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Questioning new conservation approaches

The opinions and arguments developed in the guest Editorial and News and Views of the April issue (**32** [2]) of *Oryx* were interesting and important. Conservation is changing and we have to face new situations. I would like to express some personal comments.

If we are to deal effectively with biodiversity conservation, i.e. keeping the greatest biodiversity possible on Earth, then we need to know 'why' it is necessary. The 'why' question is of great concern, as can be seen from the elephant and whale issue. Sustainable development and sustainable conservation may prove to be different. To link conservation to commercial use is dangerous if it means that only species with a known commercial value have to be protected. It should be looked at from a different perspective. If a species is well protected and population numbers are sufficiently high, then commercial and sustainable uses can be considered. However, the proof of this situation has to come from those wishing to exploit the species, and independent scientists, like those of IUCN/SSC specialist groups or any other independent organization, should evaluate any proposition. The exploitation of some species will be ethically difficult or questionable (apes are a good example, but by no means the only one).

The situation of the North Atlantic cod *Gadus moruha* is quite relevant in this context. With no real 'save the cod' lobby or non-governmental organization, a no-catch quota in the North-West Atlantic was agreed recently. Nobody can argue that this species is not of real economic importance for human consumption, and that its 'sustainable' use has to continue. But the current level of exploitation is just not sustainable. If we can bring such a species to a level of near economic extinction, then the same can happen to any other species. The idea that any species has to pay (to human kind) for its survival represents a great misunderstanding of biology and of evolution. Every individual of every species already has to work hard for its own survival. The argument that each species has to pay us for its survival makes humans 'racketeers'. This means that we are asking all other species to pay a life-tax. I understand and admit that sustainable use is something quite different.

Why should we try to protect biodiversity? Perhaps we should ask first, is there any reason not to protect it?

Another question is the difficult discussion about traditional uses of endangered species or resources. The danger is that 'traditional' may represent very different situations. How far back in time (1, 10, 100 or more years) must we go in order for the term 'tradition' to be used for any exploitation or claim? Is the hunting of 'traditional' species with modern firearms the same as hunting with traditional weapons? Is it in the spirit of tradition for local produce and traditional ways to be open to the world market through the World Trade Organisation (WTO), when the scales and the rules are so different? Traditional practices used to exploit local resources for global markets, whilst providing short-term profits, run the risk of destroying the resource base. Real traditional use is certainly possible, if also sustainable, but the word 'traditional' needs to be clearly defined.

To the questions 'why' and 'how' to protect species, immediate answers are essential. If not, we may soon lose many species. There may be large, short-term profits for some indi-

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viduals, agencies or companies, but very few resources left for the future. The answers for today must not mean desolation for tomorrow.

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Who will garrison the fortress? A reply to Spinage

It would be easy to dismiss Spinage's polemic (*Oryx*, **32** [4], 267–278) as the last gasp of the conservation old guard, which seeks to discredit new participatory models of conservation by tarring them as 'neopopulist', 'Marxist' and 'left-wing'. After all, the main international conservation agencies have already distanced themselves from the classical conservation model, which seeks to establish protected areas by clearing them of resident human populations. For example, in May 1996, after several years of dialogue with indigenous peoples' organizations, the World Wide Fund for Nature (International) adopted a new policy on indigenous peoples and conservation, which – in line with existing and emerging principles of international law – explicitly recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to the use, ownership and control of their traditional territories, approves the current draft of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and emphasizes the principle of free and informed consent in all interactions between indigenous peoples and conservation organizations (WWF, 1996).

In a similar spirit, the General Assembly of the IUCN – the World Conservation Union, at its meeting in Montreal in November 1996, approved several resolutions that refer to indigenous peoples and protected areas. The resolutions provide guidelines for the secretariat and members of the IUCN, stating not only that they should recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in protected areas but also that the personnel and members of the IUCN should contribute to indigenous initiatives in intergovernmental fora such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, which itself makes provisions for securing customary rights. The IUCN resolutions propose that the rights of indigenous peoples in protected areas should be respected and that conservation policies should be compatible with the current draft of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As a step towards the promotion of these new models for conservation, the IUCN has likewise revised its set of definitions of types of conservation areas, recognizing that protected areas need not only be managed and controlled by state agencies, but should include other types owned and managed by non-governmental agencies, private companies, individuals, local communities and indigenous peoples. To accommodate the economic activities of resident peoples, the WWF and IUCN now give particular emphasis to the need to increase the number of protected areas in the IUCN's Categories V, 'Protected Landscapes/Seascapes', and VI, 'Managed Resource Protected Areas'. The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas is currently engaged in an internal review to see how it can best put these new principles into effect, given that in many countries national protected-area legislation, developed during the heyday of the 'classical' conservation model, does not contemplate non-state institutions managing, owning, controlling or using protected areas (WWF/IUCN, 1997).

These changes within the conservation agencies' thinking reflect a growing sophistication in their understanding of the relationship between protected areas and the civil societies within which they are embedded. Increasing pressures on natural resources surrounding protected areas throws into doubt the long-term sustainability of the areas themselves if local communities resent their existence. Protected-area managers in the field have recognized that parks become management nightmares if local people neither benefit

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