarizes some of the main points in this paper; it does not present a theory of community-based conservation.

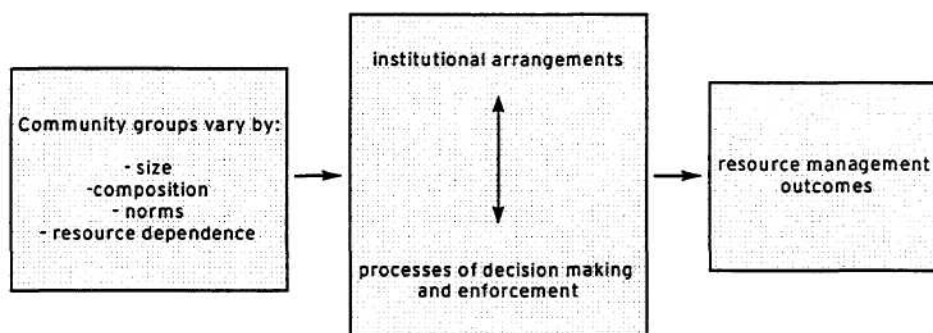


Figure 2. An alternative view of community in conservation

In Figure 2, community characteristics (e.g., size, composition, levels of dependence on resources, prevailing norms, types of technology employed to use resources) have an impact on resource management because they affect interactions of different actors around conservation. Their interactions are shaped by and simultaneously shape prevailing institutions. Viewed at any one point in time, institutions may be seen as constraints on political processes and actions of individuals. Over time, however, they are under constant contestation and (re)formation through the performances and negotiations of actors. External forces, such as new state policies in relation to community-based conservation, can drastically change the shape of existing local institutions (Agrawal and Yadama, 1997, forthcoming). On the other hand, introduced changes will themselves be contested in the local context, and have their limits tested and their meanings transformed by the communities whose actions they are supposed to alter (see Box 7.4, Fruit Trees and Family Trees).

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**Box 7.4. Fruit Trees and Family Trees in an Anthropogenic Forest: Ethics of Access, Property Zones, and Environmental Change in Indonesia**

Over the last three generations, residents of Bagak Sahwa in West Kalimantan province in Indonesia have faced a variety of events that have challenged their field and food crop production systems. Beginning with a swidden field and fallow system that included managed forests, residents have moved to a dependence on an agricultural system dominated by an intensely managed forest landscape with rubber and durian trees. Much of the change resulted from the unintended effects of various government policies.

In the 1920s, the Dutch colonial government wanted to turn the lands around the Sepik Mountain into a nature reserve. The initial boundary proposed by the government provoked a great deal of consternation among residents. They were told they would have to leave their traditional long houses for the government-built, single-family dwellings further down the mountain. Most did; however, some families remained in their long houses even eight years after the official declaration. A few members of these families were jailed for several weeks until they, too, relocated.

The Dutch intervention in land rights elicited significant formal and informal responses from local residents. First, through negotiations conducted by the head of the new village, Bagak Sahwa, residents had some success in getting the boundaries of the reserve redrawn so as to exclude much of their land. The Dutch also recognized people's rights to harvest trees they had planted even if those trees were now located in the reserve. These Dutch concessions blurred the boundary of the reserve as residents continued to plant fruit and rubber trees within the reserve, creating an informal buffer zone.

The Dutch reserve had another important impact: it sparked local people's interest in planting rubber. With lands appropriated for the reserve, residents had less land available for their swidden agricultural system. Given the necessity for intensifying the use of available land, tree crops became increasingly important. A concomitant increase in the price of rubber stimulated residents to plant rubber trees in earnest. Rubber now ranks as the primary source of regular income for nearly every family in Bagak Sahwa.

The case of Bagak Sahwa demonstrates that local resource users accept, filter, resist, and ignore enacted government policies. Further, outcomes of interactions between resource users and government officials are often unintentional, as demonstrated by the buffer zone around Sepik Mountain and the importance of rubber to the agricultural system of Bagak Sahwa residents.

Source: Peluso, 1996.

... [M]ankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.

Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859.

## 8. A Reflective Summary by Way of a Conclusion

To analyze community-based conservation, this review began by casting a critical historical eye at the notion of community. The current attention to community remains rather uncritical but borrows extensively, if unconsciously, from historical analyses. Visions of community as an organic whole, as small and territorially fixed, as being under siege and becoming eroded, or as standing in opposition to markets and states, can be traced directly to writings from the 19th and early 20th centuries. A longer-term perspective on community prompts caution before one embraces it as a general answer to conservation-related woes.

An analysis of the perceptions of community in the literature on conservation reveals strong oscillations over time in the recognition and value it is accorded. The current valorization of community should be viewed in the context of a general loss of faith in progress and future Utopias, and the disillusionment of conservationists with two other gross concepts—the state and the market. In addition, revisionist historical ecological research and contributions from the scholars of the commons also have played a role in bringing community to the fore.

The celebration of community is a necessary corrective. But the implications of turning to it are little analyzed in most writings on community-based conservation. A brief survey of the existing literature on community-based conservation reveals a widespread preoccupation with what might be called "the mythic community": small, integrated groups using locally evolved norms to manage resources sustainably and equitably. The focus on small size, internal homogeneity, territorial attachment, and shared normative understandings is ill suited for a policy-relevant analysis of community-based conservation.

Such characteristics mark few, if any, any existing communities. The vision of the mythic community fails to attend to differences within communities: how differences affect processes around conservation, the possibility of "layered alliances" spanning multiple levels of politics, and the differential access of actors within communities to various channels of influence. This vision also does not investigate the ways in which communities may be constituted in engagements with the very actors and processes they are posed against (markets, states, privatization, and centralization).

Small, territorially attached, and relatively homogeneous communities, where they exist, might find it easy to arrive at decisions. They would find it difficult, nonetheless, to withstand external threats (even from other community groups competing for access to the same resources) or manage resources that have a wide geographical spread.

Community as shared understandings is widely accepted as the appropriate definition of a community. But a focus on shared norms is still inappropriate for community-based conservation because norms are scarcely amenable to change through external intervention.

I propose a shift in emphasis away from the usual assumptions about communities: small size, territorial fixity, group homogeneity, and shared understandings and identities. Instead, I suggest, we should focus more insistently on the divergent interests of multiple actors within communities, the political processes among actors and through which interests emerge, and the institutions that influence the outcomes of political processes (Box 8.1).

That multiple actors within and outside communities have divergent interests implies that they would engage in political negotiations whose outcomes would be impossible to anticipate or guide in the absence of institutions. Institutions, as the rules that structure interactions, promote stability of expectations *ex ante* and consistency in actions *ex post*.

### **Box 8.1. Moving Toward Community-based Conservation**

- representative and accountable local institutions
- regular and open elections within local institutions
- local metering, monitoring, and sanctioning
- control over resources by community institutions
- federated organizations of community user groups

Effective conservation requires institutional solutions to three domains of action: (1) making rules about conservation, (2) implementing these rules to monitor user behavior and sanction those who break rules, and (3) adjudicating disputes arising in the interpretation and application of rules. Typically, government agencies have reserved for themselves the rights to make rules and adjudicate disputes and devolved only the responsibilities of implementation to community groups. A local, communal orientation to conservation requires, however, that community groups gain far greater authority than they have hitherto possessed in each of these three domains of action.

Greater autonomy to communities also means that externally placed actors would have to relinquish the desire to control the outcomes of community-based conservation. The content of rules around conservation, once communities gain control over local resources and begin to manage them through representative and accountable local institutions, can be regulated externally only to a limited extent. The directions in which institutional outcomes in local spaces will unfold cannot be plotted precisely. They can only be roughly assessed. Demands for greater certainty suffer from the same Utopian longings that identify community as shared normative understandings as the solution to conservation problems.

Ultimately community-based conservation is not about providing guarantees; it is more about experimenting on the basis of a set of appealing ideas. I have discussed four interlinked issues.

First, community-based conservation would more profitably be founded on principles of checks and balances among various parties-local groups, government actors, even NGOs and aid agencies-

rather than on faith in the regenerative capacities of any one of them. Unchecked authority in the hands of community-level decision makers is quite likely to lead to perverse conservation outcomes.

Second, it is evident, however, that local groups are the least powerful among the different parties interested in conservation. Community-based conservation requires, therefore, that its advocates make more strenuous efforts to channel greater authority and power toward local groups. Only then can such groups form effective checks against arbitrary actions by governments and other actors. Critical to such attempts is the need to forge federated structures of community user groups that can negotiate with government officials and aid agencies on more equal terms than those prevailing today. Negotiations on terms of equality are fundamental to holding government actors accountable.

Networked structures, bringing together the resources of several communities, are also important for other reasons. They can be far more effective in resolving intercommunity conflicts than distant, time-consuming legal mechanisms that are, in any case, biased against marginal groups. Further, they may be useful in addressing challenges from members of local elites to community-based conservation.

Third, those interested in community-based conservation, and in conservation more generally, should seek to implement reasonable processes of decision making rather than focus on guarantees about outcomes. "Reasonable" implies that different interests, especially those that are usually marginal, be represented in decision making; that outcomes of the current decision processes feed back into future decisions; and that those who make decisions submit to periodic performance reviews.

The last of these processes is perhaps the most important. Local representatives of communities and those elected as officials in federated structures of community groups must themselves be accountable to their constituents. Regular and open elections (or other ways in which representatives can be judged by their constituents) in which decision makers submit to choices made by their constituents are indispensable to ensure such accountability. Without controls on the exercise of power by representatives of communities, federations of community groups may become yet another channel for centralizing tendencies rather than being vehicles to decentralize power to the marginalized.

Finally, effective institutionalization of community-based conservation requires that local groups have access to adequate funds for implementing the rules they create. The sources for these funds should also be local, raised through contributions of users rather than granted by central governments. Over time, this would mean that government agencies not just cede their authority to make rules about conservation, but that community groups also demand control over the resources themselves.

The points outlined above do not provide a blueprint for community-based conservation. Rather, they emphasize the importance of institutions, the ubiquity of political processes, the need to institute checks to contain arbitrary exercise of power, and the impossibility of any escape from an uncertain future.

## Endnotes

1. According to Nisbet, the concept of community is "the most fundamental and far-reaching of sociology's unit-ideas" (1966: 47).
2. Some scholars simply refuse to embark on the seemingly fruitless task (Gusfield, 1975: xvii). We can, nonetheless, find valiant attempts to define, measure, and prescribe the preconditions for community. See Taylor's thoughtful studies on the relationship between community and anarchy for a discussion of the conditions that characterize community (1976, 1982). Singleton and Taylor draw on this earlier work to succinctly list the conditions for community (1992: 315). Hillery (1955) reviews more than 90 definitions of community to place them in different categories, and Stoneall (1983) examines five different theoretical approaches to studying and defining community.
3. Scholars have seen community as fundamental to the possibility of peasant subsistence (Scott, 1976), rural development (Flora, 1995; Fonseca et al., 1994), democratization (Dryzek, 1990; Fox, 1992, Habermas, 1989), and, of course, conservation (Western and Wright, 1994). As a term to denote a shared collectivity, "community" can refer to professional, ethnic, religious, national, and other aggregations (Hillery, 1963: 779). Recall Benedict Anderson's well-known definition of the nation as an "imagined political community..." ([1983] 1991: 6).
4. The quick review that follows pays little attention to the earliest scholars of community such as the Greek philosophers. For an introduction to these writings, see Booth (1993, 1994). The ensuing discussion on community is strongly influenced by Bender (1978) and Gusfield (1975).
5. Maine's work (1905, 1871) was focused primarily on issues of law and political economy, including a comparative study of property in village communities. But the distinctions he drew were equally influential in understanding social changes related to urbanization and modernization.
6. See Wirth (1926) for the influence of Maine on Tonnies.
7. *Gemeinschaft*, in Tonnies, corresponds to the popular notion of community, characterized by "intimate, private, and exclusive living together." *Gesellschaft*, often equated with "society" or the city, refers to an "artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings." In *Gemeinschaft*, people are essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors" (Tonnies, 1963: 33, 64, 65).
8. Although community and society are not exact translations of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, I will use them interchangeably in this paper.
9. See Durkheim's studies on division of labor and suicide ([1893] 1947; [1897] 1951).
10. Weber's discussions of different types of authority and its evolution from charismatic to rational-legal forms, Comte's distinctions among religious, metaphysical, and scientific/positive bases of social organization, and Spencer's focus on exchange as the organizing principle of society as it becomes more heterogenous are all indicative of their attention to social change and the desire to make sense of it.
11. Tonnies did not assert unequivocally that *Gemeinschaft* was fated to disappear and yield place to *Gesellschaft*. He found at least partial support from scholars such as Weber and Durkheim, who viewed the polar analytical types they developed as possibly existing simultaneously within the same social structures, characterizing different aspects of the same processes. But for the most part, such simultaneous existence was a transitory phase in social change.



12. For an introduction to how classical theories of cyclical change in Europe gave way to evolutionary beliefs in progress during the 19th century, see Cowen and Shenton (1995).
13. Wirth's essay (1938) on urbanism was one of the most influential pieces on changes communities undergo. See Fischer (1975) for an assessment.
14. According to Redfield, as the "isolated" and "integrated" communities in Yucatan came under urban influences, they lost their cultural distinctiveness to urban dysfunctionality (1955).
15. Parsons expanded the *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* dichotomy into four parallel dimensions (Bender, 1978:21; Parsons, 1951, 1960; Parsons and Shils, 1962). These comprised affectivity versus affective neutrality, particularism versus universalism, ascription versus achievement, and diffuseness versus specificity. Initially, Parsons included a fifth, collectivity orientation versus self-orientation. Parsons (1966) shows his interest in applying his pattern variables to social systems.
16. The logic of change in theories of modernization as in the folk-urban dichotomy is essentially ahistorical. All societies undergo similar stages to become modern. Rural regions submit to pressures from cities as they become urban. The particular histories of different societies or areas become incidental-interesting only as variations on a well-established pattern.
17. A number of insightful articles point out the vacuity of the modernity-tradition dichotomy. See Gusfield (1967), Shiner (1975), and Tipps (1973).
18. Lerner (1962), perhaps, provides the classic statement on the apathy, fatalism, passivity, and static nature of traditional communities. But he is certainly not alone. Almond and Verba (1963), Black (1967), Deutsch (1961), Geertz (1963), Pye (1965), Pye and Verba (1965), Shils (1962), and Ward (1963) wrote influential studies of modernization, forming the viewing lens for an entire generation of scholars.
19. See also Laslett (1973) for a revealing study of how the Industrial Revolution changed the English countryside.
20. Bender (1978) surveys some of the above monographs on community. He hints at the poverty of arguments that see community in decline and advocate its strengthening.
21. Benjamin (1968) describes a Klee painting named "Angelus Novus," which shows an angel apparently about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. "His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress."
22. See, for example, Eckholm (1976), and Wilson (1992). Ives and Messerli (1989) present a discussion of some of the literature, especially in the Himalayan context.
23. See Ostrom (1990) for a discussion of how the metaphor of the Prisoner's Dilemma and the logic of collective action have been important in shaping understandings about the (im)possibility of cooperation.

24. Given the large literature on the negative impact of population growth on resource conservation, it is perhaps unnecessary to refer to it at length. For some general statements, see Abernathy (1993), Meffe et al. (1993), and Myers (1991) and essays in the journal *Population and Environment*. Dissenting views are available in Lappe and Shurman (1989) and in Simon (1990). Arizpe et al. (1994) provide a useful summary.
25. Raven (1991: 260), for example, echoes this past when he singles out the very poor and judges that they use natural resources very destructively.
26. For a review of some of the literature on overpopulation and market pressures, see Agrawal and Yadama (1997, forthcoming).
27. Externalities crop up when the costs of using a resource are not borne by the actor who gains the benefits from the resource. Negative externalities, for example, occur when a factory pollutes the environment and the general population suffers without being recompensed. Positive externalities benefit farmers whose crops may be pollinated by the bees in an apiary but who do not have to pay the beekeeper.
28. See Ascher (1995), Fairhead and Leach (1994), Gibson and Marks (1995), Hitchcock (1995), and Stahl (1990) for discussions of examples and brief reviews of the relevant literature.
29. Simply because new beliefs arise does not mean either that earlier assumptions die out or that all who think about the role of community in resource use will begin to subscribe to new views. The result is a complex patchwork of notions about how villages or other nonurban groups may be connected to the resources on which they depend. The ensuing lines on community in conservation attempt to identify the most important beliefs that depart from earlier themes.
30. An enormous outpouring of literature bears witness. See Bhatt (1990), Chowdhary et al. (1989), Elbow (1994), Fellizar and Oya (1994), Ghai (1993), Gurung (1992), and Lowry and Donahue (1994). See also Wisner (1990) for a review.
31. Scholars recognize the importance of community not just for resource management in developing countries. See Huntsinger and McCaffrey (1995) for a study of the state against the Yurok in the United States, and Hoban and Cook (1988) for a critique of the conservation provision of the U.S. Farm Bill of 1985 for its inadequate involvement of local communities.
32. Ascher continues, "These organizations, with help-rather than control-from the government, are essential for promoting forest development and limiting forest extraction." In later parts of the book, he goes on to examine many of the conditions under which community organizations are more likely to be successful.
33. A number of works are available that point to the inadequacies of state-centric policy in general. See, for example, Bates (1989), Migdal (1988), and Repetto and Gillis (1988).
34. A number of writings have focused on the importance of participation for sustainable and deep-rooted democratization. Many of them also have highlighted the (potential) role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the process (Bratton, 1989a; Clark, 1991; Cohen, 1988; Fernandes, 1987; Habermas, 1989; Kothari, 1984; Sheth, 1987; Warren, 1992). The Fall 1996 special issue of *Cultural Survival Quarterly* edited by Pauline Peters (20: 3) contains a number of useful essays on the role of participation in conservation and development.

35. Agrawal (1995a) questions the possibility of separating indigenous forms of knowledge from western or scientific forms while stressing the political significance of claims on behalf of the indigenous. For sympathetic valorization of indigenous peoples and their knowledge, see Brokensha et al. (1980), Warren (1991), and Warren et al. (1995).
36. These reasons behind the emergence of community as a significant actor themselves point to the ways in which larger social processes, grandly named by the vague notion of "globalization," influence the formation of the present-day "community."
37. On the subject of the "Ecologically Noble Savage," see also Alvard (1993).
38. Anderson and Posey (1989) present a later work on the same group of Indians. For a strong critique of Posey's work, see Parker (1993).
39. The literature on this issue is vast and growing (Alcorn, 1981; Bailey and Headland, 1991; Balee, 1992, 1994; Brookfield and Padoch, 1994; Butzer, 1992; Conklin, 1957; Carneiro, 1988; Clay, 1988; Hart and Hart, 1986; McDade, 1993; Roosevelt, 1989).
40. A significant body of research argues against indigenous peoples being natural conservationists (Alcorn, 1993; Edgerton, 1992; Hames, 1991; Parker, 1993; Rambo, 1985; Redford, 1990; Redford and Stearman, 1993). But as Sponsel et al. conclude after an extensive survey, there exists relatively widespread agreement that values, knowledge, and skills of indigenous peoples and many local communities "can be of considerable practical value" (1996: 23).
41. The turn to history has come at the same time as the challenges to structural-functionalist frameworks of analysis. One area of study that has radically altered our conception of the isolation of local communities is the research on pastoralists (Khazanov, 1994).
42. See Fox (1969), Morris (1977), and Parker (1909) for early arguments highlighting contacts between local groups and "outsiders." Bailey et al. (1989) and Wilmsen (1989) present similar arguments.
43. For a discussion of the need for communities to understand the biological aspects of the resources on which they depend, see Bodmer (1994). For work that stresses the importance of time- and place-specific information about resources, see Ostrom (1990).
44. For two examples of this view, see Lynch and Talbott (1995) and Poffenberger (1990). Often the last part of the claim is probabilistically modified as, "They are likely to prove the best managers."
45. McNeely (1996: xvii).
46. See the various chapters in Western and Wright (1994) for an elaboration of this perspective.
47. Zemer's essay on *sasi* (1994), a highly variable body of practices linked to religious and cultural beliefs about nature in Indonesia's Maluku islands, also makes the same point. Current images of *sasi* depict it as a body of customary environmental law promoting sustainable development. *Sasi* has thus emerged as a site and a resource used by social activists to contest an oppressive, extractive political economy. In *sasi*, the rhetoric of local environmental management can be united with culturally distinctive communities. The result is an unusually potent political metaphor. See also Baines (1991) for a similar argument in relation to assertions on the basis on traditional rights in the Solomon Islands.
48. According to Singleton and Taylor (1992: 315), community implies a set of people with some shared beliefs and a stable membership who expect to interact in the future, and whose relations are direct

(unmediated) and over multiple issues. Significantly, they do not include shared space, size, or social composition, a concern of many other writers, in their discussion.

49. Bender (1978: 47-107) presents a discussion of this point in relation to American history and urban sociological research.

50. The popularity of this view of community can be traced, at least in part, to the fact that the renewable resources communities use, manage, and sometimes protect are themselves often located near territorially fixed communities. If top-down programs to protect resources failed because of the inability of governments to exercise authority at a distance, the reasoning goes, then decentralization of authority to social formations located near the resource might work better. There also may be other contributing factors at work. Members of small groups are likely to interact with each other more often. Regular, more frequent, and repeated interactions can lower the costs of making collective decisions. So smallness and shared space also may lend a group distinctiveness. Territorially circumscribed "communities" might over time develop specific ways of managing nearby resources.

51. See, for example, Donovan (1994), Hill and Press (1994), and Poffenberger (1994). The point is not that there are no links between size and the emergence of community. It is rather that such links, if present, require substantial attention and institutionalization to become a foundation for community-based conservation.

52. The relationship, even if weak, is bidirectional. Ethnic, religious, or linguistic homogeneity is often presumed to lead to community.

53. See Fearon and Laitin (1996) for a formal analysis of the reasons members within a group might cooperate with each other, in contrast to reasons for possible noncooperation across groups.

54. Taylor (1982) uses anthropological and historical sources to provide an extensive survey of hierarchy and stratification within even highly egalitarian communities. See also Grusky (1994), Rae (1981), and Sen (1992) for related arguments about the existence of inequality.

55. See Western (1994), whose study of the Amboseli National Reserve shows the differences within the putative community of "Maasai" (even though this is not a focus of the study). Agrawal (1996a) and Robbins (1996) point to the stratification among raika pastoralists, who see themselves as distinct from landowners within their villages. Gururani (1996) demonstrates the distinctions among women as she focuses on their forest use practices in the Uttarakhand Himalaya.

56. Even in current attempts to pursue community-based conservation, many recognize that the full range of interests in a community is seldom represented or addressed—community-based conservation is really oriented to working with parts of communities (Coward, 1997).

57. For a similar proscription on cutting particular tree species, see Dorm-Adzobu and Veit (1991).

58. Examples of such specific norms can be multiplied, of course. See, for example, Nijjuluw (1994) for a discussion of *sasi* and *petuanang*, which influence harvesting of fish; and Rajasekaran and Warren (1994) for a discussion of sacred forests among the Malaiyala Gounder in the Kolli hills in India.

59. In many situations, of course, community members create and follow resource management rules because such rules serve a practical and useful purpose, rather than reaffirming a common identity.

60. For insightful discussions of how tradition, while often only recently created, may change through politicized memory into a timeless, unchanging tradition, see Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). Related

work on how the past may be constituted in the present or become an agent in shaping contemporary regimes of conservation is discussed in Saberwal (1996) and Sivaramakrishnan (1995).

61. The history of massive deforestations that occurred even prior to industrialization, and recent empirical literature that shows wasteful practices among indigenous groups, illustrate that "the indigenous" cannot be identified with a conservation ethic. See Abrams et al. (1996) for a review of evidence in the case of the early Mayans; Fairservis (1975) for the Harappan civilization; and Meilieur (1996), Olson and James (1982), and Steadman (1989) for Polynesia. See Agarwal (1992) and Jackson (1995) for a critique of arguments that portray women as natural resource conservationists.

62. See the review of literature in Khazanov [1983] (1994). See also Agrawal (1996a) and Peters (1994).

63. According to Kottak (1990), rural development programs that attempt to introduce entirely new institutional and social structures are likely to be far less successful than those that pay attention to existing cultural practices and institutions. Ostrom et al. (1993: 1-10) provide a similar critique of projects in developing countries that do not take into account existing local institutions.

64. In various forms these points are also being made in several recent writings on community, but rarely together. For some representative works, see Agrawal and Yadama (1997, forthcoming), Anderson and Grove (1989), Baviskar (1995), Fairhead and Leach (1995), Gibson and Marks (1995), Moore (1996a), Schminck and Wood (1992), and Sivaramakrishnan (1996).

65. See also the discussion in Wells and Brandon (1992), who point out that sometimes communities may not be as effective as state officials in protecting resources or ensuring conservation. This observation must trouble any conservationist.

66. The problem of collective action, even in the presence of identical preferences, might exist (Olson, 1965). But it could be solved relatively easily by the entrepreneurial actions of a host of external institutions acting as agents: government agencies, international aid agencies, and grassroots NGOs. Local conservation institutions would reflect the similar desires of actors within and outside the community.

67. Michael Watts (1995: 60) approvingly cites Terry Eagleton's concern (1990: 88) about the attention to difference, as if "we have far too little variety, few social classes, that we should strive to generate 'two or three new bourgeoisies and a fresh clutch of aristocracies.'" This worry about too many different groups is explicable, perhaps, as the worry about not being able to carry out neat Marxist or rational-choice analyses.

68. Indeed, the list of possible political-economic factors that affect processes at the local level can be increased tenfold without redundancy. See Sanderson (1994) and the other essays in Meyer and Turner (1994) that examine land use and cover change more generally.

69. The reverse also holds true. Power is visible only when it is put into action-its workings cannot be imagined or understood outside of the trace it leaves on processes. See Foucault (1983: 219-220).

70. See the insightful works of Behnke et al. (1993), Ellis and Swift (1988), Holling (1973), Laycock (1991), May (1977), and Scoones (1989).

71. Although Chatterjee is talking about development planning at the national level, his analysis is relevant. The precise words he uses are, "Seen from the domain of planning, the political process is only an external constraint, whose strategic possibilities must be known and objectified for the planning exercise. And yet even the best efforts to secure 'adequate information' leave behind an

unestimated residue, which works imperceptibly and often perversely to upset the implementation of plans. This residue, as the irreducible, negative, and ever-present 'beyond' of planning, is what we may call, in its most general sense, politics" (1993: 208). Clearly, for Chatterjee as well, this external residue-the political-is something that planning cannot escape.

72. See Bates (1983), Riker (1980), Shepsle (1989), and Shepsle and Weingast (1987).

73. For this conceptualization of the different domains, I have drawn on a number of different works, even if the manner in which I state them might differ from the works I have consulted. See especially Agrawal (1995b, 1996b), Dahlman (1980), Ostrom (1990), Ostrom and Schlager (1995), and Schlager and Ostrom (1992a).

74. The local knowledge of different members in a community, also often called time- and place-information (Hayek, 1937; Ostrom et al., 1993), may be invaluable to the success of conservation projects. The entire corpus of writings on indigenous knowledge is based precisely on this premise (Brokensha et al., 1980; Chambers, 1979; Richards, 1985; Warren et al., 1995). For the significance of such information and the need to incorporate local expertise, see also Jagannathan (1987) and Tendler (1975).

75. The actual words by Gamson (1987) are, "Organizations are carriers of social movements."

76. A significant body of empirical research from development writings also indicates that moves toward the local are likely to be more successful when existing institutions are involved in the creation and implementation of new rules and objectives, rather than when governments seek to create entirely new local institutions (Cernea, 1985; Ostrom et al., 1993; Uphoff, 1982, 1986). Institutional rules about how local resources are to be protected and used, when made in consultation with representatives from local communities, also may find greater long-term viability than standardized rules framed and imposed on various local groups. But because existing institutions may be nonrepresentative and inequitable (Lele, 1981), a dialogue between government officials and local representatives in framing the rules for use and protection of resources such as wildlife, forests, biodiversity, and pastures is also essential. Mutual dialogue to create rules also would be useful because (1) it can help create common knowledge about the characteristics of the resource, and (2) it can help disseminate information about the benefits and risks of maintaining the status quo versus changing the rules (Blomquist, 1992; Ostrom, 1990).

77. Questions about participation, representation, and accountability are the foundation of much theoretical reflection in writings on democracy and democratization. See, for example, Easton (1965), Huntington (1968), Huntington and Nelson (1976), Riker (1982), Sartori (1987), and Schumpeter (1962), all of whom would question the necessity of popular participation in decision making, and for whom regular, unbiased elections would be sufficient. Others (Arendt, 1973; Cohen, 1988; Dryzek, 1990; Habermas, 1989; Pateman, 1970, 1979) would argue that widespread involvement of the citizenry in the process of government improves the functioning of bureaucratic and representative institutions and makes democracy more meaningful and responsive to citizen needs. See Warren (1992) for a review.

78. Berkes (1989) and Ostrom (1990) point to the importance of effective and low-cost sanctioning mechanisms. Singleton and Taylor (1992) and Ostrom (1992a) discuss the relative merits of different monitoring mechanisms.

79. For the case of joint forest management in India, an attempt to involve local communities in forest management, see Sarin (1993, 1995).

80. See Blomquist et al. (1994), Gupta (1986), and Naughton-Treves and Sanderson (1995). Characteristics of resources themselves change in response to new technological innovations or changes in socially deep-rooted norms. For example, the invention of barbed wire meant that the open range in the American West could be fenced at a much lower cost. Changes in relative prices may make resources more or less easily excludible. But because such changes usually take place over a period of time, it makes analytical sense to treat resource characteristics as more or less stable at a point in time.

### Acknowledgments

This paper has been long in the making. I started reading for it when beginning a new project on community and conservation with Clark Gibson. At that point I did not know that the reading would become useful for this additional project. My greatest debt in the writing of this paper is to Clark. I thank him for our many conversations and for his constant encouragement and plentiful help. The ideas in this paper matured through interactions with him over a long period.

I also wish to acknowledge the insightful and provocative dialogs with Elinor Ostrom and Vincent Ostrom over many a dinner. I want to thank Sabine Engel, Julie Greenberg, Mike McGinnis, Donald Moore, Nancy Peluso, Kimberly Pfeifer, Steve Sanderson, Suzana Sawyer, Marianne Schmink, James Scott, N. Kaji Shrestha, K. Sivaramakrishnan, and Jimmy Walker for their thoughtful and careful comments. Conversations with Charla Britt and Jesse Ribot have greatly influenced the discussion on federations of community groups and accountability of community representatives. Two early presentations to curious and questioning audiences at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis in Bloomington, Indiana, have helped sharpen some of the arguments. Responses and comments from members of the board of the Conservation & Development Forum also prompted rethinking on several parts of the paper.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis in the writing of this paper. A grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to the workshop supported me during part of the time I was not teaching in the fall of 1996-the period spent writing this paper.



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## Responses

**Boundary Work: A Response to *Community in Conservation: Beyond Enchantment and Disenchantment* by Arun Agrawal<sup>1</sup>**

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Arun Agrawal presents both a review of the literature on communities and local resource management and a program for action. He locates concepts of community in two contradictory paradigms: that which evaluates community positively, but construes it as a world we have lost in the course of modernization and state and market intrusions; and that which reads community in terms of tradition and inertia, and frames it as an obstacle to be overcome in the interest of administrative and market efficiency. By critiquing simplified and romantic notions of community he is able to clarify the limitations of community as a locus for conservation endeavors. He questions approaches to community based resource management which assume local harmony and homogeneity, and ignore local inequalities and power struggles. He rejects the assumption that conservation-oriented practices and institutions exist naturally in communities by virtue of their small size, collective norms, or environmental ethic. Where they exist, they are the outcome of distinctly political processes of negotiation and rule-making. Therefore, his positive program, and his answer to the conservationists' question "what is to be done", is to argue for investment in the development, modification or nurturance of local, accountable, preferably elected, regulatory institutions. Since this approach does not privilege those groups who already have (or are assumed to have) such institutions (indigenous people, "traditional" peasantries) it is relevant to a wide range of situations, including those where the population is diverse or mobile.

I find Agrawal's analysis, and also his proposed course of action, persuasive. As a result, I have positioned my contribution less as a critique than as an amplification of some aspects of his work. In particular, I focus my attention upon the edges or boundaries that actually or apparently constitute community as a unit of analysis and action. As Agrawal observes, "When we imagine "community" only in opposition to the "state" and/or the "market" we are essentially trying to carve out an independent domain within which community operates, insulated from the contaminating influences of power and exchange. Such visions of community cannot contribute to any usable notion of community-based conservation" (2). I fully agree with this statement, and my goal is to elaborate upon it and tease out its implications. This is necessary because the idea of community as a bounded entity both separate and distinct from that which lies outside it is deeply embedded in our language, imagery and practices. Even when Agrawal recognizes that "the 'local' and the 'community' are constituted in intimate interactions with 'the global', the 'state' and the 'market'" (vi), and that "The 'local' and the 'community' often become entrenched in active dialog with the 'external' (3), the notion that there is a *boundary* separating internal from external is reinscribed.<sup>2</sup> This may be unavoidable, since distinctions between state and community are embedded in the language and concepts we have available to us, as well as the images associated with these terms. While scare quotes can be used to indicate that the key words are recognized as problematic, they also indicate that these words cannot be readily abandoned. One central reason for retaining the concept of community is the political potency of the notion. It is a key term invoked in struggles over resources which are also, simultaneously, struggles over meaning and identity, and which occur at a range of levels and sites from the local to the global.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it is useful and I think necessary to do some "boundary

work",<sup>4</sup> which draws attention to the ways in which boundaries are constructed, the purposes they serve, the processes they obscure, and the consequences of all this. Community is not an easy concept to analyze in this way because as Williams (quoted by Agrawal) points out, there is no equal and opposite term on the other side of the boundary. Most often, community is counterposed to market and state, and these are therefore the relevant relational categories that situate, and that must be exposed together with community.<sup>5</sup>

A useful starting point is Massey's (1993:66) attempt to conceptualize community or place in terms which emphasize connection rather than separation: "what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus."<sup>6</sup> At the level of theory, this formulation is very persuasive, and it accords with the current emphasis in anthropology upon the connectedness of people, places and ideas (e.g. Wolf 1982, Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Roseberry 1989). It seems likely that it also accords with many rural people's experience of living in the world, where prices, wages, remittances, the comings and goings of kin, school exam results, national election campaigns, taxes, policemen and photo i.d.s figure at least as large as earth and plants.<sup>7</sup> But it is not the notion of community which underlies the classical literature examined by Agrawal, nor is it the one behind current attempts to promote community-based resource management. The communities literature, old and new, shares a vision in which state and market processes impinge upon communities *from the outside*. They do not envision a countryside characterized by processes of state formation and market involvement which are articulated into unique but provisional constellations at particular places. Despite disclaimers to the contrary, the community as a domain separate from, and counterposed to, market and state continually reasserts itself. How does this happen and what are its consequences for understanding and addressing the predicaments of rural people in relation to resources?

Subsistence is one key term which makes, marks, and maintains a boundary. It is used in discussions of rural development to suggest that the social and economic life of (some) communities is both different from that of the encompassing system, and isolated from it. Like community, the term subsistence is seriously under-specified in the literature on resource use and conservation. Often, a simplified market/ subsistence dichotomy is deployed but not discussed, even when defacto crossings are observed: markets intruding into communities, subsistence producers selling goods and labor. A label is used as a substitute for empirical analysis (Carrier 1992). The term has several referents: livelihoods which barely meet the minimum requirements for survival; livelihoods which are acquired (with greater or lesser adequacy) primarily outside market relationships; also, when framed as "subsistence orientation", it refers to a cultural style or way of life characterized by limited material needs and desires, in which increased production and prosperity are apparently of low priority. Critical scrutiny of each of these meanings provides a window on the ways in which community is both differentiated and separated from what lies beyond.

If poverty is the main feature of communities labeled "subsistence", then subsistence can be denaturalized by tracing the historical trajectory through which such poverty has been generated. Poor people, rather than being "without history", may have had all too much exposure to world economic processes. The experiences of Kalahari San are a case in point. A generation of researchers read them as original hunter gatherers, and explained their social organization and livelihood practices in terms of adaptation to the desert environment (Lee and DeVore 1976). But recent historical studies have shown that their ancestors were herders and laborers, and some were also miners, craftsmen and traders, active participants in a mixed regional economy (Wilmsen 1989, Gordon 1992). They were relegated to their "subsistence" niche in the course of a vicious colonial program of genocide,

enslavement, and land appropriation, and kept there in the post-colonial period by both Tswana and donor racism, paternalism and neglect (Hitchcock and Holm 1993). Similarly in Amazonia, the image of natural natives living in a state of nature (and poverty) arose only after pre-colonial trade and production had been eliminated, and people once forced to labor in the rubber sector were ejected back into the forest to which, it was conveniently assumed, they properly belonged (Fisher 1996). In Indonesia too the poverty and isolation which resulted from the economic and political dislocations of colonial rule have been interpreted, incorrectly, as prior natural states. In several highland areas lively and diverse regional economic systems were eliminated by the Dutch in the course of their efforts to impose coffee production. Later, after coffee's demise, during a period of world market depression, highland regions began to take on the characteristics usually assumed to be typical of "subsistence" farming systems: household-based enterprises working tiny plots of marginal land, growing food for home-consumption and producing for the market only sporadically (Hefner 1990, Kahn 1993). Only when such regional histories are ignored can subsistence farming, together with isolation and poverty, be interpreted as the natural or normal condition of rural economic life.

The second feature associated with "subsistence economies", relative isolation from markets, even in the contemporary period, is also problematic. Many discussions of rural livelihoods from a conservation perspective underestimate the extent and nature of market involvements, or assume them to be recent accretions to a more fundamental "subsistence" base. Perhaps this occurs because conservationists, who are primarily interested in the condition of natural resources, focus their attention upon activities relating directly to those resources, such as fodder and fuel collection, or farming. Components of the local economy which are not directly resource dependent or which take place in broader arena, may therefore be overlooked. Local wage work and short or long term labor migration are important examples. The use of a "green lens" (Zerner 1994) leads to the interpretation of ritual activities in a functional, conservationist light. It also highlight those economic activities which fit assumptions about communities in harmony with their environment while obscuring others which are environmentally harmful and/or market based. For example, Borneo dayaks are best known in the "green" literature for their swidden rice system, and not for the forest-products trade, migrant labor, or small holder rubber production which have been crucial to their livelihoods over the centuries (Healey 1985, Sellato 1994). Similarly, in the Garhwal Himalayas, international fascination with Chipko and forest conservation has obscured the significance of market-oriented activities, including the sale of timber, in local livelihoods (Rangan 1993).

Ironically, the recent historical work cited by Agrawal (14, 15) which has explored ancient patterns of trade and exchange can also serve to confirm the distinction between inside and outside and support "conservationist imaginings". People in communities can be market-engaged but they still manage resources sustainably. Most often, this feat is explained in terms of "subsistence orientation", a phrase which suggests a cultural milieu or way of life less driven by economic ambition and the search for increasing productivity and profit. The implication is that people in communities must be satisfied with the (often marginal) economic niches to which they have been assigned. This idea is implicit in conservationist agendas which propose that "minor forest products" be promoted to meet the (limited) income needs of forest-dwelling people (Dove 1993a). Critiquing this logic, which he dubs "rainforest crunch", Dove points out that those who lack power are excluded from enjoyment of the most profitable forest product (timber), and punished for converting land to export-oriented tree crop production (1993b). If and when the land or some "minor forest product" become especially profitable, these too are usually taken away from categories of people whose poverty renders them ineligible as beneficiaries. Therefore, according to Dove, the "search for "new" sources of income for "poor forest dwellers" is often, in reality, a search for opportunities that have no other claimants - a search for unsuccessful development alternatives" (1993a:18). Poverty, powerlessness and exclusion from

valuable resources are integrally related. Such economic and political linkages are obscured when forest communities are viewed through a lens that stresses subsistence and implies that marginality is an elected way of life.

The cultural definition of needs and wants is, in part, a reflection of what is possible, under existing constraints. It is also a reflection of desire mediated by the "imagined community" to which an individual belongs. This point is made very clearly in Hefner's (1990) study of mountain Java. Villagers growing vegetables on steep slopes witnessed erosion on a scale that would make any type of farming difficult or impossible for the next generation, yet they persisted. Tengger Highlanders showed few signs of being naturally-ecological peasants, but they cannot be dismissed as simply greedy or foolish. Their actions make sense when located in relation to an arena of want formation which is not limited to the immediate locale. Tengger Highlanders imagine a future in which they participate, together with lowlanders and city folk, in an increasingly generic, nation-wide, middle class consumption style. Many Tengger highlanders do not anticipate a future in the hills. They are counting on intensive (and destructive) vegetable production to educate their children and launch them on non-agrarian careers, preferably in the bureaucracy. Conservationist agendas which assume that mountain farmers have (or should have) subsistence goals can neither explain nor alter this scenario.

Questioning subsistence and examining the nature of rural people's engagement with the market has important implications for practical agendas concerned with conservation. Rural lives and livelihoods are not constituted in opposition to or isolation from market processes. It cannot be assumed that the direct use of resources (including labor) has priority over their exchange or sale, or that resource management decisions will reflect a long term view. For rural people as for urbanites, cost-benefit analysis is an everyday matter to which conservation agendas must respond. Unexamined assumptions about the subsistence-and-conservation priorities of farmers, and the overwhelming conservation preoccupations of outsiders, have resulted in the promotion of agroforestry programs whose economic potential is unproven (Enters 1994). In Thailand, for example, adopters of alley cropping did not experience the increases in production that were promised, and found their fields invaded by grasses, or ravaged by wild animals seeking easy forage. Resisters therefore limited their participation to a "token line" designed to please outsiders and/or avoid sanctions (Enters 1992). Similarly in the Philippines, Brown (1994:56) describes the vigor with which NGOs and government agencies have promoted "sloping land agricultural technology" (SALT) and the reluctance of upland people to adopt it, presumably because it does not benefit them. Even agroforestry programs which are successful in economic terms can fail to meet the conservation objectives of their proponents. A major agroforestry program in Indonesia was designed on the assumption that increased profitability of tree-crops (through improved seed stock and marketing) would relieve pressure on neighboring forests. However, instead of sitting back when their (supposedly limited) needs were met, farmers responded to the new opportunities by *expanding* their production into the forests, and migrants (not necessarily poor ones) were also attracted into the area (Thomich and Noordwijk, 1995). These are not exceptional situations and it is not clear that they can be rectified by better technologies and program incentives. They are the predictable outcomes of changing patterns of production and the dynamics of culture and class in many, if not most rural areas.

Only when communities are imagined as distinctive kinds of place, characterized by subsistence (poverty, limited wants and market involvement), can they be charged with responsibility for conserving resources which other, more powerful players (states, corporations, large land owners) located outside communities are free to exploit. The logic of biodiversity conservation suggests that they may also be made responsible for species which they do not regard as *resources* at all (cf Leach et al 1997), because they figure only marginally in their repertoire of livelihood sources, or are

irrelevant to the long term futures which they imagine and towards which they strive. In some instances, the environmental threat which appears to demand a conservation response may itself be exaggerated, misperceived, or even fabricated (Enters 1994, Leach and Fairhead 1994). Unless outsider-driven efforts to design better resource management institutions are clearly rooted in local priorities, they will fail to find the active, concerned local constituency which the notion of "community" seems to guarantee.

Here I am amplifying Agrawal's point that conservationists have turned to communities not only because of their location, close to particular resources, but because there is a hope and/or an assumption that they are (to varying degrees) different in their practices, motivations, or aspirations from the "world beyond". The idea of difference depends upon a boundary separating inside from outside. The discourse that relates communities to subsistence (or even livelihoods, a term which can carry some of the same baggage) permits and accomplishes the necessary separation. Conservationists can acknowledge that coercive measures will fail where they threaten "subsistence and everyday livelihood" (13). It is much harder to acknowledge that rural people may also resist conservation measures for reasons that are very much like those of urbanites (including ourselves): convenience, greed, or the desire to catch up with, or get ahead of, others near and far.

Agrawal is fully aware that conservation seldom comes naturally and does not inhere in any particular identifiable group, hence his insistence upon the need for regulatory institutions, rules and enforcement. At this point, it is necessary to turn our attention to questions of power, and to the marking of the boundary between community and state. Like the market, the state is a shadowy, underspecified, and apparently external *factor* for the communities that are the subject of conservation initiatives. Agrawal observes that "although it is convenient to talk about the community and the state, or about the local and the external, they are linked together in ways that it might be difficult even to imagine where local conservation begins and the external (that helps construct the local) ends." (28) His awareness of the myriad ways in which states and communities are not only mutually implicated, but in some respects (and for some purposes), inseparable, leads him to use hybrid terms which simultaneously mark and problematise boundaries: "the semi-autonomy of locally based politics" (29) is one example.

What is the work accomplished by positing a boundary between community and state? In much of the communities literature Agrawal explores (and critiques), the marking of a boundary between state and community is more than a convenience: it is intrinsic to the narrative which links community to conservation. The central proposition of this literature is that, since states that have failed to manage or conserve resources, then communities - outside or at least operating differently from states - offer an alternative. If it is states which spoiled previously-existing local resource management regimes, then the withdrawal of states, their devolution of control and authority to communities (or local institutions), is the solution. This particular development narrative or "cultural script for action" (Hoben 1995:1008; Leach et al 1997) is more plausible than one based on the conundrum of market involvement, because it seems to have an end, as well as a beginning and middle. States can (perhaps) be persuaded to back away from or move out of communities, leaving people happier as well as more effective in conservation. In contrast, policies directed at restricting the market involvement of rural people are, by and large, ineffective and intensely unpopular (cf Dove 1993b). Perhaps it is for this reason that "the state", more than the market, often stands as the proxy for that which is outside the boundary of community.<sup>8</sup>

Yet this narrative begs many important questions about the relationship between state-systems and rural populations. Many of the small scale population units that are viewed as



communities do not exist (structurally at least) outside or counterposed to an external state: they are units of local government. Therefore, the development of new institutions which allocate more control over resources and management authority to local units cannot really be seen as the transfer of power from "state" to "community", envisaged as separate entities. It is more useful to regard such measures as rearrangements of the ways in which rule is accomplished (Corrigan 1994).<sup>9</sup> If such units are set up so that, singly or in federations, they have the (apparent) autonomy to bargain or cooperate with "the state",<sup>10</sup> or even to struggle against it, this has to be seen (paradoxically perhaps) as an arrangement internal to the structure of the state-system. To appreciate this point it is necessary to abandon the idea of an urban or extra-village location of the state, and explore the ways in which state power is generated and actualized in rural settings (Hirsch 1989:35).

Territorialization is one mechanism through which state institutions attempt to assert control over rural citizens and natural resources. According to Vandergeest and Peluso (1995:387), "All modern states divide their territories into complex and overlapping political and economic zones, rearrange people and resources within these units, and create regulations delineating how and by whom these areas can be used". Territorialization has been a project of both colonial and post-colonial regimes. Particular territorializing initiatives may stem from a search for profit by favored elites, for tax revenues to support administrative systems, or from the need to assert state authority in areas that, although they may lie clearly within national boundaries, are not fully enmeshed in state-defined institutions and processes. Always ongoing and incomplete, territorializing initiatives are commonly contested by the populace. Moreover they involve many government departments, each with different and possibly conflicting approaches. Strategies for increased control may include privatizing natural resources (within state-defined frameworks) or direct state management; encouraging settlement in unpopulated areas or forbidding settlement and enforcing exclusion; centralizing administrative authority or devolving authority to lower levels. The making of maps, the conduct of censuses, the drawing up of village boundaries and lists, classification and staking of forests can all be seen as measures to define, regulate and assert control over the relationship between population and resources.

In view of the long history of territorializing projects in most part of the world, the status of communities which appear to be autonomous from the state formations in which they are located requires careful scrutiny. For example, contrary to the assumption that orderly, homogenous villages are a natural feature of the Javanese landscape, Breman argues that it was colonial policy which created the peasant village by pinning hitherto rather mobile people down into households and villages, surveying land, fixing and enforcing local administrative boundaries, and representing the result in maps, lists and censuses (Breman 1980: 9-14, 1988; Kemp 1991). The colonial regime also took measures to cut off the personalized chains of command, extraction and cooperation that previously linked rural people to patrons located elsewhere, thereby increasing the density of localized interactions and concentrating relations of face to face dependency within the village. As a result, the village, constituted by the state, came to take on an appearance of completeness or autonomy while the colonial regime, its power instantiated, consolidated and occluded through these very arrangements, appeared to be ever more separate, more abstract (cf Mitchell 1991, Abrams 1988). Similarly, in Indonesia's uplands and interiors, there is mounting evidence (e.g. Tsing 1993, Khan 1993) that both colonial and post colonial states have been deeply implicated in the formation of the communities (sometimes envisaged as tribes) which advocates (Lynch and Talbot 1995, Moniaga 1993) present as sites for preservation or restoration of "autonomous", "community-based" institutions.

It is important to recall Vandergeest and Peluso's caveats about the unfinished and contested nature of territorializing processes. Sometimes, attempts to intensify state rule produce unintended effects: vigorous communities constituting themselves in opposition to state projects deemed contrary to local interests. Produced by the state (in part at least) such communities can hardly be seen as external to it, yet they can be actively engaged in obstructing, subverting or otherwise undermining particular state agendas. They may use the powers vested in one state institution against another. Rural people comfortable with the general framework of rural administration may also organize themselves into groups (of a partial and contingent kind) in order to advance particular projects and oppose others (Leach et al 1997:7) and they routinely present their claims in a rhetoric of community, invoking as appropriate the local, national and global resonances of that term (cf Li 1996a, Nugent and Alonso 1994). They may seek access to state resources or oppose state projects, including those framed as community-based conservation. These processes, which are very well illustrated in the case studies by Moore (Box 5.3) and Peluso (Box 7.4), cannot be grasped when community and state are viewed as separate and opposed entities.

The effects of the decentralization measures proposed by community advocates as a mechanism to roll back state power and strengthen communities need to be carefully considered. These measures have the capacity to further state territorialization projects and provide various other opportunities (e.g. through bureaucratic expansion, donor funding, international legitimation), for the intensification of rule. One possibility for intensified rule arises directly from the nexus of knowledge and power (Foucault 1981; Escobar 1984-85, Davies 1994). A state agency charged with responsibility for designing, supporting and monitoring formal institutions for local resource management must become engaged in the collection, codification and cataloguing of ever more finely-grained information. Agrawal's analysis suggests that every aspect of society, including class, gender, ethnic differences, local histories, conflicts, and, of course, patterns of resource use and access, is relevant to the design of appropriate institutions. Such information must then be represented in standard formats, if institutionalization is to occur. When complexity is reduced to standardized "bits" of information, resources and resource users are rendered amenable to management and planning (Escobar 1984-85, 1992). Information "gathering", planning, and the design of institutions are simultaneously instances of, and vehicles for, the exercise of power. Moreover, critics of development suggest that the power-laden effects of information-and-planning operations are the same whether they are undertaken by state-institutions directly, or by other "external agents" working for, with, or around state authorities (Ferguson 1994, Rahnema 1992). Politics is not only the residual of planning, as Chatterjee (cited by Agrawal) suggests; rather planning itself is political. Another aspect of power is, of course, surveillance and this inevitably increases in intensity the more local the watch dogs (see, for an acute example, Box 7.2).

Note that new institutional arrangements which enmesh the countryside more deeply in state systems of information and control are not necessarily a bad thing for the rural people involved. In many cases, these are engagements which they seek. Just as state power is not absolute, it must be stressed that it is not necessarily malevolent: territorialisation, for example, is a normal activity of modern state systems, not one peculiar to oppressive regimes. Environmentalists and supporters of peasant struggles who assume that "traditional communities" are inclined to oppose "the state" in order to preserve "their own" institutions and practices may overlook the extent to which rural people seek the benefits of a fuller citizenship. As others have also noted, the oppositional characterization of "virtuous" peasants and "vicious" states (Bernstein 1990:71) fails to do justice to the complexities of state-formation and associated class structuring processes (Nugent 1994; Hart 1989). It neglects also the claims upon the state-system for access to modernity which characterize many peasant and

indigenous people's movements (Schuurman 1993:27), just as others reject and resist state imperatives.

The new institutional arrangements recommended by Agrawal could open up opportunities for the advancement of local agendas. Democratic spaces and procedures may be designed into the institutions themselves, as Agrawal suggests. Unplanned opportunities for popular mobilization or strategic action by particular social groups or individuals may also arise around the edges and in the gaps and fissures between levels and branches of government, especially in the course of adjustment to new roles and modes of operation. This is one way of reading Agrawal's comment that community-based conservation is "unavoidably about a shift in power". It is about shifting power, in the sense of rechanneling, diverting, reconfiguring, and tying up new knots. For example, stringent criteria for equity and inclusion of marginalized groups both rechannel power within a local area and open a new space for the engagement of state officials in intense, micro level design and monitoring operations. Such rearrangements do reconfigure the relations between relevant state agencies and rural resource users. But the overall result is unlikely to amount to the kind of transfer envisaged by advocates who would like to see power moving across a boundary from state to community. By problematizing the boundary which appears to separate communities from states, it is possible to assess both the promise and the limitation of efforts to engage with power through the development and reform of institutions.

Practically speaking, rather than ignoring or seeking to reverse state projects which expand or intensify control over rural populations and resources, it might make sense for those seeking to effect particular conservation outcomes and/or assist particularly disadvantaged groups to focus their energies upon conjunctures in which the mandate or agenda of (one or more) state-institutions and the interests of a specific group of resource users are (or could become) congruent or perhaps complementary. Similarly, conservation efforts which are consistent with the market-related economic strategies of resource users are more likely to be effective than those which overlook them, or bury them in a rhetoric of subsistence. Such conjunctures may be infrequent, and they may bear little resemblance to the sites imagined in the communities literature. Identifying them will not bring about radical change, although it could help in meeting the equity and efficiency goals towards which Agrawal and other contributors to this debate continue to strive. However carefully they are crafted, conservation institutions that assume or impose a separation between "community" and "market" or "state" have no prospect. If they are designed, as Agrawal suggests, on the assumption that all rural people are fully implicated in economic and political processes of a powerful and sometimes overwhelming nature, they could make a difference.

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank Arun Agrawal for his comments on an earlier version of this paper. I have made revisions which reflect developments in his arguments as well as my own. I would also like to thank Donald Moore for commenting on both the earlier drafts, for committing his own substantive ideas and reactions to e-mail, and for permitting the latter to be cited here.

2. In the first draft of my response to Agrawal I tried hard to avoid any phrasing that positioned community as a separate entity counterposed to something else but, as Agrawal observed (e-mail 1 April) some slippages occurred. He pointed to the "limitations of language when one seeks to question such potent figures as markets, states, communities". The very recent work by Leach et al (March 1997) succeeds in getting away from the binaries set up by community and radically rethinking some basic assumptions (including "the assumption that a distinct community exists", 1997:3). To do this, it brings in a quite different set of terms - about endowments, entitlements, institutions, landscapes, and "people in places" as "part of history". Leach et al. do not reject the term community, although they "contextualize it by describing a more or less temporary unity of situation, interest or purpose among particular groups of social actors" (1997:7), a unity that it is only apparent from some perspectives and at particular scales of analysis. I am grateful to Donald Moore for bringing this work to my attention in time for me to incorporate a few of its insights here.

3. See my discussion in Li 1996a. There is a rich literature on the "imagined community" of the nation or ethnic group which is experienced as "a sense of belonging together", a "feeling of solidarity" or "understanding of shared identity" produced (in part) through the naturalization of arbitrary boundaries (Brow 1990). Space constraints prevent me from reviewing this work or drawing out its relationship to the argument I present in this paper. I can only acknowledge the glaring gap.

4. Potent phrase I have adopted from Moore e-mail, 23 April.

5. Moore e-mail 23 April. Moore also points out that a parallel set of debates and conundrums arose in the literature critiquing "households as natural units", which, while effective in exploring the internal workings and inequities of households, paid less attention to their boundaries or the histories of their constitution as units, and inadvertently contributed to their further reification. I have attempted some "boundary work" on households in Li 1996b.

6. Note that, as Massey goes on to reject the idea of boundaries which counterpose an inside and outside, scare quotes reappear and the limits of language are again apparent: community is defined "through the particularity of linkage to that 'outside'".

7. Pigg (1992) makes such observations in her insightful discussion of villageness in relation to development. She describes the ways in which lower level functionaries, urban elites and donors filter out the complexities (as well as the flows, travel, and relationships) which they know to exist in villages, and construct instead "The Nepali village", a typified, simplified, generic and isolated other-world. The latter, she argues, is not the world in which villagers actually live, but a mythic place which only exists from the perspective of developed, non-village places, and can only be seen by people who see themselves as non-villagers. See also Ferguson 1990, and Gupta and Ferguson 1992.

8. Moore e-mail 23 April, "When there are many 'external' agents and processes refracted through (no matter how much one wants to problematize it's boundaries, constitution etc.) a 'community', [it is] interesting to note how often [it is] the 'state' that represents the prototypical outsider."

9. Sivaramakrishnan (1996) provides an analysis along these lines for the project of "joint forest management" in India.

10. I have adopted Abrams (1988) distinction between the idea of "the state" as a unified source of intention and power, which is an ideological construct or mask, and the state-system, which is composed of institutions of political and executive control and their key personnel. The state-system, through its everyday operations, produces (and disguises) the relations of power on which the reified idea of "the state" is based. See also Joseph and Nugent (1994), Mitchell (1991).

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## **Comments on the Arun Agrawal's Discussion Paper "Community in Conservation: Beyond Enchantment and Disenchantment"**

**Dr. Richard Chase Smith, Oxfam America  
Lima, Peru February 1997**

Agrawal's paper delivers a very important message: an effective organization based on enduring institutions for establishing and enforcing a consensus and for resolving internal conflicts is perhaps the most valuable resource that a community has in building a sustainable livelihood for itself. Such an organization greatly increases the chances of positive resource management outcomes for the community.

Agrawal obliges us to reexamine how we think of community and warns us not to assume we are all talking about the same thing. He shows us in great detail that community has meant many different things to different observers. He does an excellent and very useful job of reviewing the literature on community over several decades, of identifying the main trends and clusters of understanding and interpretation, and of peeling away the layers of nostalgia and romantic idealization of community in order to get at what makes up real communities. While there may be a shared territory, norms and understandings underlying a given community, he reminds us that quite likely there are also multiple groups within it, each with differing interests and perceptions about access and usufruct rights to common resources; power struggles may even erupt among these groups.

As indicators of successful outcomes in community resource management, Agrawal argues that most theorists and practitioners mistakenly point to certain characteristics of communities such as small size, shared territory, homogeneous social composition or shared norms. While accepting that these may be influential, he moves us beyond them to two factors which he concludes are far more important. These are the community processes for decision making and community institutions with the authority to establish rules on resource use and conservation, to implement those rules and to resolve differences. Agrawal makes an important contribution to our understanding of communities in resource management by focusing our attention to these institutional arrangements.

Nonetheless I am not entirely comfortable with the view of community in resource management that we are left with at the end of Agrawal's paper. While I share his view on the importance of institutional arrangements, he doesn't pay enough attention to two key questions: 1. how does a community go about developing an effective organization with strong institutional arrangements for its particular circumstances and resource configuration? And 2. once it has such an organization, how does it keep it and adapt it to new circumstances through time?

Two sets of factors are fundamentally important for answering those questions and for understanding both community and the resource management outcomes. Extra-community factors determine if the context is favorable or not for developing and keeping the necessary internal community conditions for positive resource management outcomes. While mentioned, these factors are de-emphasized to the point of being left out of Agrawal's model. And Agrawal's model of community is essentially ahistoric; that is, there is little sense that current community characteristics

and institutional arrangements are the result of an historical process within the community itself.

Both of these are serious oversights in my opinion which need to be given more weight in any analysis of community. After substantiating these comments with examples from the Peruvian Amazon, I will offer a reworking of Agrawal's model of community in resource management (see Figure 1) to take them into account.

#### EXTERNAL FACTORS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Many different external factors influence local communities and their capacity to produce positive resource management outcomes. The history, colonial experience, and geopolitical situation of the region, the ideological orientation of the state and/or present government, and the type of economy and its historical development all work together to mold the big picture. Each community case has its own particular constellation of contextual factors which need to be analyzed and taken into account.

In this section I look at two examples from the Peruvian Amazon: 1. the impact on indigenous communities of government policy decisions to incorporate and develop the amazonian portion of the country, and 2. the legal framework and official policies for community land and resource tenure/usufruct which developed as a result of this conquest of Amazonia and the resource conflicts which it generated.

##### Government Policy and Geopolitics

Over the past four decades, the changes in the Peruvian amazon and its indigenous peoples, resulting from geopolitical decisions made outside the basin itself, were genuine transformations which left deep scars as well as new socio-economic and physical realities for the future. Massive investments were made by successive governments with help from multilateral agencies in roads and communications infrastructure, in state-promoted colonization schemes, and in extension programs for agriculture and cattle raising.

The impact of these policy decisions are clearly reflected in the regions changing demographics. As we see from the following table, census figures since 1940 show that the population of Amazonia has more than tripled in the space of 35 years.<sup>1</sup> (INEI 1994) The bulk of that population growth took place in urban areas especially during the last decade of political violence<sup>2</sup>.

Indigenous amazonian societies were deeply affected by the influx of new settlers into their territories, by the market pressures that came with the new highways and feeder roads built into the forest, and by the forest clearing for sprawling cattle ranches, coca fields, African palm plantations, mining centers and oil wells promoted by subsidized credit and government services.

One result of these changes was a marked increase in conflict over land, natural landscapes and other resources over the past 35 years throughout the eastern lowlands. The indigenous inhabitants were initially ignored by the law and government policies as well as by incoming settlers, land speculators and the extractive industry.

AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE FOR AMAZONIAN DEPARTMENTS - PERU								
Dept.	Years 40-61		Years 61-72		Years 72-81		Years 81-93	#
National Average	1.9		2.8		2.6		2.0	
Madre Dios	0.0	25	0.0	25	3.9	2	5.7	1
Ucayali	5.9	1	3.4	7	3.5	5	5.3	2
San Martin	1.6	15	2.9	11	3.9	2	4.7	3
Loreto	0.4	21	2.3	14	2.6	12	3.0	7
Amazonas	1.7	12	4.7	2	2.6	12	2.3	11

# - ranking among all Peruvian departments

In reply, beginning in 1969, indigenous amazonians constructed a broad federative social movement based in their local settlements, which demanded recognition initially for their land and later for their territories including all natural resources. This movement brought about a gradual recognition, codified in national laws and constitutions, of their collective right to land and resources.

Nonetheless, the years of physical displacement, tenure insecurity, pressure to join the labor force and general conflict which resulted from the strategic decisions taken by the Peruvian government, created an extremely unfavorable context for laying down and implementing long term plans for community-based resource management among indigenous amazonians. Many communities were displaced and assimilated; in other areas, communities abandoned their traditional systems for use and management of resources in exchange for cash cropping systems.

#### Tenure Security for Community Lands

In 1974, the Peruvian government brought forward Law 20653 which established the legal existence of Native Communities in the amazonian region, recognizing among others their collective property rights to the land and forest areas they "traditionally occupied" including those areas used for hunting, fishing, and gathering (Beteta 1989, Garcia 1996, ILO 1997).<sup>3</sup> The law clearly established that Native Community property is inalienable, inembargable, and imprescriptable.

In 1978, under pressure from conservationists who argued for the strict regulation of forest use and from "resource nationalists" who argued that timber as a valuable national resource should be state property, the government dictated a new forestry and conservation law which nationalized all forested lands and established a special regime for national parks and reserves. At the same time the Native Communities law was modified to reflect these changes, substituting usufruct rights granted in concession by the state for property rights over all forest lands claimed by each community. By the stroke of the pen, in the midst of the Amazon forest, native community property rights were restricted to those lands demonstrated to be appropriate for agriculture and pastures.

However, in partial compensation, the Forestry Law established the possibility of creating a Communal Reserve, a large area of forest designated for collective non-agricultural use and

management by communities bordering on it. Neither the law nor government policy has ever established how Communal Reserves are to be governed or managed. Very few such reserves have actually been established.

Most amazonian peoples are clearly distinct societies with a generally definable territorial base. However, government bureaucrats developed the view that each indigenous settlement, no matter how small, was entitled to recognition as a Native Community and to a title for the lands surrounding it. As a result, the land titling process until about 1985 broke up all ethnic groups into archipelagos of small, and often isolated, communities. Many of the individual communities were too small (under 1000 hectares) or too densely populated to permit traditional practices of extensive resource use and management (Chirif et al 1990; Garcia op.cit.).

Beginning in the mid-1980's two factors brought about a change in the patterns of land demarcation and titling for Peruvian Native Communities. On the one hand, private funding agencies and by 1992, multi-lateral funding agencies began financing land demarcation efforts by NGOs in conjunction with Native Community federations and local government agencies. On the other, indigenous amazonians adopted a new discourse on their right to a territory, that is, to a large continuous area, including all forest, aquatic and subsoil resources. As a result, larger tracts of land (up to 50,000 hectares) were titled to individual settlements, and where possible, territorial units of up to 1.4 million hectares were pieced together through of mosaic of individual communities with common borders, communal reserves and conservation units<sup>4</sup> (Chirif et al op.cit).

The land and resource tenure regime in any region greatly influences the degree of security a community feels regarding its resources and its future relationship to them; this in turn conditions community confidence in continuing its traditional resource management practices or in developing a consensus around new practices. In Latin America, each tenure regime grows out of a political contest of influence and pressure from all the different interest groups in the country. In Peru, indigenous peoples in general have virtually no political clout and consequently little chance of influencing the shape of the country's tenure regime. Proof of this is the recent elimination of the clauses guaranteeing the inalienability and inembargability and the limiting of the imprescriptibility clause for titled communal lands in the new Constitution of 1993; the Land Law of 1995 leaves open the future option for privatizing all communal lands in Peru. Tenure insecurity continues to plague Native Communities in the Peruvian Amazon and reduce the attractiveness of long term resource management.

## **COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS AND THE VICISSITUDES OF THEIR HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The communities we know today, whether in the Peruvian amazon or in the Himalayan foothills of northern India, are the product of their historical development. As I stressed in the first part of these comments, external factors play an enormous role in shaping local communities: they set limits, they push the community in one direction or another, and they influence the community's view of their relationship to their natural world.

But they alone do not determine what a community looks like. Just as important are the ways in which a community reacts to these external factors: does the community embrace, negotiate with or resist the state, colonial, or feudal power structure attempting to impose itself? Does the community embrace, accommodate itself to or resist the material temptations offered by the industrial market system? Does the community embrace or resist the new ideology (Christianity, Buddhism,

Marxism, Liberalism, etc.) being forced upon its members through many different means? And perhaps the key question for resource management outcomes is if in this process the community has organized itself and developed the institutional capacity to reach and carry out a consensus in an effective way?

In this section I will use the example of modern community formation among the Amuesha and Ashaninka of Peru's Central Selva to illustrate the importance of internal historical factors in shaping today's communities.

#### Accommodation and Resistance in the Struggle for Territory

The Amuesha and Ashaninka peoples as relatively peaceful neighbors have occupied the andean foothills of the Central Selva in Peru for perhaps several millennia. Their strategic reactions to the intrusion of outsiders into their territories have differed over the course of at least the past half millennium, those of the Amuesha guided by an attitude of accommodation and survival while those of the Ashaninka by one of open and often hostile resistance.

The Amuesha, while fundamentally an amazonian people, played an important role as articulator of the amazonian world with different Andean civilizations and in the process incorporated many andean characteristics like a hierarchical social orientation and many elements of pan-andean religious ideology. They were subjugated by the Inca state and, as their oral history tells us, forced to weave *cumbi*<sup>5</sup> cloth for the Inca with the feathers of hummingbirds. While respected for his enormous power, the figure of the Inca was hated by the Amuesha and the oral history tells us that in the end, the Amuesha got their revenge. And history shows that the Amuesha survived while the Inca did not!

In the mid-sixteenth century, when the Spanish began spreading their colonial dominion over their territory, the Amuesha reacted with the same attitude of gritting their teeth while accommodating to a new order. The Ashaninka, however, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continually met with hostile resistance the Spanish Franciscans' attempts to impose a rigid socio-economic order with the Catholic mission at the center. The list of Franciscans martyred in Ashaninka territory is long indeed.

In 1742, Juan Santos Atahualpa, an andean Indian claiming descendance from the Inca, organized the Ashaninka to push out the Spanish from their territory. Embracing him as a new prophet sent by their Creator, the Amuesha joined the armed rebellion and enjoyed the results: the Central Selva was free of Spanish and Peruvian dominion until the late nineteenth century in the Amuesha and Perene Ashaninka case and until the 1960's for the Ene and Pajonal Ashaninka.

When the massive colonization movement began in the late 1950's, the Amuesha accommodated by assimilating themselves or by retreating from large portions of their traditional territory. However, with their collective anger reaching the boiling point and with coaching from outside sympathizers, they initiated an important national movement in 1967 by forming new communities, by instituting community assemblies for decision making and for naming community leaders, by demarcating their territorial limits, and by demanding recognition and collective land titles from the government bureaucracy. In 1969 they established an inter-community federation to speak with the government on behalf of all the Amuesha. That same year, the Perene Ashaninka began following the Amuesha example as did the Pichis Ashaninka in 1972.

During the 1980's, USAID and the Peruvian government sponsored a resource management

and development program in the Palcazu portion of the Amuesha territory. A relatively large investment was made to establish the Yanesha (Amuesha) Forestry Cooperative, to equip it with a modern lumber mill and forest tractors, and to train the Amuesha from several communities in an experimental forest management system based on natural regeneration. This experiment received world-wide attention (Benavides and Pariona 1994; Lazaro et al 1994; Gram et al 1994). When in 1987, members of an armed guerilla movement were detected in the valley, USAID and government personnel fled, and the Amuesha once again accommodated themselves to the new presence. Today the guerrillas are gone as are the drug lords that followed them, but the Cooperative is in disuse since 1992, the community forest lands are parceled up among individual community members, and the timber sold off to local lumber barons. The Amuesha survived a very difficult period, but neither their traditional nor their experimental forest management systems had the same fate.

On the other hand, the Pichis Ashaninka reacted differently to the same guerilla presence in their territory: their organization formed its own army and with bows, arrows and old hunting guns, routed the guerrillas from their territory (ILO op.cit.). They went on to win the local municipal elections which allowed them to restrict the activities of the drug lords and the lumber barons in their territories. In 1992, they pressured hard to get government approval for a European Union-sponsored land demarcation project which has allowed them to establish the boundaries of the large Cira Communal Reserve and to finish community titling around it to consolidate an enormous Ashaninka territorial unit in the Pichis-Pachitea river basins (Ibid.).

These parallel histories suggest that accommodation to outside forces results in survival but not necessarily in effective organization or institutional arrangements for other collective actions. On the other hand, it would seem that successful resistance to external imposition requires an effective organization which can also be used to obtain other collective results as well. Those suggestive conclusions need to be tested out more rigorously, but at this point they do underline the need to take into account the historical reactions of communities to the external world.

#### Community Formation and Issues of Governance

Social organization in indigenous amazonia is based on a differing combination of kinship, gender, age, and descent. However in all amazonian societies, the domestic group who shares the hearth, that is, the husband-wife team and their dependents, is the basic unit of production and consumption. This unit works together to provide the subsistence basis for reproducing themselves and their local society. This group makes all the relevant decisions about what to produce, how to produce it, and what to do with the production. (Smith and Wray 1996, Smith and Tapuy 1995)

However, it is the local settlement, as a closely knit association of interdependent and kin-related domestic units, that act together as an economic unit. This local settlement acts as an economic unit for two basic reasons. On the one hand, all the domestic units together share and manage the productive resources of their territory; no single hearth group exercises private ownership rights over any part of them. Within the norms of collective care given to the resources of the economic unit, certain rights of each domestic unit are also respected. For example, the households of a settlement generally respect the exclusive usufruct rights of other households for the areas they are cultivating, for former garden sites in the regrowth cycle, and for claims to specific forest products discovered by a household.

The settlement is the economic unit also because the production from each domestic unit circulates among all the hearths within the settlement through the norms of the gift economy. Food,

especially, is given away, received, and reciprocated. No one in a settlement should go hungry: the norms of redistributing surplus production ensure that all domestic units have roughly the food supplies they need.

As I have shown, over the past three decades, pushed by an aggressive and violent frontier, many Amuesha and Ashaninka have had to reassemble their settlements to form new communities as a defense strategy and as property-owning groups. In some of these cases, the modern community corresponds with the traditional kin-based settlement, and as such with the traditional economic unit. But it is my impression that the majority of modern Amuesha and Pichis-Perene Ashaninka communities are a new sort of unit. They are regroupings of several traditional economic units, some of which may have been traditional allies and some enemies, together with "orphan" families, survivors or refugees from other settlements displaced by the expanding frontier.

In all these cases, the notion of property rights and that of community ownership of a common territory are new as is the context of national law and the market economy; the people have had to assimilate these new concepts and use them to defend their territories and basic rights. In cases where the modern community does not coincide with the traditional settlement, there are often confusion and ambiguity among community members over access to resources, usufruct rights and property rights. The growing conflicts among community members over rights to resources and the pressure to parcel up the community lands, especially in those areas under great pressure to produce for the market, are testimony to the incomplete assimilation of the notion of community as property owner. In this process of community formation, cultural change is slow and painful.

We can understand the difficulty of this transition if we remember that it was the traditional economic unit - the kin-based settlement - which always shared and managed local resources. However, in the majority of the modern communities, it is not this economic unit, but rather a mixture of several economic units plus independent households that now have to establish a new understanding of resource sharing. And to complicate matters even more, they have to do so under the pressure to use community resources to produce a cash income; the new understanding of resource sharing then is not necessarily based entirely on traditional kin-based values, but also on market-oriented needs.

In some cases, these new communities may not be viable, as deep-rooted mistrust of one group by another may render consensus building impossible and the territory becomes ungovernable. In each case, a fundamental consensus has to be reached among all the owners agreeing that it is necessary to govern the area together and well. The challenge then, as Agrawal points out, is to institutionalize that consensus-building process in a way which crosses both ethnic (in the case of multi-ethnic communities) and kin lines. Understanding how the modern communities came into being and how they are now structured can help design new governing institutions which are more viable.

## **PROPOSED CHANGES IN AGRAWAL'S MODEL OF COMMUNITY IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

In light of my comments of the importance of extra-community factors and community historical development in conditioning how a community develops its institutional arrangements and how viable they will be in the future, I propose modifying Agrawal's conceptualization of the relationship between different aspects of community and resource management outcomes.

Figure 1 shows a sequence of influencing factors beginning with 1. current contextual factors



which influence all aspects of community as well as the viability of resource management outcomes, 2. historical-development factors which condition present-day community characteristics and institutional arrangements, 3. community characteristics which influence 4. the community institutions which in turn influence 5. resource management outcomes. The sequence, while not meant to be mechanical, does show a general tendency in the influencing factors of community in resource management.

Endnotes

1. These statistics include only those departments located entirely in the Amazon Basin and exclude those provinces or districts in Ayacucho, Junín, Pasco, Huánuco, Cuzco and Puno which received the greatest numbers of settlers since the 1961 census and which would demonstrate a much higher growth rate than that of the Amazonian departments. Census data published before 1993 is not analyzed at the province or district level.
2. According to the 1993 census, the following amazonian cities are among the urban areas of greatest growth in Peru since the 1981 census: Puerto Maldonado (ranked #1 with 7.8% annual growth rate), Tarapoto (ranked #3 with 6.9%) and Pucallpa (ranked #4 with 5.6%). (INEI 1994)
3. Since 1974, approximately 1300 Native Communities have been recognized and titled in the Peruvian Amazon with collective property or usufruct rights to roughly 8-10 million hectares.
4. A case in point is the Machiguenga territory of the lower Urubamba river built up over 10 years through the efforts of the NGO CEDIA and the local Machiguenga federation COMARU, composed of a core of 21 communities with a total area under title or usufruct concession of 471,000 hec., surrounded by a 443,000 hec reserve for uncontacted and isolated peoples to the east, a 176,900 proposed National Sanctuary to the south, and a 300,000 hec communal reserve covering the eastern flanks of the Vilcabamba mountain range to the west.
5. Cumbi was the finest and most valued cloth reserved for the Inca and often used as a gift by the Inca to cement a political alliance.

**Figure 1**

**CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COMMUNITY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES**

- 1. PRESENT-DAY EXTERNAL FACTORS
  - Development policies for the region
    - state legal/policy framework
    - state and private investment Tenure
  - security for community land and resources
    - legal framework
    - state institutional framework Property/usufruct regime
  - and conservation of natural resources
    - state legal/policy framework
    - policy/program framework of private agencies
    - state/private institutional framework
  - Market pressure on community resources
    - demand/price structure
    - presence of non-community extractors
    - communications infrastructure/distance to market
  - Community access to power and decision-making at regional and national level
    - position of community in social, economic, and political hierarchies
    - institutionalized channels for community political expression
  - Many other factors both country and region specific...

These factors influence the community in all its aspects as well as the Resource Management Outcomes ----->

COMMUNITY IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT			
2. HISTORICAL-DEVELOPMENT FACTORS	3. PRESENT-DAY COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS	4. PRESENT-DAY COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS	5. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES
Culture or cultures of community members Process of community formation Incorporation-resistance of community into -market economy -state/colonial/feudal power structures -ideological domination Local political organization for resistance/demands Epidemiological history Migration history	Size  Territoriality Social composition (socio-cultural, economic homogeneity) Resource dependence Shared norms/understandings Tenure/usufruct regime  These characteristics plus the historical factors influence: ----->	Institutional arrangements for establishment and implementation of, and Processes for decision-making and enforcement regarding: -rules/norms on resource use and conservation; -means for resolving conflict over resource use and conservation; -representation, authority, accountability  These institutional strengths condition: ----->	
These factors influence: ----->			

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