

Parks or people? National parks and the case of Del Este, Dominican Republic

Donald V.L. Macleod

Glasgow University, Crichton Campus, Dumfries, UK

Abstract: Beginning with a brief overview of the USA national park model, this paper outlines significant changes in attitudes towards resident peoples worldwide. It reviews relevant literature dealing with parks in various countries, and argues that the traditional division between people and parks, part of the intellectual context, should be challenged. It also reports that the involvement of resident peoples in management decisions is increasing. Nevertheless, at grass-roots level, as anthropological research and a case study of Del Este in the Dominican Republic show, the struggle for resources continues, with international economic power and local culture remaining dominant factors in environmental conservation.

Key words: conservation; culture; parks; people; power; resources.

I Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between people and national parks, beginning with a comparative analysis from around the world, reviewing relevant literature and then focusing on a case study in the Caribbean. The relationship between people and parks may be taken to represent one aspect of the varied experience of human society with the natural environment, a topic of some considerable debate within anthropology. National parks have been chosen as they encapsulate and represent a specific approach towards the natural environment – that of protective controller or defender of resources. They make manifest in a natural context a human desire and a culturally determined sentiment; they illustrate a relationship of power between humans and nature, and between differing social groups. Because of these factors the study of national parks in varying situations helps us to understand fundamental issues in

Address for correspondence: Glasgow University, Rutherford McCowan Building, Crichton Campus, Dumfries DG1 42L. Tel: 01387 702010; e-mail: d.macleod@crichton.gla.ac.uk

conservation, social development, the human psyche and the cultural interpretation of nature.

Initially this paper will concentrate on the concept of the national park and its various forms, giving specific examples dealing with human populations and their interaction with these protected areas. The historical development and cultural context will be referred to and the change in attitude of the planners towards indigenous or resident populations noted. A detailed look at work by anthropologists concerned with national parks will follow, giving examples of problems, solutions and the insights that fieldwork allows into local communities and their relationship with the natural environment. Finally, a case study of a national park and the surrounding region, specifically two maritime communities, in the Dominican Republic is discussed. The focus is on one village that has dramatically changed its economic base from fishing to servicing tourists who visit an area of the park, a situation that contrasts with a second village that is expanding to saturation point as a fishing community. The study looks at issues of power, resources and culture as various groups living near the park interact and struggle for control over resources with one another and with organizations from outside the region.

II National parks

In 1872 Yellowstone was proclaimed a national park in the USA. It was the first of its kind and led to a slow growth in the national park movement until the second world war, after which growth increased sharply. Initially the parks were established to protect recreational resources and wildlife, while the notion of protecting entire ecosystems and biological diversity appeared later. The National Park Service in the USA sees the concept of the park emanating from the loss of the American frontier and the desire to preserve the original resources for the increasingly urbanized public. The American notion of a national park remains the 'model system of conservation' for the majority of countries operating protected areas in the world, including the Dominican Republic (Brechin *et al.*, 1991). It is also embodied in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) 1975 definition of a national park as a large area:

- 1) Where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, whose plants and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats, are of special scientific, educative and recreative interest, or which contains a natural landscape of great beauty.
- 2) Where the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible, exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively, the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features that have led to its establishment. (West and Brechin, 1991: xvii).

The tragedy is that by such a definition peoples have been displaced or prevented from using park resources, left to suffer 'severe disruption' and all without documentary proof that they were harming park resources (West and Brechin, 1991). Such observations lead some social scientists to see international conservation as cultural imperialism: Marks (1984: 5-6) views wildlife protection as carrying with it 'the implication of force, of quasi-military operations and of sanctions'.

Imperious attitudes towards the natural environment have been recorded before. In his book charting the changing attitudes towards nature in England between the years 1500 and 1800, Thomas (1983) refers to Tudor and Stuart England. During this period the long-established view was that of a world 'created for man's sake, and that species were meant to be subordinate to his wishes and needs' (Thomas, 1983: 17). Thomas remarks that those theologians and intellectuals feeling the need to justify such a view readily appealed to the classical philosophers and the Bible. Aristotle, as well as the Stoics, taught that nature existed ultimately 'to serve man's interests' (Thomas, 1983: 17). Thomas also notes that in 1969 the IUCN defined conservation as 'The rational use of the environment to achieve the highest quality of living for mankind' (Thomas, 1983: 302). We are bound to enquire as to which particular group of 'mankind' (or, more appropriately, humankind) this dictum refers in actual practice.

It appears that the IUCN has become more sensitive to the needs of resident peoples over the years. A book dealing with managing protected areas, sponsored by the IUCN and based on the conference of the World Congress of National Parks in Bali (1982), specifically states that some native populations, following traditional culture, protect natural ecosystems and harvest on a sustainable basis (Mackinnon *et al.*, 1986). They even see these people as becoming allies to the managers of protected areas, and say that indigenous peoples can and should benefit from the establishment of protected areas. Despite such publicized intentions, there were numerous causes for concern voiced by other writers during the 1980s. An edited collection examining conservation in Africa observed in its introduction that it has frequently meant the exclusion of rural people from national parks and forest reserves, with a view to protecting large animal species and their habitats. The editors point out that in future the 'essential complementarity of ecological and sociological analysis of the African rural environment will be kept firmly in focus' (Anderson and Grove, 1987b: 10)

Lindsay (1987), in a chapter analysing the lessons to be learnt from Amboseli National Park, reports how management plans indicated that a combination of tourism and livestock ranching would best suit their intentions for the park. Resident Maasai groups that appeared to be entering the cash economy would apparently benefit through employment and livestock sales. The Maasai agreed to vacate park land, however they experienced no improvement in their economy, and agricultural expansion adjacent to the park led to divisions between local people and conservationists. Lindsay (1987) suggests that the major drawback to the plan was the attempt to graft conservation onto a changing pastoralist society without addressing the nature of that change, and he draws attention to the need to consider local attitudes and aspirations, social dynamics and ecological realities. There is a general agreement among writers of this period that local residents and their socio-economic behaviour had not been examined sufficiently by policy makers

A comprehensive study of resident peoples and national parks was published in 1991 (West and Brechin, 1991). West mentioned that the initial concept for the book was to focus on the need to document the negative social impacts and insensitive treatment of local peoples by the international conservation community (which viewed locals as a clear evil, a 'weed' to be removed from the purity of wild nature). However, he believes the debate over resident peoples in recent years has led to a

realization that the fate of protected areas is tied to 'the support and hence the fate, of local peoples' (West, 1991: xix). He sees the pressing issue as the necessity to accommodate the cultural and rural development needs of local people within the objectives of conservation, but he is aware of the problems ahead. This theme is stated more powerfully in the opening chapter introducing a framework for enquiry in which the four authors state that protected areas will not survive for long if local residents remain in poverty or are denied access to resources inside. They claim that displacement should be a policy of last resort, because of its social disruption as well as the resentment of the park and conservation politics that are engendered (Brechin *et al.*, 1991: 26).

It is not simply that powerful groups ignore local residents, but more the case that they are convinced of their own superiority in knowledge and argument, not to mention wealth and influence. On the Galapagos Islands such groups included the National Park Service of Ecuador, the international scientific establishment and Ecuador's tourism industry. These groups supported the restriction of human access to most of the natural resources, strictly limiting local development. They believed that sustainable local development depends on tourism and not on the traditional industries of agriculture and fishing. And yet, the beneficiaries of the tourism were the tour companies themselves, not the local residents (Bailey, 1991: 188).

There is a clash between western-educated park managers, viewing environmental imperatives on a global scale, and local people preoccupied with their own short-term survival. For example, the Sherpas of Sagamath (Mount Everest) National Park are concerned with their livelihoods as pastoralists and woodcutters, and perceive the parks as a scheme for outsiders to control resources and limit the economic success of local residents. As with the Galapagos example, there is a chasm between the goals of outside policy makers and local residents. Similarly, the residents of the Grand Canyon National Park (the Havasupai People) are interested in maintaining their cultural, social and political integrity and developing economic independence whereas, in contrast, the Park Service's objective is to maintain the natural resource values of the Grand Canyon as a whole. The Park Service is worried about the grazing of horses by the Havasupai and wishes to restrict it, as well as restricting their occasional recreational activities that limit visitor access and quality of experience. Both groups are keen to maintain the region's resources, but disagree about the means of doing so (Hough, 1991: 215–30).

In the concluding section to their edited collection, West and Brechin (1991: 359–400) note that it has become the new conventional wisdom in international conservation circles to consider 'primitive, traditional, tribal groups' as compatible with protected area objectives. However, in contrast, the status of marginal peasant populations and both tribal and peasant peoples who wish to use 'nontraditional' technologies for resource extraction are still suspect. West and Brechin believe that such peoples deserve equal consideration, an observation that is of particular relevance to the case study of the Dominican Republic.

III Local control

West and Brechin have made a strong case for the inclusion of local residents in the management planning of areas in which they live, a step forward in terms of including

them in the entire process. Nevertheless, they still leave the decisive power in the hands of nonlocal policy makers. Adams and McShane (1992) go further and suggest that the local residents or, in this case, Africans, should be in charge of managing their own environments. They prove with statistics that Africans have done more than their fair share to promote conservation in terms of land commitments, financing and labour. They attack the belief that Africans and wildlife do not belong together, giving examples of failures and successes, and they criticize the 'myth' of indigenous people living in harmony with nature, suggesting that given the chance indigenous peoples are just as likely to exploit their environment. Conservation organizations are seen as promoting emotional issues such as the danger to elephants and rhinos of extinction, but not presenting an intellectual discussion about the complexities of conservation in Africa – issues dealing with poverty, underemployment, lack of education and the time factors involved.

Adams and McShane (1992) highlight the fact that much of the control over funding and decisions remains with expatriate advisers, agencies and international conservation organizations, a situation way out of proportion to the amount of money they invest. Instead, the writers argue, empowerment and participation must go to the Africans, including all aspects of conservation, management and benefit, in short: 'Conservation must be done by Africans' (Adams and McShane, 1992: 245).

In Australia the situation regarding Aborigines and land designated as national parks has seen recent changes. In 1958 the process of the formation of Ayers Rock and Mount Olga National Park involved no Aborigines, despite compromising their traditional lifestyle on their land. Whereas, in contrast, a transformation in attitudes has led to the Aboriginal owners of Kakadu National Park becoming intimately involved in the process of park planning and management. This transition culminated in 1995 with the signing of a historic Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Nature Conservation Agency and the Indigenous Northern Land Council providing explicit recognition of the interests of the traditional owners in the management and control of Aboriginal heritage in the park. Notwithstanding major differences in the understanding of such concepts as art, landscape and time management, the two groups have reached a state of affairs that is regarded as a model for other Australian parks to respect (Mercer, 1998).

However, although the Aboriginal Land Act of 1991 allows traditional owners to reclaim national park areas, the new ownership is seen by some as somewhat nominal, with land being leased straight back to the government as national parks. As Strang (1997) indicates, this forms part of the wider and yet unresolved debate in Australia over land ownership, control and rights of use.

Despite a clear wish for cooperation in some parts of the world, in others there remains a serious problem in the competition for control over natural resources. In a book dealing with indigenous peoples and biodiversity conservation in Latin America, Colchester and Gray (1998) maintained that the continuing decrease in biodiversity was leading conservationists to concentrate on protecting key areas and ignore the social and political needs of local residents. However, they acknowledged an increasing awareness among conservationists of indigenous rights, with the World Wildlife Fund International approving the United Nations (UN) declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Equally, the IUCN in 1996 approved resolutions recognizing indigenous rights in protected areas and stated that IUCN personnel and

members should contribute to indigenous activities in intergovernmental initiatives such as the convention on biological diversity. The real challenge, of course, is to put the declaration principles into practice. It was noted that, despite their mutual distrust, indigenous peoples and conservationists recognize common threats and both agree on the need to check the possible imposition of tourist companies, entrepreneurs, bio-prospectors and consultants. Colchester and Gray concluded that the rights of indigenous peoples are firmly embedded in any discussion of protected areas.

Finally, a pamphlet published by the IUCN in 1997 (to celebrate their 50th anniversary in 1998) explained their mission: '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' (IUCN, 1997: 3). They elaborate on this by adding that as they see people as the principal actors in effective conservation, the Union's activities endeavour to ensure that people are also the main beneficiaries of sustainable development. The Director General reiterated these sentiments in his opening statement saying that the IUCN is designing its programmes to meet social demands of the people, through collaborative management and fostering economic incentives for conservation. By all accounts it would seem that conservation organizations are seriously dealing with issues involving resident peoples and protected areas. But what is actually happening in and around national parks?

IV Anthropologists and national parks

Anthropologists have occasionally studied people who have lived within or near to national parks. Because of their professional interest in the lives of these groups, anthropologists have often made observations that are useful for a general understanding of the human relationship with the natural environment, as well as the particular society they are examining. Turton's (1987) work with the Mursi of Ethiopia, caught between the boundaries of two designated national parks, exemplifies numerous points made in this paper. Turton sees himself as a willing advocate of the people whom he studies and, at the same time, takes a detached view of the confrontation between conservationists and the local residents as a conflict of cultural values.

In Ethiopia the Wildlife Conservation Department viewed the presence of a human population as the chief problem for conservation, and various advisers drew up resettlement plans. Turton (1987) points out that the planners grossly underestimated the population of the Mursi and were largely ignorant of their subsistence and ecology, and therefore of the natural environment moulded by human activity over many years. He details the Mursi economy, their intimate relationship with their environment, and shows that by making the Mursi economy less diversified through restrictions, the Department have increased their exposure to ecological uncertainty and famine. It also appears that the conservationists had imagined the region to be a wilderness unaffected by human activity, a view that Turton quickly discredits, describing this error as being partly due to the excellent conservation policies of the local people.

Turton's examination of the differing cultural values shows western conservationist arguments taking for granted a conflict between conservation and development: a defeatist and pessimistic approach, typical of the west's view of the relationship between human society and nature. He goes on to explain that in contrast, for the Mursi, wild animals are 'everything that cattle are not' and that the Mursi see themselves as living *in* nature; whereas in the west we see ourselves living over and above it. He concludes that conservation and exploitation are both ways of dominating nature, of bringing it under human control (Turton, 1987).

Another study of an African group affected by the creation of a national park is Turnbull's (1972) provocative work on the Ik, hunter-gatherers who were denied access to Kidepo National Park in Uganda, formerly their major hunting ground. He records their social and psychological deterioration after they were confined to a small area in what was once just a temporary resting place for them: 'They live on as a people without life, without passion, beyond humanity' (Turnbull, 1972: 295). One caption to a photographic plate in the book epitomizes their situation: 'At the *di* of Atum's village, near Pirre, men sit in clusters and gaze over their former hunting territory, now a national park, and wonder at those who ordain that animals shall be preserved while humans die'. Turnbull's evocative account powerfully conveys the destructive impact that restricting access to resources can have upon a way of life.

The Komodo National Park was established in Indonesia in 1978, with tourism envisaged as the primary source of income by the park authorities. Hitchcock (1993) draws attention to the resident population, some of whom regarded the native Komodo dragon (the giant lizard that attracts the tourists) as their sibling and have them featuring in dramatic legends. The islanders have a mixed economy including cultivation, animal husbandry, hunting and fishing; however, a management plan drawn up by multinational experts under the auspices of the UN decided that some of these activities, including hunting and tree felling, should be regulated. Their long-term plan saw islanders becoming engaged in wage labour in the service industries generated by tourism. Relocation of communities was also recommended, and Hitchcock suggests that it is unclear as to whether the people themselves were even consulted about these proposals.

Despite the park's success in terms of conserving wildlife and improving the economy, the resident islanders have seen little benefit, partly owing to their poor education. They became increasingly dependent on imported foodstuffs and prices rose; with no handcraft tradition they were unable to make souvenirs and a lack of capital inhibited their business development. Overall, an ignorance of the islanders' traditional economy, together with a concentration on wildlife and tourism by the policy makers, has meant that the resident population has suffered.

Even though the collaboration between conservationists and local residents is widely recognized as advantageous to both parties, there are still examples of blatant disregard for local knowledge and a marked preference for preserving the natural environment at the expense of human occupants. In her examination of a conservation project in Arabia, Chatty (1998) shows that the local population was perceived as an obstacle to be overcome rather than a partner in development. A project to reintroduce the Oryx in Oman had been implemented with 'near total disregard for the indigenous human population' (Chatty: 1998: 4). She observes that the local population wished to improve their lives and not live in a 'pristine traditional state', an attitude that

opposed the conservationists' desire for them to remain unchanged. Similarly, a project in Syria, backed by the IUCN in 1992, led to the exclusion of Bedouin and their herds from an important area of rehabilitated range-land. Chatty concludes that sustainable conservation requires the goodwill of the resident population. She asserts that conservation must be linked with human development and that nature reserves should be placed in their regional context.

In a broad assessment of the 'The cost of tourism in the Caribbean', the journalist Polly Pattullo (1996) records that Jamaica's first national park, Blue Mountain/John Crow (opened in 1989) has developed recreational and educational activities for tourists and Jamaicans, providing employment for local people. The park is intended to promote sustainable land-use policies, preserve the area from detrimental development and help stop deforestation. Local people are managing a special conservation area nearby, promoting ecotourism and sustainable agriculture. Pattullo contrasts the successful integration of locals and tourists in Jamaica with the situation on St. John, where conservation has led to conflict, as described below.

A national park was established on St. John in the US Virgin Islands in 1956 by an act of Congress after Laurence Rockefeller gave his estate land, covering half the island, to the federal government, stipulating it should be a national park. Olwig (1980, 1985) has seen the original population of 800 peasants and fishermen transform into 2500 waged employees, displaying an increase in wealth. However, there have been problems and the park, created in the American image of nature, was deliberately managed back to the pristine condition it supposedly experienced before the arrival of the Europeans. This involved restricting land use, thereby limiting the resident population's economy: swidden agriculture and cattle grazing were prohibited. Whereas, in contrast, provisions for the urban visitors were established: trails, exhibits, roads, camping facilities and swimming areas.

Because of the increase in work and the need for specialist skills, labour has been imported, some at a cheaper rate than local people will accept. Within the park the locals occupy the lower positions of the full-time jobs, and decision making is in the hands of the professional rangers, the majority of whom are Americans. St. Johnians are active in the transportation of tourists, if involved at all, while the majority work for the local government. Local residents have mixed attitudes towards the park: it has brought in tourist money, taught them to be more appreciative of the natural beauty, reduced their shame at being rural folk. But they see park management as inadequate as it is assumed that what is good for Yellowstone is good for St. John (Olwig, 1985: 171).

Another problem is the limited land: real estate is becoming scarce and expensive on St. John, rich men bid for land and the poor residents lose out. In fact, the rising prices and taxation of land at its commercial value has led to the sale of land to pay off debts: 'What was formerly a sense of identity and family togetherness has become a source of contention and divisiveness' (Olwig, 1997: 153). Our attention is drawn to the transformation in the relationship between local people and family land, which was once rich in cultural and social significance, deeply symbolic, but has become increasingly perceived in terms of money, driven by the international market (see also Besson and Momsen (1987) on attitudes to land and development in the Caribbean).

With a restricted amount of land to build on, and the park occupying so much, the

resentment grows. Locals criticize the concept of 'wilderness': some see the park as just preserving 'bush, mongooses and jackasses', and believe that it should provide as a food source. St. John is now effectively a 'nature island' and the native population has been joined by over 1000 alien workers and hundreds of residential continental Americans and visiting tourists, transforming the island's social profile.

V A national park in the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is a country that embraces some 16 national parks besides natural and scientific reserves, and it shares the large Caribbean island 'Hispaniola' with Haiti. There are similarities between the experience of the people on the small island of St. John with those residents affected by national parks in the Dominican Republic. They share a socio-economic profile as peasants, fishermen and service workers and compete with powerful organizations for natural resources.

The national park under scrutiny is Del Este, lying in the southeast corner, one which produces more income from tourism than all the other parks combined. It was created in September 1975 and covers 42 000 ha, 11 000 ha of which are on an island, Saona. Most of the island's mammals are represented here, particularly the rare solenodon and endangered species such as the crowned pigeon, the Hispaniolan parrot and the horned iguana. The coastal waters are home to the rare Caribbean manatee, four types of turtle and dolphins. There are pre-Columbian pictographs and petroglyphs in caves and mangroves and coral reefs surround much of its coastline.

As on St. John, the land for the park was donated to the government, in this case by the Gulf and Western Corporation, with the stipulation that it became a national park. The gift was accepted and accompanied by expropriations of land from resident people, sometimes without compensation. In 1980 a management plan declared the park's objectives relating to the protection of flora and fauna and marine systems, as well as areas of scientific, geological, historical and archaeological interest. It also made provisions for research, education and recreation facilities and the development of the resident community living on the island of Saona. Unfortunately the management and legal control over the sea channel, between the coast and island of Saona, was not concluded and remains a contentious issue owing to its critical ecological importance. Authority over the management and protection of all parks on the island lies with the National Parks Directorate (DNP), an autonomous agency. Presidential decrees and agreements with the DNP have allowed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) certain responsibilities. In 1993 the 'Parks in Peril' programme embraced Del Este: a local NGO, 'Pronatura', together with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), was engaged in management and fund-raising for the park. In 1984 a board of trustees, 'Patronato', was also set up (Brandon *et al.*, 1998).

Land-use restrictions and lack of infrastructure forced the 95 individuals living within the mainland park area to abandon their settlements where they had raised cattle, crops, coconuts and honey bees. Some 370 individuals on the island of Saona remained in 1980, but severe restrictions on land use, particularly the construction of houses, agricultural land and livestock pasture has led to emigration and a transfer to fishing and the service industries. The other communities on the periphery of the

park are Bayahibe, Boca de Yuma and Padre Nuestro. A report commissioned by Parks in Peril and published in 1998 (Brandon *et al.*, 1998) based on fieldwork undertaken in the mid-1990s gave population figures for these settlements as 582, 1210 and 30, respectively, all of which had at least doubled by 2000. The population of Padre Nuestro alone has grown from 30 to over 300, and most of its breadwinners now work at nearby hotels as opposed to charcoal production as was earlier reported. A further indication of how the park and its related tourism have dramatically changed the economic landscape is illustrated by changes in Bayahibe. Formerly a fishing village, since the mid-1980s it has been transformed into one largely dependent on ferrying tourists along the coast to Saona, with only 15 full-time fishermen continuing the tradition.

Local residents have been confused by the actions of the authorities who have not established a buffer zone around the park in which residents may be granted rights to resources. Attitudes expressed by the DNP have been ambiguous: they removed ovens for copra production, storage sheds for bee-keeping and domestic livestock from within the park, but more recently the Patronato reversed these decisions. Understandably there is distrust among the residents and serious insecurity regarding their tenure of land, which leads to problems when efforts are made towards mutual dialogue. Illegal land clearing for agricultural use and livestock continues on a small scale, whilst firewood is harvested, charcoal produced and wood taken for fences and fish traps. Others continue to hunt illegally for crabs, pigs, pigeons, iguana and turtle eggs.

Fishing, using artisanal methods, was reported in 1998 as being excessive, with biologists noting the absence of large fish in the region of the park. Nevertheless, by 2000 the largest village, Boca de Yuma, was continuing to expand as a fishing community, with hundreds of men fishing daily, as were the men of Saona. People harvesting the waters include the ex-professionals of Bayahibe who still keep many traps out at sea for the domestic table. The region has been saturated with fishermen but, unfortunately, the waters surrounding Del Este have not formally been included within the park's boundaries. A conversation with an employee of the DNP reveals that there was a mistake in the original planning of the park, an oversight that led to the coast and channel water being not legally designated as part of the park. This is a serious omission given the paramount importance of the channel as the nursery of sea-creatures for the south coast of the Dominican Republic. Continual overfishing and the pollution from tour boats will lead to its destruction.

The report of 1998 advised that local fishers should conform to national fishing regulations, such as observing the closed season for lobsters, but there were no marine patrols to ensure compliance and no restrictions within the national park area. The situation continued up to 2000 when queen conches and lobsters were caught off-season by numerous fishermen and sold by restaurants. It was rumoured that the navy turned a blind eye to activities if given payment. Equally indicative of the complexity of local power struggles, one senior marine biologist pointed out that people killed turtles for their oil, believing it to possess medicinal qualities, and it was used in voodoo ritual sessions, a practice difficult to control. Turtle oil was sold openly in a hotel shop. Similarly, manatees were protected by law, but it was suspected they were being eaten if captured: local people would keep silent about such issues.

When we consider the poverty of some people and the risks they take daily in their fishing expeditions, it is not surprising that they flaunt the weakly defended regulations to obtain resources. Boca de Yuma itself is notorious as the departure port for illegal emigration by boat, to Puerto Rico, whose passengers risk jail and drowning to escape impoverishment in the Dominican Republic.

It is tourism to the island of Saona that forms the main source of income for the national park and for the inhabitants of Bayahibe. Numbers of visitors have escalated from around 10 000 per year during the 1980s to over 300 000 in 1999. The vast majority visit Saona as part of a package tour offered by the hotels, arriving at Bayahibe by coach from where they take a 'launch' boat to the relatively unspoilt beaches. Each visitor is charged by the DNP an entry fee of around US\$1.50, and pays the tour operators far more for the day's outing. The launches seat between 10 and 30 passengers and are owned by individual men in Bayahibe and business consortiums. Over half the male working population were engaged in activities linked to this business in 2000.

The national park's income was an issue of some discord as the people in Bayahibe were disappointed that they had not received the benefits (some US\$500 000) that went directly to the parks' national headquarters. The local area had certainly suffered through the daily traffic of over 100 boats, with fish disappearing, pollution increasing from coach traffic and very little direct income through expenditure in shops: the tourists were shunted to and from the coaches without pause. Whilst there are a number of rooms and small apartment complexes in Bayahibe, there are very few independent tourists staying in them outside of the peak winter season, the Dominican Republic being a destination for resort tourists. Another grievance related to the theft of park fees collected in Bayahibe by a park employee: it was maintained that the guilty party was given a light punishment, not sufficient to condemn corruption within the park's staff. These events increased the residents' distrust of the authorities controlling the park and some said: 'the owners of the park have taken the land for themselves'.

Local residents have virtually no interest in the park as a conservation area and most of them have never visited it. The endangered species were of little concern to them; birds, small mammals and iguanas were more usually things to be hunted and killed for food or sport. In Bayahibe children killed birds with catapults and massacred butterflies for amusement. Adults hunted and ate land crabs as well as all forms of sea-creatures, even young fish and those known to be endangered: lobster and queen conch. The few 'domesticated' dogs were used for protection, and the desperately poor families would eat cats. Sentimentality shown to many animals by some North Europeans was largely absent. Cockfighting was a legal activity and very popular throughout the island: the well maintained creatures would peck one another to the death in a bloody battle fought largely for the gambling potential. Given the overall attitude towards nonhuman animal life, only the exceptional local conservationists paid any interest to the park.

Besides the local indifference to the park's endangered species, there was also little interest from tourists. Ecotourism was nonexistent in 2000 owing largely to bureaucratic problems, a lack of marketing and power struggles involving resources and values. Organizations involved in this struggle include the DNP, Pronatura, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and local NGOs – Ecoparque responsible for Del Este,

and Mamma, a marine conservation group. The 'Parks in Peril' programme is coordinated by the above organizations and receives financial support from USAID and TNC and it has supplied funds for various projects (three observation towers, solar energy units, a radio communications system, a motorcycle, 27 boundary markers and advisory signs placement). Other foreign countries have donated motorboats (Japan 2, Spain 1). In 1995 a draft ecotourism management plan was funded by TNC, and in later years an ecotourism consultant from the USA was brought in to advise Ecoparque on possibilities for setting up ecotours; a report was drafted with recommendations for development. In addition, two female American Peace-Corps Volunteers (PCVs) were stationed in Bayahibe and Boca de Yuma, both with experience in environmental education and work: they were invited to help with activities in and around the park.

Despite the clear attempts to initiate ecotourism there was no such activity by January 2000. The only visitors to the park's west entrance were students from the national university and intrepid individuals. The east entrance was in plain view on the periphery of Boca de Yuma, but very few foreign tourists ever visited the area. Ecoparque had one employee working specifically on the ecotourism project, designing a tour and liaising with hotels, but he left the organization in late 1999. One PCV was surprised to discover that Ecoparque had earlier paid for an American consultant to advise them on ecotourism but had never told her about it. Ecoparque themselves were waiting for the go-ahead from the DNP to start advertising and running ecotours through the park. They were anxious that the nearby hotels (four with some 500 rooms each) were not to be allowed to use the same route, as it might lead to poor quality tours and ecological destruction. As a consequence, it was difficult for them to market the ecotours in the hotels because the management wanted to operate the tours themselves. A further problem was the forthcoming election that could lead to a new government changing the staff composition of the DNP, affecting policies on parks and ecotourism.

There was poor communication, misunderstanding and occasionally a lack of trust between the local residents, the DNP and NGOs. Furthermore, there were differences of a cultural nature between the young American PCVs and the Dominicans working in the NGOs, the DNP and other organizations. The women believed that the Dominican men did not take their advice seriously because of their gender: one had described them as 'my girls', which they found offensive. Another official had decided to take advice on a technical matter regarding computers from a local man rather than a female PCV with relevant knowledge. The PCVs found that their zealous attitude to work, especially nature conservation, was not matched by their Dominican NGO colleagues, some of whom insisted that the working hours dictated their conservation activity and the weekend was for relaxation. Dominicans did not strictly adhere to appointment times to the Americans' constant frustration. Such incidents led to a build up of resentment and occasionally a serious rupture in co-operation between parties.

Similarly, sociocultural differences and local complexities underpinned many interactions concerning environmental activities. An apparent disinterest towards local environmental pollution was exhibited on occasion by local residents. For example, the American 'International Beach Clean-Up Day' was advertised by poster on the walls of the 'Bayahibe Development Foundation', a volunteer committee to

coordinate infrastructural development within the community. The poster was printed in English and therefore unreadable by almost every native resident, and on the actual day not one person from the village turned up to help clean the beaches, a task that was coordinated by Ecoparque and undertaken by students from a nearby town.

The discarding of rubbish around the village and on the beach was a bone of contention and a major campaigning point pursued by the PCV. It is not that the local people are oblivious to rubbish, they keep their domestic dwellings clean, but they consider the village and its boundaries to be public property, outside their domain of influence and, besides, rubbish was normally either burned or swept away by the sea. Furthermore, and most importantly, a division had developed within the village between supporters of the Bayahibe Development Foundation (which had introduced a household rubbish collection service) and an opposition group who resented paying for a service they regarded as unnecessary. This division split along kinship and historic allegiance lines, all of which the PCVs and NGOs would have been unaware at the time. The opposition group consisted of a family that claimed lineage from the village founder, had wealth and property and was headed by the current 'Mayor' (a village representative who purchased his way onto a regional council). As a consequence of the highly charged political nature of this conflict, nobody wished to become involved publicly in the quarrel. The thwarted campaign illustrates the political realities behind local activities and serves as an example of how events may be influenced by hidden factors of which the participating actors are unaware.

VI Concluding comments

A consideration of the local political complexities of conservation and managing the environment illustrates the main point of this paper: the importance of power and identity in dealing with natural resources. As Croll and Parkin (1992: 9) emphasize, referring to the findings of the Brundtland Report: 'it is the distribution of power and influence which lies at the heart of most environmental and development challenges'.

In seeking to understand some of the problems relating to national parks and resident peoples we might use the ideas of Palsson (1996) who examines human-environmental relations in his 'political economy of the environment', envisaging three paradigms: orientalism (exploitation), paternalism (protection) and communalism (generalized reciprocity). In their relationship with animals, the residents near the national park were exploiters of their environment. Their interaction with marine life, as well as wild and domesticated animals, indicated their dominance and nonreciprocal extraction of value. Whereas, in contrast, local NGO workers felt protective towards the environment and their organizations behaved in a paternalistic manner, drawing on western attitudes of ecological conservation. Such diversity of belief within a small population motivated by both local and global attitudes seems occasionally ambiguous. This ambiguity can also be discerned in the behaviour of policy makers.

It seems that the managers of national parks, following the USA model, seek to protect natural resources confined within the reserves ('Protected Areas'). However,

they do not protect the human inhabitants; in fact we may consider resident peoples to be exploited – by forced removal, appropriation of capital, utilization as cheap labour and so on. The classic dualistic view of ‘Human Society’ in opposition to ‘Nature’ (cf. Ingold, 1993; Descola and Palsson, 1996) is manifest in the attitude of management in their separation of people from the natural environment, and their subsequent stance towards each group. They have demonstrated protective (paternalist) attitudes towards the nonhuman natural resources, and an exploitative (orientalist) stance towards local residents. However, as was pointed out above, these attitudes have been changing over time.

Our examination of national parks has revealed some harsh truths about western attitudes towards resident peoples, as well as the deeply rooted intellectual separation of human society from the natural environment. But there has been a transformation in recent years, with a greater acceptance of indigenous rights and a preparedness to acknowledge the variety of human–environment relationships, with some cultures seen as environmentally benign. However, there remain serious challenges as the world transforms through global processes: pressures from conservationists worried about the reduction in biodiversity have a negative impact on local residents, whilst the neoliberal drive towards economic growth, profitability and open markets provokes policy makers to commoditize natural resources

These pressures are manifest in our examination of the case of Del Este, in the Dominican Republic, where resident populations have recently been exploited in terms of forced relocation and the appropriation of capital. Furthermore, the protective attitude of management towards the park is being threatened by financial incentives, leading them to exploit the resources. This is already visible in the use of Saona Island as a leisure beach, in the fishing of ‘protected’ waters, and in the increasing pressure on Ecoparque to become economically self-sufficient by introducing ecotourism.

As a final point, we will consider the intentionally provocative title of this paper, with its opening question: parks or people? This deliberately problematic dichotomy should provoke the thoughtful reader into challenging its presumption of opposition. Judging from examples given above, international organizations are beginning to appreciate the possibility of harmony between people and parks. It would be fair to say that resident people are of some consideration in most current discussions of parks. But we should continue to insist that a more holistic approach towards conservation is maintained, involving a reflexive attitude on the behalf of management, leading towards a stage where we can confidently deal with parks and people in a balanced and fruitful manner.

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