

## Collaborative Event Ethnography: Conservation and Development Trade-offs at the Fourth World Conservation Congress

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DOI: 10.4103/0972-4923.78141

### INTRODUCTION

Ideas about conservation have shifted dramatically over the last century. From an early focus on state-run parks and protected areas, to the role of local communities and markets in conservation, to engaging the private sector, what conservation is and how we go about doing it continues to evolve (Adams & Hulme 2001; Brosius 2006). While there have been many shifts, in this study we are interested in the recent emphasis on ‘the global’ as the scale at which conservation policies and practices are conceptualised, articulated, and (ideally) implemented (Taylor & Buttel 1992). This shift, or scaling-up, is evident in a number of trends: the emergence of ‘big’ international NGOs as key actors in conservation (Chapin 2004); increased emphasis on conservation practice at large, transboundary scales (ecoregions, seascapes) dictated ostensibly by ecology (Brosius & Russell 2003); the continued proliferation of protected areas, the dominant symbol (and measure) of western-influenced nature conservation (Zimmerer 2006); and, of particular interest in our research, the increased use of international meetings and agreements to establish the goals, targets, and means of achieving conservation.

This collection of nine papers is a result of research conducted at one such meeting—the Fourth World Conservation Congress (WCC) hosted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in Barcelona, October 5–14, 2008. The IUCN is the world’s ‘largest global environmental network’, whose stated mission is to ‘influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable’ (<http://www.iucn.org/about/>). IUCN was originally formed in 1948 as the International Union for the Preservation of Nature, and is a hybrid of government and private interest groups (McCormick 1989). Today, with more

than 1,000 member organisations in 140 countries (including 200+ government and 800+ non-government organisations), as well as almost 11,000 volunteer scientists in six commissions (<http://www.iucn.org/about/>), IUCN continues to exert a major influence in the global conservation domain. While often compared to the ‘big three’ non-government international conservation organisations (Conservation International, WWF, The Nature Conservancy), it is fundamentally different and more akin to a multilateral UN agency, though with private sector members as well.<sup>1</sup> Until recently, the IUCN did very little implementation of conservation, casting itself as a scientific authority to inform and track conservation rather than implement it. Its most well-known products are the IUCN’s Red List of Threatened Species™ and its system of categorising protected areas, often used to compare national commitments to conservation ([http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa\\_overview/](http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_overview/)). Through such initiatives, IUCN has been an important player in determining not only what conservation should be, but also how it should be measured.

According to its statutes, the IUCN Members’ Assembly convenes every four years to make decisions, plan, and elect its council, the governing body of the IUCN. In 1996, a Forum open to non-members and the public was added to the meeting, and the meeting became the WCC, a more visible and dynamic event (Universalia Management Group 2009, iii). The WCC is heralded as ‘the world’s largest and most important conservation event’ ([http://www.iucn.org/2012\\_congress/](http://www.iucn.org/2012_congress/)). It aims ‘to improve how we manage our natural environment for human, social and economic development’ ([http://www.iucn.org/2012\\_congress/](http://www.iucn.org/2012_congress/)). The contrast between the four-day Forum, a lively, busy, and often entertaining event spread out over multiple locales (we describe it as part conference, part trade-show), and the Assembly, a formal parliamentary

style proceeding operating under Robert's Rules of Order, is striking, as noted by several of the contributors to this collection. The combination of Forum and Assembly means that a diverse and large audience is drawn to the WCC, many members coming for different reasons, for one or the other main components. Although most non-members come for the Forum, the Assembly was open to observers for the first time in 2008. Unlike international meetings associated with specific treaties (e.g., the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), the agenda at the WCC is a broad one, as much concerned with shaping ideas of what conservation is or should be as with the specifics of implementing it.

For 13 days, a group of 22 researchers—mostly anthropologists and geographers—attended the WCC and carried out a collaborative event ethnography (CEE). In Barcelona we worked together to better understand both the formal and informal nature of conservation policy-making in this international forum, with a specific focus on the concept of trade-offs. In this introduction to the collection, we detail the background on the project and methods, and highlight common themes that run throughout the contributed papers.

#### **PROJECT BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT TRADE-OFFS**

This research emerged as part of the Advancing Conservation in a Social Context (ACSC) initiative, a three-year international, interdisciplinary research initiative supported by the MacArthur Foundation. ACSC's goal is to investigate the complex trade-offs that exist between human well-being and biodiversity conservation goals in specific places, and between conservation and other economic, political and social agendas at local, national and international scales (see [www.tradeoffs.org](http://www.tradeoffs.org)). ACSC adopts the term 'social context' as a kind of shorthand for the complex context in which conservation policy-making and intervention takes place.

ACSC is premised on the assumption that the idea of trade-offs can provide conceptual clarity and coherence in the effort to envision new approaches to conservation. At the same time, ACSC recognises that the concept of trade-offs presents a number of challenges. First, the idea of trade-offs is part of the working vocabularies of several different fields of inquiry—economics, political science, ethics—each of which have used the concept in different ways, at different times, in different debates, with different kinds of data. Some fields employ the concept in conjunction with a rigorous and highly formalised set of methods, yielding analyses that are presumably objective and precise: the life-history approach in evolutionary theory, optimisation models in behavioural ecology, cost-benefit analysis in economics and decision support systems, to name just a few. Other disciplines or fields of practice employ the idea of trade-offs as an abstract concept or guiding assumption, without any necessary reference to method: the ideas of rational choice in economics, of intergenerational equity in ethics or of compromise in conflict resolution. Second, our understanding

of trade-offs is complicated further when we recognise that the idea is embedded in implicit and eclectic ways in a huge variety of other domains—in polemics and debates (people versus parks), in the outcomes of international fora (Millennium Development Goals), in programmatic rhetoric (win-win) that appears in funding proposals and project documents, and in the practices of conservation actors and institutions (priority-setting approaches to conservation). In virtually any context in which the ideas of choice or decision-making are invoked, explicitly or implicitly, the concept of trade-offs is present.

To facilitate further thinking on trade-offs, the ACSC initiative supported three workshops in 2007 to examine the concept from a variety of perspectives: ecosystem services and resilience, values and ethics, and the politics of knowledge. The latter workshop was organised and led by Peter Brosius of the University of Georgia's Center for Integrative Conservation Research (CICR). It was here that the idea of carrying out a CEE emerged and began to take shape. During three days of intense discussion, participants in this workshop agreed that, in order to understand conservation trade-offs, it is crucial that we distinguish between a focus on process and a focus on outcomes; a critical element in understanding trade-offs is the nature of the transaction, not just the post-transaction outcome. We need to know who gains and who loses, and also how that happens. Attention to the processes of decision-making always requires looking not just at the local, site-specific context in which conservation 'outcomes' are experienced, but outwards to the various actors and processes that bring those outcomes to life. Thus, 'social context' is relevant at what we think of as traditional field-based sites of a conservation intervention, but also within and between conservation organisations, where concept development and planning take place. In practical terms, this means we need to focus our attention on a set of actors not normally considered in assessments of 'the social context' of conservation: conservation organisations, donors and others who are instrumental in designing and promoting various conservation paradigms, policies, and practices. For example, when conservation leaders decide that The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) is the future of conservation, how do they discuss the trade-offs associated with this approach (Monfreda this issue)? When conservation biologists consider the prospects of climate change, how do they assess the strengths and weaknesses of possible response strategies (Hagerman *et al.* this issue)? When the marine conservation community decides that 12% of the world's oceans need to be protected, what kind of costs to local resource users do they recognise (Gray this issue)? Decisions made and policies adopted at the international level are a critical part of the 'social context' in which local conservation projects are implemented and enacted.

It was recognition of these dimensions of the social context of conservation that led us to develop the concept of CEE. A key recommendation to emerge from the ACSC Politics of Knowledge workshop (and echoed at the Values and Ethics workshop) was that ACSC should support ethnographic approaches to understanding conservation trade-offs, not only

in local places where ethnographic research is common, but also as part of the broader thematic research programme. In an effort to build on this consensus, ACSC agreed to support a programme on ethnographic research conducted in conjunction with the IUCN's Fourth WCC. The Fourth WCC's theme, 'A Diverse and Sustainable World', placed recognition of the importance of identifying and navigating trade-offs at the forefront of emerging conservation practice.

International meetings are one place where the roles of a broad suite of non-local actors in informing conservation policy and negotiating trade-offs become visible to researchers in an ethnographic context. Particularly since the 1990 UN Conference on Environment and Development, and partly through the agreements it produced, the need for global environmental governance (through agreements, institutions, and funding mechanisms) has become widely accepted in the international community.<sup>2</sup> We see international meetings, like the WCC, as venues where epistemic communities align and can be tracked, and where their ideological work is partly done. Meetings can be read as spectacles, orchestrated and structured to facilitate a renegotiated 'order' of conservation. They are sites of conservation decision-making, where the interests of various stakeholders are negotiated and traded-off in high profile public events. It is a mistake to see meetings as isolated events, however, and much work is done in the run up to any one meeting and between different but clearly interconnected meetings (MacDonald this issue). While acknowledging this, we believe an event like the WCC is important in and of itself, as a key moment in global conservation priority-setting and decision-making. It is at the physical site of meetings that the interactions, associations, and politics associated with specific policies are performed in front of an audience. Further, because of the audience, meetings are where dissenters often target their resources. Meetings bring together thousands of actors in one space for a short period of time, and thus represent unparalleled opportunities to study not only individual agents and institutions of global environmental governance, but also the networks in which they are embedded.

### THE 'HOW' OF STUDYING MEETINGS

Despite the prevalence of international meetings relating to conservation, the role they play in shaping conservation policy and practice, and the opportunities they provide to observe the politics of conservation, there has been a surprising lack of ethnographic attention to 'the meeting' as a field site. While ethnographic work that might guide us in understanding the organisational dimensions of conservation has begun (e.g., Nader 1972; Fox 1998; Harper 1998; Mosse 2001; Lewis 2003), meetings have largely escaped attention (but see Poncelet 1990; MacAloon 1992; Little 1995; Reed 2001). This gap is significant. A great deal of ethnographic attention is paid to the politics of conservation projects in localised field sites, but observations from these sites are rarely connected empirically to the politics of decision-making that shape the ideological and practical orientation of institutions for global environment governance.

Thus, in undertaking CEE, we adopt a methodological tradition of 'studying up' (Nader 1972; Gusterson 1997), and respond to Lahsen's call (Crate 2008: 587) to overcome the 'continued aversion to studying power brokers'.

This is easier said than done. There are many good reasons why ethnographers seldom 'study up' and tackle mega-events like the WCC. Just as large international meetings present a novel opportunity to study conservation policy-making in action, so, too, do they constrain the ethnographic approach. The sheer size and scope of such events is daunting for a would-be researcher. The Fourth WCC consisted of a Forum (October 6–9) and the Members' Assembly (October 10–14). During the Forum, 6,698 participants from 179 countries attended (Universalia Management 2009). While the overall theme of the meeting was 'A Diverse and Sustainable World', three themes (A New Climate for Change; Healthy Environment—Healthy People; Safeguarding the Diversity of Life), 12 'journeys' (Energy; Markets and Business; Law and Governance; Rights and Conservation; Mediterranean; Protected Areas; Islands; Marine; Forests; Species; Water; Biocultural Diversity and Indigenous People), and eight types of sessions (Aliance Workshops; Global Thematic Workshops; Knowledge Cafes; UNDP Poble; Sustainability Dialogues; Conservation Cinema; Posters; Learning Opportunities) 'structured' the programme and offered diverse choices to participants. During the Members' Assembly, open to observers for the first time in 2008, 145 motions were discussed (Universalia Management 2009), and many had associated contact groups that worked in the evenings to make motions ready for the Assembly. The formal schedule frequently ran from 8 am to 8 pm, with informal events (ranging from cocktail parties to working meetings of 'contact groups' associated with resolutions) lasting late into the night.

While social scientists increasingly attend major global conservation meetings such as the WCC, whether as researchers or as participants in the deliberative process, they primarily participate as individuals. For a researcher, the logistical constraints on studying such an event, and making sense of what is seen, are considerable. It is simply impossible for any single individual to gain a broader analytical perspective on the events unfolding before them as these meetings proceed apace. To overcome these constraints, we adopted a multi-sited ethnographic approach, wherein researchers followed people, things, metaphors, or conflicts across sites (Marcus 1995). Our work is multi-sited in two ways. First, as individual researchers, we followed issues and themes of interest from more traditional 'local' field sites where we have studied the politics of conservation practice, to the WCC. Second, by working collaboratively as a group, we could better cover the multiple sites at, and thus make better sense of, a meeting like WCC. We describe both of these strategies in further detail below.

### Linking Local Conservation to Global Process: Contextualising What We See at Meetings

In his discussion of multi-sited fieldwork, Hannerz (2003)

pointed out that 'sites are connected with one another in such ways that the relationships between them are as important for this formulation as the relationships within them; the fields are not some mere collection of local units'. Each of the researchers who participated in the WCC CEE had been engaged in their own individual conservation research trajectories prior to the WCC, and we brought our background experiences to Barcelona, i.e., we followed relationships and associations from our various 'local' field sites around the world to the WCC. In doing so, we were better able to understand and contextualise what we saw and heard at the meeting. Studying the WCC, however, is not about studying meetings (up) instead of the local (down), but studying both, seeking to build a kind of 'ethnographic symmetry' (Robbins 2002). Our understanding of the local and global is enhanced by studying both at once.

For example, Noella Gray came to the WCC having completed ethnographic research in Belize, where she studied policy-making and implementation of marine protected areas (MPAs), focusing on the politics of knowledge and co-management institutions (Gray 2009). At the WCC, she explored the tensions between what she labels the 'local participation' and 'expert knowledge' approaches to MPAs, and considered how casting the debate at the global (rather than local) scale influenced the discussion (Gray this issue). Ken MacDonald also approached the WCC from long-term ethnographic field experience. Having studied the ways in which the implementation of market-based conservation mechanisms in northern Pakistan were driven by the interests of translocal institutions rather than grounded empirical research (MacDonald 2005), he began to examine the mechanisms through which market logics were gaining traction within conservation organisations and institutions (MacDonald 2010). The WCC provided an opportunity to expand this work and observe the role played by meetings and 'meeting culture' in establishing the associations and shifts in organisational order needed to legitimate new ideological perspectives on biodiversity conservation (MacDonald this issue). For both Gray and MacDonald, their detailed knowledge of specific issues gleaned through more traditional ethnographic work in particular places allowed them to contextualise more abstract discussions held at the WCC, to recognise particularly important 'moments' in related debates, and, more practically, provided them with contacts and networks that facilitated their research at the WCC.

While Gray and MacDonald, like other members of our research team, have been working to link the local and the global in their research, the 'complex and fragmentary nature' (Little 1995) of events like the WCC make 'studying up' difficult. Enter the team approach.

### **Dealing with Complex and Fragmentary Events: 22 Heads (and Bodies, and Digital Records) are Better than One**

Translating the opportunities presented by events like the WCC

into a coherent programme of research demands recognition of the challenges posed by such a project and a willingness to experiment with innovative approaches. CEE is our response. The approach combines rapid or time-constrained ethnographic assessment (Low *et al.* 2005) with institutional or organisational ethnography (Goldman 2004; Mosse 2004), the purpose of which is to capture engagements between scientific experts, decision-makers, and private sector and NGO actors in the context of a time-condensed meeting. Our innovation to these existing approaches lies in combining our efforts to work towards a common set of research goals (but see also Smith *et al.* 2008 on their parallel experiment with 'distributed' ethnography at the US Social Forum). Our inspiration for the approach came from watching how other actors—particularly conservation organisations and national delegations—work at meetings. They send large, organised teams to these events, divide up schedules, and convene daily to compare notes. In so doing, they are able to gain a broader perspective on the meeting, and thus strategise to influence debates and outcomes more effectively. Though we did not have an agenda in the sense that advocacy organisations do, our approach to research at the WCC was to mimic this strategy of coordination, collaboration and comparison in order to gain the sort of broad perspective that can only come from a collective effort.

Our belief in the value of the CEE approach only increased during the Fourth WCC. Prior to the event, we envisioned collaborating to cover events, share observations, and to think through emerging questions, but we underestimated the value and extent of collaboration in practice. During the WCC, members of our research team often collected data for their colleagues when unanticipated opportunities arose, and facilitated introductions to relevant interviewees. We strategised to divide forces to cover simultaneous activities, and alerted one another to unscheduled events. For example, when a last-minute informal meeting was held at the back of the Members' Assembly hall to discuss a series of biofuel-related motions, Maclin was able to alert Dammert (Maclin & Dammert this issue). Phone calls, text messages, emails, and notes were essential for navigating the overlapping sessions of the WCC. Researchers typed notes from session meetings immediately after they were held and circulated them via email to those not present. We met as a whole group each day to discuss emergent themes and ideas, clarify scheduling, and coordinate our efforts in numerous minor ways. Other smaller meetings were frequent; a cluster of beanbag chairs in the convention centre lobby became an impromptu drop-in spot, where one or two team members could usually be found. Evenings included participant observation at the many receptions, book launches, and other informal events. The locations of our shared apartments in a lively Barcelona district proved convenient; dinner was often *tapas* taken at 11 pm, and our after-dinner discussions sometimes lasted into the early morning.

It was only because of our collaborative approach to this research that we were able to distil from the continual rush of



encounters and events at the WCC a series of key themes that have continued to inform our analysis. For example, a remark at one of our daily meetings by one researcher concerning the performativity of events at the congress became a major interest of the group when others responded with similar observations. This unexpected insight emerged as a key theme as we subsequently discussed how 'performance' was often disciplining. As a group, we became interested in how the event itself was structured (including issues like which sessions were translated into other languages, and which were not), how the agenda was organised, and where we saw protest (or lack thereof). The politics of performance is now one of our core theoretical interests (MacDonald this issue). As we move forward with developing this method, we are focusing on how to maximise the benefits from this kind of group insight and analysis.

### **Structure of the WCC CEE**

Following the ACSC Politics of Knowledge workshop in October 2007, Brosius assembled an advisory committee that included three of the participating researchers (Brosius, Campbell and MacDonald) and others associated with the larger ACSC project. The advisory committee guided the initial conceptual development of the project, and solicited applications from graduate students and other researchers who we believed could contribute to the project. Applicants were asked to describe their interest in the project, and the topical focus they would pursue at the WCC. After an initial selection process, we specifically solicited participation by additional researchers interested in climate change. In total, the project supported the participation of 16 researchers. An additional six researchers joined the group with other sources of funding.

Activities of the group began with a series of online webinars hosted by the Center for Integrative Conservation Research at the University of Georgia. During these weekly meetings, we logged into a project website where we could communicate audibly and look at project documents on a shared screen. We discussed common research questions, individual project interests, ethical protocols, logistics and scheduling. We also used these meetings as an opportunity to learn more about the background of the IUCN and the WCC. We invited several guest participants from IUCN to join us for information sessions, for example, Jeff McNeely, Senior Scientist for the IUCN. While we experienced occasional technical glitches, the system was an excellent way of uniting a diverse and geographically dispersed team. All meetings were digitally archived so they could be accessed at a later time.

We arrived in Barcelona a day prior to the meeting, to get acquainted in person, settle into our shared accommodation, get oriented at the meeting site, and to coordinate logistics. Once the Forum started, we held daily meetings at lunchtime, and smaller groups convened throughout the event. Once the Forum ended and the Assembly began, we spent the day in the Assembly Hall following the discussion of the motions and spent the evening in 'contact groups', where specific

motions were modified, merged, or fought over until they were presentable to the General Assembly.

To focus our efforts towards a common goal while allowing for the kinds of new insights that come from a diverse group of collaborating researchers pursuing a range of research topics, the research programme was divided into two parts. First, each of the researchers was responsible for addressing a common set of questions aimed at achieving a broader synthesis of the WCC and reflecting the interests of ACSC. Second, researchers selected to participate in the WCC CEE pursued research on conservation trade-offs through a more specific focus on topics they proposed. These focused topics included topical or conceptual issues (displacement, climate change, biofuels), debates (biodiversity vs. ecosystem services, the role of corporate funding of conservation), resolutions, conservation actors (organisations or national delegations) or other topics that are deemed relevant to the understanding of conservation trade-offs. Throughout the congress, researchers set up interviews and took notes on what they were observing. In doing so they observed interview subjects and other actors interacting in meetings, in panels and forums, in floor debates, and in other contexts in ways that provided a broader perspective on the opinions expressed in interviews.

Following the WCC, we reconvened in webinars to further discuss our experiences, and to strategise on writing up our results. For the most part, our efforts have focused on papers written by individuals related to their individual research interests, and nine of these papers comprise this collection.<sup>3</sup> Many of the papers also draw on some of our shared observations at the WCC, including the importance of meeting structure and process, the dominance of market-based approaches to conservation as preferred policy solutions (particularly for addressing climate change), the treatment of marine conservation at WCC, and the concept of trade-offs. These were some of the issues we identified during our group discussions at the WCC and afterwards, and capture the utility of our approach. Observed by one of us, we may have passed some of these over; our shared observations across different sessions, days, events, and interviewees gave us confidence that a theme was, in fact, a theme, or that a particular process was important! This summary of four of our general observations provides further context for the individual papers that follow.

### **SHARED OBSERVATIONS FROM THE WCC**

#### **Performing, Structuring and Directing a Conservation Meeting**

One of the most productive themes that arose in our discussions was the way in which the structure and processes of the meeting influenced what was happening. This struck us from the first day, when we entered the conference centre through the pavilions hall, where each 'journey' was physically manifested in a booth, with staff, seating, wall-sized illustrations, and sometimes refreshments. Later that day, we sat through opening ceremonies, complete with larger-than-life slideshows

featuring images of spectacular nature, performers, dignitaries, and even some off-script protesting (such was the orchestrated nature of the event that the protesting seemed staged, rather than real). The kind of performance we saw at the opening ceremonies was not restricted to the organisers of the event. Indigenous peoples were often present in full traditional dress, marking their presence in visible and often colourful ways. Clearly, part of the WCC is a show, staged to have a particular effect (MacDonald this issue).

A structural characteristic that greatly affected the meeting for participants, ourselves included, was the organisation of ‘journeys’, an interesting experiment in facilitating communication and helping attendees navigate a complex schedule. The 12 ‘journeys’ produced hard copy guides, colourfully illustrated, for attendees to follow. Rather than sift through the entire programme, someone interested in ‘protected areas’ needed to only follow the predefined programme. At the pavilions in the main entrance hall, IUCN staff could be found, journey guides could be collected, book signings and other events were held, and attendees could sit and relax when needed. While attendees undoubtedly appreciated the organisation the journeys provided, journeys were also disciplining; most of us noted that, consistently, the same people showed up to similarly themed sessions. Thus, the journey structure acted as a barrier to the kind of communication and interaction that might encourage dialogue between actors with different ideological orientations toward conservation. Although this disciplining may have been an unintended consequence of trying to make Forum navigation easier, for at least some groups the desire that like-minded participants ‘travel’ together was overt, and the guides served as more than a practical navigation tool (MacDonald this issue). MacDonald (this issue) tackles the ‘performativity’ of the meeting most directly, describing his own experience following the ‘markets and business journey’, and in doing so he provides a convincing argument for the need to study meetings not just for their content, but for the way that content is performed.

As a multi-national, multi-lingual research team, we quickly noted how issues of access, and particularly language translation, was sometimes problematic. Some events had translators, while others did not. Where this seemed particularly problematic was in contact groups associated with the Resolutions for consideration before the Assembly. For example, at one contact group meeting, three motions related to the same issue were eventually consolidated into one. The three original motions were in English, French, and Spanish, while the consolidated motion was only available in English. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair asked if it was acceptable to everyone to proceed in English, and everyone agreed that it was. However, as discussion of the motion proceeded, significant changes were suggested to the (English) text by one of the sponsors of the original English motion. Someone in the group (a fluent English speaker, not an original sponsor, who had already recorded several objections to various parts of the motion) asked if all of the new language being proposed was

incorporating the content of all three original motions, or just the preferences of one of the sponsors of the original English motion. Sponsors of the French and Spanish motions were present and both agreed that they accepted the new additions by the English-speaking sponsor, but the Spanish speaker observed that it was an ‘uneven scenario’. She said that while she did not object to the new language being introduced, it was a lesson for the contact group process—that the process as it was proceeding (all in English, with no official translation) was unfair. The process of sorting out Resolutions was not just affected by language, however, and it was *vis à vis* Resolutions that we started to sense the ways in which different actors have different abilities to navigate that process; Maclin and Dammert (this issue) provide an account of how competing Resolutions on biofuels were worked out during the Assembly in a back-of-the room huddle by a subset of interested parties.

### Changing Ideas About How to Undertake Conservation

Ideas about implementing conservation come and go, and it was hardly surprising that some ideas were promoted at the WCC while others popular in the past were absent. However, some of what we saw deserves attention as it reflects more general shifts, not just in topics, but in the mechanisms and actors best suited to achieve conservation goals, and the scale at which these are pursued.

In terms of mechanisms, market-based approaches to conservation captured centre stage at the WCC. For example, TEEB project was given priority scheduling by the current IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre (Monfreda this issue). Arguments about the necessity of making conservation ‘pay for itself’, thus allowing conservation to compete with other land and resource uses, are not new to conservation, and have been gaining traction since at least the 1980s (MacDonald 2010). However, the idea of valuing resources or nature has expanded to include the idea of valuing ‘ecosystem services’. Once such services are identified and properly valued, they can then be paid for, preferably via market mechanisms. This more recent extension of market logic to conservation was not only evident at the WCC, it eclipsed past approaches to making conservation pay for itself, e.g., through project-oriented programmes like sustainable hunting, ecotourism, or more general integrated conservation and development projects (Peña this issue).

The types of programmes discussed included ‘payments for ecosystem services’, ‘biodiversity and carbon offsets’ and ‘conservation agreements’. Broadly, these have been considered as mechanisms to enable the transfer of funds from global actors (e.g., companies, donors, investors, consumers) who want to protect forests and biodiversity, to local resource owners and users who are in the position to make conservation happen on the ground (i.e., to deliver ‘conservation services’). Unlike past market-based approaches, in which incentives to conserve were indirect, e.g., channelled through a profitable ecotourism enterprise, most of these newer approaches prioritise direct payments for non-use of resources, e.g.,

protecting a forest intact. Numerous presentations at the WCC from conservation organisations and the private sector aimed to share know-how and to promote the implementation of such market-based or economic instruments. For example, we observed practical toolkits for designing payments for ecosystem services (PES) mechanisms, technologies for visualising and mapping ecosystem services as part of policy-making, and the demonstration of new instruments for buying and selling ecosystem services such as auctions and trading schemes. These ideas and technologies are largely theoretical, and conservationists agree that there is little implementation experience so far—they expect to make some mistakes too; as one practitioner said ‘it’s like riding a bike’.

PES schemes were seen as particularly promising for mitigating climate change, the high profile environmental concern at the WCC (Hagerman *et al.* this issue), and the high profile PES scheme to address climate change was the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation programme (REDD). REDD was widely seen as presenting ‘both a risk and an opportunity’ and debates about it have engaged diverse actors, including private companies, multilaterals (especially the World Bank), indigenous people, NGOs, carbon brokers, conservation biologists, and governments. A number of issues emerged during REDD discussions. First, a strong message emerged from global conservation investors that combined enthusiasm—‘this is the moment we have been waiting for’ (Conservation International representative)—with pragmatic opportunism—‘if we don’t act now, we will miss the boat’ (World Bank representative). Second, the need to act quickly is increasing peoples’ fears that a ‘one size fits all’ approach is being adopted, and will ultimately not work, due to the diversity and complexity of local and contextual factors (Peña this issue). Third, specific groups have specific concerns. For example, conservation biologists question the logic of relying solely on economic rationales for conservation (Monfreda this issue), while indigenous peoples resist what they see as the neo-colonial underpinnings of REDD and the potential for it to serve the interests of the North over the South (Doolittle this issue). More generally, we noted a discussion about how local communities will be affected by and compensated via these new market-based mechanisms. While these questions were taken seriously, the discussion invoked simplified notions of community, a term that has been widely critiqued in conservation relevant literature over the past ten years (Agrawal & Gibson 2001; Brosius *et al.* 2005).

These concerns reflect our related observations about actors and scale. In terms of actors, we noted an underlying tension about what the rise of market-based mechanisms implies for what kinds of knowledge and thus actors are required for conservation. For example, if market-based mechanisms continue to proliferate, then the type of expertise required to ‘do conservation’ changes, marginalising the traditional authorities on conservation (Welch Devine & Campbell this issue). Conservation will need more economists, and specifically people with expertise in finance, marketing, and even stock markets. What role does the traditional species biologists (the

Species Survival Commission is one of the oldest and largest arms of the IUCN) play in this new vision of conservation? How will indigenous people influence conservation when it arrives in the form of carbon credits generated through a global market? Market-based approaches also reflect a general trend in the IUCN towards a closer relationship with the private sector, and this too, is resisted by some as reflected by a controversial resolution about the IUCN’s relationship with Shell Oil (MacDonald this issue). Resistance is both to the specific agreement with Shell and to the general change in the IUCN that the agreement reflects.

In terms of scale, we note that, again, the trend toward ‘scaling up’ conservation has already been documented, for example through approaches like ecoregional planning (see Brosius 2006; Zimmerer 2006). At past WCCs, governments and conservation organisations have used the event as a platform to make announcements about the establishment of large, often transboundary protected areas, e.g., Heart of Borneo (Hitchner this issue). We saw little of this at this WCC, and the lack of attention to place-based conservation (parks or networks of parks) was striking. We suggest that new market-based initiatives ‘scale-up’ conservation even further than past initiatives. A global carbon market, for example, is an economic transformation at a structural level, the conservation implications of which are targeted to be broader than those of even the largest transboundary protected area. While such a market will clearly have an impact on a variety of places where conservation is done, it will itself be somewhat placeless, tied perhaps to a UN office or a stock exchange.

### **The Strange and Somewhat Parallel World of Marine Conservation**

Marine conservation stood out at the WCC, where the mood at the marine journey pavilion was almost euphoric. From the many slides of marine life projected during the opening ceremonies, to the marine pavilion that hosted book signings by people like Sylvia Earl, to high profile events like the launch of Google Oceans, the marine agenda proceeded apace, often seemingly unencumbered by the issues and debates that are challenging in terrestrial conservation. While only two of the participating researchers were specifically following marine issues, the mood among participants in the marine journey was noted by all of our researchers. As a theme, marine contrasted with many others. While climate change was one of three themes at the IUCN and dominated in many places, only five of 35 sessions on the marine journey addressed climate change, with proportionately more attention paid to fisheries, MPAs, and ocean governance. The attention given to MPAs, and large networks of such areas, reflects the marine conservation communities goal of seeing 12% of the world’s oceans in protected areas by 2012 (Gray this issue), and stands in contrast to the relative lack of attention to this kind of place-based conservation at the WCC in general. Ecosystem services, again, were absent in most discussions on marine issues, and even old trends in conservation, like the need to include local people



in protected areas planning, were overlooked in some of the marine resolutions, which the Assembly sent back to contact groups as a result (Gray this issue). Though there was some dismay over high seas fisheries and what to do about protecting areas outside of national jurisdictions, these concerns did not dampen the mood. As one participant at the MPA Synthesis session said, this was ‘the most blue congress... finally marine has come of age’.

### And What, After All, of Trade-offs?

As a research team, we were interested in how and when the concept of trade-offs was addressed both explicitly and implicitly. Aware of the different ways in which the term is used, we did not ourselves adopt a definition of what constituted a trade-off, since we were less concerned with recognising the presence of a pre-defined type of trade-off, than we were with cataloguing the diverse ways the language of trade-offs was used. Perhaps not surprisingly, we found all of the ‘messiness’ one would expect. While our interview script began with questions about trade-offs, many interviewees themselves saw the concept as problematic, noting its varied definitions and meanings. In this collection of papers, we find the same varied language and different levels of attention to the trade-offs concept, invoked by the individual authors to reflect the treatment of trade-offs in relation to the topics they were pursuing. For example, the concept of triage—as discussed among conservation biologists confronting the prospects of climate change—is an explicit recognition of trade-offs that leads Hagerman *et al.* (this issue) to engage with the concept theoretically, introducing the notion of protected values to explore and understand any ultimate limits to what can be traded-off. In contrast, for Gray (this issue), the already documented debate among MPA proponents about trade-offs between biological versus social integrity is taken as given (Gray & Campbell 2009); here, Gray turns her attention to what happens to the debate when it is ‘scaled-up’ at the WCC. Thus, while the genesis of this CEE was in a project devoted to exploring the conceptual clarity and coherence that the idea of trade-offs might provide in envisioning new approaches to conservation, this collection falls short of that goal; it does, however, illustrate the types of challenges that will confront ACSC as it continues to work with the trade-off concept (see Brosius 2010, Hirsch *et al.* in press, McShane *et al.* in press for further treatment of trade-offs by the ACSC project).

### The Contributed Papers

MacDonald’s paper on the relationship between the IUCN and the private sector leads off the collection. He tackles the ‘performativity’ of the meeting most directly, and in doing so provides additional argument for understanding the importance of meetings as moments in conservation policy-making. In building on his on-going work on the relationship of the IUCN with the private sector and its market logic, MacDonald also provides contextual background for understanding where the

current emphasis on market-based conservation is coming from; following the ‘Business of Biodiversity’ journey, MacDonald illustrates the ways that this journey can be read as a further step in the ongoing transformation of IUCN. This more general overview of change sets up a number of papers that examine the specifics of it.

Monfreda provides one of these. He looks at TEEB project, a high profile effort to properly ‘value’ biodiversity and the services it provides, and one singled out by the IUCN’s current Director General for a prime spot in the WCC programme. Monfreda explores how three types of knowledge—of economics, of biodiversity conservation, and of traditional, indigenous peoples—are invoked, enrolled, and sometimes challenged in the discussion of TEEB, but ultimately reconciled to its purposes. While he documents some dissent among participants in TEEB sessions, he illustrates how the programme’s promoters sought to align these knowledge types in order to secure the authority and legitimacy of TEEB. In doing so, Monfreda illustrates the micro-political work done, some of it through meeting structure and performance, to push broad changes in how conservation is conceived in the international community.

PES is a generic tool that programmes like TEEB can support. TEEB can tell us what things are worth, and PES schemes can be devised to capture such value. While many PES schemes were in evidence at the WCC, the ‘cause célèbre’ was the United Nations Collaborative initiative on REDD. Initiated in 2008, REDD is ‘an endeavour to create an incentive for developing forested countries to protect, better manage and wisely use their forest resources, thus contributing to the global fight against climate change. It rests on the effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in standing forests’ (UN-REDD Secretariat 2010). While the ultimate form REDD will take remains unknown, it combines the popularity of economic approaches with the leading environmental concern of climate change; thus, the attention it received is not surprising. Doolittle and Peña both tackle the treatment REDD received at the WCC, from different perspectives. Doolittle examines the responses of indigenous leaders to REDD, and contextualises this response in the overall efforts of indigenous peoples to gain a voice in international climate change negotiations. She points to the strategic use of a ‘shared identity’ that draws on the relation of indigenous people to their natural environments and their rights to traditional lands and resources, to claim authority and gain access to such negotiations. At the WCC, resistance to REDD draws on this shared identity, but also on legacies of colonialism and the North’s exploitation of the South. With REDD proceeding apace and widely embraced in many WCC venues, indigenous resistance stands out in stark contrast.

Peña contrasts the attention REDD received at the WCC with the lack of attention given to other programmes attempting to provide incentives for communities living with natural resources to conserve them, programmes that generally fall into the broad category of Integrated Conservation and Development Programmes (ICDPs). Peña is specifically interested in Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), and he



argues that the current attention to REDD at the exclusion of all else is poor economic planning, promoting a 'one size fits all' approach. In contrasting REDD to NTFP programmes, Peña is mostly arguing for diversity in the arsenal of resources used to combat and mitigate climate change, rather than against REDD per se. Although the scale at which REDD and NTFP are conceived and the types of incentives they provide are different, on the ground, both programmes can promote the conservation of standing forests. Peña's paper more generally illustrates the ephemeral nature of conservation thinking, or how conservation ideas come in and go out of fashion. Smaller-scale, place-based ICDPs that focused on indirect payments, including NTFPs, enjoyed considerable popularity in the 1980s and early 1990s (Wells & Brandon 1992, 1993).

Hagerman *et al.* also examine debates about climate change at the WCC, but their focus is on how conservation biologists discuss the climate change threat. The threat is to the species conservation biologists care about, but climate change can also be seen as threatening the tools they use, and even their own roles in conservation. Hagerman *et al.* most directly tackle the issue of trade-offs, and engage a variety of theoretical perspectives to do so. Their results show a contrast between the public and private discussion of possible responses to climate change at the WCC. In formal WCC sessions, new policy innovations are resisted (trade-offs avoidance), while, during interviews, individuals acknowledge that 'tough choices' will need to be made and express openness to experimentation (trade-off recognition). One of the more striking features of Hagerman *et al.*'s paper is how tied conservation biologists are to traditional tools of conservation, like parks and protected areas; although parks will face considerable challenges under climate change, conservation biologists mostly propose to expand or connect them. Hagerman *et al.* use the concept of 'protected values' to explore how what can and cannot be traded-off is delineated, and how events like the WCC sometimes serve the function of 'norming' rather than challenging dominant thinking.

Maclin and Dammert examine the treatment of biofuels at the WCC, an issue that clearly illustrates how programmes to solve one set of conservation and development challenges (climate-related impacts of fossil fuel-generated energy; development impacts of relying on oil imports) create new sets of problems (conversion of forests to biofuel monocrops; competition between biofuel crops and food crops). Of all the topics covered, biofuels perhaps most clearly illustrate the messy nature of trade-offs—both how complex trade-offs are and how difficult it is to pin down exactly when and how trade-offs are made, and who makes them. Maclin and Dammert trace the emergence and evolution of energy as an issue in the IUCN over the last 10 years, and illustrate how decisions taken at the IUCN must be understood as part of an evolving discourse on energy. However, rather than negate the importance of the meeting, they reinforce it, by showing how a community of practice intervened spontaneously and somewhat informally, at particular moments and in particular places, to ensure the discourse stayed on track.

Hitchner uses issues debated at the WCC, particularly the roles and rights of indigenous people and those of the private sector and extractive industries in conservation, to contextualise her research on a large trans-boundary protected area, the Heart of Borneo Initiative. Hitchner's paper exemplifies the kinds of problems these large-scale initiatives often face in practice, with multiple interests operating across multiple scales, and with ambiguous and sometimes contradictory outcomes. In showing how trades-offs are defined and negotiated differently depending on the interest group and scale at stake, she illustrates their plurality. While the Heart of Borneo project appears problematic from a number of perspectives, Hitchner also suggests the ways in which issues and resolutions taken at the WCC provide opportunities for NGOs and indigenous communities to achieve some of their own conservation goals, to some extent enabled by the ambiguity of the overall initiative.

Gray takes us into the world of marine conservation and illustrates the importance of scale in framing conservation debates. Gray's paper offers some background on the growth of MPAs, and how debates about their utility and function have always incorporated concerns of both science and local participation; gaining popularity only in the last decade, the MPA movement arguably benefited from the experiences and lessons learned in terrestrial conservation, where the consequences of ignoring or excluding local resource users are well documented. However, Gray shows that when the MPA project goes global, as reflected in the commitment by the international community to protect 12% of the world's oceans in MPAs by 2012, the nature of the debate changes, with less attention being paid to the rights and needs of resource users. This proved problematic at the WCC, when a resolution forwarded in support of the 2012 goal was immediately critiqued for lack of attention to the process of establishing MPAs and the need to involve local people. Gray finds that even some attendees associated with organisations pushing the 2012 goal wonder if there is too much unchecked momentum behind the global project to protect the world's oceans.

Welch-Devine and Campbell end the collection with an exploration of how on-going debates about the role of social science in, and/or the need for interdisciplinary approaches to, conservation played out at the WCC. They find natural and social scientists in many ways echo what has been written on these topics: that social science and interdisciplinary work are needed; that barriers to achieving interdisciplinarity are philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and practical; and that social scientists remain somewhat marginalised within conservation organisations. However, they also find that the main source of tension identified is not between natural and social scientists, but between social scientists working within conservation organisations and those working within academia. Like MacMynowski (2007) they argue that efforts to overcome barriers (e.g., by finding shared language, taking more time, seeking balance in interdisciplinary teams) will likely fall short if they fail to recognise underlying questions and tensions that relate to power and authority associated with particular types

of knowledge. They suggest the need for such recognition is increasingly urgent, given the way that trends in conservation, for example towards market-based approaches, will challenge what has traditionally counted as the 'right' kind of knowledge for conservation.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by the MacArthur foundation through the Advancing Conservation in a Social Context project (<http://www.cicr.uga.edu/acsc/index.htm>). We are grateful to project Principal Investigator, Tom McShane, for investing in this work, an experiment to be sure. The WCC event ethnography benefited from an advisory team (William Adams, Juan Luis Dammert, Ken MacDonald, Sheila O'Connor, plus the authors), and we thank all the researchers who participated at the WCC: Danyel Addes, Saul Cohen, Amity Doolittle, Christina Faust, Noella Gray, Shannon Hagerman, Paul Hirsch, Sarah Hitchner, Rose Kicheleri, Ann Laudati, Ted Maclin, David Meek, Sarah Milne, Chad Monfreda, Nels Paulson, Pablo Peña, Jose Carlos Silva, and Meredith Welch-Devine. We are especially grateful to Ken MacDonald and Noella Gray, who have influenced our thoughts on this work greatly in the post-WCC writing and analysis phase. The work was undertaken with the full awareness of the IUCN, and we are grateful to both Jeff McNeely and Sally Jeanreanu for taking the time to meet with us before and during the WCC.

### Notes

1. IUCN was formed in the post World War II era of multilateralism. In discussing its formation, British and American representatives wanted the IUCN to be formally associated with the then evolving UN system. This was resisted by the Swiss, Belgians, and Dutch however, who had been the main countries running its predecessor, the International office for the Protection of Nature, which was formed in 1934, but derailed by World War II. These countries did not want to lose independence by association with the UN (McCormick 1989).
2. This does not imply global environmental governance is easily done. While the need for it may be recognised, the details of the means to achieving it are hotly contested, as the recent negotiations under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change illustrates.
3. As social scientists, our instincts were to write up our results and analysis as individuals, producing the sole authored publications valued in our disciplines. In hindsight, we recognise that in many ways, these instincts served to undermine the real value in the CEE approach; CEE is not just a means of gathering additional data by having more people covering more events. The unique value of our group collaboration lies in our shared insights across events, topics, and themes. Our next CEE, focused on the October 2010 CBD/COP10 meeting in Nagoya, is designed with this in mind, with more formal thought given to how collaboration will take place and be carried on through the analysis and the writing components of the project.

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