

# The Common Property Resource Digest

NO. 54 QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COMMON PROPERTY SEPT. 2000

Constituting the Commons: the Eighth Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property was held from May 28th through June first in Bloomington, Indiana, USA and it was a wonderful success. Fifty three countries were represented by almost 600 common property scholars and practitioners.

Perhaps the main centerpiece of Constituting the Commons was the intensive discussion of the Regionalization Initiative, the IASCP's drive to make itself into more of a truly global organization. For one thing, many people thought that the word "regionalization" did not really communicate what we were trying to do through this effort, although we are continuing to use the word until a replacement can be found. In this issue *Charla Britt* offers a report of the regionalization discussions at the Conference.

Practical steps to strengthen the IASCP in particular regions have already begun. For one thing, the IASCP Council has accepted a proposal from a group led by the Center for Applied Social Science at the University of Zimbabwe to hold the 2002 biennial conference in Southern Africa. IASCP also held a very successful panel at the World Congress of Rural Sociology in Brazil. This helped bolster growing IASCP activities in Latin America, including a Latin American *Regional Beat* in the December Digest that will be tied directly to an exciting CPR Forum on current issues in formal theory.

One of the key events at Constituting the Commons, and perhaps the one that gave the most intellectual content thus far to what Regionalization is all about, was President *Bonnie McCay's* address, particularly the second section entitled "Edges, Fields and Regions." We reproduce the address here in full. **Enjoy!**

CONTENTS	
<b>Reports from Constituting the Commons: The Eighth Biennial Conference of the IASCP</b>	
<b>Presidential Address .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Post-modernism and the Management of Natural and Common Resources	
<i>Bonnie J. McCay</i> .....	1
<b>Regionalization Reports .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Bridging Divides: A Summary Report of Discussions from the Regionalization Sessions at the IASCP2000 Conference	
<i>Charla Britt</i> .....	9
<b>Recent Publications .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Announcements .....</b>	<b>15</b>

## Presidential Address

### Post-modernism and the Management of Natural and Common Resources

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#### Modernism in Common Resource Management

To explain what I mean by "post-modern" I must first define "modern," which is, among other things, the dominant perspective in the "traditional" field of natural resource management (NRM). The tradition of which I speak is not very old, perhaps a century or so; it is the way people are educated in schools and universities and the way of government agencies charged with common pool resource management, for example, fisheries, agriculture, forestry, and water management.

One "modern" feature of traditional NRM is that it is organized around utilitarian values: the greatest amount for the greatest number is one way of expressing utilitarianism. More generally, it means a focus on human use-values (Table 1). A second modern feature is that it is commodity-oriented. The use-values of most importance are those that are marketable, that is, commodities. Although recreational and subsistence values are acknowledged, most modern resource management is still organized around the production of fish, timber, and other products for sale, and recreational values are also often expressed in market terms.

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*Published with support from*

*the Ford Foundation*

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A third feature of modern NRM is that its science and policy often rely on data sets and models about a single species. The diversity and complexity of natural systems are reduced and simplified to more “manageable” populations of single species, the ones of most utility. A fishery management plan, for example, will be for lobster, or for herring, or for cod, and not for any combination of the three even though they may be found in the same area, have significant ecological interactions, and play roles in the same fish harvesting enterprises. A forest management plan will emphasize the species of commercial importance, even when they are found in mixed stands.

Fourth, in the tradition we have inherited from the late 19th century NRM is organized hierarchically, from the top down. This is an outgrowth of the development of government responsibility for management of public lands and waters, and the practice in many modern nation-states of making virtually all common pool resources either public or private. Governments also control funds available for managing public goods, and they have much of the enforcement capability required, given that “the state” is such in part by having a monopoly on the use of force.

Fifth, in this tradition, resource management decisions, like other important decisions, are ideally based on information that has been collected and interpreted through the lens of science. Therefore, there is a scientific monopoly on data and analysis in many of the ways in which we think about managing common pool resources. Sixth, the scientific models used to understand and predict population changes tend to be deterministic ones. That is part of modernism. We look for positive

effects, and we expect predictable relationships among elements of the models.

Finally, modern resource management has little to say about people except as sources of constraints and demands on the system. The social dimension is reduced to some estimate of extraction or harvest rates. It is expressed by how many pounds of fish are caught, how many logs or board-feet of timber are taken out of a forest, or how many acre-feet of water are used for irrigation.

Two models, or simplified representations of reality, are commonly used to show the challenge of managing renewable, living populations. Each emphasizes the problem created when they are treated as public resources, to which access is open. One is the familiar narrative about the “tragedy of the commons” and the other is an iconic figure (figure 1), known in fisheries as the Schaefer-Gordon production model, or bioeconomic model. I turn to the latter, a popular way of visualizing and talking about modern NRM in fisheries and wildlife management, environmental economics, and other fields.

Figure 1 shows levels of production or “yield” at different levels of harvest or “effort.” It refers to one population of fish and an undefined group which is making decisions about increasing effort to harvest individuals of that population. The special feature of a renewable but finite natural resource is what economists call the backward-bending supply curve: at some point adding more effort will no longer increase production. Instead, it will begin to reduce production: increased effort, declining yields. A famous objective of management is to somehow keep levels of extraction at that point on the curve which yields maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

Modern resource management has focused on proxies of the goal of MSY, using harvest quotas, technology constraints, and other measures. When simple economics are added, as in the cost line of figure 1, which shows that as effort increases, so does cost, this diagram becomes a representation of the open access problem, also known as ‘the tragedy of the commons,’ and hence an argument for government intervention or privatization. Figure 1 shows that increased effort increases yield, up to a point, but costs also rise, and at some point costs and yield intersect. At that open access equilibrium, any additional unit of effort (say another fish net) will no longer pay off. Marginal returns are zero. Rational people will stop entering or investing in the activity.

The tragedy is two-fold: at equilibrium, all profits are gone, and yield may be lower than MSY. It is far to the right of the optimal point for MSY. It is even farther

**Table 1: "Traditional" Management**

- Utilitarian Values
- Commodity Production (MSY)
- Single Species Models & Mgmt.
- Deterministic Scientific Models
- Top-Down; Govt. & Expert-Based
- Scientific Monopoly on Data & Analysis
- "Social" = Level of Resource Use

away from the point of optimal profitability (MNEY, maximum net economic yield). This is the classic view of the open access problem as well as the argument for limiting access even to the point of sole ownership. The lack of secure exclusive property rights creates perverse incentives, so that what seems rational to the individual actors (like adding more effort to extract resources beyond MSY, as long as there is some profit to be made) is not rational for the larger system (the productivity of which could be higher if effort were controlled) nor, in the long-run, for the individual actors themselves (at least some of whom could have higher returns to their effort if overall effort were restricted).

**"Post-modernism"**

The practitioners of post-modernism in the humanities and social sciences may be proud of the fact that it is very hard to define: one of their claims is that realities are not only socially constructed but plural. Happily, Rudel and Gerson (1999) have nonetheless isolated components of post-modernism (see also the many authors they cite).

First is rejection of metanarratives or grand theories which make claims of universality, truth, and objectivity. A post-modern perspective is that "...all knowledge is situated, produced by people in specific social locations at particular moments in time". Some postmodernists, such as Lyotard, challenge any scheme or practice that privileges scientifically-generated knowledge as "the truth," insisting on multiple truths.

The tragedy-of-the-commons theory qualifies as such a meta-narrative, and it has come under attack from an "embeddedness" perspective which places situation and context as primary. It deserves other post-modern criticisms, too, following Rudel and Gerson (1999). It essentializes and therefore places beyond question certain ideas such as the superiority of private property and the intractable nature of free-rider disincentives for collective action. It often obscures divergent realities, such as the reality that common resource users may have developed

sustainable ways to manage those resources. As Peter Taylor has argued its strong assumption that the common resource users are atomized, undifferentiated individuals faced with similar choices and holding similar resources, contributes to the role of this grand theory in glossing over, and perhaps contributing to, the exploitation of disadvantaged groups, indigenous peoples, and minority populations.

Second is emphasis on social fluidity and indeterminacy. "In response to changing conditions, individuals and institutions must constantly reconstitute themselves, so their appearances and realities are inherently uncertain, indeterminate, and in flux" (Rudel and Gerson 1999: 215). This feature is mirrored in changing perspectives in ecology, which challenge more "modernist" notions such as equilibria, stability, and the unfolding order indicated by ecological succession, with greater attention to instability, indeterminacy, chaotic processes, and unpredictability. This perspective is a major challenge to the reigning models of natural resource management, which project simple and determinate relationships between mortality and future recruitment, between catch and yield, between present and future. Translated into the scientific endeavor of NRM, it calls for the sort of profound paradigm shift that Jim Wilson and others have argued for.

A major feature of changes in natural resource management throughout the world is stronger emphasis on local communities, including attention to the local impacts of NRM policies and, in particular, policies based on community-based management and co-management. It is

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telling, then, that post-modernism places greater primacy on the local. If multiple truths are important, then local perspectives--and knowledge--must be attended to. If indeterminacy and uncertainty are general features, then we must question generalizations about society and ecology, devoting ourselves to understanding the specifics of particular places and times--the local--in relation to their histories and larger contexts. The localism of post-modernism also has a political edge; local struggles are often the only feasible means of resistance where elites maintain control over most sources of power (Foucault quoted in Rudel and Gerson 1999).

On the other hand, a post-modernist perspective might be to question the very notion of "local community," along with other categories, insofar as it is simplified, privileged as a primary explanatory force, and used to obscure other realities. Arun Agrawal and Clark Gibson suggest

that it implies the existence and ability to delineate clear boundaries among communities and between levels and scales of organization and activity, when such might not be true, given the actual linkages and trajectories of power and influence among people and institutions.

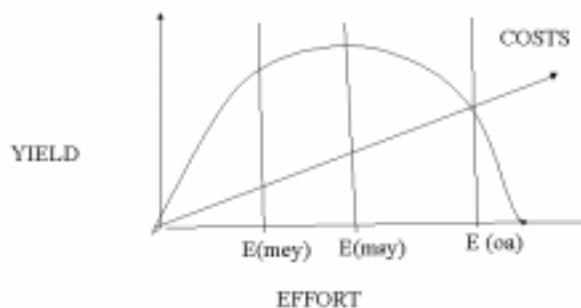
The last two features of post-modernism identified by Rudel and Gerson are polyvocality and the importance of signs and texts. Polyvocality--multiple voices--is recognizable in this Common Property Conference and others through the participation of practitioners who bring "voices from the commons". Awareness of the difficulty many people have articulating their views, speaking in their own voices, and having them heard, a recurrent theme of discussion when planning conferences like these, is also part of post-modernist analyses. Finally, signs--not just words but artifacts, art, buildings, landscapes and more--have only contingent and situated connections with the things they represent. Consequently, meaning is uncertain, and increasingly so with the rapid expansion of technologies for communication. Hence the importance, in meetings like this, of attempts to agreed upon terms but also to recognize the likelihood that we have very different ways of interpreting the words, actions, and other signs around us.

### Post-Modern Natural Resource Management: Ecosystem Management

I suggest that there is a post-modern perspective in NRM, and that we've even come up with a (much contested) label for it, "ecosystem 'management'." (I use quotation marks around "management" to suggest the hubris of the very idea of managing an ecosystem, just as earlier I used scare quotes around "traditional" to hint at the fact that NRM is in fact not very old at all, compared with the experience of the societies and ecosystems to which it is applied). Ecosystem management in the United States is a loosely structured set of divergent and alternative values, approaches, and perspectives that can be identified in the rhetoric, policies, and actions of NRM agencies (such as the U.S. Forest Service), non-governmental organizations

(such as the Nature Conservancy), international development and assistance groups (including those favoring community-based resource management), and of course individual scholars and practitioners. Table 2 lists some of the features of ecosystem management as evident in reviews of recent literature and in contrast with those identified as "traditional" NRM in Table 1.

Figure 1: The Open-Access Problem



First, utilitarian values are now side-by-side or competing with what the pioneering ecologist Aldo Leopold called "the land ethic," or non-anthropocentric values such as ecological integrity and biodiversity. A plurality of values and contested visions and meanings. Second, deterministic and single-species or "stock" analyses are recognized as inadequate given the complexities, discontinuities, and surprises of natural systems. This leads to a humbler science, because it is very difficult to model much less manage complex ecological systems. This is opening up space for claims to other sources of knowledge, including that of resource users (i.e. the "traditional ecological knowledge" movement), as well as fractious interest-driven claims to knowledge masquerading as science (i.e. "junk science"). We must accept a high degree of uncertainty and possibly intractable ignorance. Within the existing management community, that in turn has led to calls, such as those of Carl Walters, for adaptive management, i.e., for management interventions which are designed to reduce

uncertainty and respond to new knowledge although others, like Emory Roe, argue that uncertainties, contingencies and variability call instead for a more decentralized, local-community driven search for solutions.

Finally, this “post-modern” version of NRM—which today, in practice and rhetoric, includes some elements of the modern approach and has many components, not all clearly connected—has a very different approach to the human dimension. It is not reduced to estimates of harvest takes or measures of effort. People are not just takers of the resource. At the very least, democratic ideals of “public participation” are added on to the pastiche of ecosystem management. People become active participants in the system in many ways, including as monitors and managers, as experimenters and witnesses. Community-based or localized and area-based management emerges as a possibility and reality. This links with some of the other elements of ecosystem management. For instance, a humbler science is accompanied by appreciation of the significant of the knowledge and experience of lay people, of non-scientists, of “traditional ecological knowledge.”

**Modernism, Post-modernism, and Privatized Access Rights**

The “modern” NRM approach leads to an emphasis on either central government control or exclusive --and individualized--property rights as the institutional solutions to problems in managing common resources. One line of argument is that once we take an “ecosystem management” perspective, the argument for exclusive, tradeable property rights deserves even more critical scrutiny. For example, in fisheries individualized and tradeable allocations of quotas (ITQs) have been advocated and implemented. Obviously they are designed around the commodity-orientation of modernist NRM. Ecosystem management is not. Moreover, these systems have been created to manage and allocate rights to single species even though the activities to which they are applied involve many other species. The holders of the quasi-private access rights respond more and more to market signals. Market signals are conveyed through prices, and we all know that markets have short-term horizons. Ecological systems have longer horizons.

Finally, the “community” aspect of privatized systems is often narrowed to those who hold and own exclusive rights; many others who work for and with them are excluded from participation in any significant decision-making. On the other hand, holders of more or less “perfect” access rights do have incentives for collaboration and stewardship, particularly in relation to improving the value of their rights. They may have incentives and improved ways to be accountable for contributing to industry-based regulation and research, as shown in New Zealand’s ITQ fisheries where rights-holding companies have set up third-party corporations to carry out research. Good post-modernists, we say that we need to know the specifics and how they might be changing. Moreover, we need to be aware that many people are hurt by these

arrangements but their voices have not been heard, and to inquire what there is about the politics and persuasion in the policy process that has caused this to happen.

**Post-Modernism and Community-Based Management**

The metanarratives used in the past have precluded recognition of community-based control, perhaps even community-based exclusive property rights. Critics have argued for community-based management, but as Agrawal and Gibson (1999) have argued that too is premised on overly simplified, essentialist ideas. Jentoft and I have used the language of “market failure or community failure” to provoke a different way of thinking about problems in NRM which emphasizes the embeddedness of the decisions of individual actors and the institutions they create. It also requires that we examine the many dimensions of community that pertain to property rights.

Elinor Ostrom and Meg McKean among others address what really matters to communities and their capacities for dealing with the challenges of relying on common pool resources. Examples include the existence of boundaries and clear membership criteria, the capacity to monitor behavior and to recognize feedback, the fair or equitable distribution of power and resources, and well-defined political and property rights (whether private, public, or common). Taking a more legalistic perspective, we would also ask about the duration of community rights--to the resource, its products, and to make decisions about the resources-; the legitimacy of the process;

**Table 2: Ecosystem “Management”**

- Utilitarian & “Land Ethic” Values
- Multiple-Species; Habitat; Interactions; Discontinuities
- Humber Science, Accepting Uncertainty
- Adaptive & Bioregional Mgmt
- Bottom-Up, Collaborative
- “Social” = Active, Engaged User Groups & Communities

the nature of transferability within and outside the community; relations among the generations; and the alienability or inalienability of rights to property and decision-making.

### Conclusion

In my use of the concept of post-modernism I have been talking about challenging existing systems and the traditional way of thinking about natural and common resource management. About recognizing the specificity of people's lives and their institutions and the history and culture behind them and giving respect to the reality of people's lives and the ecosystems on which they depend. About accepting the contingency and complexity of property and other institutions that affect how people use and manage natural resources. I suggest that these and

other elements of the diffuse but influential cultural change known as post-modernism are found within the rubric of "ecosystem management" and that they also encapsulate much of what people who study "common property" are doing and thinking about.

There is, however, at least one point on which many of us students of common property institutions diverge sharply from many academic post-modernists. Respecting the specificity of people's lives, histories, institutions and environments means more than personal encounters with and interpretations of them--or their texts. Respectful scholarship also and above all demands careful, empirical, and reproducible research: natural and social science. We would agree, however, that respectful and accountable scholarship also involves engagement, making one's own scholarship relevant to the needs and goals of the people being studied. I speak as an academic scholar. The many practitioners among us have their criteria, too, for respectful engagement with those who really depend on and care about common and natural resources.

## Presidential Address Part II:

### Edges, Fields, and Regions:

In the second part of my presidential address to the Common Property Conference 2000, I use the concept of "edge effect" from ecology to argue for the importance of interdisciplinary and inter-regional interactions. Those "edge" interactions benefit from strength within the disciplines and within the regions.

What happens at the edges, the overlapping boundaries of ecological systems? At the edges, ecologists have shown us, there is much cross-fertilization and evolution; often high diversity and productivity. So, for example, at the "ecotones" where the woodland and grassland or the sand dune and inter-tidal marine zone meet, some wonderful things happen, the "edge effect." Biodiversity is likely to be high, natural selection is working overtime, and productivity can be even greater than at the centers of the ecological systems that overlap at these edges.

I have appropriated the "edge effect" as a metaphor for one of the outcomes of globalization, the bringing together of people, ideas and institutions from very different systems. In our case, we share an interest in what is happening to common pool resources and the people who depend on

them. We come from very different systems indeed, from communist, socialist, and capitalist political economies, from totalitarian to openly democratic regimes, from ancient to new nations, and so forth. We come from agrarian and industrial areas, from the South to the North, from tropical and semi-tropical to temperate and sub-Arctic; from the dominant millenarian religions like Islamic, Christianity and Judaism, to thousands of alternative ways of

relating to the spiritual in life and death. We come from the continents of Asia and Europe, from Africa, South and North America, Australia, the archipelagos of southeast Asia, the great islands of Papua New Guinea; the smaller islands of the Pacific, and the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Indian seas. We come from so many different places, and we bring the particular histories and cultures of those places and our personal lives with us. So many edges, as we meet and exchange data and narratives, theories, and methods. We have much to gain from the "edge effect" created by our encounters with each other at meetings such as the conference in Bloomington, Indiana.

Let me take this ecological metaphor one step further to introduce the topic of IASCP's Regionalization Initiative. What happens at the edges of ecological communities depends on composition and functioning of those communities themselves. Imagine an ecological system which has reduced its species richness: for example, a corn field, which is found next to an ecological system that has been altered by the grass, lawns, and asphalt driveways and roads of a housing development. What are the "edges" going to be like there? Probably a scattering of weeds,

Table 3: Post-Modernism & The Commons

- Historical, Cultural and Geographical Specificity
- Contingency & Complexity of Property
- Multiple Voices & Perspectives
- Social Construction & Production of Nature, Knowledge, and Society
- BUT ALSO: Respect for the Reality of Life, Human and Non-Human

herbs, thorny bushes and wildflowers along a drainage ditch. In comparison, imagine the edge where a forested woodland meets a freshwater pond, and this edge is inhabited and visited by creatures large and small, by swimming plankton and swarming insects, by water buffalo and giraffes, all making their imprints on this edge and benefitting from the diversity of its resources. Just so, I argue, we will contribute the most to our encounters at conferences such as this, where we are at the edges of our usual work, when we come from vibrant local and regional communities of scholarship and practice.

### **Edges and Fields:**

The problem is that common property researchers and practitioners are usually isolated, in different disciplines, institutions, organizations, and places, making it hard to be engaged with others in communities of inquiry and action. Indeed, that's what makes meetings like this so valuable. Through them we have largely overcome disciplinary isolation and stagnation. Through our common focus on "the commons," on how people use and manage common pool and commonly-held resources, we anthropologists, economists, mathematicians, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, biologists, lawyers, geographers, specialists in community development, members of local communities, and others have come up with some exciting ideas and findings, on the overlapped edges and boundaries of our separate areas of expertise. Arguing from my ecology metaphor, the quality and productivity of what happens at these edges is strengthened by the quality, diversity, dynamics of each of the disciplines. And vice versa.

### **Edges and Regions:**

The same can and will happen with respect to our cultural geography. That is the central thesis of the Regionalization Initiative. We come from all continents (except Antarctica, I think) and virtually all regions of the world. We come from homes and communities embedded in the many "Great" and "Small" cultural and religious traditions of the world. We come from development centers, colleges, universities, and government agencies scattered around the globe. And we come from distinct communities of scholars and practitioners. When we come together—at meetings like this, in the pages of the CPR Digest, in the "commons" listserv, through our publications available on the Web-site, and in the many thousands of ways that we collaborate with each other—we are creating transnational and intercultural "edge effects," not just interdisciplinary ones.

### **The IASCP Regionalization Initiative**

IASCP's Executive Council was challenged by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, two of our supporters, to "globalize" IASCP. The Council felt that "globalization" may be one of the problems, not the

solution, if by globalization we refer to linkages and processes that are dominated by "the North," the wealthier industrialized, capitalist nations and their intellectual and cultural institutions. Recall a recent issue of CPR Digest that featured critical debate about the role of the World Bank and other international lending institutions, and arguments that actions supported by policies of those institutions have weakened or altogether obliterated access to common resources and communal institutions for managing them. And we all are aware of the pernicious power of the "tragedy of the commons" intellectual model in justifying anti-commons policies, overlooking the potentials and powers of local resource users and their community institutions to manage and restore common resources.

The IASCP was formed largely in response to that paradigm, and today it is known best as a network that supports the development of alternative perspectives on the commons. As such it dovetails with and supports the paradigm of "community-based resource management," which is now part-and-parcel of most rural development projects in The South. The hard question we have to ask—and the one that may have been meant by Ken Wilson and others at the foundations when they asked us to "globalize"—is whether the IASCP is itself prone to hegemonic globalizing. Are the theoretical preoccupations and perspectives espoused by members of IASCP and realized in development efforts dominated by a few paradigms that emanate from "the North"? Have we over-privileged voices from the North and marginalized those of "the South"? Are the policies and ideas expressed in the South generated from practitioners, scholars, and policy-makers there? Are some of these appropriated by people from the North? Is our reliance on the English language appropriate to the needs of people throughout the world struggling to address problems of 'the commons'?

The presidency of IASCP has been held by people like myself—academic, middle-class, white North Americans. The Executive Council is, happily, far more diverse, and soon the presidency will be too. I will take the risk of saying that all of us share a certain view of the problems of the commons based on faith in the potentials of some local communities of resource users, under some circumstances, to contain and minimize those problems. These ideas are shared widely within IASCP and beyond. However, we should be concerned that as they diffuse at a globalizing pace and become part of the tool-kits for change, people may overlook the need for questioning and testing them and their applicability to particular landscapes, seascapes, and political-economies.

Here are some cautionary issues that come to mind:

Many people who have had leadership roles in IASCP and have published books that are widely cited in "common

property” circles share enthusiasm about local democracy and leadership which others, from other regions and with other experiences, might find very naïve.

Methodological individualism—the firm basis for prisoners dilemma sorts of understandings of commons problems—may be questioned by those whose backgrounds, training, and experiences lead to greater appreciation of the cultural and spiritual embeddedness of individual action within collective structures. Others may have greater awe of the power of agents of the state and multinational corporations to constrain and diminish the agency of individuals. They may also have reasons to fear the consequences of individual and local-level action where violence and police-power are used to protect the privileged power of elites, state agents, and corporations over common property resources.

Writings about the commons are dominated by the English language, although there are some notable exceptions. One of our new initiatives is to sponsor bibliographic work in other languages. The tendency to focus on natural resource management may be seen as off-the-mark by those who live and work in situations where the issue is simply access to resources, for the sake of the survival and health of one’s family. It may also be questioned by more radical environmentalists who worry about the anthropocentrism of NRM, and by others who are working on common pool and common property problems in urban areas.

Those are some of the reasons why the IASCP has created a “Regionalization Initiative.” We have begun to sharpen the focus of our collective resources—enhanced by the Ford Foundation—to help give greater voice and power to alternative views and other experiences. IASCP should be an instrument for enriching globalized knowledge and understandings of CPR issues rather than an instrument for “imperial” globalization. We—all of us—can work to strengthen the communities of knowledge and practice in the major regions of the world: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia; Micronesia and Melanesia in the Western Pacific; Africa; the Middle East; Eastern Europe; Western and Northern Europe; South and Central America; North America. Getting back to the ecology analogy, the result will be even richer and more productive meetings, as the “edge effect” takes place.

In sum: Increased interaction of scholars and practitioners, of researchers and local communities, in different parts of the world will create richer and more diverse “edge effects” when we get together for these international meetings. The main objective of IASCP’s regionalized initiative is to help researchers, community development workers, local leaders, and others who live and work in regions outside North America increase their own capacity to address challenges in CPR management. I hope that the initiative is able to leverage resources to create opportuni-

ties for the generation and communication of new ideas, methods, and theories.

Too much of the work in environment and development has been based on the application of theories and methods that come from “the North” rather than those that have been generated and tested by researchers in “the South.” In the future the bibliographic citations used in common property studies should be in more languages than English and give primary space to the work of scholars and practitioners throughout the world.

Speaking only for myself, but expecting that what I have to say would be seconded by colleagues such as Jim Acheson, Fikret Berkes, Elinor Ostrom, Meg McKean, Louise Fortmann, Dan Bromley, and many others at the “most often cited” center of common property studies to date—I hope that our work, coming from our “northern” and North American experience, is continually and fervently challenged by researchers and writers from developing countries. I also hope that they can find the resources and socio-political “space” to communicate their own ideas and approaches to the problems of local, regional and global commons. Again, that is what our Regionalization Initiative hopes to facilitate.

Let me close with a return to my metaphor. Some of the rich ecological “edges” were created by people as boundaries, namely the hedgerows that fence off the fields and pastures of the countryside of Southern England and other places, creating a mosaic whose ecological richness lies in the hedges themselves, bursting with life. In past decades the loss of the hedges to large-scale agriculture has become a major issue in England. An irony, is that many of these hedges were created in past centuries as part of the enclosure movement, transforming open fields that were part of a village’s common inheritance to privately owned fields, and in the process displacing thousands of agrarian workers, the “tragedy of the commoners.”

At the Bloomington, Indiana conference, many people were concerned that the Regionalization Initiative was creating distinctions and difference where there should have been none. That was never the intent, and participants as well as IASCP officers have worked hard to make sure that it did not happen. But it is a reminder, reinforced by the little history lesson above, that the very meaning of field and edge --and region--is itself a changing and contested part of social and historical processes.

For further information:

Agrawal, Arun and Clark C. Gibson. 1999. Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation. *World Development* 27(4): 629-649.

Rudel, Thomas K. and Judith Gerson. 1999. Postmodernism, Institutional Change, and Academic Workers: A Sociology of Knowledge. *Social Science Quarterly* 80(2): 213-228.

## **Bridging Divides: A Summary Report of Discussions from the Regionalization Sessions at the IASCP 2000 Conference**

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About a year ago a new program for diversifying and strengthening links between people engaged in the study of common property was initiated by the IASCP. This became known as the Regionalization Program, and it represents an effort to expand conversations between practitioners and academics, between disciplines, and between and within different regions of the world. The idea is to increase regional participation and global access, and to facilitate a better balance in the flows of information, perspectives and representations. Objectives of the Program include bridging divides in language and locations by facilitating networks and more effectively sharing information about CPRs through different media, forums and people. This article is a report on the consultative process that took place during the IASCP 2000

Conference regarding how and, indeed, if the Regionalization Program should move forward.

Because of the expense of bringing together IASCP members from different regions and countries, until the Bloomington conference, opportunities for discussion about “regionalizing” the IASCP were limited. Throughout the Conference, however, great emphasis was placed on the idea in order to learn from the experience and benefit from the perspectives of attending members and other interested persons. At different venues – in hallways, during coffee breaks and at sessions – numerous informal discussions took place. In addition, five different regionalization-related sessions were held. These started with a plenary on the first day, and were followed by four region-specific meetings focused on Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, and Latin America during the remainder of the Conference. The group meetings brought together people with interests in specific areas of the world. The idea was that these meetings would enhance networking opportunities, as well as help to establish national and regional action

plans based on the perspectives and concerns of the IASCP’s membership worldwide.

The regionalization meetings were well attended, with diverse and interesting perspectives raised. Approximately 120 people were at the Plenary, and substantial numbers also attended the region-specific meetings: 45 people in the Africa grouping, 41 in the Asia and Pacific grouping, 24 in the Latin America grouping, and 13 in the Europe and North America grouping. Given the number of parallel sessions competing for time and attention during the conference, these numbers suggest a fairly keen interest. The hope was that through these meetings a sense of “ownership” might develop, and a kind of consensus about a meaningful mandate and/or program

possibilities could begin to take shape, based on IASCP membership participation and ideas. I believe that this was accomplished to a certain extent. Below I outline discussions, outcomes and proposed initiatives.

### **Plenary Session**

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000, from 5:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M., a plenary was held which was open to all interested persons. In the meeting small groups were formed, with practitioners, scholars, and researchers

working in and/or from (or otherwise interested in) particular regions participating in one of four different and broadly-defined regional and language groupings. The division into four groupings (and in the other sessions that followed) was based on meeting and time constraints, and does not indicate or otherwise reflect regions as defined by the IASCP or its members.

In order to achieve a balance between open and structured participation, three questions were supplied to each group, with facilitators present to help guide discussions. Participants were also encouraged to raise other issues or ideas, unrelated to these questions if they chose to do so.

The questions were:

What do you think would be the most effective ways to regionalize the IASCP’s membership and activities?

Examples/ideas might include:

Local chapters?

Local editors for the CPR Digest?

Regional conferences?

Networking?



*The Author and Friends on a Conference Break.*

*Photo Courtesy Victoria Edwards*

How should regional units within the IASCP be strengthened and expanded?

Particularly in terms of:

- (1) communication channels (flows of information, methods and means of communicating);
- (2) organizational structures (regional or national, funded by IASCP or not, a branch of the IASCP or independent);
- (3) institutional rules or norms?

What would be your top three priorities in an action plan for making the Regionalization Program more effective?

From each group a short presentation was given at the end of the meeting. It was apparent from these that the group discussions had raised diverse and interesting perspectives on the challenges and opportunities posed by the idea of broadening and diversifying linkages within the IASCP. Comments from these presentations are incorporated in the meetings discussions outlined below, because many of the conversations that were begun in the plenary continued in region-based meetings – as explained and outlined below. These meetings

were more informal and, as noted, were meant to bring together people with interests in specific regions in order to share information about ongoing CPR-related activities as well as create opportunities for better and more diverse network links between IASCP members.

### **Group Meeting for Latin America:**

In this meeting earlier discussions that occurred in the plenary were deepened by identifying more specific strategies and individuals, with the aim of translating priorities into practice. The top three priorities related to:

- (1) Dissemination. Ways of sharing information and the different methods and media for accomplishing this objective.
- (2) Survey. The need to identify and define commons, and who is involved in the context of Latin America.
- (3) Institutional arrangements. Different “focal points” or individuals and institutions for facilitating linkages and the sharing of information.

The group decided that a home page linked to the IU server as part of the IASCP web site with address lists as

well as basic documents and bibliographies translated into Portuguese and Spanish would be helpful. In particular, the need for translating important CPR-related concepts into Portuguese and Spanish was emphasized, in order to build a “common and translated understanding”. It was suggested that a discussion list serve could be established to collect and disseminate information about useful and important papers, articles, and books (portions of), with the idea of compiling a monograph and in order to expand discussions on CPRs, CPR theory, and the regionalization of the IASCP.

Other ideas included: integrating information about CPRs and the IASCP with other institutions or disciplines, such as rural sociology, ecology, and ethnobiology (among

others); convening meetings and workshops as well as organizing specific CPR-related courses; printing booklets in Spanish and Portuguese (using less-technical terms) for rural communities; and, asking *Interciência*, a journal, to publish a special issue on CPRs.

A working group was formed to strengthen links within a core group working on CPRs as well as build a “critical mass” for working out and implementing institutional arrangements. Focal points are being identified nationally and, in the case of a large and diverse country like Brazil, in

different sub-regions. Criteria for selection included: willingness, time-availability, and access to technical resources. It was thought that engaging and building on the contacts of members who are less senior in terms of their positions and extent of competing obligations, would be the best way to move forward and diversify links. In addition, a proposal that the IASCP board membership should have an even distribution of board members from the different regions was raised.

### **Group Meeting for Europe and North America:**

There was less enthusiasm in meetings of the Europe and North America group, because feelings about regionalizing the IASCP were mixed. Many did not see a need, with reservations centered on time-constraints, information overloads, and the idea that the strength of the IASCP is in its international nature and structure.

For those who did see a need for regional efforts, particularly within Europe, it was mentioned that there have been ongoing efforts to expand links without success for a number of years. However, a further point was that regions of the “South” do see a need, and efforts in this direction might help to strengthen interactions within and



between different parts of the world. An especially important objective since most researchers based in North America and Europe conduct their studies in the “South” and there is a need for them to more effectively share the information drawn from their research within those countries and regions.

Recommendations included building on and strengthening links to existing networks, organizations, and “interest groups,” as well as raising the profile of CPRs in related conferences and meetings. One outcome was the formation of a working group from Europe which will coordinate to set up and propose panels on CPRs for conferences in Europe – such as for the Ecological Economics conference and others – to raise awareness of CPR theory and better share information about the IASCP.

Other points included: The need for more diversified publications, perhaps a refereed journal that would focus more on theory; having smaller workshops in Europe, focused on commons in specific geographical regions, such as the Alps, and conducted in different languages, such as French; and, the need to reach new groups and individuals by, for example, attracting and identifying people whose work does not fit in strictly-defined discipline-based conferences.

#### **Group Meeting for Asia and the Pacific:**

Discussion focused on the need for deciding the purposes and objectives of regionalizing the IASCP, and considering what might be the “value-added” or benefits from this as distinguished from present networks. Advantages included: access to broader regional perspectives and concerns; the possibility of a need for an advocacy role for regional groups; and, opportunities for comparing case studies regionally and sub-regionally, holding region-based conferences and building better links with other organizations. Disadvantages included: duplicating already existing networks; problems of diversity; and, questions about the appropriateness or usefulness of dividing up or lumping together the diversity of Asia and the Pacific.

The group endorsed the need for regional meetings or chapters based on geography or shared interests. It was noted that each and every country has CPR problems, and many of these are similar – thereby enhancing the need for sharing information and identifying institutions or individuals who can facilitate national and regional linkages as well as collect and disseminate information.

The gap between discussions at the IASCP 2000 conference and what happens at the local level was highlighted, with discussions about the shortage of practical and implementation-oriented presentations or papers. It was suggested that more grass roots involvement is needed, perhaps through regional conferences that can more effectively address the needs, questions, and concerns of actual resource users.

The group also recommended establishing a database of members in regions and NGOs working on CPR issues. A web site was suggested, but this should not duplicate available sources; rather, it should provide links. Priorities included: the need for training on CPRs and supporting young researchers and fieldwork; and, establishing aims and objectives on a country-by-country basis, but with links to the IASCP.

#### **Group Meeting for Africa:**

Initially there was much discussion about problematic aspects of establishing and maintaining networks and the idea of strengthening the IASCP regionally. There seemed to be a general feeling that this was imposed. This changed when the time allocated for the meeting was over, and there was frustration that no

strategy had been devised. As the group stayed into a second hour of discussions, the tenor of the meeting changed and I was informed that there was interest in this or so many people would not have attended.

Suggestions included: identifying, diversifying, and strengthening links with existing networks, such as the Pan-African Symposium, among others. In particular, there was concern about making the IASCP network more inclusive, by reaching out to researchers and practitioners working on CPRs who may not be part of existing or known networks. Questions were also raised about how to channel and manage information, so that more practical experience from the field could be highlighted and shared on a regular basis – instead of the “Northern” and theory-driven perspectives that tend to dominate the IASCP. Information, it was noted, is important and a central “clearing house” may be needed to collect and manage information. A non-bureaucratic structure was also recommended. Not a “mini IASCP” or something that replaces the IASCP, but rather focal points and/or sub-chapters in different areas of the region that might strengthen connections and awareness about the IASCP.



*On a Conference Field Trip. Photo Courtesy Jan Riseth*

Specific activities might include: producing and editing a CPR Digest by and for the Africa Region; occasional meetings which would bring together scholars and practitioners to share experiences and result in publications; and, the exchange of ideas through email and web site links. It was also suggested that efforts in Africa could benefit substantially from having the next IASCP conference in Zimbabwe, and that information should be shared with and coordinated through CASS about potential participants and ideas for Africa-focused themes.

### What Next?

As is evident from the interactions and discussions outlined above, a number of concrete and practical initiatives have been proposed. A fair amount of enthusiasm was generated and it is important, especially at this early stage, to build upon this momentum. Follow-up activities might include (but not be limited to):

- (1) Coordination and support provision for regional workshops;
- (2) Contact-building and support for establishing focal points in Latin America, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific;
- (3) Information-sharing about members and CPR-related activities;
- (4) Identifying existing networks and establishing or enhancing links to and from the IASCP;
- (5) Disseminating informational reports;
- (6) Coordinating and/or writing proposals for supporting translation of IASCP informational materials as well as CPR-related papers, articles and/or portions of books;
- (7) Establishing a list of NGOs working on CPR issues, and making that available to members;
- (8) Investigating mirror-sites and the possibility of home pages for different regions and languages, being linked to IASCP web site and the IU server.

My term as Regionalization Program Coordinator ended in August 2000. Michelle Curtain, Secretary-Treasurer of the IASCP, is following-up on many of the ideas and initiatives discussed. Thanks again to all who kindly shared their time, insights, and information during the IASCP 2000 Conference. We look forward to hearing more from you about efforts within your area to diversify, strengthen and expand the sharing of information about CPR-related activities, and otherwise bridge divides in language and locations.

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Compiled by Charlotte Hess

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*Continued on page 16*

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