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Participatory Conservation in the Condor Bioreserve, Ecuador

Jonathan Padwe [a]
[a] Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, USA

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SECTION II: MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATED CONSERVATION

Participatory Conservation in the Condor Bioreserve, Ecuador: Representations, Decision Processes, and Underlying Assumptions

Jonathan Padwe

ABSTRACT. The Condor Bioreserve (CBR) project seeks to promote *community-based* and *participatory* forms of conservation at four protected areas in Ecuador. This chapter provides a review of the academic and practitioner literature on participatory conservation, and explores the kinds of participation which occur in the CBR. Three assertions are central to the paper. First, the ways communities are represented by project documents and project planners condition the outcomes of participatory projects. Second, the intense focus of participatory approaches on the community level diverts attention from political and economic reali-

Jonathan Padwe is a PhD candidate at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

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ties which constrain the ability of community members to actively conserve natural resources. And third, the chronological point at which communities and local people become involved in decision processes affects the kinds of participation in conservation projects; because problem definition is a key moment in which various participants establish basic assumptions about the nature of problems, the exclusion of local communities from the initial phases of program planning conditions the ways in which communities are likely to participate in conservation efforts. The paper addresses these issues by looking at the cases of management planning activities, the water fund (FONAG), extension efforts in the Sinangoé community, and the Local Participation in the Management of Protected Areas (PALOMAP) external review of participation in the CBR initiative. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS. Participatory conservation, community-based conservation, community-based natural resources management, representation, threats reduction assessment

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INTRODUCTION

The Condor Bioreserve project is an effort to conserve biodiversity, protect watersheds, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and improve the livelihoods of local people in a large area encompassing four protected areas in northern Ecuador. Project planners and implementers, including government agencies responsible for the management of the areas and national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) assist in Reserve management. They have stressed the importance of participation by local people in the planning and management of activities in the Condor Bioreserve (CBR), an approach commonly referred to in project descriptions as *community-based* or *participatory*.

In this paper, I discuss the community-based approach endorsed by conservation organizations in developing countries worldwide, using the Condor Bioreserve project as a case-study. In my analysis, I pay special attention to the ways that representations of communities condition the kinds of participation which are actually achieved in these projects. I also seek to demonstrate that, whereas a vast literature on participation has sought to demonstrate that community-based approaches have many advantages for NGOs and other organizations seeking to encourage conservation, communities' abilities to act

are constrained by larger political and economic forces located outside the narrowly confined official conceptualization of the community. Finally, I pay close attention to the chronological point at which communities begin to act as participants within the CBR decision making processes. The problem-definition stage of the decision process is a critical moment during which agendas and responsibilities are established; therefore, the exclusion of communities from active involvement in the early stages of problem definition leads to a certain variety of participation, one which may prevent the feelings of project ownership which community-based conservation hopes to promote.

Because I hope this paper will be of use to conservation practitioners with the CBR project and elsewhere, I begin with a review of the historical emergence of participation as an important trend in sustainable development and conservation worldwide. After documenting this trend, I discuss various practitioner-oriented and academic literatures which address community-based approaches. In the next section, I provide an overview of some of the CBR program activities, and discuss ways that ideas about participation influence how problem-solving is undertaken in the project. I then look in detail at one case of participatory conservation involving the indigenous community of Sinangoé and its neighbors. In the last section, I review the Local Participation in the Management of Protected Areas (PALOMAP) study, an external review of participation at the Cayambe-Coca Reserve, and identify how the underlying assumptions of the *threats-reduction analysis* approach endorsed by PALOMAP condition the kinds of recommendations which the study's authors make for improving participation at CBR. In analyzing the PALOMAP study, I provide alternative views on how participation and community-based conservation can be envisioned by managers. These views, coupled with observations from the other cases addressed in this paper, inform a series of conclusions about the nature of participation in sustainable development and conservation projects such as the CBR.

As an outside observer and one-time visitor of the Cayambe-Coca Reserve, I undertake this study in the hope that it will provide participants in the Reserve project (and those participating in similar endeavors elsewhere) with insights that will aid in the management of natural resources. For this reason, I have included a basic review of the literature on participation and conservation which can serve as an aid for project participants. Ideally, such information can be made available to social organizations such as rural labor unions and indigenous peoples' organizations. My own standpoint is that of a North American who has spent almost ten years working in conservation organizations and promoting participatory conservation in Latin America. That experience, and the questions it raised about the equity of relationships between institutions and communities, motivates my effort to understand the nature of participation in the CBR.

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CONTEXT: PARTICIPATION AND INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

Over the past twenty years, conservation efforts internationally have increasingly embraced *community-based conservation*, *community-based natural resources management*, and other participatory approaches to conservation (Western and Wright 1994, Little 1994). The emerging emphasis on participation was in part a reflection of the increasing internationalization of conservation efforts, and the perceived failure of Western models of conservation–national parks absent of human populations, for instance–to achieve conservation goals in developing country settings. As Brandon and Wells (1992) note, more parks and reserves were established between 1970 and 1992 than in all previous periods, more than half of them in the tropics. According to Ravenel and Redford (in review), whereas in 1990 there were 6,940 protected areas in the world, with a combined surface area of 6,514,676 km^2, by 1993 (only three years later) the world was home to 9,832 protected areas, covering a total of 9,263,496 km^2. Echoing an opinion commonly held among Northern conservationists, Brandon and Wells (1992:565) assert that many of the new parks were established in countries where managing agencies lacked "the inclination or capability to identify or address people-park conflicts."

Often, rural populations lived in or near the new protected areas, and relied on the natural resources within them for hunting, fuelwood, building materials, and other needs. At the same time, new roads into resource-rich areas where the parks were located, coupled with government-backed colonization projects, resulted in new waves of immigration into areas which had previously been more scarcely populated (the story has been similar in many parts of the developing world. For a study of Brazil, for instance, see Hecht and Cockburn 1990).[1] The presence of human populations, coupled with lack of funds and infrastructure for the new protected areas, was a principal concern for the non-governmental and governmental agencies charged with managing conservation activities at the protected areas. These agencies sought to address these problems by recognizing that conservation of natural resources could not occur without the buy-in of local people. Thus academics and practitioners increasingly promoted approaches to conservation which would seek to involve local people as participants in resources management. Proponents of participatory conservation urged that top-down approaches be abandoned in favor of bottom-up strategies, and envisioned the replacement of coercive conservation with more inclusive, community-based initiatives. The internationalization of participatory discourse was significantly propelled by the endorsements of the highly influential Bruntland Commission Report of 1987 and by the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, which

urged a coupling of environmental protection and human development goals under the rubric of sustainable development (Bruntland Commission 1987, Redclift 1992).

Thus, the emphasis on participation in conservation was connected with similar trends in rural development (Cernea 1991). It should be recognized, too, that the trend towards the use of participation and local management to subsidize fiscally-strapped state agencies has its roots in the colonial experience of many of the developing nations, even though the trend may appear to be a new one. Mosse (1997), for instance, has shown how the British colonial administration in India, faced with fiscal shortages, began to encourage traditional participatory approaches to irrigation management in Tamil Nadu, India. While these traditions were, to some extent, newly invented ones, the discourse of traditional management has often been resurrected in India, most recently in the late 20th century to justify a rollback of state water management activities during a period of fiscal shortages.

The design of protected areas and conservation programs has changed to reflect the renewed emphasis on participation. An important step in this process was the development of the Biosphere Reserve design, developed in the 1970s by the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program. The design called for the zoning of protected areas and their surroundings into three separate areas: a core zone, which protects the most environmentally sensitive parts of the protected area and is protected from human activities besides research and monitoring; the buffer zone, which is conceived of as being compatible with limited human settlements and limited human activities; and a transition zone, in which local management agencies and non-governmental organizations work with local communities to encourage sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of local people (UNESCO 2001). The biosphere reserve is one of a series of recent approaches which combine rural development extension and conservation efforts. These projects are generally referred to as *integrated conservation and development projects*, or ICDPs, and are based on the assumption that "in order for resources to be managed adequately, local people must ultimately become the managers of the resource base" (Brandon and Wells 1992:559).[2] The category ICDP is not separate from Biosphere Reserves–indeed both terms are used to describe projects such as the Condor Biosphere Reserve. As the number, scale, and importance of biosphere reserves and ICDPs have increased over the past several decades, academics and practitioners have sought to analyze and critique these new structures, an effort which has been reflected in the numerous articles on the subject published in conservation biology and social science journals.

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ANALYZING PARTICIPATION

The growing scientific and practice-based literature on participatory conservation and natural resources management is too vast to adequately summarize here. However, certain trends in this analytical work are particularly important for understanding the CBR project. A principal branch of this literature concerns the question of how to involve local people. Drawing on similar work in the arena of international development, Brandon and Wells (1992, Wells and Brandon 1992), discussed the problems inherent in linking biodiversity conservation with social and economic development, and their implications for the design of ICDPs. Michael Cernea's (1991) volume, *Putting People First*, proposed a number of methodological approaches for community-based management. Similarly, the work of Jules Pretty (e.g., Pretty 1995) urged the importance of participation and promoted the benefits to be had by operationalizing sustainability through community-based approaches. A number of practice-oriented volumes sought to collect experiences and critical approaches to participatory conservation in technical works designed for project planners (Western and Wright 1994, Borrini-Feyerabend 1997, Margoluis and Salafsky 1998). Margoluis and Salafsky's (1998) *Measures of Success* is a particularly useful book for project managers, which demonstrates the usefulness of adaptive management strategies for conservation planning, and introduces a series of well-reasoned approaches to participatory research and monitoring to address natural resources conservation problems. International organizations also developed technical manuals describing techniques of community-based management (FAO 1990, World Bank 1995). Peter Little's (1994) review of the issues that participation raises for natural resource professionals is a concise and useful summary, and raises many of the points which will be explored in the following case study of the Condor Bioreserve. Similarly, Wilshusen's review emphasizes five factors which shape local participation: differences in goals and meanings; knowledge as power; histories of domination; class, ethnicity and status differences; and external forces (Wilshusen 2000). I will take up many of these issues in this case study.

Even as this practice-based literature emerged to discuss how to create and implement participatory approaches, criticisms of these approaches arose both from preservationists who felt that the pendulum had swung too far towards an emphasis on development and away from true conservation, and from critics who questioned the ways that rhetoric of participation was being used to justify intrusions into local peoples' lives. In the first camp, Kent Redford has, in a balanced way, questioned the advisability of integrating conservation and development as the basic model for biodiversity conservation to the exclusion of stricter protection regimes (Redford and Stearman 1993, Redford and Richter 1999). While Redford has explored the opportunities which traditional

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management practices offer for conservation (Redford and Mansour 1996, Redford and Padoch 1992), John Terborgh (1999) is far less optimistic. He sharply criticizes ICDPs as ineffective, and blames environmental degradation largely on local people who use protected areas' resources and on governments that encourage such activities. Clive Spinage (1998), at the far end of the *people-out-of-parks* spectrum, endorses coercive conservation strategies. He states that the new emphasis on participation represents a neo-populist approach which "emerged . . . according to the [neo-populist] authors, due to the 'failure' of the 'classic' approach. Whether it has failed is a moot point, for it is due to that approach that today we have those [protected] areas, which are so covetously desired" (Spinage 1998: 276).

From the other side, a number of professionals and academics have objected to the ways in which participatory conservation has been designed and implemented. Pimbert and Pretty (1995, Pretty 1995) have proposed a continuum of participatory approaches, from *self-mobilization* to *passive participation*, arguing that as participation descends towards passivity, fewer gains are realized for conservation. An edited volume by Ghimire and Pimbert (1997) makes the point that, even as participation was being endorsed by major conservation organizations and their partners, many of the same top-down mechanisms criticized by these institutions actually permeated the design and implementation of ICDPs. Many of the cases in their volume point to instances in which local people are included in participatory schemes only after reserves have been established and management structures (and power relations institutionalized by them) have been put into place. Marcus Colchester (1998), approaching the issue as an activist and practitioner, has similarly continued the old attack against the classic approach to conservation. Responding in part to Spinage, he posits the inability of this approach to see conservation as both a cultural and a political process, and voices his concern that classic conservation and its modern proponents support the prerogatives of state and central bureaucracies to interfere in the lives of less powerful people and social groups.

Beyond these and similar criticisms that participation has not gone far enough, some scholars have questioned the ways in which terms like *participation*, *sustainable development*, *community*, and *indigenous* are used within conservation discourses. Ribot (1996:40, Ribot 1995) suggests that individuals assumed to represent communities (village chiefs in the African case he investigates) often are not truly representative of the community, and asks "can there even be community participation without some form of locally accountable representation?" Echoing a concern which is of prime importance for this school of criticism, Ribot asks who really participates, and who benefits from the new trend toward participatory development.

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In a paper laying out a research agenda for the study of this topic, Brosius et al. (1998:159) state that "to the extent that these terms [i.e., participatory, community based, etc.] carry legitimacy in international forums, they can be used coercively to create local resource management plans that may or may not empower local people." Brosius et al. ask who creates representations of participation, and to what end? This critique of the representational strategies surrounding community-based and participatory conservation connects to a larger literature concerning representations of rural people and the uses of those representations to enable certain kinds of policy interventions. Such an argument, for instance, is one of the main points of James Ferguson's (1994) book, *The Anti-Politics Machine*. Ferguson describes ways that World Bank project documents in Lesotho construct an elaborate, and inaccurate, representation of Lesotho's rural people as a certain kind of poor agriculturalist, in order to justify a certain set of policy interventions.

Especially important to questions about community-based conservation programs is an emerging literature on the idea of community itself, and the ways that institutions and individuals construct ideas of the community (Agrawal 1997, 2002, Ribot 1996, Li 1996). In part, this literature has tried to show how project documents and institutions hold assumptions that communities are static, self contained social units. Agrawal (1997:3) analyzes "stereotypical visions of community as an organic whole, as small and territorially fixed, as being eroded by a host of external forces, as standing opposed to markets and states." Because of these assumed characteristics, NGOs and government agencies have tended to view communities as better targets for development aid than were large, centralized bureaucracies. In order for conservationists to understand communities, Agrawal (1997:viii) asserts, they must begin from an understanding that "the local community is intimately connected with external actors, including those within the market and the state." More positively, Tania Li (1996) notes that potentially disadvantaged groups can deploy particular representations of the community ideal to strategically strengthen their property claims in their struggles with state and private actors over rights to natural resources.

Similar to debates over the ways community is defined and represented are debates over the meanings of indigenous identity. Tania Li, Anna Tsing and others have questioned the ways in which identities of indigenous and other local people are contested within struggles over access to natural resources. This political-ecological critique has focused on the role played by governments and NGOs in constructing ideas about who is indigenous, and has looked at how images of indigenous identity are deployed in the promotion of certain kinds of policy interventions at the expense of others, and at the ways in which perceived identities are contested, reshaped, and articulated by native

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people themselves (Li 1997, 1999, 2000, Tsing 1993, 1999, Conklin and Graham 1995, Brysk 1994).

A quite separate literature regarding participation has looked at the questions of who participates and why through the lens of the policy sciences, a mode of investigation which traces its origins to the pragmatism of John Dewey and roots itself firmly in the work of Harold Lasswell (Lasswell 1971). Participation is a central issue for policy science approaches, which seek to identify the standpoints of various participants in order to understand their actions within a policy context. Critical to this line of inquiry is the question of who participates in which stage of the decision process. As Brewer (1983:58, see also Brewer and de Leon 1983, Primm and Clark 1996, and Clark 1999) states, "it is helpful to conceive of problems as having a 'life,' during which time they emerge, are defined and estimated to their potentialities, are confronted with strategic statements (policies) and tactical measures (programs) that are meant to reduce or resolve their unwanted consequences, and in time stabilize or worsen." The decision process, as conceived by Lasswell, and cogently analyzed by Brewer and de Leon (1983), consists of six separate phases, which follow in roughly chronological order, but also overlap and, at times, occur concurrently. These are:

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1. *initiation*, in which the problem is identified, participants become involved, and agendas are set;
2. *estimation*, in which the extent and implications of the problem are analyzed;
3. *selection*, in which various policies are formulated and selected;
4. *implementation*, in which selected policies are put in place;
5. *evaluation*, in which policies and programs are examined for their effectiveness; and
6. *termination*, in which policies and programs are ended or reconfigured.[3]

Because problem definitions are decided upon during the initiation stage, at which point the relative roles of participants begin to be defined, this initial phase is particularly important in determining the kind of participation which will occur as problems are resolved. Citing Lasswell and others, David Dery, in his book *Problem Definition in Policy Analysis* (1984:23), notes that "problem definition has . . . been considered the most crucial stage in policy analysis." He goes on to find useful the concept of problem definition as "stage setting which creates or defines certain activities as solutions" (Dery 1984:24). As I will attempt to demonstrate, the point at which local people become participants and join the decision process is particularly important for the analysis of questions of participatory and community-based conservation in the CBR.

This brief review has sought to document the trend in international conservation towards participatory and community-based approaches, and to briefly

review some of the academic literature pertinent to that trend. In addition to a literature aimed principally at practitioners, the shift has been accompanied by academic writing supporting or attacking greater involvement of communities in conservation projects, and a considerable literature on the ways that terms like *participatory*, *indigenous*, and *community* are constructed and used within the conservation and development literature and project documentation. In this case study, I analyze the Condor Biosphere Reserve project in light of the issues raised by these approaches, giving special attention to questions of representation.

PARTICIPATION AT THE CONDOR BIORESERVE: AN OVERVIEW

The Condor Bioreserve project proposes to conserve biodiversity, protect watersheds, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and improve livelihoods of local people in a large area presently encompassing four protected areas: the Cayambe-Coca Ecological Reserve, the Antisana Ecological Reserve, and Cotopaxi and Sumaco-Napo Galeras National Parks. This overview briefly describes some of the activities conducted by NGOs and state agencies involved with the CBR, including management planning activities, development of FONAG, and community extension activities. For each activity, I analyze the ways that ideas about participation are integrated into project design and implementation.

Management Planning

NGO and state agency administrators have conducted a number of planning activities over the past several years for the CBR. In the Cayambe-Coca Reserve (RECAY), these activities have included the creation of a rapid ecological assessment that analyzed both bio-physical and social aspects of conservation in the area (FUNAN 1997). This activity was then followed by the elaboration of a management plan which establishes specific activities to address the various conservation priorities raised by the assessment (FUNAN 1998). Participation is a concept central to these two endeavors. According to the rapid assessment, "participation of civil society . . . from the diagnostic through to the execution of policies" is necessary in order to avoid "the failure of large management plans" that has been prevalent in Latin American conservation (FUNAN 1997:111). Participation can lead to a situation in which "the community can become the principle executor and so become the beneficiary of the Management Plan" (FUNAN 1997:111).

While the rapid assessment and management plan documents endorse ideas of participation, the documents themselves do not show ample signs that local

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communities had a hand in their creation, beyond contributing information about land use, household economics and the like to agents of the implementing agencies. The authors of the documents are urban experts drawn from NGOs and government agencies. Significantly, priorities for social research and the questions about which data would be gathered were determined in advance by The Nature Conservancy's internal methodology (Sobrevilla and Bath 1992, see FUNAN 1997 for an explanation of the process). Areas with the highest degree of conflict were chosen as foci for social research, and field data collection used questionnaires designed by NGO staff. Thus, while participation is clearly an important goal of CBR planners, it is a certain kind of participation which is endorsed in these activities.[4]

In the case of the REA and management planning activities, the point at which local communities join the decision process is a key factor in determining the kind of participation which is produced. Because the way a problem is defined significantly shapes the kinds of policy solutions which will be selected to solve it, the initiation stage of the decision process is a critical moment. During this stage, problem definitions are generated and participants are identified and position themselves. The lack of significant community involvement in the planning of the REA, and in the determination of what issues should be included in management programs can be seen as a kind of exclusion of communities from participation in the initiation stage of the decision process. As in the other examples provided in this case study (see below), often it is the extent to which communities participate in agenda setting during the initiation phase that determines the extent to which they participate with NGO staff, government agencies, and other non-local actors.

It is not my intention here to argue that the lack of full community participation in initiation activities is necessarily detrimental to the projects. My point here is rather that project planners should be aware that different kinds of involvement by local communities result in different forms of participation. If the managers of the CBR believe, however, that better natural resources management will occur when communities feel they have ownership of the projects, involving them earlier in decision-making may provide one avenue to achieve this goal.

FONAG

The *Fondo del Agua* (Water Fund) is a fund created by The Nature Conservancy which harnesses a percentage of the water fees paid by users in Quito and directs these financial resources toward the conservation of the Cayambe-Coca Reserve. The idea behind the project is that users of environmental services from the Reserve should pay for those services. TNC has entered into an agreement with the municipal water company EMAAP-Q, and an organizing

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body has been drawn up which will administer the funds that EMAAP-Q makes available. The Quito Electric Utility, which draws 20 percent of the city's hydro-electricity from sources in RECAY, has also agreed to contribute annually. In the future, FONAG hopes that other beneficiaries of environmental services will also contribute to the fund, which will support projects submitted for funding by both NGOs and communities. The Fund is also exploring the possibility of covering the transaction and monitoring costs of conservation easements for private landowners whose lands provide a biodiversity and water conservation service.

Two issues dominate questions about participation within the FONAG project. The first is a classic question of urban versus rural use of water resources. Because urban water uses for sanitation, potable water, and the like are valued more highly than rural water uses, such as agricultural use or biodiversity conservation, governments support public-works projects which take water from rural areas to urban areas. Rural users complain that their water is being unfairly taken from them. Such is the case among rural users at the Cayambe-Coca Reserve, where the Oyacachi community has sought reimbursement for the imposition of a small dyke on their property, from which water is being removed to supply users in Quito. These rural users feel that they have not participated in the decision-making processes which resulted in the taking of their water and its allocation to other users. In such situations, projects like FONAG can help to reimburse upstream users for acting in such a way that water is conserved. Here again, the chronological point of entry of rural communities into problem solving conditions the kinds of participation that emerge.

Questions about participation in the FONAG project also surround the decision-making processes for allocating FONAG funds. After collecting user fees from Quito water users, FONAG redistributes these funds to projects which will aid in conservation and help to maintain water quality and quantity. Seats on the board of directors of FONAG are limited to those institutions which contribute money to the fund, and board meetings are attended only by representatives of The Nature Conservancy, EMAAP-Q, the technical secretariat of FONAG, and a permanent observer from Fundación Antisana. Thus, although individual communities or organizations may participate in debates on how the FONAG moneys will be spent, they do not participate in the decision-making processes which have the final say on disbursements. Local communities participate only to the extent that projects which they recommend to the Fund are approved and funded.[5] When questioned about the role of local communities in making decisions about the uses of the water fund, one of FONAG's designers (confidentially) responded that, because rural people see EMAAP-Q dams as 'takings' of their water and land, there is a lot of resentment towards EMAAP-Q by the communities, and "when you get them in a room together, you get a fight." It is in order to avoid politicized battles, which

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could derail the efficient functioning of the water fund, that community organizations have been excluded from the FONAG decision-making structure. In the words of this FONAG proponent, an organizational structure which did not include community representatives on the board was necessary in order to "neutralize" opposition to FONAG operations in a highly politicized environment.

Questions about *depoliticization* resonate with arguments (notably those in Ferguson 1994) about the ways in which development projects extend the reach of governments and other forms of governmental control into the lives of rural people, while at the same time de-politicizing debates over the kinds of change which should occur in rural areas. Disagreeing with Ferguson, Tania Li (1999:297) notes, "rather than depoliticizing the countryside, 'development' programs may become a politically charged arena in which relations of rule are reworked and reassessed." In the case of FONAG, private and government concerns are clearly attempting to depoliticize the funds distribution system. These attempts would seem to be at odds with a stated emphasis on participatory approaches. Participation, at a certain level, is about discussion, politics, and compromise–elements which FONAG managers seem eager to avoid when they endorse neutralizing dissent.

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Other Activities

The institutions responsible for CBR management interact with local communities in a variety of other contexts, and participation varies from instance to instance. RECAY managers have encouraged local communities, especially the highland settlements along the Reserve border, to sign community agreements prohibiting certain activities which would threaten biodiversity and other RECAY values.[6] The agreements are completely internal to the communities, and impose sanctions for village members who pasture cattle or allow pigs on Reserve lands. Because the agreements are enforced by the villagers, and are not explicitly tied to the kind of development assistance or other inputs available to the community from NGOs or state agencies, these agreements would seem to provide examples of *interactive participation*, according to Pimbert and Pretty (1995), and would seem to involve local people in decision making about conservation priorities in ways that other projects in RECAY have not fully accomplished.

Other community agreements have been tied to NGO and management planners' priorities for how communities should behave–in these cases, NGOs and others have exerted pressure on the communities to participate in exchange for assistance with land titling and other development (a form of participation which would correspond to "participation for material incentives" in Pimbert and Pretty's scheme). For example, Oyacachi and Sinangoé are in-

digenous communities with considerable inholdings within the park boundaries. Until recently, these communal lands were not recognized by the state, and the communities did not hold legal title to the lands they used. Most observers agree with community members that these lands have been used by the communities for a long time (what might be considered "traditionally"). RECAY managers agreed to facilitate the titling of these lands, but only if the communities would agree to engage in participatory planning processes which would generate management plans for their lands. The management plans include maps which zone specific productive activities, and include some proposed changes to economic activities by community members. These practices are developed to promote natural resources management at Oyacachi and Sinangoé which will be compatible with RECAY conservation priorities. For instance, the Oyacachi management plan delimits an area of forest which should remain protected for spectacled bear conservation, promotes watershed protection measures, and indicates that páramo areas grazed by Oyacachi livestock should not be burned annually.[6] In exchange for producing these plans, the communities were granted legal communal land titles, insuring their continued rights to use traditional lands.

Outside protected area boundaries, NGO activities in the RECAY buffer zone also involve local communities. Largely, these are micro-credit and extension efforts providing assistance to individual farmers and to cooperatives. The Fundación Rumicocha has been particularly active in promoting micro-credit programs. Typical projects include the creation of native-species tree nurseries and afforestation schemes, efforts to improve the productivity of cattle and sheep pastures, organic gardens, and guinea-pig and snail production projects to provide alternative protein sources for participants. In most cases, these efforts are intended to provide economic alternatives which allow local residents to improve their livelihoods without relying on the conserved resources of the Reserve. Pasture improvement schemes are intended to reduce the extent of grazing and thus remove the incentive for villagers to graze inside protected-area boundaries. Alternative protein sources are intended to reduce dependency on pastoral animals. Garden projects are intended to diversify production. Micro-credit schemes are allocated based on conservation-friendly criteria.

In other cases, the tie-in to conservation activities is less explicit. Micro-credit lending in one community was used as an incentive for the creation of a carpentry industry, with the idea that selling value-added wood products is preferable to the sale of uncut timber from the region. Such projects, however, might increase the local demand for lumber and could create incentive for additional timber removal from the Reserve. Similarly, a credit granted to create a local cheese and milk processing plant allowed a locally-owned business (the plant) to compete with the only other plant in the area, owned by

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Nestlé. As a result of the competition, the price paid to local farmers for milk rose significantly, allowing incomes in the area to increase. The project would seem to encourage dairy production, thereby also increasing grazing pressure locally. Such projects demonstrate the obvious tension which inheres in participatory conservation and development: the improvement of rural livelihoods in resource dependent communities may not be fully compatible with strict protection of biodiversity. If local participatory conservation means that conservation priorities will reflect local desires, it is probable that resulting projects will tend to favor measures which meet local needs (economic well-being), rather than more distant needs (biodiversity protection).

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THE CASE OF SINANGOÉ: PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

As the preceding survey has sought to show, different circumstances can condition different kinds of participation in conservation programs. In part, the ways that communities can participate within conservation projects depend on how they are represented or characterized by project managers. Representations of communities–as indigenous people who possess cultures of conservation, or as depredatory colonists with little traditional ecological knowledge–condition the ways that policy interventions are directed at the groups in question. While such representations are often linked to the real practices of the groups in question (i.e., colonists in many cases are more intensive users of natural resources), it is also true that these representations influence whether communities will be considered partners or threats, and thus influence the kinds of development which are available to such groups. Conflicts over identity and the representation of identity are thus contests for power within natural resources conservation and development problem solving (Brosius et al. 1998, Li 1996, 2000).

The interactions of CBR managers with members of the village of Sinangoé, inside the eastern border of the RECAY, provide a case study of how representations condition participation. The Sinangoé case is also significant because it is one of the principal research sites of the PALOMAP study described below. According to program documents (FUNAN 1997:124), Sinangoé is a community of 18 families, with 99 individuals. The residents of Sinangoé are, for the most part, Cofán indigenous people. Cofanes in Ecuador are organized as part of CONFENIAE, the Indigenous Peoples Confederation of Ecuador, and have been active in indigenous peoples' identity-based political mobilizations, including a lawsuit against the multinational Texaco oil company (significant factors of Cofán organization which NGO documents have tended to overlook, perhaps because of conflicts between these political involvements and the idealized visions of indigenous peoples' lives which the NGOs tend to

promote). Although project documents do not indicate how long the Sinangoé settlement has existed, its existence pre-dates the creation of the Reserve, and the community claims traditional occupation of an inholding within the Reserve. Fundación Antisana and INEFAN have negotiated the legalization of land rights in exchange for Sinangoé's participation in the creation of a management plan of the area to be titled.

The FUNAN Rapid Ecological Assessment (1997) and Management Plan (1998) provide a detailed description of the community of Sinangoé and the characteristics of the community which are important for conservation planning. The documents represent the Sinangoé Cofanes as "possessing a great cultural richness" which is "continually under attack by western-mixed-blood influence, due to the contact [Sinangoé] has with the non-Cofán colonists who are today part of the community, as well as with the surrounding villages which are completely mixed-blood" (1997:128-9). According to the management plan (1998:97):

> It is evident that the colonists and Cofanes maintain divergent opinions regarding the life of the community. The first wish to increase their pastures, bring in cattle, cultivate various crops (plant rice), etc., while the Cofanes do not seriously consider [i.e., embrace] new forms of life, [and] wish to continue hunting, fishing and cultivating as necessity dictates.
>
> Unfortunately, this cosmo-vision is slowly changing, such that the six non-Cofán community members are universalizing in daily life the idea of 'progress' according to the Western understanding, utilizing for this purpose the legitimate desire to live in better conditions than those currently extant.

Concurring with this description, the rapid assessment (1997) complains that the non-Cofán residents of Sinangoé, aware of the importance of the village to interested institutions, have adopted the attitude that sooner or later those institutions will have to do business with them. The assessment describes these non-Cofanes as *chantajistas* (blackmailing), and sums up their position as: "you'll help us with our proposed projects, or we'll continue our [depredatory] activities" (1997:129).

These documents provide readers with a representation which serves to establish truths about the Cofanes and their non-Cofán neighbors. Collected and portrayed as data, these truths serve to frame any ensuing debate, and are used by NGOs and others to justify policy interventions. As the above passages demonstrate, the management plan and the rapid assessment represent the Cofán indigenous people of Sinangoé as the more ecologically-friendly of the

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area's inhabitants. The documents describe an ongoing struggle between culturally diverse indigenous people who are not offensive to conservation activities, and westernizing non-indigenous late-comers who are contaminating Cofán culture and promoting non-environmentalist uses of nature. This *ecologically noble savage* narrative is one which is extremely prevalent in developing world conservation settings, and has been explored extensively in academic literature (Redford 1990, Redford and Padoch 1992, Redford and Stearman 1993, Alcorn 1993, Conklin and Graham 1995, Alvard 1994, Sivaramakrishnan 2000). The point of the present argument is not to contest the representation made in the project documents, which may indeed capture some of the nature of the conflict in which Cofán people and their neighbors are engaged. Rather, it is to demonstrate that such representations play an important role in conditioning the ways that planners program the management activities which will affect Sinangoé.

The representations in the document seem to manifest themselves in at least two specific examples in the CBR case. The first concerns the previously mentioned land-titling initiative for Sinangoé. TNC and PALOMAP researchers have recommended that Sinangoé be titled 15,000 hectares within the Reserve, based on "the criterion that the Cofanes, who have managed their tropical forest ancestrally, using traditional agricultural practices . . . are the only ones who can guarantee the conservation and protection" of these lands (FUNAN 1997:125). Here, the construction of the Cofanes as ecological stewards justifies a specific policy intervention, in this case a land-titling initiative.

In contrast, the 200 Quichua indigenous people who have migrated to the village of Chuscuyaco from the Tena region are represented differently in project documents, and are treated differently than the Cofanes by policymakers. The Chuscuyaco Quichua established their settlement after the formation of the Reserve, and are thus treated more as colonists than as environmentally friendly indigenous people. According to the FUNAN documents (1997:126, 1998), these settlers are less ecological than Sinangoé residents, contaminating rivers with *barbasco* poison and dynamite, "arbitrarily" expanding their boundaries into Cofán land and traveling "armed and disguised" in the Reserve. Chuscuyaco has been granted 1,000 ha of land by INEFAN. According to the rapid assessment, Chuscuyacu's Quichua residents "are jealous of the Cofanes because of the difference in territory which they control; [the Quichua] are not in agreement, and therefore attempt any action in order to amplify the number of hectares assigned to them" (FUNAN 1997:126).

Clearly, Sinangoé's traditional tenure in the area is understood by FUNAN staff and government agencies as a more valid justification for property rights than is Chuscuyacu's recently claimed territory. Such a position corresponds with Western notions of property–few of us would allow an unknown visitor to set up camp in our back-yard and claim it as his or her property. Rather, we

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would assume that our prior property right was more valid, and seek to have the interloper removed by authorities. At the same time, indigenous land tenure patterns in Ecuador have historically resulted from migrations and conflicts similar to those which have produced the current conflict between Sinangoé and Chuscuyacu. The Cofán presence in Sinangoé is itself the result of just such a migration. Like the Quichuas of Chuscuyacu, members of the Sinangoé community migrated to that area at some point in the past, an event recorded in oral tradition, according to the Management Plan (FUNAN 1998). As Wilshusen (2000) points out, histories of domination–as well as class, ethnicity and status differences–inform the kinds of participation available in conservation initiatives. These histories are ongoing, and include power differentials among indigenous groups as well as between indigenous groups and non-indigenous planners.

Embedded in the difference in representation of the Cofanes and Quichuas are ideas about which group is more of a traditional indigenous group, and more ecologically friendly; these ideas affect the ways that the rapid assessment and management plan treat each party. The judgments of INEFAN regarding how much property to award Sinangoé seem to reflect an understanding of this issue. While TNC and the authors of the PALOMAP study have recommended that the Cofanes should receive more than 15,000 ha, INEFAN has proposed that Sinangoé receive only 12,000 ha, finding that it is unfair to distribute more than this to the 99 members of the Sinangoé community when the 200 members of Chuscuyacu have received a total of only 1,000 ha (FUNAN 1997).

A failed tourism project demonstrates a second example in which representations of Cofán culture influence the kinds of development available to the Sinangoé community. The SUBIR 1 project helped the community of Sinangoé to build tourist facilities, including huts with beds and furnishings, an electricity generator, and a canoe with outboard motor. The project "intended to show an indigenous community with all of its cultural traditions, dress, language, and customs" (FUNAN 1997:129). The present management plan, now part of the Condor Bioreserve project, looks back with regret on the SUBIR attempts to provide alternative income through tourism. Finding that it would have benefited "the most agile" community members, while only the "weakest" members of the community would have been employed in wage labor, the documents regret that the project caused negative feelings towards outsiders and NGO staff among community members, who "now feel tricked by all those who have come there with the proposition of 'helping' them" (FUNAN 1997:129). Tourism, according to the REA, is now the desire mostly of the non-Cofán community members, who hope that it will continue in a second phase. The Cofán community members fear that with tourism will come

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"strangers, to invade their day-to-day living" in such a way that they can no longer live tranquilly (FUNAN 1997:129).

The story of eco-tourism presented by the REA demonstrates that the NGOs involved at RECAY are learning from past experience with participatory conservation, and may thus be seen as a positive step in the evolution of management structures for the Reserve. At the same time, the representations of the Cofanes at Sinangoé as repositories of indigenous knowledge, ecological wisdom and cultural diversity, upon which the idea of the tourism project was based, seem to continue in the present. In part, the story the documents tell blames the failure of participatory efforts on the non-Cofán elements of Sinangoé, who sought to capture the benefits of the project from its intended beneficiaries, the indigenous people of the village. According to this story, if tourism is to be abandoned, it is in large part because tourism threatens to introduce modernizing outside ideas to a traditional people who would prefer to live traditionally.

In summary, in the awarding of land rights, and in the promotion of eco-tourism, NGO activities seek to promote Sinangoé as an indigenous village, and seek to protect the diversity of that tradition from modernizing forces which would introduce more intensive, less ecologically sound, but perhaps more financially rewarding practices to the community. Management plans encourage participation by the community in projects which resonate with this effort, and seek to discourage other types of development. By characterizing Sinangoé as a struggle between potential indigenous partners and outside forces which threaten both indigenous identity and RECAY's natural resources, the representations made by project documents encourage the Cofanes of the region to participate, and discourage the kinds of outcomes which might result from increased participation in decision-making by non-indigenous residents of Sinangoé and its environs.

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ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATION

The PALOMAP Study and Threats Reduction Approaches

In demonstrating the importance of representations in conditioning the kinds of participation which emerge in the CBR, I am not suggesting that the move to participatory conservation within the CBR project has merely been rhetoric. Clearly, the NGO and government agency planners have sought to change their management practices to conform to recommendations made by the current practice-based literature on the subject, in order to improve the kinds of conservation which occur at the project. One of the best indications of how seriously these managers have embraced ideas about participation is to be found in the external review of participation at RECAY commissioned by The

Nature Conservancy. The Local Participation in the Management of Protected Areas study, or PALOMAP, is a collaborative effort between The Nature Conservancy and the Latin American Social Science Faculty of Quito, now in its sixth year (Ulfelder et al. 1997). The project assessed six case studies of participatory conservation initiatives at Cayambe-Coca. Three different approaches were used: *stakeholder analysis*, seeking to "clarify relationships and types and levels of power that exist among various actors"; *threats analysis*, focused on "those activities of human or natural origin which cause significant damage to the area's resources, or which are in serious conflict with the objectives of managing and administering an area" (Machlis and Tichnell 1985 in Ulfelder et al. 1997:21); and *analysis by types of participation*. This third form of analysis adapted Pimbert and Pretty's (1995) typology to describe the kind of participation encountered in each project according to the following categories:

1. Passive participation, in which communities are informed of projects which will be carried out or has already been carried out.
2. Contractual participation, in which "the community's participation in certain activities is requested or invited through a formal arrangement."
3. Consultative participation, which, like contractual participation, is initiated from outside the community, but in which local opinions and desires are taken into consideration.
4. Collaborative participation, which similarly is originated by outside agents; here, both outsiders and community members "participate in the same manner in diagnosing and evaluating the initiative."
5. Participation "among colleagues," which focuses on empowering local communities and places emphasis on activities "that can increase the ability of informal and local systems to be self-mobilizing."
6. Community self mobilization, the only category in which problem identification and definition originates from within the community, which may or may not seek outside help in resolving the problem. (Ulfelder et al. 1997:27)

Among other findings, the PALOMAP study determined that:

> very few of the initiatives [were] based on local participation that could be considered among colleagues, collaborative, or self mobilization. Most of the projects depend[ed] on a less active community role. Finally, many initiatives change participation types over time . . . unfortunately, they have moved toward the passive, contractual, and consultative instead of becoming more collaborative or among colleagues. (Ulfelder et al. 1997:32)

New management planning activities since the PALOMAP study, such as the current management plan, have sought to incorporate the PALOMAP rec-

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ommendations into project planning, and explicitly recognize many of the issues brought up by the study. Thus, rather than review the findings of the PALOMAP study in detail, it will be more useful for the purposes of this study to investigate some of the underlying assumptions of the PALOMAP project, many of which are indeed shared by the institutions supporting participatory approaches for RECAY.

Both the PALOMAP study and the RECAY management plan endorse an approach to conservation known as *threats-analysis* or *threats-reduction assessment*. Margoluis and Salafsky's *Measures of Success* (1998) provides one of the most cogent descriptions of this approach, and has become a principal guide for conservation practitioners working with local communities on ICDPs. Threats reduction assessment operates on the assumption that all biodiversity loss is human-induced, and that threats to biodiversity "can be identified at a site-specific level" (Margoluis and Salafsky 1998:32).[7] The Margoluis and Salafsky approach to analysis emphasizes the identification of direct threats, such as overgrazing or deforestation, and indirect threats, such as poverty. This analysis is meant to be carried out together with local communities, and programmatic responses are to be developed based on a ranking of threats. Key criteria for ranking threats include the urgency of a threat, the political and social practicality of attacking the threat, and the organizational ability of the project organizers who will be combating the threat (Margoluis and Salafsky 1998).

The PALOMAP study uses a similar approach, developed by The Nature Conservancy and applied in dozens of protected areas in the United States and Latin America. The methodology identifies five elements: systems, tensions, origins or threats, strategies to mitigate threats, and anticipated results. In this approach, tensions are "the impacts that damage the ecosystem," and include "phenomena such as habitat fragmentation, wildlife illnesses, erosion, and sedimentation" (Ulfelder et al. 1997:21). The origins are the threats themselves; for instance, PALOMAP suggests as threats the deforestation of steep terrain which is a cause of erosion, and the construction of a new road and settlements which cause habitat fragmentation (Ulfelder et al. 1997). In the rest of this section, I identify three tensions inherent in this understanding of participatory conservation, demonstrate how the underlying assumptions of threats-reduction assessment tend to favor certain kinds of approaches to these issues, and suggest alternatives to these ways of understanding participation at RECAY.

Underlying versus Proximate Causes of Degradation

The greatest promise of participatory conservation, namely its focus on community-level action, may also be its greatest weakness. The participatory

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approach adopted by sustainable development practitioners directs its focus explicitly on communities: direct threats to natural resources conservation are understood to originate in communities, rather than in the political and economic structures which condition those communities' resource use practices. The emphasis of the approach on those problems which are within the community's ability to control–deforestation for fuelwood, for instance–tends to imply that villagers' resource use practices are useful targets for programs, while ignoring that events outside the villagers' control may result in far more extensive resource depletion, as in the case of increased urban markets for agricultural goods, which provides market incentives for the expansion of ranching and mechanized agriculture. Thus, while Margoluis and Salafsky (1998) allow that such issues as poverty are indeed *indirect* threats, the criteria for determining programmatic responses (i.e., political practicality and organizational ability) tend to favor approaches which are local in nature–they encourage the reworking of agricultural and production practices by villagers rather than attacking the larger question of structurally-produced inequalities in income and wealth within Ecuadorian society.[8]

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Thus, for institutions seeking to encourage community-based natural resources management, it is important to realize that the ability of communities to conserve resources is constrained by political and economic pressures which originate outside the boundary of the community, boundaries which program documents and conservationists' own conceptions of community serve, in part, to create. However, by the same logic, it is important to note that the actions of organizations such as TNC, FUNAN, and INEFAN are themselves constrained by political and economic realities. Expecting such institutions to be able to maintain biodiversity and to insure watershed protection in protected areas like RECAY may be overly optimistic. The ability of these organizations to influence the distribution of income and economic opportunity in Ecuador is, in fact, quite limited. Because NGOs are often supported by donations from international donor organizations such as USAID, they are constrained in their ability to become involved in national politics, and are thus unable to confront head-on the infrastructure development or settlement schemes which place resource-dependent peoples close to protected areas. Similarly, international donors tie their aid to certain types of approaches, and will not provide funding for others. An emphasis on participation, encouraged by international donor agencies, is thus built into the operations of organizations whose activities are tied to funds from international donor organizations. These constraints limit the ability of TNC or FUNAN from taking on such indirect causes as subsidies for agricultural expansion, mineral concessions within or near protected areas, political corruption, and other problems. These are problems which local-level participation in community based natural resources management will not alleviate.

Participating to Conserve, or Participating to Benefit from Development?

A second, related tension is to be found in the focus of threats-reduction approaches on the question: What threatens natural resources? The result of this emphasis is that recommendations for participation emphasize, as the PALOMAP study does, that "participatory conservation initiatives with local communities must be directly related to threats facing the protected area" (Ulfelder et al. 1997:35). Such a recommendation proceeds from the assumption that communities are interested in preserving protected area resources and see a benefit from conservation activities (thus leading to the other frequent injunction of such recommendations, also made by PALOMAP (Ulfelder et al. 1997), that participation in conservation activities must be shown to benefit local communities). Although communities certainly may benefit from the conservation of natural resources upon which they depend, it is also often the case that conservation activities actually provide benefits for users much farther away; for instance, they may preserve biodiversity for the benefit of environmentalists concerned with endangered species extinctions, or they conserve watershed functioning for the provision of water to urban users. In many cases, local communities are far more concerned with issues such as health and education for their families, and with economic opportunities, rather than with the less immediate threats to their livelihoods like the gradual decline in ecosystem functioning and diversity.

Given this apparent conflict, it may be useful for conservationists to re-configure their understanding of participation altogether. Many times, on-the-ground realities in local communities near protected areas involve more of a tit-for-tat relationship with NGO extensionists. Local people often agree to go along with NGO priorities, as long as they receive benefits in exchange. The implication is that communities, and individuals, will continue to allow NGOs to operate projects in their villages (i.e., will continue to legitimize NGO presence in the region) as long as NGOs provide material incentives. Thus, comments such as that of Sinangoé area residents, that conservationists should "help us with projects or we will continue our [depredatory] activities" (FUNAN 1997:129) should be interpreted as a realistic portrayal of the nature of participation, rather than as statements of blackmail.

It may thus be less than helpful to qualify ideas about self-mobilization for conservation as compared with participation for material incentives. There exists, in studies such as the PALOMAP project, a normative assumption that the former variety of participation is more desirable than the latter. It may be useful to re-assess this assumption in the face of on-the-ground realities. Rather than seeing their role simply as one of looking for ways to participate with local communities on issues of interest to reserve managers, institutions might see their considerable ability to raise money for development projects as assets

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for communities, and might consider "buying the goodwill of communities" as principal objectives of some (but not all) development activities in reserve buffer zones. Admitting that such a dynamic is operating between NGOs and communities tends to challenge underlying assumptions about how communities benefit from protected areas. The received wisdom that communities benefit when ecosystem functioning is maintained is, in part, replaced with an understanding that communities and NGOs are acting out struggles over material resources. Increased realism in identifying what motivates local communities may help to avoid accusations of broken promises and unmet expectations.

Joint Problem Definition

Wilshusen (2000:320) cites Little (1994) in arguing for the importance of joint problem definition: "[t]he critical questions are, whose definition of the problem is being invoked, and who shares in its meaning(s)? . . . The extent to which the local population shares in problem definition and participates in its identification is a prime factor affecting program success." Such an approach is likely to be a first step towards a reconfiguration of the meaning of participation in projects such as RECAY, but also implies that NGOs and government agencies must relinquish some of their agenda-setting role. As the cases in this study have shown, in many instances participation by local communities in the CBR has been sought only once program priorities have been established. Local communities have been brought in to provide data for expert planners developing management plans, or have been asked to provide input as to what should be done with funds available through FONAG. They have not been involved in the creation or management of the NGOs which design and implement management activities, nor have they been invited to participate in the structures which govern the creation and management of the Fund.

As in other areas, NGOs are constrained in their ability to allow such participation, as donors (e.g., donors to TNC and FUNAN, in the first case, or EMAAP-Q, which provides funds from water user-fees, in the second) are unwilling to release control of the objectives which such institutions will address. Similarly, because involving too many interested parties may produce inefficient governing structures, implementing institutions have sought to eliminate the kinds of conflict over goals and methods which would result from inviting organizations that faithfully represent community interests to be members of boards or governing bodies. The effect, however, is to suppress political discussions over what ought to be done at the protected area. Efficiency, in this case, works to silence debates over power, priorities, and agenda setting by preventing certain constituent groups from having a real voice in the decision process or from being able to influence the kinds of activ-

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ities that will take place at a protected area from an early stage in the programming of such activities.

Just as the chronological point at which communities enter the decision process constrains the ways that communities will participate, the question of who is a participant, and who is kept from entering the discussion, is critical to the creation of participatory conservation. This issue is a problematic one for the threats reduction approach, and is tied, again, to the issue of representation. The threats reduction approach encourages certain kinds of representations to be made about communities near ICDPs, representations which in turn influence the ways that participation take place. As in the case of the Sinangoé Cofanes and their non-indigenous neighbors, when whole categories of local residents are considered threats, meaningful participation by those community members becomes problematic. Seen in this light, threats reduction approaches actually discourage certain groups from participating in decision-making about natural resource use in conservation and development projects.

If NGOs seriously intend to involve local communities in participatory approaches to conservation, they may find it necessary to open decision processes to local people earlier in the planning stage, and to open these processes to groups of people who do not appear to be natural allies. Involving communities earlier in the agenda-setting process may help planners to avoid the tendency, which the PALOMAP study observed, that initially participatory efforts tend to degenerate to consultative ones over time. It is unlikely that a local community will feel a sense of ownership, or become the principal executor and beneficiary of a management plan if the members of the community do not feel that their voices were heard and their priorities were adequately addressed in the elaboration of that plan.

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CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have sought to provide a review of the academic and practitioner literature on participation, and to describe the kinds of participation occurring within the Condor Bioreserve project in Ecuador. Participation has been invoked and pursued in the CBR project in management planning activities, the creation of FONAG, the representation of events in the Sinangoé community by NGO documents, and in many other aspects of conservation and development in this project. An important step taken by conservationists in the CBR project was the commissioning of the PALOMAP study. Yet it is important to identify that the PALOMAP study, the threats reduction approach which it endorses, and the current trend towards participation which is evidenced in the CBR, are all based on a number of assumptions which should themselves be called into question.

I have tried to offer some different ways of looking at the question of participation, which might be considered recommendations to those involved in natural resources management problems. They are: (1) Rather than seeing participation as a panacea for all conservation problems, conservation organizations should recognize that many problems which appear to be caused on the local level are indeed produced by larger political and economic structures. It is unlikely that actions and programs designed to change the behavior of natural-resource dependent communities will alleviate these problems. By the same token, critics of conservation organizations should also realize that these organizations are similarly constrained by their own location within politics. (2) Rather than attempting to portray the process of community involvement in conservation activities as one which depends solely on convincing local people of the importance of protected areas for their own well-being, conservation and development organizations should take a realistic view of what motivates local people. If interested parties can admit that they are negotiating exchanges in which local people agree to forego certain activities in exchange for certain kinds of aid, local people may be able to direct development assistance to projects which meet their pressing needs, and conservation groups may be able to count on higher levels of buy-in and goodwill from communities. (3) If local communities are involved earlier in problem definition processes, they will have more of a say in the kinds of activities which protected areas management will address. While relinquishing control of the agenda may be unattractive to NGOs and implementing agencies, such an approach may have the effect of bringing contentious issues to the table before funds are committed to plans which may never achieve the level of local support necessary for their success. Rather than silence debates over power in the name of efficiency, true participation ought to encourage healthy debate over activities which will affect the livelihoods of people living near protected natural resources.

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NOTES

1. Conservationists have been criticized for claiming that large protected areas, such as those in South America, were comprised of virgin forests, relatively untouched by human populations. Many influential conservationists still hold this opinion (e.g., Terborgh 1999). Several authors have sought to show that forests in Central and South America, for instance, reflect thousands of years of human occupation and management. Indigenous populations in the Americas were far higher before European contact (see Denevan 1992, Dobyns 1991, Crosby 1972). The influx of colonists, often *campesino* farmers who have left unproductive agricultural lands and are resettled by governments, represents a somewhat distinct human population. Whereas indigenous and *ribereno* groups (non-indigenous forest dwellers, often descended from farmers who

migrated to Amazonian forest regions during the rubber boom of 1890-1915) practice swidden agriculture techniques which can result in the maintenance of forest cover over the long term, newer colonists are not familiar with those practices, and face economic and other pressures to practice more intensive agriculture.

2. Such language, of course, reflects the assumption that prior to the establishment of parks, and the creation of large new state and NGO bureaucracies to manage them, local people were not managers of the resource base.

3. For an excellent summary of the decision process, from which this list is in part drawn, see Ascher and Healy 1990.

4. Pimbert and Pretty (1995), provide a typology of different forms of participation, one which is adopted and modified by both Wilshusen (Wilshusen 2000) and the PALOMAP study at RECAY (Ulfelder et al. 1997). According to Ulfelder et al.'s methodology, these management planning activities would probably qualify as consultative participation. They note (1997:26) that "in this type of participation . . . the initiative to participate comes from outside, but is based on the desires, opinions, and needs of the people or the community. Agents from the outside define the problems and solutions, but may modify them in light of information obtained in their consultations with the community."

5. The arrangement of FONAG's operating structure resonates with similar public/private initiatives worldwide, which have stressed the importance of cooperation between the state, the private sector, and civil society. Critics have pointed out that the role of civil society in this formulation is often occupied only by NGOs, organizations which are not democratically elected and which may be more responsive to international donors than to local constituents.

6. Prohibiting páramo burning is a principal concern of RECAY managers. Burning is a range-management technique used by local communities and large landowners alike in the region for much of the last century. It stands to reason that burning has had an active role in shaping the páramo of the region. The prohibition of burning will thus, over time, probably result in a much different páramo ecosystem than the one currently being conserved by RECAY. Implications for habitat creation and water creation are yet to be fully understood. The implications of burning proscriptions would be a worthy question for future research. Similar conservation-based proscriptions on swidden agriculture in Asia, and forest fire prevention schemes in the United States, have had negative long-term impacts for natural resources conservation.

7. Margoluis and Salafsky (1998:32) write "The Threats Reduction Assessment (TRA) approach to program design, management, and monitoring operates under three assumptions: [1] Almost all biodiversity destruction is human induced, [2] All human threats to biodiversity can be identified at a site specific level, [3] Actual reduction of threat to biodiversity can be measured."

8. *Measures of Success* (1998:106-107) provides prospective management planners with a number of assumptions which are common in conservation and development projects, suggesting that these assumptions may be points of departure for their own management activities. The assumptions include: "income generation from small-scale commercial natural resource-based enterprises will lead to conservation success . . . environmental education will influence people to act to conserve natural resources . . . [and] intensification of agriculture through the use of sustainable agricultural practices

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will lead to the conservation of biodiversity." Highly political assumptions are absent from the list of suggestions; community-level participants are not encouraged to consider such issues as the complicity of government officials in the promotion of illegal logging, for instance, or the effects of structural adjustment conditionalities on government development policies. If these assumptions were found to be critical causes of deforestation or resource depletion, and if communities were to decide to try to remedy these problems, the kinds of participation which might result could include social mobilizations and political activities in which international NGOs are constrained from becoming involved.

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