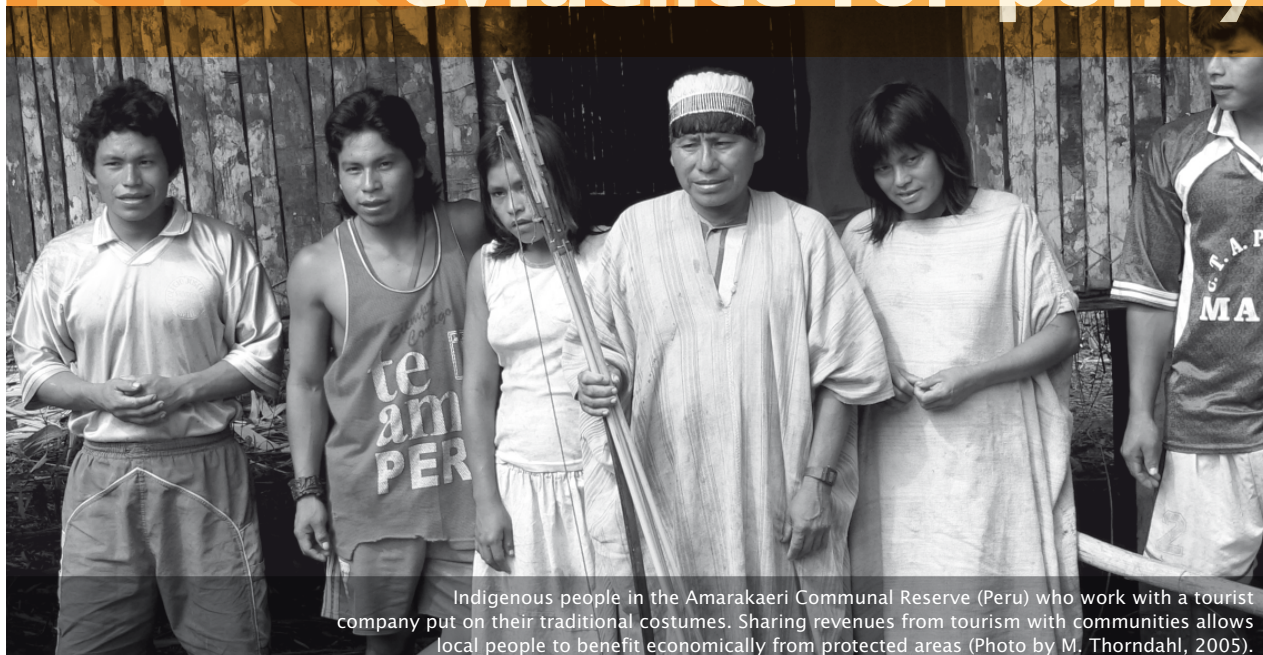


# research evidence for policy



Indigenous people in the Amaraakeri Communal Reserve (Peru) who work with a tourist company put on their traditional costumes. Sharing revenues from tourism with communities allows local people to benefit economically from protected areas (Photo by M. Thorndahl, 2005).

## Conservation in protected areas: do local people benefit?



Case studies featured here were conducted in: Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam, Switzerland.

### Policy Message

- The shift towards participatory conservation is far from complete. The management of protected areas often includes local people in theory but not in practice.
- Cost-benefit analyses worldwide reveal few economic gains for local communities, but partial political benefits.
- Economic benefits – provision of basic social services, income generating activities, insurance schemes – can be promising incentives for people to participate.
- Research shows that ecological goals are best supported where the control of parks is transferred to local communities.

- There are clear connections between the involvement of local people in the management of protected areas and the conservation of biological diversity.
- While “participatory conservation” is widely recognised as a model that enhances efforts to improve the richness in species and ecosystems, it is in many cases not applied in a way that benefits both the people and the environment. This edition of *evidence for policy* examines the difficulties in taking communities in protected areas seriously into account. It also suggests practical ways of improving the relationship between the needs and interests of surrounding communities and the efforts to maintain biological diversity.

### Managing protected areas

- International concerns about the increasing number of plant and animal species facing extinction prompted the establishment of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. While the establishment of protected areas was seen as an important strategy to counter the rapid loss of ecosystems and species, ways in which to manage such areas were hotly debated. These concerns are addressed in a recent publication by the NCCR North-South, *People, Protected Areas and Global Change*.
- A “fortress” approach banning human

use of protected areas dominated until about a decade ago. It involved police or military-like central state control of protected areas, and proved to be anti-popular, inefficient and costly. A shift has since been noted towards “participatory” or “community” conservation, which aims at recognising and returning power and decision-making to the local level and to communities in a bottom-up, participatory way. For donor agencies as well as for many civil society organisations, the local population now plays a key role in biodiversity issues.

- **Moving towards participatory conservation**

- The publication *People, Protected Areas and Global Change* provides a timely analysis of participatory protected area governance and management. The editors, Marc Galvin and Tobias Haller, examine how the community approach to conservation evolved in specific settings and who benefits from it.
- Drawing on the work of 13 research groups active in diverse regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Switzerland, the book offers a set of comparable case studies that take into account historical, geographical, political, social and economic contexts and dynamics.

- The case studies suggest that the shift from the old way of fortress conservation of supposedly 'pure nature' or 'wilderness' to the new paradigm of inclusive, community conservation of protected areas is far from complete.
- Local people often face the problem of having access to involvement on paper but not in reality. In many cases, the control of parks is not fully transferred to local communities despite agreements to do so.

- **Costly ecological benefits**

- Ecological benefits related to fauna and flora protection are mixed and depend largely on local involvement and investment. In Latin America, the maintenance of biodiversity is a result of the power and organisation of local indigenous groups. In Africa, low acceptance of protection measures often means ecological gains are only possible with a high level of external investment. In many places such as

Waza (Cameroon), the participatory conservation approach is no longer really applied and poaching, fishing and grazing in the protected area are observed. By contrast, in Nepal and Tanzania more endangered animals are surviving. Despite the fortress approach in some places, an increase in wildlife numbers and protection of flora are observed. This may be explained by the presence of considerable outside inputs from tourism or development projects.

**Do poor people benefit?**

Protected areas may attract tourists, generating revenues for governments and tourist operators. One of the main challenges of participatory approaches is to ensure that local people receive their share of the profit. The cost-benefit analysis in *People, Protected Areas and Global Change* paints a rather negative picture:

- In most cases in Latin America, local people were exposed to costs from protected areas due to loss of access to land and forests.
- In Africa, people may be evicted, lose land, suffer crop damage and, in extreme cases, be killed. Partial revenues are obtained through hunting quotas or park outreach projects such as soil conservation programmes and small-scale tourism activities.
- In Asia, the cost-benefit situation is more varied. In Nepal, benefits come from high investments in development projects and credit associations. An insurance system covers some of the losses when domestic animals are killed. There are no gains for local people in Indonesia and high losses in Vietnam, where local hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators were expelled.

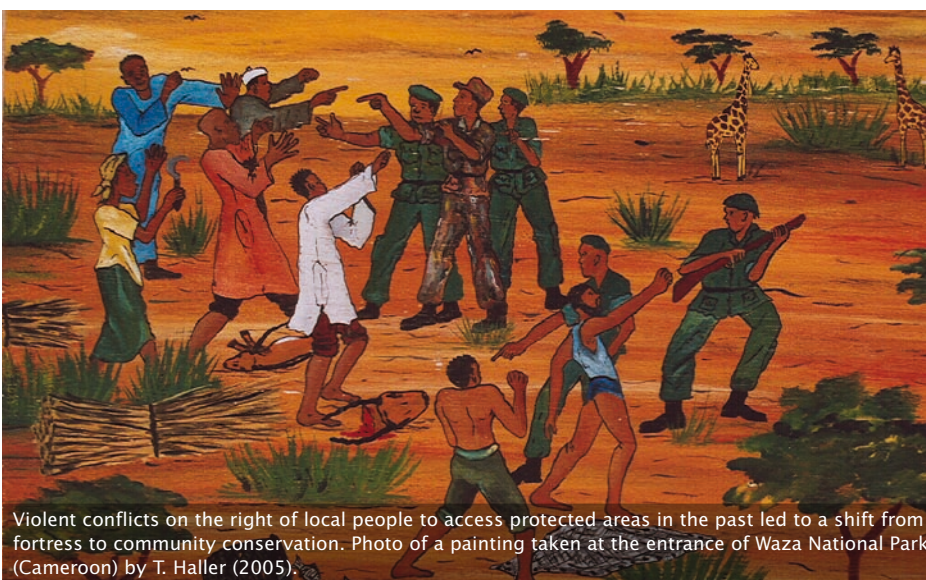
Overall, the economic benefits from participatory conservation are low and have yet to be more equitably distributed.

**Political gains for indigenous people**

In addition to the economic costs and benefits, the authors analysed the possible political benefits from participatory management. What stands out is that in Latin America, all local representatives use the label of "indigenesness". Defining oneself as indigenous legitimises the exclusion

**Participatory Conservation**

The World Commission on Protected Areas of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has set up guidelines on how to best govern protected areas and how to transfer responsibility from central state control to communities at the local level. The classification of governance types includes 1) governance by government, 2) shared governance, 3) private governance, and 4) governance by indigenous peoples and local communities. [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)



Violent conflicts on the right of local people to access protected areas in the past led to a shift from fortress to community conservation. Photo of a painting taken at the entrance of Waza National Park (Cameroon) by T. Haller (2005).

of other competing interest groups such as immigrant settlers, farmers, lumber industry, gold miners, oil companies and sometimes private tourist companies. Indigenouness is only partly an issue in Asia. While Indonesian indigenous leaders successfully refer to it in order to enforce their claims against immigrant farmers, in Vietnam and Nepal no political benefits have been shown so far for local groups. In Africa, indigenouness cannot be used as a political argument. Living close to a protected area or in a buffer zone even in Wildlife Management Areas yields hardly any political gain.

### Policy implications

The NCCR North-South case studies emphasise that if local people see an economic or political benefit, they are more likely to be inclined to participate in the conservation of protected areas, and this in turn supports ecological goals. Possible benefits are:

- the provision of basic social services such as the construction and maintenance of trails, bridges, drinking water or schools;
- support for income generating activities like goat-keeping, carpentry or horticulture as a way of creating alternatives to natural resource-dependent livelihoods;
- revenues from tourism or trophy hunting passed down to the village level;
- insurance schemes to protect against the depredation of crops or livestock by wildlife;
- capacity building as a measure to strengthen the people's claims on the territory.

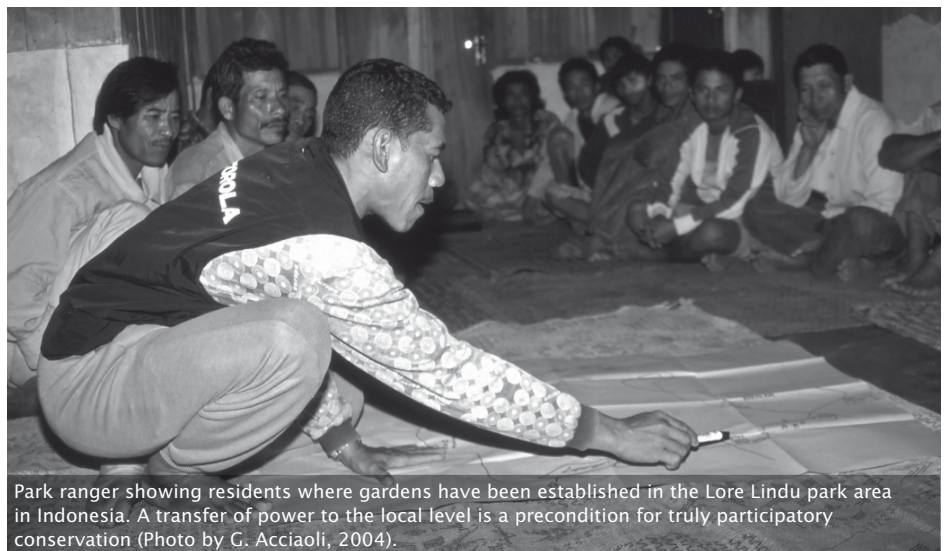
Incentives at both the household and the community levels are prerequisites for sustainable development. Economic incentives should be based on the calculations of local stakeholders and must take into account their power, interests, needs and culture.

*People, Protected Areas and Global Change* calls for renewed efforts by aid agencies, states and NGOs to examine the way they work with communities in the creation and governance of protected areas. Working together more effectively with communities requires an understanding of the local interests in protected areas.

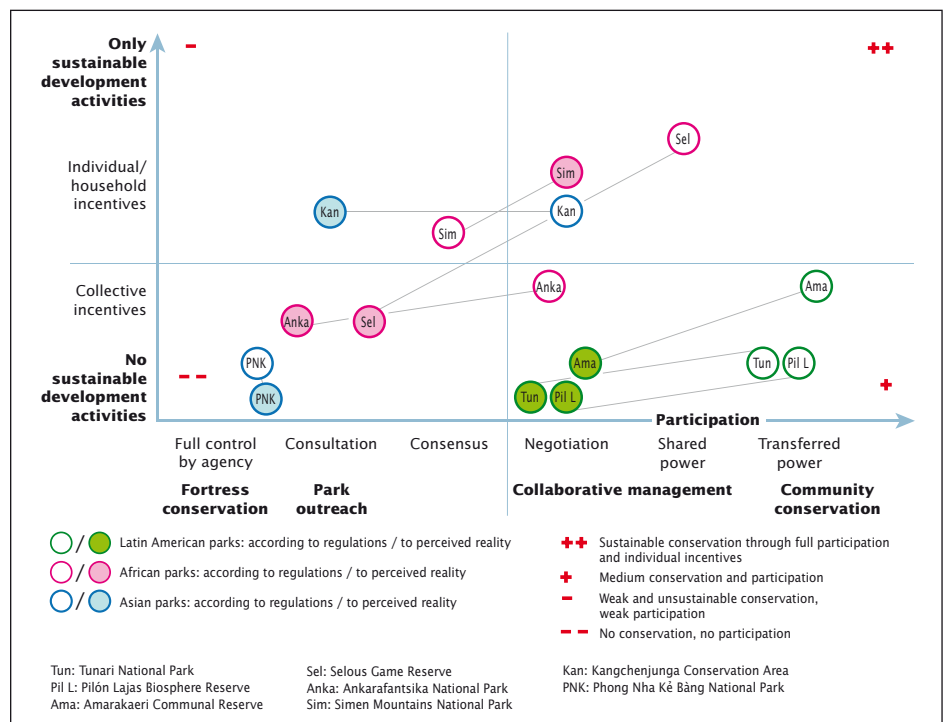
This means:

- Local stakeholders should be given a platform and a trustworthy institutional framework for addressing their needs.
- Participatory conservation should be defined in collaboration with local communities at the beginning of the establishment of a protected area.
- Empowerment of local people, accountability, transparency and subsidiarity are important principles of good governance to be applied to park management.

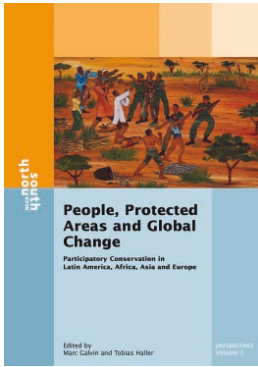
Embedding the park management in a broader governance strategy helps protected areas to become a means of conserving flora and fauna as well as a home for the people.



Park ranger showing residents where gardens have been established in the Lore Lindu park area in Indonesia. A transfer of power to the local level is a precondition for truly participatory conservation (Photo by G. Acciaoli, 2004).



Comparative Participation-Sustainability Matrix for protected areas examined in NCCR North-South study areas, with a focus on stated degree of participation and development activities, and degree as perceived by local people (Source: T. Haller and M. Galvin, 2008).



<http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/content.php/filterpage/id/2>

**Galvin M, Haller T**, editors.  
*People, Protected Areas and Global Change: Participatory Conservation in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe.* Perspectives of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South, University of Bern, Vol. 3. Bern: Geographica Bernensia, 560 pp.



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*"Protected areas are cultural landscapes. That's why the parks belong to the people."*



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*"Benefits from reserves are more of a political than of an economic nature for indigenous people in Latin America."*

**evidence for policy**  
*evidence for policy* provides research highlights from the NCCR North-South on important development issues. This is the first issue in a series of policy briefs that offer research information on topics such as governance and conflict, livelihoods, globalisation, sanitation, health, natural resources and sustainability in an accessible way. *evidence for policy* and further research information is available at [www.north-south.unibe.ch/](http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/) or from our research communicator Claudia Michel: [claudia.michel@cde.unibe.ch](mailto:claudia.michel@cde.unibe.ch).

## Case studies linking participation and sustainable development in protected areas

The case studies for *People, Protected Areas and Global Change* were carried out in Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam and Switzerland.

### Combining conservation and development in Nepal

The Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Project in Nepal addresses biodiversity conservation priorities as well as the livelihood needs of local inhabitants. The project supports alternatives to natural resource dependent livelihoods for the local population to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity. The employment of local personnel, gender-focused and partnership development approaches, and management by competent Nepali professionals are factors that have contributed to its success.

### Unfulfilled promise of participatory conservation in Tanzania

In Tanzania, there were changes in the management of the Selous Game Reserve – Africa's largest protected area and a tourist attraction – from top-down control to community participation. However, for many local stakeholders the term "participation" has a negative connotation. Potential revenues from tourism do not reach them and do not sufficiently cover losses through conservation restrictions and crop damage.

### No economic but political gains in Latin America

Biodiversity conservation policies are closely related to indigenesness in Latin America. Indigenous leaders have for example opted for a protected area solution for the Amaraakeri Communal Reserve in Peru. While this yields no economic gain, controlling the territory helps to guarantee their cultural survival.

### Further reading

**Haller T, Galvin M, Meroka P, Alca J, Alvarez A.** 2008. Who gains from community conservation? Intended and unintended costs and benefits of participative approaches in Peru and Tanzania. *The Journal of Environment & Development* 17:118–145. doi: 10.1177/1070496508316853


**Haller T, Merten S.** 2008. We are Zambian – Don't tell us how to fish! Institutional change, power relations and conflicts in the Kafue Flats fisheries in Zambia. *Human Ecology* 36(5):699–715. doi: 10.1007/S10745-008-9191-4

**Dudley N.** 2008. Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. Available at: [www.iucn.org/what/issues/protected/resources.cfm?uPage=1](http://www.iucn.org/what/issues/protected/resources.cfm?uPage=1); accessed on 23 December 2008.

The NCCR North-South is a worldwide research network including seven partner institutions in Switzerland and some 160 universities, research institutions and development organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Approximately 350 researchers worldwide contribute to the activities of the NCCR North-South.

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