

The Common Property Resource Digest

NO. 76 QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COMMON PROPERTY March 2006

Welcome to this edition of the *CPR Digest* on “Conservation Policy and the Commons.” The CPR Forum on this topic, a theme of the IASCP 11th Biennial Conference, explores the role policies on conservation have on the commons and people who rely on commons for their subsistence and livelihood. The *CPR Forum* opens with a lead essay by **Moira Moeliono** who emphasizes the need for government policy makers to collaborate with stakeholders at the local level. **Bruce Currie-Alder** follows with a response reminding us that social learning and issues of power play vital roles in the success of conservation policies related to parks. **Mutuso Dhliwayo** highlights the importance of the framing of conservation laws and policies, as they can not only facilitate, but also hinder, community participation in conservation. With a perspective from fisheries and marine protected areas, **Patricia Pinto da Silva** points out that striking the right balance of rights and responsibilities between resource users and governments is never easy. The *CPR Forum* closes with **Dario Novellino**’s response questioning the cross-cultural applicability of notions of ‘rights’ and ‘responsibility for the environment’ and reminding us that conservation is, indeed, a social challenge.

This issue also contains a large number of announcements from the IASCP Board, some of the most important of which are the nominations for the 2006 IASCP election, a request for comments on the proposed IASCP name-change, and registration for the IASCP 2006 Bali Meetings. For the creative, there is also a call for Logo ideas for the New *International Journal of the Commons*. Take a look and **Enjoy!**

CONTENTS	
CPR FORUM: Conservation Policy and the Commons	
Conservation Policy and the Commons <i>Moira Moeliono</i>	1
Beyond Conservation: Embedding Parks in Development <i>Bruce Currie-Alder</i>	4
Issues Arising from Conservation Policy and the Commons <i>Mutuso Dhliwayo</i>	5
Fishermen at the Frontline of Marine Conservation <i>Patricia Pinto Da Silva</i>	7
Our Views and Their Views of Conservation <i>Dario Novellino</i>	8
Recent Publications	10
Announcements	13

CPR FORUM COMMENTARY

Conservation Policy and the Commons

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In May of 2005, a workshop on Social Controversies and Cultural Contestations regarding national parks and reserves in the Malay Archipelago” was held in Singapore stating the question: Conservation for/by whom? We have become used to think that conservation is a good thing for the public good and that governments are responsible for it. We take for granted the existence of protected areas, national parks and reserves managed by small and large government and or non-governmental organizations. Protected areas have become national or even global commons. Highlighted in the workshop, however, was the other side of the coin, i.e., the conflict between conservation policies set by the state and the rights of local or indigenous people. Conservation is supposed to be about safeguarding global public goods in the interest of all. In practice conservation for the benefit of the global communities is too often carried out at the expense of local people. Is the theme therefore: ‘For the global people by the local people?’

Conservation is beneficial for the world, for the people of the world. Is it therefore also good for local people?

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*Published with support from
the Ford Foundation*

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Despite evidence to the contrary the protected area approach is still the dominant model for conservation and local communities are perceived as being the main threat to conservation. Indeed when an area becomes a protected area, the ways local people have perceived the changing status of the land have resulted in environmental degradation. When common property of a community was made into a protected area, in effect it became open access. The community had no legal rights while the state was not present to protect the area against 'illegal' acts.

This realization supported the theory that given secure rights over the area, indigenous communities will manage the resources in a traditional sustainable manner. People living in and around forest area, however, are often amongst the poorest in the country where conservation becomes a luxury they might not be able to afford. As well increasing heterogeneity of rural people and the strong linkages to global economic process has led to the deterioration of traditional management systems. The issue of poverty and claims of indigenous and local people, however, have resulted in some rethinking and increasingly we have become aware that conservation is far more a social challenge than a biological one.

Assuming that poverty drives communities to encroach on national park land, rural development projects were commenced targeting poor communities in and around nature reserves. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank funded large conservation projects known as Integrated Conservation and Development Projects. The role of NGOs to initiate and run 'participatory' natural resource management schemes became generally accepted. Today, almost all national parks have some aspect of management done participatorily. NGOs working with local communities to strengthen local capacity, improve strategies for action and facilitate communications had already adopted participatory approaches such as PRA, PAR and participatory mapping. In forestry various types of participatory schemes emerged, from social forestry programs as part of logging concessions to development of traditional systems of natural resource management.

Participatory approaches to management and conservation of natural resources became part of the solution to situations in the field. However, the question is whether local communities are able and willing to participate in managing a national park for abstract and long term purposes? As well, implementing participation is no easy task. After all, in most cases the people who are now asked to participate have first been de-responsible and

dispossessed. Now these same people are asked to participate and become responsible again. As well the state and international agencies, which has become accustomed to a simple top-down approach has had to learn the actual meaning of participation. And the burden for conservation is still put on the local population.

Generally attempts to manage parks for uses by local communities are more likely to succeed if the users support the management plans. Users are much more likely to support management plans if the plans take account of their economic needs. And this is much more likely when users have had a significant role in the development of management plans. However, while most participatory approaches are based on the notion of resources being essentially state property, it is essential that some rights of communities are recognized. After all, being rational human beings community members are unlikely to invest labor and resources in sustainable management without some guarantee that they or their descendants will receive its benefits.

ICDP and collaborative management approaches are focused on a particular protected area and its surrounding communities. However, as also suggested in a recent IUCN publication on poverty and conservation that one should look beyond the site level and address problems at the appropriate levels both geographically and institutionally. We need to accept the fact that conservation is a multilevel problem and therefore requires multilevel solutions This means that conservation need to be viewed from the level of local households, urban populations, and the international community, but also at the level of the protected area and the larger landscape.

Based Upon the
**Workshop on Conservation for/by
whom? Social Controversies and
Cultural Contestations regarding
National Parks and Reserves in the
“Malay Archipelago”**,

Jointly organized by

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences;
Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science;
Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law (APCEL),
Faculty of Law; and the Asia Research Institute of the
National University of Singapore

Conservation, whether conventional or through community participation, has so far shown a remarkable lack of success. The government is not able to guard the large areas it assigned for conservation. Local government and local communities are seemingly not interested.

So, whose task should conservation be?

Should local communities be in charge? Many NGOs promote the myth of indigenous or traditional communities living in harmony with nature and applying traditional systems of natural resource management. The state system of parks and conservation areas is to be seen as a crime against humanity whereby land is alienated and people are prevented from fulfilling their needs. Parks will therefore be much better managed when traditional communities are in charge.

John MacKinnon, Director, ASEAN Regional Center for Biodiversity Conservation, on the other hand says of participatory management that it might be necessary to reach some compromise but ‘it is certainly not the best way to achieve conservation’. Apart from probably having a more economical way of using the area, local communities might not have the interest. He further criticizes the common belief that if we can raise the standard of living, local communities no longer need to exploit natural resources and the area can be protected more effectively. However, the more ‘developed’ people are the higher their needs. The conditions under which people are seen as ecologically friendly (low population, low resource use, subsistence production) are conditions under which we would not expect conservation to develop. On the other hand when people might feel the need for conservation due to a ‘developed’ lifestyle with market oriented production, they are perceived as obstacles to conservation.

Although the way natural resources are controlled by the state is much criticized, ultimately the government must be responsible for conservation. After all, isn’t the state created in order to protect the common good? However, the government is clearly not able to do this alone. Some sort of collaborative arrangement is needed.

Collaboration and participation for conservation is not only an option, it is a necessity. The government might have formal power, but de facto, national parks are managed (or not-managed) by the people living in and around the park. Communities which have no legal rights, even if willing, are not able to protect the park against encroachment by outsiders. Private companies might be willing to manage a park if profit is involved but even then have to cope with local communities.

For conservation purposes in particular, government is needed to set a general management policy setting guidelines for permissible and non-permissible activities and ensuring that society as whole abide by these rules.

However setting policy by the state is not enough. The 'reality gap' between policy makers and the reality in the field needs to be closed. And for this we first need to realize the different realities of policy makers, those implementing the policies and those affected by these policies. Too often policies and regulations are made to guarantee the sustainability of the state rather than of the environment.

For Further Reading:

Fisher et al, 2005. Poverty and Conservation. Landscapes, people and Power. Landscapes and Livelihoods Series No 2. IUCN Forest Conservation Programme

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CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Beyond Conservation: Embedding Parks in Development

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Conservation has come a long way. From the simple 'fence and fine' approach of the Yellowstone model of over a century ago, the present state-of-the-art in conservation is much more complex. Whereas the function of protected areas was previously seen as preserving a piece of pristine wilderness from human influence, they are now a means for people to learn to live within nature. Today's parks are expected to satisfy multiple objectives, including *inter alia* protecting charismatic species, biodiversity, the livelihoods of local people, the flow of ecosystems services. The art and science of conservation has had to evolve. As the Yellowstone model was exported to developing countries, it simply didn't work. As Moeliono correctly points out, new parks were established without an understanding of how people interact with park resources. By cutting off their *de facto* rights of access and use to such resources, the 'fence and fine' approach to conservation undermined existing collective action as people no longer had a vested interest in sustainability. Thus, the great discovery in the latter decades of the 20th century was that people matter, that ecological systems were intimately tied to social systems. This realization inspired alternative models, such as the biosphere reserve, in which different geographic

zones are used to create a gradient from controlled use to strict conservation of natural resources.

Nonetheless, such models still tend to focus inward and relies on centralized planning, largely ignoring the incentives that shape the people's actions and wider processes within which parks are embedded.

In the 21st century, protected areas must now be seen as active experiments in sustainable development. Rather than saving part of nature from development, parks should be role models for how development could be elsewhere. Rather than viewing the people who live in or near parks as subjects, to be managed through conservation programs, they can be agents of their own development and partners in management. The geographical space of protected areas must be associated with a social space within which different stakeholders are engaged in a process of deliberative dialogue regarding the future of park, its resources and their individual roles in that future. Rather than parks becoming private property or devolving into an open access, the existence of such a social space opens opportunities for stakeholders to negotiate new arrangements to share power and responsibilities. In Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, the Actanchuleb reserve on the northern coast was established by local fishers and lies outside the formal government protected areas; meanwhile on the western coast, local people pressured government to accept a consultative council for the Terminos Lagoon Protected Area. Such experiments emerge from a process of dialogue over time regarding values, interests, needs and vision. Rather than institutionalizing a particular arrangement, such as co-management board, what matters is a sustained process of social learning.

To be successful social learning requires unpacking issues of power and representation. As Moeliono states 'conservation by and for whom?' Successful parks go beyond the token participation of few indigenous and NGOs representatives. They seek to transform the incentives faced by different stakeholders and the relationships among them. At the heart of protected area management is the question of 'who has the power to do what, and on behalf of whom?' The exercise of power is more than property rights. The ability to exercise power also depends on being heard, influencing the vision and mandate of management, taking on and fulfilling responsibilities, and holding others accountable. Power is defined in comparison to other stakeholders. One stakeholder's power depends on their relationship with others. Park managers thus need to be at least as knowledgeable of

the social networks within which parks exist as they are of ecosystems dynamics. Without such knowledge, well-intended attempts at participation can simply reproduce existing power inequities rather than empower local people to make their own decisions.

The power of ideas depends on how they are shared. At a basic level, establishing and running a protected area is a matter of implementing policy, of translating the idea of conservation into practice. Social learning requires identifying key stakeholders at an early stage and engaging them over time. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has a five-year corporate plan to describe future actions, not unlike a protected area management plan. In reviewing that planning process, I learned that managers and staff remembered the corporate plan more on the basis their memories of the in-person discussions and consultations, rather than viewing the final text of the written document. Whereas I initially perceived the final written document as the key outcome of the planning process, I came to appreciate that the most valuable outcome was how the ideas included in it were shared within the organization. Enhancing practice relied more on in-person learning, than simply assuming staff would read the written document. Conservation is more than capturing expert knowledge in designing rules or writing management plans. Whether in designing policy or conducting research, the practice of protected areas depends on sharing ideas.

Finally, today's parks need to look outwards and connect to the world beyond their boundaries. Protected areas can no longer be seen as isolated islands of conservation in a sea of development. In biophysical and social terms, parks are embedded in wider processes at different scales. Designing parks becomes even more complex when considering the need to 'climate proof' parks and adapt as variability shifts biomes and forces species to migrate. Additionally, wider social and economic processes such as increasing labor migration, regional trade agreements and urbanization all exert pressure additional pressures on protected areas. Once 'protected' by their remote location, today's parks faces pressures such as the emigration of local youth, markets hungry for natural resources, and the demands for water from thirsty cities. Protected areas must be seen not *a part from*, but *as part of* the wider world, embedded in development rather than immune to it.

This does not mean that there is no future for conservation. Instead conservationists must learn new skills and be more creative than ever. Acknowledging that

parks are embedded in development opens new opportunities for research. For protected areas to be experiments in sustainable development requires: unpacking issues of power, new strategies for sharing ideas, and looking outwards to the world beyond park boundaries. In such an agenda, there is very much a role for new research that engages questions of how effectively do parks operate? For what purposes? How do they adapt to external pressures? And how can conservation policy be more inclusive? Such critical reflection on the state-of-the-art in conservation can inspire and set an example for future directions protected area policy and practice.

For Further Reading:

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Chuenpagdee, R.; J. Fraga and J. Euán-Avila (2002) Progressing Toward Comanagement Through Participatory Research *Society & Natural Resources* 17(2):147-161.

Sithole, B. (2002) *Where the power lies: multiple stakeholder politics over natural resources*. CIFOR, Indonesia.

Wells, M. and K. Brandon. (1992). *People and parks: linking protected area management with local communities*. Washington, DC, World Bank, World Wildlife Fund and US AID.

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CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Issues arising from Conservation Policy and the Commons

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Moir's commentary on conservation policy and the commons provides important insights. The key issue raised is the lack of community participation in the initiation, development and implementation of protected areas. Judging from the trends over the past two decades, it can be argued that such protected areas are going to be there for many years. A number of factors are identified as having contributed to this lack of community participation in conservation. Among them is the "reality gap between policy makers, those implementing the policy and those affected by the policy." Apart from conservation policies, conservation laws also contribute to this reality gap. Therefore we need to reflect carefully on the future of protected area management with regard to

community participation. In particular, what kind of conservation laws and policies do we want to see in respect of community participation? Rather than the disempowering and disenfranchising laws and policies of the past, we need those that do the opposite: empowering and enabling stakeholders (including communities) to play significant roles in protected area management and ensuring that they are beneficiaries in the real sense. Explicit policy and legal provisions, is one of the ways through which community participation in and support for conservation can be strengthened.

Depending on how they are framed, laws and policies can either facilitate or hinder community participation in conservation. Conservation policies and laws have often been used to disempower communities from conservation. It can therefore be argued that conservation laws and policies can help provide solutions to the problems bedeviling community participation in conservation today.

But the question we need to consider is whether community participation is an end in itself or a means to an end. Community participation is a process aimed at delivering tangible benefits to communities. Ultimately, community participation should lead to the empowerment of communities. Laws and policies can play an important role in ensuring that community participation in conservation leads to community empowerment. For community empowerment to be achieved, conservation laws and policies must be prescriptive. The assumption being made here is that if laws and policies are explicit in their intent with regard to community participation in conservation, then the prospects of real benefits accruing to communities are enhanced. The lack of explicitness in policy and legal provisions is one of the causes of the reality gap between policy makers, the implementing agencies and the communities.

An important indicator of how serious a legal or policy provision is prescriptiveness. Conservation laws and policies that are not prescriptive leave themselves open to various interpretations that may not promote community participation in conservation. Lack of explicitness in conservation laws and policies, makes it possible for conservation agencies to come up with self serving justifications to hinder, if not prevent local communities from participating in the process of identifying and establishing protected areas. Weak provisions may be interpreted by the conservation agencies as indicating a lack of commitment to local participation by policy makers. If the policy makers are not committed to community participation as shown by vague and weak law and policy provisions, then why expect conservation agencies to be?

Conservation policy and the commons can indeed co-exist through collaboration among different stakeholders with different backgrounds, view points and skills including communities, working together. On the other hand, without some reasonable assurance of tangible benefits, local communities will have little, if any incentive to be involved in government sponsored conservation initiatives. Unfortunately, the failure by local communities to participate in government sponsored conservation processes which is due to the lack of tangible any tangible benefits, is often interpreted as a lack of “willingness and ability” to participate, which is not true.

Obviously, local communities need capacity, skills and competence to participate in conservation. And whatever capacity, skills and competence they possess can surely be improved through collaboration with other stakeholders in the conservation process. Prescriptive laws and policies, in which people likely to be most affected have had an in put, can go a long way in empowering and encouraging local communities to participate effectively in state sponsored conservation initiatives. This entails the promotion of good governance in protected area management.

While the extent to which conservation laws and policies should be prescriptive is debatable, precedents have already been set in other sectors of the economy. An example is South Africa’s Black Economic Empowerment Act, No. 53 of 2003 establishing the framework for the promotion of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). The aim is to redress economic imbalances that were perpetuated during the apartheid era. Prescriptive provisions are made for the principle of BEE. The BEE policy documents are clear in their intent and set out specific targets that should be met for Black Economic Empowerment to be regarded as successful. If laws and policies can be this prescriptive in other sectors of the economy, then why not in the conservation processes where it is known that local communities are frequently marginalized? It is through definitive laws and policies that are clear on their intent that community participation which leads to community empowerment can be achieved.

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*Hope to
see you there
this June!*

CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Fishermen at the Frontline of Marine Conservation

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Moira Moeliono's commentary questions who benefits from protected areas and what the role of resource users should be in these initiatives. Certainly, where no clear link exists between the quality of the resource and the well-being (economic or otherwise) of the dependent communities or resource users, garnering local support and participation for such initiatives will be challenging. However, where these links exist and where stakeholders wish to participate in the governance of these resources, they should be encouraged and enabled to do so.

Although protected areas have historically been the keystone of terrestrial conservation programs, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) have taken longer to gain currency. As a result, experiences with stakeholder participation in marine conservation and management are also comparatively new.

Striking the right balance of rights and responsibilities between resource users and governments in the management of these areas is not always straightforward and arrangements appropriate for one situation may not work in another. Where protected areas are created primarily to achieve conservation objectives, garnering local level support and participation is often difficult. However, protected areas and non-placed based resource management regimes can also emerge at the bequest of the resource users themselves. Such collaborative management arrangements are likely to be more socially sustainable when they are not imposed from the outside.

Although MPAs (like their terrestrial counterparts) come in a variety of forms, they are often (mis) interpreted as 'closed areas', especially when these are introduced by resource management entities to severely limit or completely restrict extractive activities. However, few areas off the northeastern coast of the US are closed to all fishing activities, although most fisheries management plans (particularly in New England) involve some type of

place-based management. The result is that fishing grounds in the region are layered with restricted-use areas that, when mapped, appear to be an odd sort of patchwork quilt.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1976 established regional fishery management councils consisting of governmental and appointed industry representatives. Although the Act decentralized conservation and management decisions to the regional level, opportunities for community-based or user group management were not formally established in the Northeast region. Nonetheless, over the years, a number of resource user groups have strived for the opportunity to manage an allocation of the resource (such as a percentage of a stocks total allowable catch or a geographic area). Presently, the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association co-manages a portion of the Georges Bank cod quota (under the New England Northeast Multispecies Management Plan) as a community based group. The Montauk Tilefish Association has a similar arrangement for a significant fraction of the tilefish quota (under the Mid-Atlantic Tilefish Fishery Management Plan).

In Brazil, 'bottom-up' opportunities for decentralized marine conservation have also emerged. Since the 1990s, MPAs in Brazil have been based largely on a participatory conservation model. Maritime Extractive Reserves (MERs), a type of government-community collaborative management regime, have been established in coastal areas at the request of local resource user communities to protect natural resources while sustaining local livelihoods. Coastal communities interested in establishing an MER develop a proposal and, if this is approved, play an active role in the conservation and management of the MER. In return, the government provides the community with extractive rights over the MER for a limited period of time (*i.e.*, 60 years). The long-term participation of resource users in this arrangement is the cornerstone of this conservation and development model. This approach is based on the idea that where resource users see a direct link between the status/condition of a resource and their own livelihoods, conservation objectives are more likely to be achieved over the long term. As of 2005, 18 MERs have been created in Brazil and more are planned.

In the USA Atlantic and Brazilian cases, interest in participation in the management process exists. Motivating factors include external resource threats and the desire for greater control over decisions affecting community livelihoods.

Rights come with stewardship responsibilities and the success of these initiatives is dependent on ability of the groups to sustain their management regimens over time. Certain group and resource characteristics seem to lend themselves better to collaborative management. In the Northeast USA, for example, co-management success has been associated with groups that are place-based, small in size, and whose decisions clearly control conservation outcomes.

Moeliono rightly states that governments are unable to manage resources on their own. The same is true, however, for communities and resource users. Decentralized governance does not mean that harvesters bear the entire burden of responsibility but - where interest and capacity exist - they have the opportunity to do so. Moeliono also points to the need to address problems at appropriate geographic and institutional levels. Fishing pressure is only one of many activities that determine the overall health of marine ecosystems, and certainly cannot be managed in isolation. Moving towards ecosystem based management (EBM) should lead to management structures that recognize the many vital linkages between land and marine activities (e.g., fishing, shipping, mining, etc.) and which ensure that decisions are made at the appropriate scale. Fisheries management, at any scale, will not be successful if such factors are ignored or discounted.

In developed countries economic and commercial concerns are often central drivers in determining how and for whom fisheries resources are managed, while developing countries are often faced with simply meeting basic needs. In both situations, however, fishermen and fishing communities are at the frontline of conservation and must be engaged in the process.

Maira Moeliono notes that conservation is a social challenge. The question is not whether resource users should participate in resource management - but how to design appropriate local and regional institutions to foster such input and to ensure the right balance of rights and responsibilities. This is easier said than done.

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Design the logo!

For the new *International Journal of the Commons*

Details on page 13.

CPR FORUM RESPONSE

Our Views and Their Views of Conservation

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Whether we like it or not, debate on environmental protection is still trapped in western categories with detrimental implications for the lives and well being of indigenous communities. One does not need to look far to understand some of the principles underlying the basic tenets of the conservationists' 'faith'. For instance, the well known slogan 'think globally and act locally', appears to be based on the assumption that the whole of humanity strives for a common goal, that is the protection of the world's natural system. Of course, I am not disagreeing with the noble objective of saving the Earth. This is something that every citizen of the world should strive for! What I am questioning here are notions such as 'respect' and 'responsibility for' the environment regarded by conservationists as universal, and thus applicable cross-culturally. My two decades experience with the Batak of Palawan (the Philippines) tells me a different story.

The Batak are a vanishing group of horticulturalists and hunters-gatherers, and they have always been thinking 'globally', in the sense that they normally draw a causal connection between certain actions (over-hunting, over-harvesting, sexual improper behaviour, etc) and the impact that these may have on the world. So in this respect, attributing responsibility for the fate of the world to humans seems to be endorsed by both conservationists and Batak (as well as other indigenous people). However, what differs is the perception of 'globality', how the cosmos is imagined and, indeed, the way in which the relation between causes (human actions) and effects (ecological consequences) is understood.

Unlike conservationists, Batak do not project into the world a generalised fear that humanity's destructive power can bring life as we know it to an end, and that 'culture' can take over 'nature'. Customarily, the maintenance of good relationships with the other entities are all associated by Batak with what is perceived as a 'sustainable' use of the common environment shared with animals, plants and non-human agents.

Overall, Batak seem to be more concerned with how socialisation between human and non-human agents come into being, and about the repercussions (both positive and

negative) that the latter may have on the world. In short, Batak too, like conservationists, have a ‘global’ perception, but one where social relations, not nature or biodiversity are its fundamental constitutive elements. How to incorporate these views into laws and conservation policies is, however, another matter.

Just think about the legislation on ancestral land in the Philippines. (Republic Act 8371). No doubt it represents a fundamental step in favour of indigenous peoples. However, most of its definitions dealing with land and the environment imply utilitarian criteria of human action and thus do not represent epistemologically valid concepts for the indigenous societies to whom these notions are applied to. I ask: does the western notion of ‘land tenure’ have

any relevance at all when compared to the holistic approach of many indigenous people towards land and resources. Surely, the term tenure does not seem to have any equivalent word in Batak language. When indigenous communities are confronted with this alien terminology they are also forced to express their claims using a foreign vocabulary. As a result, they have to adjust their views in the attempt to make them intelligible to outsiders. Indeed, to ground



Batak resting after the planting of upland rice in the remote interior of Tanabag. April 2004

environmental laws on people’s own ways of perceiving and engaging with the environment is easier said than done.

Let me tell you a little story. Between May and July 2001, I assisted my Batak friends in the preparation of a Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF), which is part of their legal requirements as holders of a Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA). Preparation of this documents required close coordination between community members and myself in order to discuss controversial topics, such as the inclusion of swidden practices (which is forbidden by the law) in their CRMF. Batak were concerned that such inclusion might have led the Department of Environment and Natural resources to take legal actions against them, thus jeopardising the community’s future chances for obtaining the necessary permits to gather and sell non-timber forest products (NTFPs). A unanimous decision was eventually reached: Batak agreed that swidden cultivation had to be

listed amongst the activities of their CRMF, and that this decision had to be forwarded to the concerned government agencies.

To challenge DENR regulations was, in my opinion, a remarkable move. However I thought that, in order to strengthen community’s claims to swidden cultivation, it was necessary to support and validate them, using powerful pieces of legislation. Interestingly enough, Presidential Decree No. 705 prohibits shifting cultivation nationwide, while Republic Act 8371 ensures protection for indigenous rights to perform traditional religion. Significantly, swidden cultivation (*uma*) is not only a food-producing activity but also a fundamental part of Batak ritual practices and “religious beliefs.” As specified in Rule VI, Section 3 of the ‘Rules and Regulations Implementing Republic Act No. 8371,’ the

right to cultural integrity shall include: “recognition of cultural diversity”, “protection of religious, cultural sites and ceremonies” (no doubt, this also applies to Batak swidden fields and related rice ceremonies); Clearly, all such rights were being hampered through the implementation of CBFMA regulations. The more I studied the law, the more I became convinced that this could have been used to

support Batak claims to swidden farming. After a careful assessment of the existing legislation, I held discussions with Batak about the fundamental connection between the sustainability of traditional swiddening, local beliefs and ritual/religious practices, and on how the existing legislation might have been used to validate such a connection.

A Batak legend attributes the origin of rice to a human sacrifice and rice is generally regarded as *taw* (person/human). Particularly promising, I thought, was to use Batak beliefs and rice related practices as evidence to support people’s rights to ‘protect indigenous knowledge systems’ (and thus swidden cultivation). In other words, during our meeting with the government, we would have demonstrated that - according to Republic Act NO. 8371 - the State was obliged to protect, rather than prohibit, indigenous agricultural practices because they are also an integral part of Batak ‘spiritual beliefs’.

Finally, the meeting with the local DENR officials was arranged. Two Batak representatives, members of a local non-government organization (NGO) and myself visited the DENR Office in Puerto to discuss and defend the argument that swidden cultivation had to be allowed inside the CBFMA area, and be regarded as one of the activities of the Community Resources Management Framework. Contrary to what we agreed, during the meeting, Batak did not discuss with government officials the connection between rice cultivation and religious beliefs, neither did they mention the myth concerning the origin of rice, and why this crop is often referred to as *taw* (human).

It was only in the following days that I became more and more aware as to why Batak are unwilling to disclose certain aspects of their culture to outsiders. In short, I had failed to see that Batak are all too aware that state bureaucracy cannot be challenged through ‘direct’, and straightforward descriptions of people’s worldviews. In relation to this, Pekto, one of the Batak joining the meeting, told me:

“How can we explain to the government that rice is human? I am sure that they cannot understand this, they would laugh at us. Exposing these issues, would make things even more complicated. Because the government would ask us: do you have the proofs of what you say? Do you have a document to support what you say? The government is different from us, they always have a piece of paper for everything they say, but our culture is only ‘on the tongue’, we have no written papers, so we cannot challenge the government.”

Here, I can only footnote a couple of messages that this story has taught me. First, indigenous people, nowadays, are inescapably trapped in a State discourse on property rights and environmental conservation, which they have great difficulties coping with. Secondly, people like the Batak are aware of the difficulties of using traditional beliefs as a means to legally support their own land management practices. This is because indigenous knowledge and beliefs can hardly be translated into the language of bureaucracy, as well as into protected areas laws. This also brings us to the problem of how certain cultural values no longer shared by communities as a whole, may be used by indigenous advocates (like myself) as means to support customary rights (e.g. to rice cultivation), and to infer that local beliefs (e.g. the attribution of ‘personhood’ to rice) play an essential role in the maintenance of both genetic diversity of rice and sustainability of traditional swiddens. Then, paraphrasing Weiner (1999): if the knowledge that underwrites a belief system is no longer a basis for ritual action, can this still serve a political function for indigenous people like the Batak? Again, this question guides us back to one of the key points of Moira’s article, that “conservation is far more a social challenge than a biological one.”

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Charlotte Hess

Books

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Common Property Resource Digest

IASCP Eleventh Biennial Conference, June 19 - 23, 2006

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Please mention here if you have any special requirements (i.e. special dietary needs, physical ailments):

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Forms should be sent with payment to: Michelle Curtain, Executive Director, International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), PO Box 2355, Gary, IN 46409 USA
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A Name Change for IASCP?

During its May 2005 meeting, the executive council voted to propose a name change to the membership. The proposal is to change the name of the association **from** The International Association for the Study of Common Property **to** The International Association for the Study of the Commons.

In April, members will have an opportunity to vote to accept or reject this change.

Why eliminate the word “property”?

Over the past several years it has become increasingly evident that many prospective members of our association have opted not to join, in large part due to the association’s apparently exclusive focus on “common property”. The concept of the commons applies more broadly than the association’s name currently suggests. The word “property”, in the view of some current and potential members limits the range of ideas and developments the association strives to encompass. The name change would provide us with an opportunity to broaden the base of people who identify with our work.

IFM Announces a New Director



As of 1 February 2006, **Dr. Mahfuzuddin Ahmed**, will serve as the new Director of the Institute for Fisheries Management and Coastal Community Development. 2006. Dr. Ahmed is a leading fisheries economist with more than 25 years of experience in fisheries economics, policy, and market research. Living in South-East Asia for the last 22 years,

he has spent most of his professional career on research, development and capacity building in fisheries and coastal sectors in Asia and the Pacific, and has developed collaborative linkages and partnerships with individuals and institutions in both developed and developing world. A former associate adjunct professor of University of the Philippines, Dr. Ahmed is the current President of the International Institute for Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET).

The former Director of IFM, **Poul Degnbol**, has from 1 January 2006 taken over a position in Brussels as Scientific Adviser in DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to Poul for the enthusiasm and creativity he has put into developing and managing IFM over the last 7 years.

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THIRD PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING

September 3 – 6 2006

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

The International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP) in association with the Australian Property Institute (New South Wales Division) is seeking papers for the Third Pacific Regional Meeting to be held on September 3 – 6, 2006, in Auckland New Zealand at Albany Campus of Massey University.

Traditional and Indigenous Land uses and Economies

The Regional Meeting will focus on the transformation of traditional and indigenous sustainable uses and economies into untenable positions in the face of unsustainable “modern” uses and economies. In some parts of the IASCP Pacific region this untenable position has produced racial tensions and changes of national Government (Fiji), while in other parts the traditional and indigenous cultures associated with these land uses and economies have been transformed by European colonisation into a mere chimera of their former selves (New Caledonia, Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti).

The pivotal discourse to be canvassed is how the skill sets of researchers and practitioners in the area of common property resources can be marshaled to rectify the untenable position of indigenous and traditional societies. The pressure upon biodiversity in the south created by the demands of the north, has a parallel manifestation in the social, economic and physical dispossession of traditional and indigenous peoples throughout the world. In the IASCP Pacific Region the astounding diversity of marine and terrestrial biota is matched only by the diversity of the cultures of the traditional and Pacific peoples.

Both are under enormous threat, and if we were honest Suzuki’s sacred balance is clearly on the verge of profound transformation. However, any new balance in the Pacific region is looking remarkably profane, rather than sacred.

Abstracts should include a discussion of the objective of the proposed paper, the research design and methodology (where applicable) and some discussion of the nature and implications of the findings for CPR’s in the Pacific region. **Abstracts must be received by June 30, 2006** and must include the following information for ALL authors on the cover page:

Title of Paper,
two or three key words indicating topic,
corresponding author,
institutional affiliation,
complete address,
telephone,
FAX and
email address

Persons interested in organizing a special session/panel discussion, or volunteering to serve as a session chair or discussant is encouraged to indicate interest by **June 30, 2006**.

Submit abstracts or completed papers via email to api@nsw.api.org.au

or as a 3.5” diskette via mail as shown below, as a Microsoft Word file as one document; length not to exceed 30 pages, including all tables, figures, notes, appendices, and references; margins, 2.54 cm. (1”) on all dimensions; font 12pt. Please direct questions to:

John Sheehan

Pacific Regional Chair

International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP)

C/- NSW Division

Australian Property Institute

60 York Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Email: margaret@nsw.api.org.au

Be the designer of the
"International Journal of the Commons"
logo!

The preparations to launch the IASCP's new
"International Journal of the Commons" are moving
ahead. In order to make the journal look as attractive as
possible, we invite proposals from our members for a
special journal logo. Although a professional design is
welcomed, good ideas can also serve as a basis. A
graphical designer will then continue working on it.
Logos and ideas that will be used for the journal's
official lay-out will be
appropriately rewarded.

Proposals should be sent to Martina de Moor
Tine.deMoor@let.uu.nl,

The managing editors
Martina de Moor, Charlotte Hess, Erling Berge

2006 IASCP Election

The IASCP Nominating Committee is pleased to present the slate of
candidates for the 2006 IASCP Election.

President-Elect

Ruth Meinzen-Dick USA

Executive Council:

Frank Matose South Africa
Nirmal Sengupta India
John Sheehan Australia
Doug Wilson Denmark

Candidates for the Executive Council positions were nominated based
on the following criteria:

- Regional balance
Regional and global perspectives
Good networking skills
Time to commit to assisting IASCP
Assistance with funding issues

Additional information about these candidates is available on our
website at: www.iascp.org/2006bios.html

Please remember to check your mailboxes (electronic and postal)
in April for election materials.

IASCP Nominating Committee

Susan Hanna, Chair
Rucha Ghate
Isilda Nhantumbo
Calvin Nhira
Dianne Rocheleau

JULY 1, 2005 - JUNE 30, 2006 IASCP MEMBERSHIP CARD

Renew your membership now and you will not miss any of your membership benefits; including: subscriptions to The CPR Digest; discount registration at our nearly
annual meetings; conference abstracts, and the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the IASCP. Contact the IASCP office for additional information or visit
our web site.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION: Renewal ___ New ___ (Please check one)
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City State/Province: Postal Code/Zip: Country:

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INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP* CHECK MEMBERSHIP YEAR(s):
\$50,000 or more.....US \$60.00 ___ July 1, 2005- June 30, 2006
\$20,000 - 49,999.....US \$40.00 ___ July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007
\$19,000 and less.....US\$10.00 ___ July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008
Total dues payment @US \$60.00.....\$ ___
Total dues payment @ US \$ 40.00.....\$ ___
Total dues payment @ US \$ 10.00.....\$ ___

*Institutional membership fees are a suggested flat rate of US \$120.00.

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For either individuals or institutions, if your financial situation prevents you from making a full
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to:

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF COMMON PROPERTY

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