

Population displacement inside protected areas: a redefinition of concepts in conservation policies

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Abstract. After considerable review of empirical data and evaluation analyses, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other agencies came to the conclusion that people living in protected areas are made materially worse off and impoverished by the introduction of "restriction of access" to natural resources, enforced as part of conservation projects. This article describes and discusses a significant recent policy revision and development, adopted by the multilateral development banks as a response to that understanding, which has direct relevance for international conservation activities. The revised policy redefines "restricted access" to certain resources in protected areas as a form of involuntary population displacement, even if the affected groups are not physically relocated. This broadens the definition of "dis-placement", beyond its usual acceptance as geographic relocation, to include also occupational and economic dislocation, and requires commensurate economic reconstruction activities. Currently, the substantial opportunity costs and losses incurred by residents of protected areas are most often not compensated. Economic and social analyses have demonstrated that the benefits of biodiversity conservation through protected areas tend to be highest at the global and national levels and lowest at the level of local communities, while, conversely, the costs are highest for the local communities and lowest at the global level. In light of empirical evidence and of the above policy developments, conservation organizations need to consider issuing their own self-binding policy prescriptions to prevent impoverishment in protected areas and, specifically, ruinous displacements. The impoverishment risks and effects of access-restriction and displacement are severe and must be recognized, preempted, and counteracted. The new policy of the international banks is all the more relevant as it contains self-obligations and prescribes means correlated with ends. In this vein, among other measures, the World Bank adopted in April 2004 a new land financing policy that, for the first time, allows the use of Bank financing for land acquisition in displacement situations. The new policy on access-restriction, with its institutionalized new procedures examined in this article, does broaden the options for compensation and economic/livelihood reconstruction, and enhances the capacity for sound PA co-management arrangements.

Some of the most passionate debates that I attended during the recent 3rd World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, Nov. 2004, took place in the sessions dedicated to the relationships between people and parks. The tensions between conservation and livelihood, the issues of forced population displacement and resettlement, of poverty reduction, of indigenous people's rights, of global environmental benefits versus local costs, and of the position of environmental organizations, were intensely examined,

in a committed collective effort to forge conceptual and action-oriented consensus.¹

Given these issues' importance, intense debate was to be expected. However, I was rather surprised to realize that a very significant and relatively recent policy development, which affects the strategy of creating protected areas (PA) worldwide, was little or not at all discussed. Perhaps that recent policy change, with its social and economic rationale, is still largely unknown. But it

should be, because it institutes new approaches in conservation practice. Both its intrinsic meanings and its operational implications are far-reaching.

Restriction of access as displacement

This policy development consists in, and builds upon, the redefinition of the concept of "restriction of access" in the resettlement policy of the World Bank for the development and conservation projects that it finances. This redefinition was soon replicated in the policies of other multilateral donors such as the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the African Development Bank for their programs. It affects also programs financed by GEF. Obviously, it will have impacts at the level of domestic policies of many countries as well.

Circumstances justifying the introduction of "restricted access" to some areas or natural resources tend to occur in several categories of projects: conservation projects protecting biodiversity or cultural heritage and natural monuments, and various area development or extractive industries projects. Given the leading role of the multilateral development agencies in financing conservation, development, and general environmental protection programs, this policy change and its conceptual foundation are likely to be deeply consequential. They may help in overcoming the objective difficulties and severe problems that have affected the creation of many PAs. This article examines this policy change, its basic rationale, and likely challenges in its implementation.

The essence of the policy change consists in two elements. First, it defines the imposition of "restricted access" to certain resources in protected areas as *a form of involuntary population displace-*

ment. Second, the new policy broadens the definition of "displacement" beyond its usual acceptation as geographic relocation, to include also occupational and economic displacement not necessarily accompanied by the physical (geographic) relocation of the local users. The economic risks and occupational displacement imposed by such restrictions are recognized as having many consequences comparable to physical displacement.

Restricted access to certain resources in protected areas is a form of involuntary population displacement even when it is not accompanied by physical (geographic) removal

As is rather well known, the World Bank's resettlement policy (with its preventive measures, and compensatory and entitlement provisions) has been historically covering, among many other sectors,² also the displacements caused by conservation programs through the establishment of parks. But it *did not cover* the projects that introduced "restriction of access" without imposing people's physical relocation. The recognition of restricted access as a form of economic displacement was introduced by beginning of 2002, when by the Bank Board's decision the previous (1990) version of the resettlement policy, code-named OD 4.30,³ was replaced with an updated resettlement policy, code-named OP/BP 4.12.

What explains this change? How was this change arrived at and why was the modified approach elevated to policy status?

Twin objectives in establishing protected areas

The changed definition of "restriction of access" as displacement even when physical uprooting isn't mandated was arrived at as result of long and in-depth



Picture 1. In 2001, people from Okwango village (Nigeria) listen to a lecture from the Cross River National Park staff, who are explaining they should resettle to a new site. (Courtesy Kai Schmidt-Soltau)

internal discussions between the World Bank social and environmental specialists, grounded in their joint examination of previous worldwide experiences with the use of "restricted access." The twin key reasons for it are the pursuit of *environmental effectiveness* and of *social equity*: that is, environmental effectiveness through real and sustainable protection of biodiversity; and social equity, through identifying and preventing the adverse impacts of PAs upon those whose access to some natural resources is suddenly restricted, by offering them alternative options for securing their livelihood sustainably. This way, they will not end up worse off. These two goals are seen as interdependent twin goals, which must be pursued concomitantly.

In substance, the overall aim of the new policy is to ensure a stronger protective regime to PAs. For this to take place, the means necessary are prescribed and provided through the new policy. These means, absent in the past, are specific entitlements, comparable with those prescribed in typical development-caused

displacement situations.

Protected areas are seen by the multilateral development agencies as a crucial modality for conserving unique biodiversity resources and areas endowed with major cultural heritage or natural monuments. Restrictions of access to such resources are objectively necessary to prevent total loss, overuse, or gradual depletion, since many such resources have global or national importance, beyond their immediate benefits for the local populations. The challenge is to involve those local populations in genuinely managing sustainably such resources, either by themselves or in various patterns of co-management. In certain such

situations restrictions become indispensable. This need for reasonable restrictions is not, in itself, at issue.

At issue, however, are two types of recurrent failures of the institution of restricted access, highlighted increasingly by independent research/evaluation studies.

First, in numerous situations the introduction of restricted access has sadly failed to achieve its environmental objectives: the resource depletion by the former users has continued, rendering the protection ineffective. Therefore, to avoid further environmental failure, the protection regime needs to be introduced with better incentives and additional organizational skills, improving implementation and monitoring.

Second, the practice of simply declaring some areas and some prior resource-use patterns as suddenly "restricted" and prohibited has caused imposed heavy opportunity costs on local people, subtracting without restitution from their liveli-

hood. The social outcome has been net de-capitalisation of those affected and impoverished.

The change in policy is intended to help in overcoming both types of failures, by creating organizational, economic and social premises conducive to "double sustainability": that is, to protecting both people's livelihoods and the environment at the same time.

Debates on the content of "forced displacement"

Forced population displacement caused by development or environmental projects is usually defined as occurring when people lose, through expropriation, either their *house*, or their *land*, or

People's place is their land too, not only the roof above their heads, land is livelihood and identity

both simultaneously. They are compelled to yield the "right of way" to the project. This broadly accepted definition of forced displacement, however, has given place

to at least two long simmering conceptual and definitional debates. The debates, not just academic, are loaded with heavy implications for practice.

In the first debate, the definition mentioned above was opposed by a somehow more limited definition of forced displacement, which introduced a distinction between loss of home and loss of land. The supporters of the narrow definition contended that displacement occurs only when people lose dwellings and are evicted from their houses. Loss of land or of access to land, their argument contended, would "affect" people's productive activities but will not necessarily dis-*place* them because they don't lose their "place," are not forcibly resettled and could stay further in their house. At closer scrutiny, this view-point appeared exceedingly narrow. It belittles the core

economic content of displacement and reduces it to geography. People's place is their land too, not only the roof above their heads, land is livelihood and identity.

Confronted with vast empirical evidence and robust theoretical response, that narrow definition of displacement as house-expropriation only has lost the debate. Land dispossession, even if occasionally not accompanied by loss of housing, has been vastly recognized as forced displacement. Today, that narrow definition of displacement is virtually forgotten. That debate is basically settled, even if isolated advocates unrepentantly return to the narrow definition.

In the second debate, the issue at stake was more complex. It referred primarily to populations with customary land ownership, not formal title. When protected areas are established, the populations with customary ownership over those areas (most often tribal or other indigenous groups) are often relocated forcibly.

Forced resettlements from park areas, however, have compiled a historical record abundant in well documented social disasters. Those physically uprooted were not given equitable, realistic and viable alternatives. Specifically, no land title to other sites have been allotted as part of such forced relocations; compensations were not paid or were woefully under-paid; people's place-rooted identity was undermined; conflicts with hostile host populations have frequently ensued. In turn, the displaced people, lacking an alternative livelihood, kept pressure on the PA from the outskirts, so that the "displacements-without-proper-resettlement" have also detracted from the expected environmental effectiveness of PAs.

Scholars of various specialties have em-

pirically researched and explained these negative impoverishing outcomes in great detail. The essence of the deep economic conflict between park-displaced people and park-promoting conservation has been well captured by Geisler in the suggestive title of his study *"Your Park, my Poverty"*⁴ and by Kaimowitz and his colleagues in their study – *"Your Biosphere is my Backyard"*,⁵ about the Bosawas Reserve in Nicaragua. Volumes and countless studies have reported hard evidence about the unmitigated impoverishment risks inflicted on those displaced, demonstrating how these risks turned into actual impoverishment and tragic destitution occurrences, and about the ethical clouds and unsolved dilemmas that the responsibility for causing such social pathologies has placed upon protected areas and their one-sided proponents.⁶

The mounting criticism of socially irresponsible forced physical relocations has had some impact, and a slight tactical shift was introduced in the establishment of conservation areas: namely, the promotion of PA approaches continued to enact "restriction of access" and create protected areas based on "restrictions of access", but it de-linked in some instances such restrictions from the pursuit of immediate physical displacement. The assumption was that, without imposing forced geographic displacements, the enactment of "restriction of access" would become benign in its socio-economic effects, and the obligation to compensate and relocate those "restricted" would disappear because they were not physically removed.

The real situation of the "restricted populations" inside parks and other types of PAs has become the subject of what I termed the second debate. The responses to the critique of park-caused physical

displacements have varied on a broad range.⁷

On the ground that no physical removal takes place, some promoters of protected areas have denied that the displacement concept is applicable when populations are subjected to "only restricted access". They argued that because there was no physical resettlement, there was no displacement either, and cited cases of populations that are still inside PAs, despite the laws that either made their residence there illegal or that "restricted" their access to resource-streams.

This is a fallacious reasoning. What in fact happens is displacement in its economic sense, without even the mitigation, alternatives and the entitlements provided through planned and organized resettlement.

People made into illegal residents and prohibited by access-restricting laws from using the land and resources declared "protected areas", also remain under the constant threat of being at any moment physically relocated.⁸ The denial of the displacing effects resulting from "restriction of access" without counter-risks measures implicitly justifies the promoters' refusal to grant the deprived populations compensation and entitlements to alternative land resources or activities, impoverishing them further.

Responding to this view, many social researchers and resettlement specialists,

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including also some conservation specialists, have argued and documented empirically that the enforcement of "restricted access" to resources vital for livelihood is tantamount to economic displacement, destitution and impoverishment. I have been myself a participant in this argument, both inside and outside the World Bank; long before the adoption of the revised Bank policy OP 4.12, I argued that "the concept of displacement describes also situations in which some people are deprived of their productive lands, or of other income-generating assets, without being physically evicted from their houses."⁹

Confronted with field-findings and critical analysis, the assumption mentioned above was proven precarious and incorrect. The poverty effects of access-restriction and of denying a prior food/income stream remained severe even in the absence of physical relocation. The underlying issue is that, as long as the deep consequences of these restrictions on people are not recognized, preempted, and counteracted, they suddenly and severely subtract from the livelihood of the local communities. Vulnerable and poor populations are made even poorer. The economic effects on their livelihoods end up being almost the same as if they were physically forcibly displaced. Moreover, lacking alternatives, such groups soon revert to surreptitious and now illegal use of the restricted areas, sapping the intended conservation as well. Rather than the vaunted "win-win", a "lose-lose" situation is created.

This debate, as opposed to the first one, has been long simmering. But accumulating empirical research evidence has revealed the dire impoverishing effects on people inside parks and protected areas and the failure to ensure sustainable livelihoods. This empirical evidence and the lessons from painful experiences with

"restricted access" have led the major multilateral development agencies to new conclusions, that is to recognizing that the practices of restricted access, even without physical relocation, are tantamount to occupational displacement with imposed impoverishment. For the first time, the newly adopted policy provisions and definitions regarding restricted access bring key international actors to an unambiguous position in this debate.

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This is why the *conversion of this research conclusion into explicit policy* is a landmark.

New policy conclusions and prescriptions

How is this conversion reflected in the text of the updated policy? The World Bank's new policy statement explicitly broadens the coverage of the policy from only situations of involuntary "taking of land" through expropriation, extending it also to situations of imposed and

"involuntary restriction of access to legally designated parks and protected areas, resulting in adverse impacts on the livelihoods of the displaced persons." (OP 4.12 art. 36).

Further, the policy explains what is understood by "involuntary restrictions" and to whom it refers. It states:

"For the purposes of this policy, involuntary restriction of access covers restriction on the use of resources imposed on people living outside a park or protected area, or on those who continue living inside the park, or protected area, during and after implementation." (OP 4.12, Note 9).

In the 25 year history of the World Bank's resettlement policy, this is for the first time that "loss of access" is being explicitly considered as a form of displacement. However, this is fully consistent with the conceptual definitions and argument developed by the sociologists and anthropologists studying displacement. It is also consistent with the theoretical principle adopted by the World Bank long ago: namely, that the *definitional* characteristic in forced displacements is not only the *physical geographic removal*, but the imposed *loss of assets and income*.¹⁰ It is precisely this displacement-caused *loss* that must be corrected by restoring and improving people's livelihoods.

Indeed, these two distinct definitional elements have been, and probably for some time will still be, often confused. In practice, imposed deprivation of assets

The policy also covers the loss of income sources or means of livelihood, whether or not the affected persons must move to another location can take place and often does take place *in situ*, without the physical removal of inhabitants. Therefore, this time the policy warns against such confusion. Explicitly, it specifies that, similar to situations of actual "taking of land", in restricted access situations the policy also covers the

"loss of income sources or means of livelihood, whether or not the affected persons must move to another location"; OP 4.12, and 3a11).

Beyond the World Bank itself, the international response from other major development agencies to the definition of restriction of access as displacement has been rapid and consensual. Inter-agency consultations and replication followed shortly. For Africa, the region where a long history of abuses has marred the creation of many parks and other pro-

tected areas, the African Development Bank has included in its 2003 policy on involuntary resettlement a new clear statement, absent in the prior (1995) policy version. The revised AfDB 2003 policy states:

"This policy covers economic and social impacts associated with Bank financed projects involving loss of assets or involuntary restriction of access to assets including national parks, protected areas or of national resources; or loss of income sources or means of livelihood as a result of projects, whether or not the affected persons are required to move." (AfDB 2003, para 3.4)

The African Development Bank places the new provisions on PAs in the context of its stand against the impoverishment risks induced by displacement. It emphasizes the obligation of operationally identifying in each project the impoverishment processes inherent in displacement, listing them verbatim, and the need for applying counter-risk reconstruction strategies. The policy states:

"...the above lessons highlight the need for improvements in the planning and implementation of resettlement components (and) for identifying the key impoverishment processes entailed in the displacement of persons arising from these projects. These are landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, loss of access to common property resources, increased morbidity and community dislocation. Therefore, the key to a development-oriented resettlement scheme is to identify the impoverishment risks of a project and attempt to counteract them by adopting a program with a people-centered focus rather than a property-compensation approach, e.g. by addressing landlessness with land-based schemes; joblessness with employment schemes;

homelessness with home reconstruction schemes; community disarticulation with community reconstruction schemes, etc.” (AfDB, 2003, para 2.3.6).

The AfDB policy also correctly notes that the additional costs of not applying a good policy in displacement

“almost invariably outweigh the investments that would have been needed to plan and execute an acceptable resettlement program.”

In turn, the Asian Development Bank extended in 2003 its involuntary resettlement policy to also explicitly address the

“social and economic impacts that are permanent or temporary and are caused by... change in the use of land or restrictions imposed on land as a result of an ADB operation.” (ADB, 2003 para. 3).

“An initial poverty and social assessment (IPSA) is required for every development project and should be undertaken as early as possible in the project cycle... It quantifies any land acquisition, land changes, or restrictions that will necessitate involuntary resettlement planning” (ADB 2003, para 23-24, added emphasis)

Surely, the chain consensus of the multilateral development banks is more than just inter-agency replication: it reflects a self-critical reconsideration of their previous position and the intent to close a loophole that allowed dispossession without planned resettlement to occur under internationally financed projects. Beyond this correction, it institutionalizes positive changes materially able to optimise the governance of the protected areas, thus becoming part of what is seen as a broader set of governance changes in this domain.¹¹ The policy change by the multilateral banks also recognizes and

validates the long and increasing resistance of indigenous people and their NGOs, in all continents, against the social injustices and impoverishment inflicted upon them during the creation of many protected areas. The policy of the World Bank applies also to all GEF projects executed by the Bank, as well as to projects by private sector entities that are co-financed by IFC, the World Bank’s group arm for private sector projects.

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The policy changes adopted by the World Bank and the regional multilateral Banks are setting a model to follow for private sector foundations concerned with conservation. Commercial corporations or private foundations from developed countries which undertake park management roles need to be, in their turn, ethically compelled to support and apply the same moral and economic safeguard standards protecting the livelihood of people as those embodied in the policy provisions described above. Such organizations, often funded also by OECD governments or by donations from the civil society, can not escape the moral and political responsibility for the destructions and impoverishing displacement carried out by local governments, when such displacements are in fact the preliminaries for those organizations’ projects to establish a new park or to commercially manage a park.¹² Fairness to resident populations, as well as basic ethics and respect of human rights, requires making sure that any displacement, physical or economic, does not leave the affected people worse off, even if technically it occurs “prior” to

the foundations' formal involvement in the management of a given park.



Picture 2. In 2005, this is how a deserted village appears within Lopé National Park (Gabon). People from this village were evicted in 2002. (Courtesy Kai Schmidt-Soltau)

The economic rationale underpinning the policy change

The policy reassessment has not occurred lightly. It is the result of considerable analysis of factual evidence and of dialogue between conservation and social specialists. It is also grounded in the fundamentals of environmental economics. David Pearce, one of the founders of environmental economics and among the very few economic scholars analysing population displacement issues, argued that in conservation as well as in development projects

"the first rule is that all parties to the project should be better off with the intervention than without it. The fundamental justification for this rule is that if any party is made worse off by the intervention, they are likely to act in such a way that the success of the project will be jeopardized. Clear examples exist in the conservation policy area where protected area might restrict access to local communities who previously used the area of various ecosystem services and products – the

so-called 'evictions from Eden'. Unless the local community is compensated in some way, restricted access will generate losses and resentment, and this may result in what then becomes illegal activity, threatening the project... Each party must have an incentive to 'sign up' to the project, which in turn means that the benefits of the project to them must exceed the costs of the project to them." (Pearce, 2005)

From the economic viewpoint, therefore, the strategy conclusion is that the economic displacement caused by access-restrictions – even "displacement in situ", inside the protected area – must (a) be help generate benefits that exceed the costs incurred by the affected people and (b) the benefits need to be channelled back to the affected people. These channelled-back benefits may take the form of a package of entitlements, combining compensation, incentives and added investments to cover losses and incremental costs.

It is sometimes pointed out that a protected area, by preserving biodiversity resources, may ultimately generate biodiversity benefits shared in by the affected people as well. This is indeed true, but it is crystal clear that the negative impoverishment impacts on the locals, poor to begin with and made poorer by displacement, are immediately livelihood wrecking, long before any ultimate benefits may be felt.

Conservation is undertaken in the name of global interests, and this brings into discussion the relationships between benefits at global and local levels. Economic analysis has demonstrated convincingly that the *benefits* of biodiversity conservation through protected areas or parks tend to be highest at the global and national levels and lowest at the level of local communities.¹³ In the same vein,

economic research has concluded that:

"when analysing costs, they are (found to be) highest at the local level and lowest at the national and international levels... At the local level, net benefits may be negative, indicating that there is no local incentive to undertake land conservation. This suggests that not only must the local community be involved in conservation efforts, but that they should also be able to appropriate a fair share of the under values of conservation." (Brown, Pearce *et al.*, 1993).

The benefits from protected areas accrue primarily to stakeholders and groups which are far away, are developed, and by far much better off than the local resident poor populations. In other words, costs of conservation are externalized, imposed upon, and are born by those less able to afford them.¹⁴ The substantial opportunity costs/losses incurred by PAs residents are not compensated to those unwittingly bearing them. The ethical failure is obvious. In this case, a known syndrome is at work: "some get the gains, while others get the pains."

Social analysis, in turn, has demonstrated that displacement and loss of access to common natural resources is closely associated with social disarticulation, loss of income-generating occupation and identity, increased morbidity and mortality, marginalisation¹⁵ – in short, with most of the basic risks identified by the general model of impoverishment risks and reconstruction (IRR) that applies to development-caused displacement/resettlement in other sectors as well.¹⁶ The vastly documented body of findings about these impoverishment risks in Africa¹⁷ raises issues of social justice and equity in conservation strategies too. The general rationale of the IRR framework, when tailored analytically to the case of parks and protected areas, is congruent

with the classic rationale about the economic harm and moral injustice of development-induced displacements in all sectors, which must be reversed by organized reconstruction.

Significantly, awareness about these unacceptable social, economic and cultural effects is also increasing within the conservation community, as a recent paper critical of western environmentalists' biases has stated. Because

"protected areas have often increased poverty amongst the poorest of the poor, there is now emerging recognition of both an ethical and practical imperative to why we must consider the linkages between protected areas and poverty. Ethically, western environmentalists, no matter how well-meaning, have no right to run roughshod over local needs and rights." (McShane, 2003)

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Although this position is not yet generally embraced, and direct reference to forced displacements is still not made, the 2003 World Parks Congress and the 2004 IUCN Congress in Bangkok adopted the recommendation that areas protected for biodiversity conservation should under no circumstance exacerbate poverty.¹⁸ The big conservation organizations still have to issue "how to" self-binding prescriptions on how to actually accomplish impoverishment prevention in protected areas and to formally commit themselves to avoid and oppose displacements that

ruin livelihoods.

From policy to implementation

How will the multilateral agencies' new policy definition be implemented? The short answer is: it will face substantial difficulties, at least initially. However promising it is for both protection and social equity, consistent implementation of the new policy will have to confront

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serious obstacles: a wide range of interests vested in repeating old approaches to PAs; shortage of institutional capacity for enforcing the new approach; technical difficulties in measuring costs and allocations; and entrenched biases ready to exploit all these difficulties for subverting the new approach.

Yet implementation success is of highest interest, both to the affected people AND to the conservation supporters.

Both groups gain important new means for promoting sustainable and equitable protection. It is therefore indispensable that Governments, major international conservation organizations like IUCN and WWF, and country-based NGOs, genuinely join forces in implementing the new policy approach.

Two decisive premises for implementing this policy will be (a) increased financial resources, and (b) more detailed socio-economic planning work. To be noted, the World Bank has not simply revised concepts and policies without securing means for making them stick. It also prescribed new procedures, project tools and resources. Among these is an improved process of project preparation tailored to protected areas, supported by access to certain financing options previously not available.

By supporting a better equipped approach to establishing PAs, the new policy's implementation will not endorse the proclamation of protected areas without the financial backing necessary, is these are simply predicated on the dispossession of resident populations under the cover of conservation-correct rhetorical discourse. The multilateral agencies

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have learned the hard way – from their own and others' experiences – that such past approaches have produced fake protection and compounded social misery. Instead, the new policy's implementation is bound to place an incomparably more solid financial platform under the establishment of enduring PAs. This way, it is apt to increase and improve effective protection. It will secure genuine global environmental goods more effectively, because it will compel the provision of a more fair and equitable, that means higher, restitution of costs imposed on locals, through entitlements to the kind of measures and resources granted in recognized development-caused displacements.

A new policy is always more credible when it contains self-obligations and prescribes means correlated with ends. Through its new policy, the World Bank has committed itself to a sequence of "required measures" tailored to the needs of the affected populations. Governments asking for Bank assistance and Bank staff members are now required to prepare a "process framework" for all "projects involving restriction of access to legally designated parks and protected areas" (OP 4.12, para. 7), since the type of resettlement action plan (RAP) required usually when populations are physically relocated¹⁹ would not apply in this case.

What is called "the process framework" is a formal project document which spells out the steps needed to implement the policy in ways germane to specific protected areas. The purpose of this framework is to institute genuine involvement and consultation, through which members of potentially affected communities would participate in designing the

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project's components. These consultations are explicitly not only about measures for biodiversity sustainability but also about measures for the sustainability of people's livelihoods. The framework will lay the founda-

tions of a resource management plan, which can be, in time, improved gradually through a process of jointly identifying²⁰ those activities which may be continued sustainably as distinct from those which must be restricted for protection and replaced with other income generating activities.

The degree of detail in the policy's exacting demands regarding the interactions between project sponsors and affected population is well reflected in the following, rather long but significant, excerpt:

"A process framework is prepared when Bank-supported projects may cause restrictions in access to natural resources in legally designated parks and protected areas. The purpose of the process framework is to establish a process by which members of potentially affected communities participate in design of project components, in determination of measures necessary to achieve resettlement policy objectives, and in implementation and monitoring of relevant activities... The

document should briefly describe the project and components or activities that may involve new or more stringent restrictions on natural resource use. It should also describe the process by which potentially displaced persons participate in project design... The document should establish that potentially affected communities will be involved in identifying any adverse impacts, assessing of the significance of impacts, and establishing of the criteria for eligibility of any mitigating or compensating measures necessary.

Measures to assist affected persons in their efforts to improve their livelihoods or restore them, in real terms, to pre-displacement levels, while maintaining the sustainability of the park or protected area will be identified. The (process framework) document should describe the process for resolving disputes relating to resource use restrictions... and grievances that may arise from members of communities who are dissatisfied with the eligibility criteria, community planning measures, or actual implementation." (OP 4.12, Annex A, para. 26, 27, added emphasis)

The content of this statement is particularly significant as it establishes the requirement of pursuing "double sustainability", for both biodiversity and livelihoods. It breaks with the chronic de-linking of the vital interests of "park people" from biodiversity conservation. The new revisions to policy do not mean, however, that the policy prohibits physical relocation in all conditions, if at the limit it is unavoidable to relocate some groups as the only way to save a unique resource from further risks. Such situations may occur, for instance, when recent encroachers move in large numbers purposefully to exploit the wealth of a rare and precious biodiversity resource – an old

forest, an area of unique vegetation, etc. – threatening their survival. Distinctions must always be made between natives and newcomers of various sorts. The point is that relocation, if unavoidable, is not a punishment tool but a last-resort tool for safeguarding the enduring survival of the resource, while also materially enabling the area's native inhabitants and

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their children to achieve an alternative sustainable livelihood.

Pursuing constantly the "double sustainability" is the just compass for conservation activities.²¹ Of course, once the policy position is established, what matters ultimately are not just the

statements in the policy documents but whether resources, both financial and human, are provided for on-the-ground implementation.

Additional financing for genuine co-management

The redefinition of restricted access as displacement changes the prior landscape of conservation work in some important ways, apt to prevent inducing impoverishment. It offers those affected, even when they are not being forced to physically move, access to the entitlements provided under multilateral agencies policies for those who are physically relocated. Like the World Bank, in turn, the Asian Development Bank policy similarly prescribes that

"affected people will be provided with certain resettlement entitlements, duly as land and asset compensation and transfer allowances, prior to their displacement, dispossession, or re-

stricted access" (ADB 2003, para. 38)

Even in the recent past, the establishment of protected areas has chronically suffered – even in projects supported by major donors or international NGOs – from insufficient financing. This has diminished the effectiveness of the restrictions themselves by not supplying the incremental resources needed for alternative income-generating productive activities. In turn, promoters of protected areas (including governments of the countries where PAs were created) explained-away the non-payment of just compensation to affected people by "lack of resources" to cover the costs, thus tacitly recognizing that the costs of creating protected areas were partly or fully externalized on the local populations.

Past situations therefore teach us that the recent change in definition will have no practical effects unless it is backed up on the ground by the delivery of material entitlements which the resettlement policies of the development banks grant to those targeted by the restrictions. This policy revision is NOT just a matter of shifting definitional labels: it is a matter of shifting resources. Because resources are shifted in the first place away from those restricted, therefore other resources must be shifted back to them. The means of livelihood subtracted from the affected must be replaced with access to alternative and sustainable means of livelihood (and not just with a one-time, soon-evaporating "compensation"). This material safeguard is the ultimate meaning of the change in the international definitions and policies.

How will this be accomplished – including the use of fair valuation procedures, the calculation of amounts, and the design for alternative productive activities? Not an easy task, certainly. Multilateral development banks are now expected to

show practically (in the feasibility reports for PAs and project appraisal reports prescribing restricted access) how the restrictions' costs are realistically calculated and quantified financially. In turn, international conservation organizations can not, morally, apply lower feasibility standards in their projects.

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Only terminology changes in artfully written feasibility reports would not change anything in the absence of transparent economic analyses, of explicit resource-allocation, and of instituted new NRM patterns, co-management included. In some cases, such artful descriptions depict imposed relocation as voluntary relocation, while in fact the material and cultural prerequisites for such change in the nature of relocation are far from being met. The mechanisms for channelling the incremental resources needed for establishing PAs and protecting livelihoods should be transparent, to ascertain that they truly reach the members of the affected communities and are not siphoned off for other uses at intermediate national, regional or local levels.

Details on these entitlements and other compensation and mitigating measures are given throughout the OP/BP 4.12 policy on involuntary resettlement and in ADB's policies.²² In practice, the international agencies, as well as the local agency or NGO responsible for the PA, need to describe realistically and supply

"the arrangements for funding resettlement, including the preparation and review of cost estimates, the flow of funds, and contingency arrangements"

(OP/BP 4.12 Annex A, para. 24).

That this is not just discourse language is already suggested by another significant decision. In April 2004, the World Bank has also adopted a new land financing policy, which for the first time allows the use of financing by IDA (International Development Association) and the Bank for land acquisition, within Bank-supported projects²³. Prior to 2004, the World Bank did not allow its credits to be used to purchase lands, with only case-by-case exceptions. Any land acquisition had to be financed with government counterparts funds. Recently, this barrier was lifted, in the effort to facilitate realistic ways to preempt impoverishment.

Thus, the new policy represents a multisided change and does include added financial backing. Previously, a series of proposals to this respect inside the same institution, including recommendations of a special task force that was convened to examine the World Bank's financing of land acquisition in support of better resettlement, had been rejected along the year.²⁴ On this background, the recent changes are even more significant.

The increased flexibility for using Bank and IDA financing towards land purchase in displacement situations will also help increase capacity for establishing co-management arrangements over natural resources. Despite their intrinsic promise, such co-management patterns have often failed because of lack of material means. The unfavorable cost-benefits ratios for

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the local communities made the rhetorical calls "to co-manage" sound vacuous, and alienated the local actors from co-managing.

Further, park promoters often promised local resident groups high alternative revenues from eco-tourism, in exchange of restriction-induced losses. But such promises have been hugely over inflated. They were employed sometimes as a smoke-screen to justify and hide the welfare losses caused by eliminating past income-streams. An important GEF study²⁵ on the global-versus-local benefits in GEF-financed projects found that eco-tourism benefits were unwarrantedly exaggerated in feasibility studies, and that local communities typically did not get the promised benefits. Hopefully, the new funding mechanisms for PAs with restricted access, due to the recent change in World Bank policy create new options and incentives for innovative co-management patterns.

In turn, the traditional agricultural knowledge possessed by local communities may also be more effective while they remain *in situ*, helping to balance restriction of access with sustainable use of other resources for personal consumption.

One step that must not be underestimated in future PAs planning is the analytical difficulty of calculating accurate estimates of the costs (losses) to be incurred by residents because of restrictions. This will require perceptive socio-economic work on the ground in preparing new PA projects, using adequate economic tool-kits. The more accurate the cost identification and coverage, the better the protection of the natural resources, and the higher the chances of creating PAs without making local population worse off.

In sum, realistic economic and financial premises are indispensable for securing people's interested cooperation in genuine co-management. The World Bank's "process framework" explicitly requires that such cost-assessments be done not by outside conservation specialists alone, but with the direct participation of the local communities. The combination of local knowledge with outside expert knowledge, plus fairness in negotiating agreed estimates and in assessing incremental costs,²⁶ are the desirable, in fact the indispensable, mechanisms for preparing sound and sustainable conservation initiatives.

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Focused research on restricted areas and poverty

The international conservation community is increasingly concerned with researching and analysing a fundamental question: "Can Protected Areas Contribute to Poverty Reduction?"²⁷ In turn, to analyse further its own past and ongoing experiences with restricted access in more depth, and to derive lessons useful in implementing the new policies, the World Bank initiated in 2004 a project portfolio review and identified a large number of projects – over 100 – supporting parks and access-restricted areas, out of which 48 projects were selected for detailed study.

Among its main preliminary findings, this study notes self-critically a lack of proper balance: namely, that in the reviewed World Bank projects, prior to the revision of the resettlement policy, the "restrictions of access were thought of mainly in term of how to achieve conservation objectives, not in terms of impact on live-

lihood". Also, in those projects the
"mitigation strategies in feasibility analysis were more of an optimistic menu of potential options, rather than the results of thorough feasibility analysis: even when feasible, many strategies were inadequately supported by other elements of the designed projects" (van Wicklin III, 2005).

This study recommends, among other operational measures, both the strengthening of technical analyses and more material support to setting up protected areas with sustainable strategies in the World Bank- and GEF-assisted projects. The review, in progress when this paper goes to print, will likely be a valuable knowledge source about alternative approaches to restriction of access, apt to protect both the biodiversity and the needs of the resident native people.

At the 2004 IUCN World Conservation Congress, several research projects on these issues were announced and planned by CARE, by branches of IUCN, WWF and African Wildlife Federation, in partnerships with academic researchers. These revolve around "the social and economic costs and benefits of protected areas in East Africa", and their defined objective is "promoting social justice in conservation."²⁸ A large scale, world wide synthesis study was initiated on the "social impacts of protected areas."²⁹

Much of the credit for the current new policy definition of PAs, restricted access, and displacement adopted by development agencies should go to the efforts over long years of many researchers of the classic theme "people and parks". In more than one way, this policy emerged not "from the outside", but from this kind of long, patient and candid field research. It is this work that has gathered the empirical evidence revealing the risks and destitution inflicted on vulnerable indig-

enous populations by physical displacement or restricted access.

Some of these studies³⁰ went farther and made important policy recommendations, based upon the incontrovertible evidence (produced by many researchers) about additional impoverishment caused to people physically displaced out of parks and protected areas: namely, the policy recommendations to discontinue physical displacements and to formally rule them out as a mainstream park-creation strategy, unless the full complement of titled replacement land, just compensation, productive alternatives and civil rights protection is provided to the relocated populations.³¹ The debate continues around this recommendation, since the supporters of forced displacements are reluctant to embrace it, while they remain unable to disprove the facts that led to it or to meet the requirements of livelihood protection.

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The ability to derive strategy/policy recommendations from such in depth field studies and evaluations shows why this kind of research needs to be continued and expanded. Most probably, the changes in the policies for creating PAs, described above, could benefit from research on how the new definition of "restricted access" is translated in projects, and from highlighting positive experiences, successes, difficulties.

Overall, the sustainable governance of biodiversity resources, the need for accountability in conservation interventions for the social consequences they trigger,

the relationships between poverty reduction and conservation work, the risks of impoverishment and the counter-risk response measures – re-emerge with increased immediacy as critical areas of priority research, to be converted in knowledge-guidance for on-the-ground activities.

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Notes

- 1 IUCN, 3d World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, 2004.
- 2 The World Bank's initial policy on involuntary population resettlement was issued in 1980, at which time it was the first policy ever adopted by any international organization for regulating project-caused processes of displacement and resettlement. The early adoption of this policy positioned the World Bank at the forefront of international efforts for improving the norms and practices of forced population resettlement, but also opened up a period of recurrent tensions and criticism, both inside the Bank and between the Bank and its borrowers, resulting from various instances of inconsistency between policy principles and projects' implementation. During the difficult uphill battles that followed after 1980, the initial resettlement policy was revised, gradually strengthened, and expanded in several successive stages in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1994 (for a history of this policy and its impacts, see Cernea, 2005a.) The revised policy (OP/BP 4.12) that broadens the previous policy's coverage as described in the present article was adopted by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors in November 2001 and became effective in January 1, 2002.
- 3 World Bank, 1990.
- 4 Geisler, 2003.
- 5 Kaimowitz, Faune and Mendoza, 2003.
- 6 Feeney, 1998; Turton, 2002; Chatty and Colchester, 2003; Brechin *et al.*, 2003; Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau, 2003 and 2005; Ghimire and Pimbert, 2004; Rudd, 2004; Brockington and Igoe, in press, 2006.
- 7 Some of these responses were so insensitive to the social and moral issues, and so deeply immersed in denial, that they hardly deserve consideration. For instance, one of such responses argued that resettlement is a "political matter", and poverty reduction is a moral goal, while conservation is a "scientific matter" and science-based conservation should not be mixed or "compromised" with social considerations.
- 8 One case in point, subject to recent articles and discussions, illustrates well the complexities of such situations. This is the case of the Mursi, whose territory lies within and between the Omo and Mago National Parks in southwestern Ethiopia (Turton, 1987; 2002). The Mursi depend for about 75 per cent of their subsistence needs on land lying within the park boundaries - agricultural land in the Omo Park and dry-season grazing land in the Mago Park. Although these parks were set up, in a practical sense, over thirty years ago, it was only in early 2005 that the Ethiopian government began taking effective steps to have their boundaries legally established. This was in connection with a proposal from a Netherlands-based organization, African Parks Foundation, to run the parks in a public-private partnership with the government. The implications of this for the customary land rights of the Mursi are not yet fully evident, but could be disastrous. Once the park boundaries have become a legal 'fact', the Mursi will face the likelihood of permanent restricted access to subsistence resources within the parks which they need to sustain their economy, without receiving alternative livelihood options from the foundation that would manage the park commercially. The authorities, meanwhile, would be able to claim that, in denying such access, they would not be 'evicting' the Mursi physically from their territory and would not, therefore, be obliged to provide alternative livelihood opportunities. (Turton, 2005) An even more dramatic case was reported by Feeney from Uganda a few years ago: the sudden and brutal relocation of inhabitants from the Kibale game corridor (Feeney, 1998). Physical displacement from other PAs, after years of residence endorsed by authorities, are also known.
- 9 Cernea, 1999.
- 10 Cernea, 2005.
- 11 Borrini-Feyerabend, 2004.
- 12 Pearce, 2005; see also the case in Southeastern Ethiopia described in detail in footnote 8.
- 13 Wells, 1992.
- 14 Daly, 2004.
- 15 Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau, 2003.
- 16 Cernea, 2000.
- 17 Cernea, 2005b.
- 18 IUCN 3dWorld Conservation Congress, Bangkok, 2004.
- 19 For those situations, projects must include a distinct "Resettlement Action Plan" (RAP).
- 20 *e.g.* through accepted forms of co-management of the restricted access areas.
- 21 The argument for "double sustainability" was developed by the author in more detail in other papers as well; see Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau,

- 2003 and 2003/2005.
- 22 The reader may consult, in addition to the OP/BP 4.12, the "Involuntary Resettlement Sourcebook" recently published by the World Bank, arguably the most complete technical manual in existence about how to carry out displacement and resettlement consistent with Bank policy (see World Bank, 2004).
- 23 World Bank OP/BP 6.00, *Bank Financing*, 2004 (Note: OP and BP 6.00 are based on Eligibility of Expenditure in World Bank Lending: A New Policy Framework (R2004-0026/1), approved by the Board of Executive Directors on April 13, 2004).
- 24 I served on such a task force on financing land a decade ago, in mid 1990s. Yet the context was insufficiently favorable then and despite a sharp battle of arguments, the task force's initial proposals to this respect were at that time derailed.
- 25 Todd *et al.*, 2005.
- 26 To be covered by projects aiming to institute protected areas.
- 27 Scherl *et al.*, 2004.
- 28 Franks, 2004.
- 29 Brockington and Schmidt-Soltau, 2004.
- 30 *e.g.*, Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau, 2003 and 2005.
- 31 Studies recommending such de-mainstreaming of forced physical displacements were presented at the Durban World Parks Congress (2003) and at the Bangkok IUCN World Conservation Congress (2004); see also Cernea-Schmidt-Soltau 2003 and 2005.
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