

Social change and conservation misrepresentation in Africa

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Concomitant with the increasing denouncement of African game legislation as inappropriate law imposed by a former colonial authority, is the attack upon traditional, i.e. total protection, practice of conservation. It is increasingly argued by a school of neo-populist thinkers, that local people should be allowed to exploit protected areas in accordance with their own traditions and beliefs. Examples of alleged injustice or practice are consistently misrepresented with a view to replacing traditional conservation practice with left-wing political dogma, proponents claiming a mandate from the Caracas 1992 IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas.

National parks or multiple-use resource?

Mounting pressures on wildlife in developing countries, particularly Africa, have led to an increasing body of opinion condemning inherited colonial game laws, misrepresenting colonial attempts at conservation as ill-intentioned towards indigenous peoples (Spinage, 1996). Cloaked in Marxist and neo-populist dogma, and philosophical discourse, the latter to give spurious weightiness to the authors' views, the left-wing radicalism of the opposition to the practice of traditional conservation is exemplified by statements such as that of Ghimire and Pimbert (1997), who state that local communities should be in a better position to assess what is good for them than 'American biologists, British conservationists, German and Scandinavian foresters, or members of European aristocracies and preservationist organizations'. The latter can only be construed as a snide attack on the President of the World Wide Fund for Nature, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh; and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands before him. I wonder how far the World Wide Fund for Nature would have got without such prestigious backing? These authors ask: 'what is the social purpose of establishing a park or reserve?' Does there have to be a social purpose? They claim a need for debate and imaginative people-centred

initiatives, which are 'unlikely to come from mainstream conservation bureaucracies'. It is hardly surprising that they are unlikely, when opponents of traditional conservation do not base their arguments on empirical evidence but frequently on flagrant misrepresentation, thus not providing serious fora for discussion.

The arrogance in promoting this view is exemplified by the statement that conservation scientists and field officers 'tend to perceive ecosystems through the narrow window of their own professional discipline. Their training has taught them to look at just that aspect of the ecosystem in which they specialize...' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). It could of course be applied to the sociologists and anthropologists, who are also most unlikely to look outside their own disciplines. The norms and practice of conservation science itself, state Pimbert and Pretty, have been one of the major reasons for the failure of parks and other protected areas because, since the early 17th century, scientific investigation has come to be dominated by the Cartesian paradigm, usually termed positivism or rationalism, in support of 'Western, positivist, disciplinary science and its inherent ethnocentric bias' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997).

Conservation and the need to preserve areas in a natural state has been referred to as 'the imperialist yearning of Western biologists'

(Guha, 1989); and a paper by Mittermeier and Bowles (1993) viewed by Guha as radical American environmentalism is referred to as 'This frankly imperialist manifesto' (Guha, 1989). Such language illustrates how much these views are an expression of a political agenda rather than of science.

Western societies are 'slowly gaining' the idea that what are now regarded as 'pristine' wilderness are, in many cases, formerly inhabited areas (Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997). To claim that they are human cultural artefacts as these authors do, would imply that man-made changes are irreversible. Rather, man may have temporarily affected the areas. But this was well known by ecologists in the 1960s.

No room for the noble savage

Criticizing classical conservation, where human presence is considered incompatible with the preservation of natural areas, Colchester (1997) wrote that a curious aspect of this view of nature (that is, of primordial wilderness) is that even where such lands are inhabited by indigenous people, they are sometimes still considered to be wilderness: 'The contradiction can be sustained because of a common perception that indigenous peoples are of "nature" – wild, natural, primitive and innocent.... To some extent these images are retained to this day and lie behind conservationist policies of "enforced primitivism", whereby indigenous peoples are accommodated in protected areas so long as they conform to stereotype and do not adopt modern practices.' This is to completely misrepresent the intention. It was considered that non-technological man, living at relatively low densities, lived in harmony, sustainably, with the environment. *Ergo* he was part and parcel of a protected area and there was no reason to expel him. Colchester also claimed that it is an 'observable reality' that indigenous societies have traditionally maintained relatively stable relations with their natural environments; but this is only because of low numbers and limited technology.

'The present management systems are con-

cerned essentially with the pure protection of flora and fauna and seek to separate local communities from their customary interactions with the local ecology.' (Colchester, 1997).

In my opinion, yes, because of: (i) the increase in human population; (ii) interactions with local ecological systems being no longer 'customary', e.g. use of guns, wire snares, gin traps, insecticidal poisons; scattering of indestructible litter, plastic and metal; (iii) use of modern veterinary advances to increase stock numbers; (iv) the desire for monetary wealth to buy radios, bicycles, clothing, canned beer, motor vehicles, etc.

Although compromises might be reached, these would be short-lived because of the population increase, as was shown early in the history of Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park. When it was created resident fishing villages were allowed to remain, having an exclusion zone around them. Fishing in the park was unrestricted apart from canoes being registered. It was not long before the villages had expanded to the extent that another was created. Tourists soon complained of the increasing numbers of dilapidated, rusting, corrugated-iron roofed shacks lining the waterside (Katete, 1964).

One of the most emotive examples of the effect of the classical conservation approach on indigenous people, has been that of the Ik, which has been grossly over-dramatized, especially by Calhoun (1991) with his wishful: 'What a Shangri-la, this land of the Ik'; and referred to by Colchester (1997) as 'one of the most grotesque examples' of displacement of people to make way for a national park. Described by Colchester as a small hunting and gathering tribe, the Ik were denied access to their customary hunting grounds in extreme northern Uganda by the creation of the Kidepo Game Reserve in 1958 (national park status came later). Limited to their subsistence agriculture in barren highlands outside the park, they suffered prolonged famine leading to an alleged total collapse of society and the disappearance of all mores except naked self-interest. 'Traditions of food-sharing vanished as the Ik slowly died of hunger while seeking

to delay the inevitable through “poaching”, begging and prostitution’ (Colchester, 1997). Turnbull, the original source, even in the re-issue of his book (Turnbull, 1994) does not offer proof whether their behaviour really was different when they could hunt freely in the Kidepo Valley, a surprising omission because it was such a central point. To quote Turnbull: ‘It is, of course, guesswork when we try to say what the Ik were like before all this happened, for there are no records.’ They did not tell him, and he apparently did not ask them. All we have is one old woman referring to times when people were kinder. It is difficult to believe that their whole social system and sense of humanity could have completely broken down in the space of 8 years. They still hunted, illegally, in the park, but sold the meat to the police post. The park was created in 1962 and Turnbull painted his controversial picture from 1964 to 1967, 1966 being a time of acute drought. Heine (1985) found no evidence that they had ever been true hunter-gatherers as implied, but were cultivators, presenting evidence of long-established cultivation practices. He found them, 20 years later, still in existence and apparently quite sociable, despite losses from drought and disease in 1980. He claims Turnbull’s account to be largely fictional, yet, despite this, antagonists of protected areas still give full credence to Turnbull’s distorted picture. The instigator of the game reserve stated that his vow was to preserve the area as a natural unspoilt ‘wilderness area’, believing the Ik to be ‘only a few shy honey hunters’ (Kinloch, 1972). The Uganda Government probably saw it later as a useful buffer zone against raiding parties from the Sudan, including by the Sudan Defence Force. Having national parks’ guards patrol it relieved the police and army of the responsibility.

Conservationists have, since the London Convention for the Protection of African Fauna and Flora in 1933, been cognizant of human needs. Article XI stated: ‘The Contracting States shall take all necessary legislative measures to reconcile customary rights with the provisions of this convention.’

British national parks are cited by

Colchester (1997) as an example of compatibility with human occupation, British conservationists having accepted the vision of nature as part of a process of continuity and gradual change, with man at the centre and integral to the rural landscape. They thus recognized existing rights and sought to maintain the established pattern of farming and land use by rural communities. They had no option. There was nothing else to preserve but scenic beauty. One cannot draw parallels with African national parks where, in most cases, it is the uniquely rich fauna that is the attraction. But even with national parks as they are in Britain, many of the inhabitants complain of the restrictions placed upon residents, although often failing to realize that similar restrictions under planning laws apply to wider areas of Britain.

Ghimire and Pimbert (1997), in passing reference to the ‘roots of the protected-area movement’ in the Old World, refer to the Norman concept of royal forests in Britain, the extent of which led to bitter objection by local people on the restrictions of their rights. In fact the objection came initially from the barons; it was not until the end of the 14th century that ‘local people’ became involved. Allegedly the colonial powers ‘carried with them to the tropics little of this respect for traditional rights and uses’ (Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997), but the British government repeatedly insisted on traditional rights being respected. This may be one of the reasons why it took so long, until the 1940s, for national parks to be created in British possessions. In Britain herself an empowering Act did not come into force until December 1949, with the first national park declared in 1951, postdating many of the national parks created in the tropics.

Koch (1997) stated that a change in approach to the traditional view of conservation was mooted at the 1982 World Congress on National Parks. The Congress in fact called for: increased local support for protected areas through education; national parks revenue-sharing; participation in decisions; and the creation of complementary development schemes adjacent to protected areas. Not, as Koch has misrepresented it: increased local

support for communities through educational programmes; revenue-sharing schemes; participation in the management of reserves; and the creation of appropriate development schemes in protected areas.

Within weeks of the Congress its resolutions were followed up with a front-page announcement in the *Bulletin of the French International Foundation for the Protection of Game*, also misrepresenting the intent of the resolutions: 'Safaris [i.e. hunting] in the national parks, admitted, widely practised, beneficial. This truth is however carefully camouflaged!' (Clers, 1982). On another page it announced: 'Only one resolution in twenty a relic of "protectionism"' (Anon., 1982). This front organization for the French hunting lobby, Conseil International de la Chasse, aptly demonstrated the dangers of intimating any relaxation of traditional policy, requiring the Chairman to make a statement denying that hunting was considered acceptable in national parks. The exclusion of man from protected areas is what Pimbert and Pretty (1997) term the 'positivist paradigm', which is, 'so pervasive that by definition, those inside it cannot see that alternatives exist.' Perhaps the problem is that they can see only too well what those alternatives are likely to result in. '... many biologists ... often ignore that they are really observing relationships between organisms and environments that have been influenced by humankind over thousands of years ... Even when they do not ignore human influences, such "natural systems" biologists typically treat human presence as a purely negative phenomenon' (Nabhan *et al.*, 1991). What the neo-populist view studiously ignores is that it is technological man who is incompatible with nature.

In the 1890s the Shona and Ndebele of present-day Zimbabwe 'managed' their wild animals 'in a sustainable fashion' according to McIvor (1997), killing only those that were necessary for their own needs when the agricultural season had been poor. This completely misrepresents reality. Wild animal populations were high, the numbers of people relatively low, their weapons primitive, and there was no financial inducement to sell

meat. It was not a question of 'management'. An 'old man' interviewed by in 1979 is quoted as saying that in the pre-colonial era it was a simple life and one could go hunting anywhere one liked; 'No one claimed possession of wild game' (Jensen, 1992). This old man would have had to have been at least 90 years of age and one questions how far his memory reflected fact. The chiefs claimed possession of most wild animals and organized hunting other than that of small animals for the pot. Customary law could result in more severe penalties for infraction than colonial or post-independence law (Spinage, 1991). McIvor (1997) himself stated that there were traditional prohibitions on the killing of pregnant animals, and that sanctuaries were created, venerated as holy sites, where all hunting was forbidden.

'Colonial policies and legislation destroyed this relationship between wild life and its human neighbours ... Antagonism between local people and wild life was exacerbated by the displacement of indigenous populations to areas that could barely sustain them ...' (McIvor, 1997). As is clear from McIvor, Zimbabwe was a special case in which the alienation of land for European settlement was the main factor contributing to hostility.

According to Hitchcock and Holm (1993), in Botswana it is foreign aid organizations and their academic advisers, NGO leaders, and top-ranking civil servants, who are deciding the substance and rate of change of the Bushmen or San. But it is deliberate government policy to try and integrate them into the national economy. A devastating drought of the 1980s largely destroyed their lifestyle and made them dependent upon food handouts, putting pressure on government to effect change more rapidly. One cannot escape the view that it is the anthropologists who wish for the retention of the noble savage identity. They, rather than conservationists, decry the passing of primitivism.

Misrepresenting ecology

The 'expulsion of the Maasai from "their

lands" in Tanzania has resulted in the Serengeti increasingly being taken over by scrub and woodland meaning less grazing for antelopes', the 'rich Serengeti grassland ecosystem [having been] in part maintained by the presence of the Maasai and their cattle' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). This statement completely misrepresents the cycle of events, which was that a vast increase in antelopes – the wildebeest population rising from an estimated 263,000 to 1,279,000 between 1961 and 1977 and then stabilizing at this level – meant that, also influenced by changes in rainfall, grass, which formerly provided fuel for fires in the dry season, was removed, and the lack of fire allowed woody vegetation seedlings, which grazing antelopes avoid, to increase (Sinclair, 1995). The past extermination of rhinoceros, which feed upon woody seedlings, could also have played a significant part (Darling, 1960).

Of Tsavo National Park in Kenya, Botkin (1990) alleges that resource management policies to protect and control elephant populations led to severe deterioration of the land within the park boundaries while 'the inhabited area around the park remained forested'. But he fails to appreciate that the Chyulu Hills to the west, part forest reserve and part inhabited, are forested on their western slopes because of a higher rainfall and because lack of water means that they are not particularly favoured elephant habitat. Elephants are also not easily able to destroy mature montane forest trees. Whereas they destroyed the trees and bush within the park, there was no 'control' of numbers and the statement implies that vegetation rather than elephants should be protected. Tsavo has been a particular and long-raging controversy, the conflict being between to manage or not to manage, rather than between central control and people participation. When the park was created in 1948 it was inhabited only by a small tribe of elephant hunters numbering no more than 500, of unknown origins and with no strong sense of owning territory. Whereas some have condemned their removal and the destruction of their lifestyle, what government would allow a minority of less than 500 persons to maintain

customary rights over an area of over 40,000 sq km?

Misrepresenting ecological theory

Claiming it as a recent advance in ecological theory and knowledge, Pimbert and Pretty (1997) stated: 'It has become increasingly clear that existing ecological systems of plants and animals are a function of their unique pasts'. But how could they be otherwise? Only adherents of belief in the Creation could assume the contrary. Was not the whole of Darwin's theory based upon such a postulate? According to Foster *et al.* (1992) ecologists 'are becoming increasingly sensitized to the importance of the effect of history on the structure of modern communities and ecosystems'. These authors seem unaware of the classic work of Ford (1971) and other historical ecological treatments for Africa dating from 1947 (Hubert, 1947).

Past management of animal populations and vegetation, state Pimbert and Pretty (1997), has been based on far too static a concept of ecosystems. But where management is about maintaining the status quo of an area, it does not follow that one has to believe that the area was always like that. There is 'growing empirical evidence [to suggest] ... that moderate frequencies or intensities of disturbance foster maximum species richness ...' (Hobbs and Huenneke, 1992). Growing evidence? It has been known for at least half a century that the collapse of a mature tree in closed canopy forest allows the growth of other species in the gap thus created, species that will eventually be stifled. And for how long has it been known that meadow flowers are invaders of disturbed ground? Rackham (1986) stressed that the centuries-old system of coppicing created diversity in woodland, a management system that had only died out in ancient woodland in Britain in the post-war years because of economic trends.

It has been implied that the creation of Tsavo in Kenya as a national park caused a decrease in diversity (Western and Gichohi, 1993). When the park was created over 30,000

sq km of mostly dense thicket afforded a safe haven for elephants retreating before mounting land pressures around the park. The numbers increased from an unknown number, but an informed guess suggests from c. 30,000, to c. 50,000. The thicket was laid waste and open plains created. Plains' game, such as zebra, hartebeest and oryx, are then said to have increased (Parker, 1983). At least they became more visible and they probably did increase in numbers. This could be seen as greater, not less, biological diversity. We have no evidence that the dense thicket carried a greater biodiversity before the build-up of elephant numbers took place but, in terms of invertebrates, small reptiles, and the avifauna, this was probably so.

'The implicit assumption in creating a park is that protection will maintain and most likely enhance biological diversity. In reality, the opposite may be the case. Part of the reason stems from the large role human ecology has played in shaping and maintaining the East African savannas ... The biological inadequacy [of protected areas] has only become apparent in recent years' (Western and Gichohi, 1993). This is to state a half-truth. Man who allegedly shaped and maintained the East African savannahs was not technological man, neither is it likely that he existed at the densities that man exists in East Africa today, and it is very easy to overestimate his role in affecting the environment.

Misrepresenting fact

'How long can a park or reserve exist when it is surrounded by discontent and sometimes hungry populations?' ask Ghimire and Pimbert (1997). But this finite conception is a result of population increase resulting from man's technological advance, not a result of creating the protected area.

In former Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, McIvor (1997) stated that in 1923 'wild animals were categorized as "royal game"', misrepresenting that fact that the classification of royal game was a legal device for protecting certain rare or vulnerable species,

and only applied to a limited number for which a special licence was required to hunt or capture: namely eland, elephant, giraffe, gemsbok, hippopotamus, greater kudu, ostrich, rhinoceros (black and white), and zebras. McIvor also stated that in 1975 a new structure was created to administer national parks areas, legislation abandoning the concept of 'royal game' in conformity with a perception that unless wildlife became a resource of benefit to the people, the conflict between the two would continue. Although the term 'royal game' clearly was not appropriate in a state not ruled by a crowned head, it was not a question of abandoning the concept but of extending the ownership of huntable game. Royal game had always been but a small category. McIvor also stated that the colonial government declared such animals state property, a rather different, and indeed more correct, terminology. In fact they only became state property once killed or captured.

Peluso (1992), without offering any evidence in support but probably extracting from Bonner (1993), stated that the Kenya Wildlife Service after 1989 declared virtual war on ivory poachers and summarily killed, without charge or trial, hundreds of indigenous peoples. In fact the main ivory poachers were foreign nationals from Somalia, illegally in the country and heavily armed with AK47 automatic assault rifles. Dangerous adversaries who did not hesitate to shoot to kill anyone who opposed them. What does Peluso suppose that the authorities should have done. Allowed themselves to be meekly shot by these raiders? In the Central African Republic, also quoted by Peluso, most of poachers involved in conflict with the military were likewise foreign invaders, either from Tchad or the Sudan, heavily armed with AK47s and dangerous. The Central Africans have never looked kindly on their own poachers being shot, or even prosecuted. Although it is questioned whether such a hard-line approach to nature conservation in the form of military or quasi-military operations achieves its objectives in the long term, community participation programmes or granting legal rights to the people would do nothing to solve these

dilemmas. How could local people, unarmed and untrained, stand up to such incursions if they wanted to? In the 1980s when I was resident in the Central African Republic, it was common knowledge that a village headman in the east of the country tried it. He remonstrated with the Sudanese poachers who came to his village and was promptly shot.

The myth of the Elysian field

National parks established on indigenous lands (where else could they be established?) have denied local rights to resources 'turning local people practically overnight from hunters and cultivators to "poachers" and "squatters"' (Colchester, 1997). One might as well say that the creation of a speed limit in a town turns people overnight from drivers into criminals. 'More insidiously, the exclusion of resident people from protected areas aggravates the loss of valuable traditional knowledge of plant, animal and microbial species used for food, medicinal and other purposes' (Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997). One asks why are these resources assumed to be found only in the protected area? The answer must surely be because they have disappeared where people have freely exploited them. It is a traditional complaint of professional hunters that they should be allowed to hunt in national parks because hunting is 'good' for animal populations, it 'manages' them by removing the old males. If it is so good for them, then why are there greater densities of animals in national parks than outside them?

'The world over, conservationists are now beginning to realise that the strategy of locking up biodiversity in small parks, while ignoring wider social and political realities, has been ineffective. So long as polluting and unsustainable land-use patterns prevail outside, the future of the parks is in jeopardy' (Colchester, 1997). This is indeed a problem, but not one that is solved by abandoning the small parks to those interests that created the unsustainable conditions around them.

Pimbert and Pretty (1997) proposed that laws must be changed to give local people

control, including them in the management of protected areas and devolving management to local communities: 'Legal frameworks should focus on the granting of rights, access and security of tenure to farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and forest dwellers'. 'Such changes will require shifts in the balance of social forces and power relations'. Allegedly, where empowerment of local communities has been a political priority, the successes that have followed have been significant. 'This new paradigm asserts that the multiple livelihood activities of rural communities are not necessarily incompatible with the conservation of biological diversity. Indeed, under certain conditions, community participation in natural resource management can help maintain and actually enhance the diversity of nature in and around protected areas' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). The qualifications of the authors, 'not necessarily' and 'under certain conditions', are of paramount importance in this 'new paradigm'. Indeed, in some societies it may work advantageously, in others it will not.

Much has been written on Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE programme, whereby in the communal areas (formerly tribal reserves) local people are empowered to exploit the wildlife. But in the eyes of Mclvor (1997) even CAMPFIRE needs to devolve further responsibilities for management, organization and ownership to local communities if it is to fully reconcile people and parks. It requires 'a final act of faith' in extending ownership to the people.

Ghimire and Pimbert (1997) offer what amounts almost to a call for revolution: 'There is ... much need for debate and for imaginative people-centred initiatives. These are, however, unlikely to come from mainstream conservation bureaucracies; nor are they likely to happen without strong social pressure and mobilization at the grass roots'.

If the neo-populists have a case, then why are the examples quoted against the classical practice of conservation so grossly misrepresented?

Until the 1970s, according to Pimbert and Pretty (1997), participation was increasingly

seen as a tool to achieve the voluntary submission of people to protected-area schemes. In the 1990s, participation is being seen by some as a means to involve people in protected area management: 'There has been a growing recognition that without local involvement, there is little chance of protecting wildlife' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). But past experience does not support this 'growing recognition'. Although the Moremi Wild Life Reserve in Botswana, created in 1965, might be seen as an example of local indigenous peoples' initiative (Adams and McShane, 1992), it was the brainchild of a white Rhodesian family, June and Robert Kay (Kay, 1963, 1970), which encouraged the local people to create and administer it. Such community participation did not last for long. Employees were not paid, despite the gate receipts, and nothing was done to manage the area. In 1976 Government was called in and finally took it over as a game reserve in 1979 (Spinage, 1990).

Much stress is placed on sacred groves as an example of how indigenous people practice conservation (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). Such groves, claimed to be common throughout southern and south-eastern Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands and Latin America, represent a miniscule area in Africa and are preserved, not sustainably managed.

Pimbert and Pretty (1997) stated that, 'The devolution of planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of protected areas to villagers and low-income groups is a frontier that needs to be explored by modern conservation organizations and governments'. The idea is not new. As far as experience in Africa is concerned, it is wishful thinking, a product of political ideology rather than a concern for conservation. 'Systems of participatory learning and interaction, therefore, imply new roles for conservation professionals, and these all require a new professionalism with new concepts, values, methods and behaviour'. Rural people 'know the complexity and diversity of their livelihoods and environment' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). Allegedly they are experts on their own immediate realities. The reality is that they tend to go along with nature – suffering

famine in times of drought and other adversity. They do not manage their environment to achieve stability.

'Protected area policies will ... need to be reformed to allow indigenous peoples and other rural communities to play a more central role in determining what is conserved, how and for whom'; and 'Governments have much to gain by decentralizing control and responsibility for protected-area management'. 'Legal frameworks should focus on the granting of rights, access, and security of tenure to farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and forest dwellers. This is essential for the poor to take the long-term view' (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997). But what happens when their populations increase?

'This new paradigm asserts that the multiple livelihood activities of rural communities are not necessarily incompatible with the conservation of biological diversity'. Pimbert and Pretty (1997) state that national parks and other protected areas could be managed under agreements between governments and rural communities. An approach tried and failed in the case of Moremi. Despite the fact that Pimbert and Pretty claim it as a 'new vision for protected areas', the idea is not new at all. It is just one that has not been shown to work.

Daring to voice the fortress mentality

There is no want of arrogance as far as Blaikie and Jeanrenaud (1997) are concerned: 'Although many conservationists may not accept the more radical implications of the populist's model, the central management has made it absolutely clear that WWF remains firmly committed to community-based conservation. While a few traditionalists do remain, very few international conservationists would now dare to voice the "fortress mentality" of a couple of decades ago'.

Oh wouldn't they?

The neo-populist approach has emerged in the last 15 years, according to these 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 these

areas, which are so covetously desired. If it is now failing, it is because of the change surrounding such areas: namely increased population pressure and economic change. Rarely is the desire to poach, i.e. to hunt illegally, on a serious scale a question of subsistence. It stems from a desire for monetary reward, which the sale of poached products in urban areas can bring.

Colchester (1997) claims that conservationists have fought shy of admitting the underlying reason why the classic approach to protected area management has failed. The reasons are not, as he supposes, because they have sought to impose their own ideas on other peoples, thus making conventional protected areas at odds with indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and territorial control, but because of population increase and the enormous influx of modern firearms. In fact, elsewhere he gives us the answer: 'Rising indigenous populations have likewise increased local pressure on the environment. Increasing demands for cash, some externally imposed and some internally generated, also place a heavier burden on local economies and environments to produce a marketable surplus. New technologies, like steel tools in place of stone ones, chainsaws, shotguns, agricultural machinery and transportation, new crops and agrochemicals, may radically change land use. At the same time traditional value systems, social organizations and decision-making processes may be transformed, and not just as a result of outside impositions. All these forces tend to upset the indigenous peoples' relations with their environments and may result in over-intensive land use and environmental degradation'.

According to Hitchcock (1990), although over 1 million sq km have been set aside in Africa as national parks and game reserves, they have been remarkably unsuccessful at protecting wildlife. How much more wildlife then does he expect to survive? I doubt whether the millions of tourists who annually flock to Africa would think that there was not much wildlife to see. In the late 1970s there were an estimated 1.3 million elephants in Africa, their sudden reduction to less than half

of this was not due to an upsurge of antagonism to the preservation of elephants by indigenous peoples, but to the Japanese-backed exploitation of elephants for their ivory, made simpler by the flood of communist-bloc weapons into the continent. Likewise, the near-extinction of the black rhinoceros has not been due to resentment against preserving them, but the economics of oil revenues in the Gulf and the booming economy of the Far East, which have resulted in the demand for horn at literally any price.

Whose land is it anyway?

Classic conservation approaches, according to Colchester (1997), tend to reinforce existing divisions between local people and government, made 'most starkly apparent with regard to rights to land'. Most national parks' legislation alienates protected areas to the state thereby annulling, limiting or restricting local rights of tenure and use. Claims that denial of indigenous peoples' land rights is contrary to both customary and international law may conform to present-day western ethics of *Homo sapiens*, but in nature there is only one law of possession and that is the law of occupation by force. How far can we take the alternative – should America be handed back to the Amerindians because they arrived there before the Pilgrim Fathers? Should Australia be handed over to the Aborigines because they got there before Captain Cook? In Britain many people were dispossessed of their land by the Enclosure Acts but there can be no turning back of the clock. Reference is made to the expulsion of the Maasai from the Serengeti in Tanzania, but the Maasai are relative newcomers to the area, having driven out the Datoga pastoralists, who now live to the south of the area, in a 4-year battle sometime between 1836 and 1851 (Mulder *et al.*, 1989). But even the Datoga were preceded by an unknown people. So who has rights to the area? The popular entertainment film *Gorillas in the Mist* is referred to as perpetuating 'the myth that conservation in Africa can only be achieved through violent confrontation with indigenous peoples'

(Colchester, 1997). Could not one equally ludicrously claim that American westerns are designed to remind Americans that the occupation of land can only be won by force?

Is there a way ahead?

In essence there are two different issues: (i) community participation; and (ii) multiple use of protected areas.

In the recommendations of populist intervention the proponents have nothing to lose; because if decline continues after such recommendations are instituted, then they will simply lay the blame on an antagonism towards protected areas derived from the classic conservation approach inherited from colonial intervention.

There is no doubt much truth in some of the arguments of social injustice, and many injustices may have been perpetrated wilfully or ignorantly. But in Africa, at least in the British sphere, these have resulted from conditions that were not apparent at the time their causes were instituted and were not therefore wilful in the majority of cases. They result from the burgeoning population pressure. If the opponents of traditional conservation feel they have a case, why do they so blatantly misrepresent the evidence? It can only be either through ignorance, in which case silence should be the best policy, or wilful attempt to mislead to gain advantage for contrary ends. Whereas earlier (Spinage, 1996) I was critical of attempts to impugn bad motives to protective legislation, the problem here is simple misrepresentation.

Western and Gichohi (1993), quoting Western (1989), stated that 80 per cent of Kenya's wildlife (referring to the large mammal fauna) lives outside protected areas. One wonders, therefore, why is there pressure on using animals for consumptive use, legally or illegally, which are inside national parks? If cattle grazing and other land uses create greater diversity and greater numbers, then why were the national parks created? Why choose areas for protection that are relatively underpopulated with game? But I assume that

this 80 per cent exists widely scattered and at relatively low densities. This is impossible to determine from Western's figures, because he states that the counts of large mammals covered 40 per cent of Kenya's rangelands, equivalent to 700,000 sq km. Yet the total land area of Kenya is only 568,000 sq km!

Postulating that segregation from human influence of an area as a national park leads to decreased diversity, Western and Gichohi seem to overlook that many African national parks have been segregated for fairly long periods of time in some form or another. For example, the Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda since 1924, when the inhabitants and their stock were removed on account of sleeping sickness. Whereas we know from Stanley's visit in 1889 that stock kept the area open (Middleton, 1969), this role was maintained by elephants until their destruction in the mid-1970s, much of the area then changing to dense bush with an increase in tsetse fly. But if a heavily grazed area turns to tall grassland with a decline in herbivore numbers and possibly variety due to the removal of domestic stock, the example given by Western and Gichohi being the Nairobi National Park, then to assume that this is the end point is to accept the postulate of a climax community, generally disputed since its first enunciation by Clements in 1915. The alternative is continuous states of change. We must assume that in time the reduced diversity will be deflected to another state which, by inference, must be richer once again. The pitfall is whether the diversity of species can maintain a foothold elsewhere until they invade.

Bearing in mind that maximum numbers and diversity are not necessarily the best goals for a national park, if change is to come, then it should be based on ecological criteria and not political ideology. Although the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, held at Caracas in 1992, resolved that new partnerships were needed for the management of land and natural resources, this did not mean that their management should become the domain of sociologists and anthropologists. These people might temporarily assuage the demands of

man's avidity, but they are ill-equipped to consider animals and plants as other than a means to that end.

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