

Elusive Meanings: Decentralization, Conservation and Local Democracy



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IS DECENTRALIZATION A PANACEA
FOR CONSERVATION? OR CAN
DECENTRALIZATION "SAVE"
CONSERVATION? (1990S-2000S)

- ✘ Role of discourse/'discursive regimes' in shaping social reality
- ✘ Sharply distinct -if not opposed-discursive regimes at their origin
- ✘ Both theories and policies have problems of their own
- ✘ Joining the 2 without addressing those discrepancies hinders our capacity to learn from the practice of decentralization or conservation
- ✘ A problem of language as well as history and epistemology

BASIC OUTLINE

- ✘ Short histories
- ✘ How the two discourse regimes did come to be joined
- ✘ Backlash, criticisms and issues
- ✘ 5 major forms of local constructions at the interface of decentralization/conservation
- ✘ African, Asian and Latin American cases
- ✘ The question of 'fugitive power'
- ✘ Blood rights and civil rights
- ✘ Local Democracy & Conservation
- ✘ Space-taking, space-making and space-granting

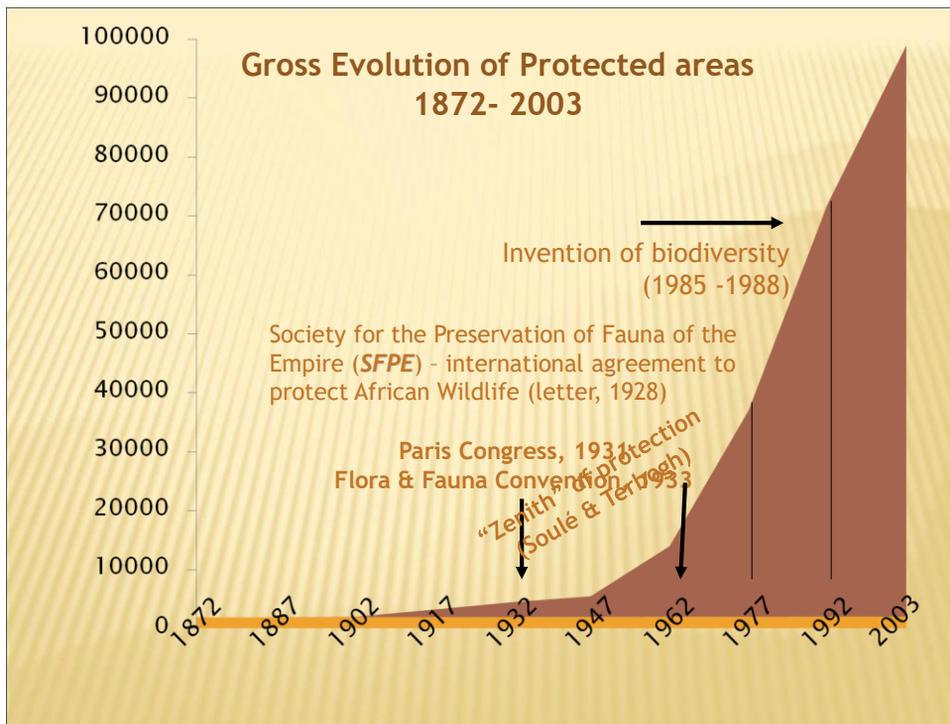
DECENTRALIZATION AND CONSERVATION

A short history of decentralization

- ✘ **Current decentralizations**
 - + Unraveling post-war, post-keynesian, soviet bloc growth economies - 70s
 - + Initiated from above ; "enhance state capacity for non coercive governance" (Manor)
- ✘ **Older decentralizations**
 - + Brazil (1891), Philippines (1901), Sri Lanka (1931)
 - + Argentina -struggle to incorporate Buenos Aires
 - + Mexican revolution -near state collapse
 - + Post war India and African British colonies
 - + Reverse African movement at Independence - French vs. British colonies - 1960 → 1972 (Senegal)
- ✘ **Ways to build the state**
 - + Commandist beliefs
 - + Decentralization as political market
 - + Democratic decentralization - accountability paradigm
 - + **2 forms**: deconcentration / devolution
 - + **2 channels**: State / Natural Resource Sectors
- ✘ **Roots in political theories of the state**

A short history of conservation

- ✘ **Roots in Western theological romanticism and moral activism**
 - + Transcendentalism (Emerson, Thoreau...)
 - + John Muir, 'inventor' of national parks
- ✘ **Context of colonial violence**
 - + 1st parks, all in settlers territories -19th c.
 - + Indian wars, "Yellowstone model"
 - + Vacant lands without masters
- ✘ **Public forests and reserves: the 1st global form of protection (18th c.)**
 - + Tobago, Mauritius, Europe, USA, railway
 - + Tensions in the West between utilitarian & esthetic demands on nature
- ✘ **Parks & extractive reserves as "twin mammals of the commercial and esthetic dreams of colonialism"**
- ✘ **Global Spread of "fortress conservation"**



The *invention* of biodiversity

*THE YOSEMITE PARK
VIEWED BY JOHN MUIR*

Metamorphoses of "Nature"

Landscapes as Scenery

Wildlife

Wildlife & Flora

Environment

Biodiversity

Landscapes without people

THE JOINING OF CONSERVATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

- ✦ Biodiversity not a "stable construction"
- ✦ Epistemological pluralism- CBD, Indigenous rights, bio-sovereignty, bio-democracy, next to the old paradigm
- ✦ 1970s: community forestry
- ✦ 1980s: emergence of "community conservation"
- ✦ 1990s: move of community forestry from dry to humid environments -- family farms, planting rights & common property
- ✦ *These = on the heels of the decentralization movement*
- ✦ *A problem for hortodoxies*



COMMUNITY CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

- × Two key elements
 - + Participation
 - + Linkage between conservation and development

Two poles

Biocentric



Conservation neglected

Anthropocentric



Ambiguous, utilitarian

critics

The fortress backlash

- UN & lending institutions are... continuing to propagate the myths of... sustainability and...economic development as a necessary precursor of conservation (Soulé & Terbogh, 1992)
- A national parks remains powerless without the backing of those who carry the guns (Terbogh, 1999)
- Biodiversity transcends national boundaries and belongs to no one (Terbogh, 1999)
- In today's world...local autonomy is effaced (Sanderson, 2005)

DECENTRALIZATION CRITIQUES

- ✘ Mixed feelings
 - + “paradoxical outcomes”
 - + “Elite capture”, predation
 - + “Tyranny of minorities”
 - + “Limited/partial decentralization”
 - + Devolution “against local people”
 - + “Trojan horse” & “copy cat” strategies next to “blind mice” & “busy bees” situations
 - + “Immense proliferation” of user committees without proper democratic credentials - usurp the role of elected political bodies

Mainly sympathizers or advocates of ‘real’ decentralization

WHAT LOCAL GOVERNANCE?



DECENTRALIZATION

- ✘ Political decentralization & NRM
 - + Francophone West Africa
 - + Bolivia vs. Cameroon
 - + Lasting tensions on land, tenure & taxation; beyond issues of funding, resource transfers, competencies....
 - + Legal local associations vs. indigenous institutions – problem of social unit of action
- ✘ Conservation schemes
 - + Delegation, NGOs, Advisory councils
 - + ICDPs or SCDPs???
 - + Wildlife Management Committees

GOVERNANCE 'UPSURGES'

- ✘ PEMASKY, Panama
- ✘ Nagaland, Maharashtra & Orissa: Self-rule and people conservation movements
 - + Tribal ownership, from clans to political federations
- ✘ Senegal: Community Heritage Areas (*Natural community space Kër Cupaam*)
- ✘ Gambia: Tumani Tenda

SELECTED CASES AND ISSUES

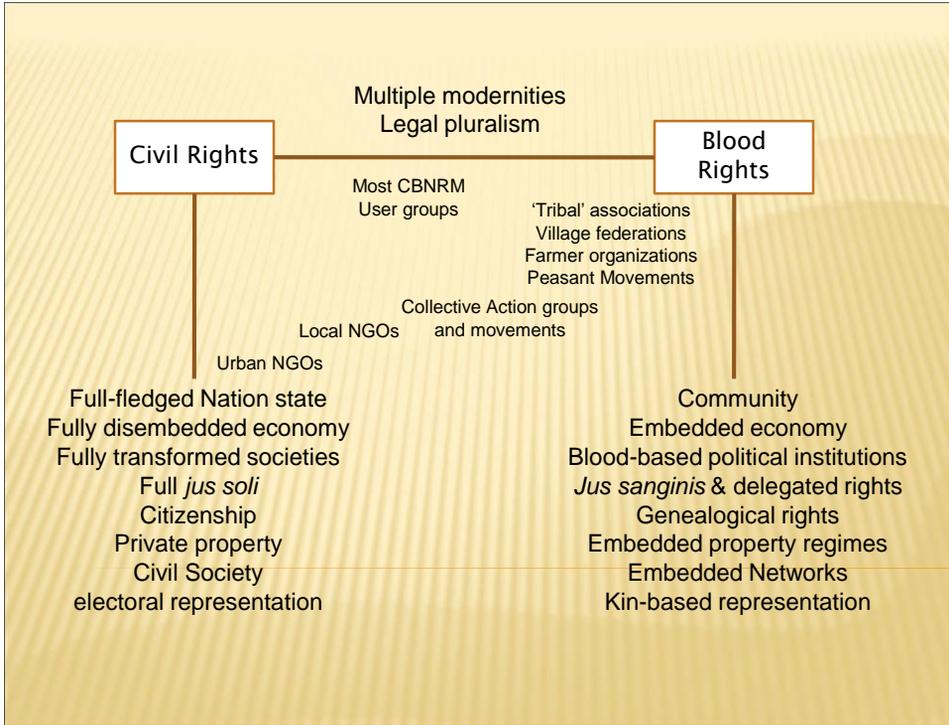
FUGITIVE POWER (FARELL, 2004)

- ✘ The propensity of power to operate beyond the law and the scope of legitimating structure
- ✘ Emerging property of political systems, i.e., given sufficient conditions power will go 'fugitive'
- ✘ Democracy as a constant quest to 'recapture power' by improving legitimacy, governance
- ✘ So, why is 'power capture' almost a defining characteristic of decentralization?
- ✘ Valuable explanations but neglect of *infrastructural conditions of local legitimacy – nature of NR entitlements*

WHY NOT 'DEMOCRATIC CONSERVATION?'

- ✘ 'Non comparable' value systems
- ✘ 'Equality of species before Creation
- ✘ Easier not to negotiate on 'core values'
- ✘ Fundamental democratic deficit
- ✘ Legal fencing
- ✘ Same 'invisibility' of *infrastructural entitlements*





Legal pluralism just not recognized by decentralization policies

- ✗ Construction of the 'modern' nation state → "detritalize" societies – break the communal bases of land tenure
- ✗ 1996: 64 % of policies – the rest = passive acceptance & colonial legacy of tribal authority lands
- ✗ Nonetheless, customary/CB tenure the 'de facto dominant type' in the tenure profiles of 43 countries – West Central Africa, Greater Horn of Africa, Southern Africa (Bruce et al., 1998)
- ✗ Similar observations around the world Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal... Bolivia(?)

Single property regime

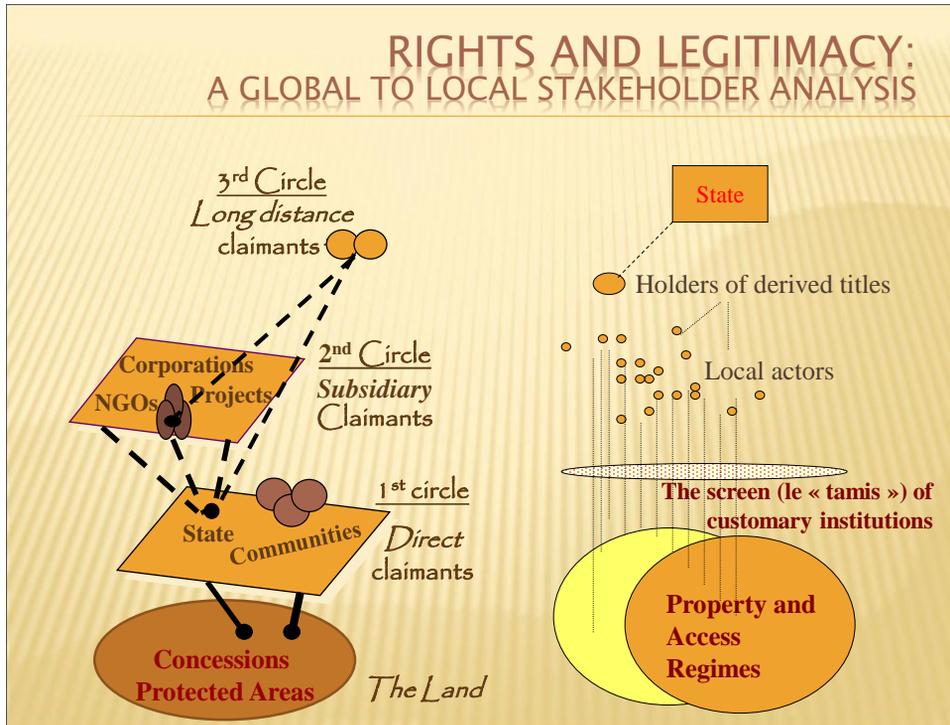
private

Overlapping property regimes

Statutory law

Customary law and institutions

Legal pluralism



Space-taking, space-making & space-granting: Alternative paths of local governance

- ✘ Citizens and communities as moving democratic subjects
- ✘ Need more complex concepts of governance where the political sphere has deeper and more diverse legitimating structures
- ✘ Grant or make Space rather than impose forms
 - + State level (e.g. Nagaland) to coalitions (mass federations) to landscapes (e.g. Model Forests) to villages and lineages...
- ✘ Electoral vs. participatory and deliberative democracy
- ✘ Negotiate objectives as well as meanings – bring conflicts to the level where they can be deliberated over and transformed ...



Thanks

