

## **IUCN: A History of Constraint**

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### **Text of an Address given to the Permanent workshop of the Centre for Philosophy of Law Higher Institute for Philosophy of the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL), Louvain-la-neuve**

At the outset, let me say that I am by no means an expert on IUCN. My experience with the organization comes from serving on the Commission for Environmental Strategy and Planning (formerly Environment, Economic and Social Policy), and as a member of the Collaborative Management Working Group and the Ethics Working Group. More importantly, from my perspective, my experience with the organization comes from working in communities that have been subject to the implementation of IUCN projects. This lends, to some degree an unusual perspective on the organization, as I've been in the position of critiquing programs, and also providing input. I have often felt uncomfortable in this latter role, for in general, I agree with the goals of the organization, but I have great reservations regarding its capacity to re-orient the base beliefs that have underpinned its actions for most of its history. These reservations come from what I have experienced as a resistance to informed criticism. It is this experience that has led me to prepare a new research project – an institutional ethnography of IUCN – which is aimed at addressing some of the questions being considered in your workshop - particularly what is the organizational culture of IUCN and how does that culture both produce and act on knowledge produced about its subject of action? I will talk more about that later but first, let me lay out the basic points that I want to communicate today:

- IUCN is an organization that is involved not simply in conservation action, but in producing and circulating a definition of what constitutes conservation. It is an ideological actor.
- The structure of IUCN and its institutional arrangements tie it into a network of more and less powerful/resourceful organizations to which it is beholden in different ways. It relies on the more powerful for operating resources, and on the less powerful for implementation capacity. Learning in this context then is a process based not so much on reflexivity, but on a limited capacity for action based on structural constraints.
- IUCN is an organization in which learning is delimited by a set of pragmatic constraints involving the acquisition of resources, and the selective acquisition of

knowledge, all of which occur at a distance from their sites of action. This distancing necessitates forms of abstraction that limit the possible outcomes of reflexivity (i.e., the changing of basic beliefs).

### **IUCN - Background**

Before I address those points, however, I'll rehearse some basic information that is likely very familiar to you by now. IUCN is typically listed as an NGO, though it occasionally describes itself as a GONGO. It has observer status at the United Nations and consultative status with UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), FAO, , and UNESCO. As a Union, it is composed, in part, of its membership which includes 71 states, 107 government agencies, 675 national NGOs, 68 international NGOs. A map of membership affiliations would cover most of the globe with the exception of Central Africa and small areas in South-east Asia. There are also 34 non-voting affiliates. These members encompass a range of political positions on 'nature', but to a large degree they represent a fairly mainstream perspective and favour some interests over others. This is reflected in the process for membership approval, voted on by the executive council and appealable to the general assembly during the World Conservation Congress. A successful appeal requires a 2/3's majority from both the government and NGO members. A scan of the list of members reveals the absence of some perspectives. The case of the attempt by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (an Animal rights group) to secure membership exposes the general ability of existing members to exclude organizations whose basic beliefs or mechanisms of action, they disapprove of. In the case of IFAW, it was a perception that IFAW could not accord with current sustainable use initiatives that blocked their membership. At the same time, members from my own country, Canada, include the Fur Institute of Canada, an agency that has been successful in bolstering a declining fur industry.

### **Organizational Structure:**

The organizational structure of IUCN consists of three basic parts, though each of these has divisions. The core of IUCN is the Secretariat, which consists of the operations of the head office in Gland, and the regional and country offices spread throughout the world. The Secretariat is basically the permanent staff of IUCN at any given time. The core Executive consists of an elected President, the Director-General, a Director for Global Programmes, a Director for Corporate Strategy, partnerships and Communications, and a Chief Scientist. The head office is subsequently broken into four divisions:

- The Global Programme which includes the:
  - Programme, Planning and Evaluation Unit,
  - the Policy, Biodiversity and International Agreements Unit ,
  - the Programmes Unit which includes the following Programme Groups:

- Ecosystem Management Programme;
  - Forest Conservation Programme;
  - Marine Programme;
  - Programme on Protected Areas;
  - Species Programme;
  - Wetlands & Water Resources Programme
  - Environmental Law Programme
- Corporate Strategy Group
  - Programme Advisors for Special Initiatives (Economics and Environment, Gender, Social Policy, WSSD)
  - Operational Services

It is in the Secretariat that the core of IUCN's daily work and decision-making is done, including headquarters, regional offices, country offices, and programme offices.

IUCN often markets itself as a knowledge-based organization that generates, integrates, manages and disseminates knowledge for conservation and equitable use of natural resources. Indeed, this is what they claim as their core business. This claim, as I'll point out below is to some degree debatable, because its revenue generating potential does not come from the generation of knowledge, but the implementation of programmes. Regardless what allows them to make this claim is the work of the second main component of the organization, the **Commissions**. There are six:

- The Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM),
- The Commission on Education and Communication
- The Commission on Environmental Law
- The Commission on Environmental, Economic, & Social Policy (CEESP)
- The Species Survival Commission (SSC)
- The World Commission on Protected Areas

These commissions are made up of volunteers rather than permanent staff. Membership usually derives from a matter of knowing someone within the organization or responding to a call for members. To some degree it is based on academic achievement. There are about 10,000 people serving on commissions and communication is typically through newsletters, e-mail messages, and discussion lists. It's important to point out that membership is not evenly divided on these commissions. The majority of members (consistently over 80%) sit on the SSC, and the majority of the remainder sit on the WCPA. So when IUCN advertises their broad base of expertise, it is important to note that much of this is self-selected, and disproportionate to the current range of interests of the organization. They are mostly natural scientists. Social scientists are not well represented, with the exception of economists whose presence has grown over the past

few years, in line with shifting organizational interests and the rise in the popularity of ecological economics.

The third component of IUCN, the membership and its triannual meeting is usually represented by IUCN as a reflection of its openness and its “bridge-building” capacity. Members participate mostly through the triannual World Conservation Congress which replaced the General Assembly meetings in 1996. The Congress exists as a forum for structured debate and input to the policy directions of IUCN, with the ultimate goal of tabling, and voting on resolutions that are meant to guide the organization’s activities. The Congress elects the President, the Regional Councillors, and the Commission Chairs. The Executive Council, which meets at least annually, consists of the President, up to four Vice-Presidents, 24 Regional Councillors, five appointed Councillors, and six Chairs of Commissions. According to IUCN, it is in this forum that representatives of government agencies and non-governmental agencies have the opportunity to interact. (Reading IUCN documents gives one the impression that governments and NGOs are still two distinct beasts in this day and age and ignores the reality of the consistent interaction between these sets of actors in different contexts).

## **Objectives**

Given that structure, the agency has several explicit objectives that relate to what it describe as its mission (again the language of contemporary management)

The vision of IUCN is '*a just world that values and conserves nature*'. And it frames its mission in the following terms:

*the mission of IUCN 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.*

The organization also states explicit objectives:

- to secure the conservation of nature, and especially of biological diversity, as an essential foundation for the future;
- to ensure that, where the Earth's natural resources are used, this is done in a wise, equitable way;
- to guide the development of human communities towards ways of life that are both of good quality and in enduring harmony with other components of the biosphere.

These mission and objective statements are not ideologically neutral, nor are they grounded in consensus. One of the points that I want to stress today is that IUCN is at root a knowledge-based organization, and as such has developed in accordance with the interests of dominant epistemic communities within the organization but that the

conditions of dominance have changed through time. Following WWII, for example, it was dominated by what was, at the time, seen as the fairly radical notion of the importance of nature internationally, not simply framed within nationalist ideologies. It has certainly held to and promoted this position through time, but currently the dominance of the scientific community has to some degree waned in the face not so much of conditions of sustainable development but of how these are defined within the ideological terrain of neo-liberal economics that pervade the institutions upon which IUCN has come to depend for its existence. This, condition of contained dependency is not new, however and has plagued IUCN from the start. So, a good way to understand the capacity for reflexivity within IUCN today is to look at its institutional history

### **Institutional History**

Historically, the actions of IUCN are relatively simple to describe. Its basic sphere of operation was in monitoring conservation activities, planning and promoting conservation actions, and providing the assistance and advice necessary to achieve progress in conservation on the ground in the form of an international protected area network. To accomplish this, they worked in concert with a variety of national governments, most of them in the so-called Third World, to encourage the establishment of protected areas, usually centered on the protection of habitat for species identifies as endangered.

The institutional history of IUCN, however, varies depending on the source of the information and on the method of investigation. Official IUCN documents cast the organization as the outcome of concerted efforts in the early part of the 20th century to establish international regulations for the protection of individual species. They trace the transition of these efforts into the demand for a regulatory organization, and of particular individual roles in this process (Holdgate 1999). This account, while accurate in one sense, avoids confronting the ideological underpinnings of such efforts and skirts around a genealogical interpretation of individual roles as they relate to ideological positions. To understand the contemporary form of IUCN and to recognize the degree of continuity in institutional goals and objective it's important to engage in this kind of analysis and to remember the institutional origins of IUCN. Rather than emerging from the ether of international concern in 1948, IUCN has its genealogical roots in earlier organizations that presented themselves as devoted to the cause of nature preservation. In particular, many individuals involved in the establishment of IUCN, as IUCN was known until 1956, were leading figures in the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of Empire, established in 1903 (and which continued on to become the Fauna Preservation Society). Like many such organizations, this imperial group contained a variety of ideological positions, but two stood out. One was the need to protect species that were seen to be in decline as a result of 'native' hunting pressure, the other was to protect species for the continuance of hunting by 'Europeans'. Both used the rising public and political value of science to garner support for their cause. Importantly,

however, the mechanism devised to accomplish their aims came from the recent experience with national Parks in North America and with a long-standing tradition of hunting preserves in Britain. This exclusionary mechanism contained an implicit racial bias, common to colonial endeavours, that so-called native populations were responsible for the decline of wildlife, and that they were incapable of the type of stewardship and scientific knowledge that was necessary for their survival. The emergence of natural preserves throughout Africa and South Asia during the early part of the century was continually justified through this exclusionary logic, designed in part to eliminate the competition of subsistence hunters, and what was seen as the need to preserve not simply species, but the social value of the hunt as an element in the production of European masculinity (see similar statements by Teddy Roosevelt in the United States).

The goals of the SPFE were not that different from the original goals of IUPN. Their overarching concern was to prevent the extinction of wild animals within the British Empire. This was to be achieved through influencing public opinion, promoting national parks, and enforcing game laws. This interest was matched by other individuals in Europe, and brought representatives of European organizations together in 1931 at the International Congress for the Protection of Nature (ICOP). The SPFE had a sizable presence at this meeting, but its concerns remained largely focused on the territories of the British Empire. However, a Belgian delegate worked to establish the International Order for the Protection of Nature in 1938, just prior to the outbreak of WWII. Following the war, Julian Huxley and other members of the SPFC were involved in establishing the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee in 1946 as an advisory body to the British Government. The Commission visited Switzerland to tour the Swiss National Park in 1946 and the Swiss Nature Society took the opportunity to hold an impromptu international wildlife conference. This conference laid the ground for contentious meetings that would result in the formation of the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN). UNESCO and the embryonic International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN) came into being at approximately the same time (1946). The latter, however, was not formally constituted until 1948 by which time UNESCO was already planning a technical conference on the conservation of nature, to be held in 1949 in New York. IUPN was brought under the wing of UNESCO and charged with preparing the agenda for the Conference.

Tracing this history is important to understanding the institutional connections that continue to structure policy and practice within IUCN today. Julian Huxley, who was also a long standing member and president of the British Eugenics Society, for example, went on to become the first Secretary-General of UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization). Other members of the SPFE figured prominently in IUCN's formation. The Society's chairman, Peter Scott, became the chairman of two of the IUCN's most important Commissions: the Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, and the Survival Service Commission. The point here is that IUCN has

always existed within a broader institutional context but that this context existed, to some degree as a continuum of common interest and common goal.

### **Changing Goals**

That is not to say that the goal, or a definition of the problem to be solved, has not changed through time. It has. Perhaps two of the biggest problems IUCN first faced were on the one hand ideological – deciding between a definition of solution to species eradication as one of protection or conservation (distinguishing between no use, and legitimate use) and a political one of finding agreement that there was a need for an international approach to addressing the solution. The first of these was easily solved by the epistemic community of IUCN – the membership, particularly the commissions, many of them biological scientists caught up in a broader disciplinary alteration in ecology that was beginning to adopt a systems approach to understanding environmental interaction. Within this paradigm, the notion of isolating and protecting individual species or areas became to many untenable. This did not necessarily sit well with the constituency of IUCN vested in the establishment of Protected Areas, such as National Parks, but the relation between ecological science and park management was growing in such a way that conservation (implying the impossibility of absolute protection) gained credence. This played a major role in the redesignation of IUCN in 1956 from IUPN to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature *and Natural Resources*. Notably the emphasis on natural resources can also be seen as an appeal to a broader political body that had resisted becoming a part of IUCN's constituency – that of national governments who accepted the distinction between nature, (taken to mean wilderness and its constituent elements) and natural resources (taken to mean the environmental basis of building national economies). To some extent, this recast IUCN in a new light with relevancy to governments who had resisted the notion of joining a organization that treated nature as transcendant of national interest. The government of Britain, for example had shown reluctance to participate in the formative UNESCO/IUPN conference stating that "our first commitment must be to set up our own Nature Conservancy... Little, if anything can be done in international protection, except on the basis of practical measures of education, legislation and organisation in at least some of the leading countries concerned".

Following its foundation and with the support of UNESCO, through the 1950s IUCN represented itself largely as a science-based body, and as a collector and clearing house of information on threatened species. It began to undertake field missions and drew up a first official list of gravely endangered species (the predecessor to the now famous Red Lists – IUCN's most well-known product), and marketed itself as an agency that could provide governments, particularly those in LDCs with the knowledge to counter environmental degradation. This remaking of image and the appeal to governments was meant to address a more pressing problem that has plagued IUCN from its start. Inadequate operating capital. Support was acquired to some degree from UNESCO and

nominal membership fees, but the organization was heavily reliant on the free work of its Commission members, to get anything done. In an effort to secure a permanent source of funds, negotiations were begun within the organization to establish a separate fund-raising arm of the organization, which eventually became what is now called the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). In some ways, the plan backfired. While WWF did contribute to IUCN's base budget, that amount was minimal, and WWF proceeded to become an independent INGO in its own right, with broad-based advertising and much more popular appeal and 'brand loyalty' than IUCN.

However, major social changes in the 1960s helped to save IUCN from a slow death. The social revolutions in Europe and North America and rising concern over development and environmental degradation, combined to provide the political opportunity for IUCN to capitalize on its broad base of knowledge and appeal to both public and political sentiment. In 1969 the General Assembly, adopted a set of resolutions that clearly aligned it with the rising tide of popular environmental concern and the Ford Foundation came up with a grant of \$650,000 over 3 years to provide a strengthened Secretariat including a Chief Scientist and a professional administrator. It was this boost that allowed IUCN to capitalize on the subsequent burst of environmental activity in governments around the world, particularly the establishment of departments or ministries of environment. It also allowed it to play a key role in the preparations for the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. This conference led directly to the creation of UNEP, with the intention of strengthening the environmental dimensions of the UN system (one way of looking at this is that IUCN lost out once again). But IUCN staff prepared background papers and acted as consultants and, as governments developed reports for the conference, they turned to people who were associated with IUCN. The outcome of the conference included three particular Conventions suggested by IUCN: on the export , import an transit of certain species of wild animals and plants – to become the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES); on the conservation of wetlands of international importance (to become RAMSAR); and on the conservation of the World Heritage (to becomes the World Heritage Convention). These three conventions and IUCN's role in developing and implementing them through the 1970s became IUCN's claim to legitimacy within both the UN system and government bodies around the world.

Through an expanded legitimacy, a decreased need of governments in the developed world to rely on their assistance, and with increased funds available for development programming, some elements of IUCN began to promote an operational strategy that linked conservation and development, in effect taking what they saw as their perceived expertise in the ecological sciences and applying it to the regulation of development projects. Despite continued conflict within the organization, this resulted in what has, to date been IUCN's most successful programme, the World Conservation Strategy, issued in 1980, which sought to encourage the development of national conservation strategies

around the world and to encourage international efforts to maintain ecosystems, preserve species, and to persuade nations to adopt ecologically sustainable development practices. The strategy was a mechanism to promote and popularize a number of new terms. The notion of sustainability - that development relies on a continued supply of natural resources - and genetic diversity (soon to become biodiversity). This document attracted funding from a variety of donors who found economic or political value in promoting the concept of eco-development (in part to stave off more radical environmental critiques) but did not have the expertise to implement the strategy in developing countries. They turned to IUCN not simply as a policy organization but as an agency to implement these ideas. In very short order IUCN developed a new funding source in the form of bi-lateral development assistance agencies. Most of this funding came as support for specific field projects, often in countries of interest to the donor agency. In order to facilitate this new operational format regional, country and program offices were established in a variety of locales around the world. Project development, however, such as National Conservation Strategies, often involved IUCN sub-contracted personnel, and in many ways, IUCN began to resemble a standard development NGO, supporting government and donor approved projects and tailoring its actions to appeal to the funding requirements of donors and the willingness of governments to approve their work. This project emphasis radically altered the operational structure of IUCN. Commissions and membership took on less import as the Secretariat became more engaged in the financially prosperous and image-making task of project development and implementation. Soon, the Secretariat, and the sub-offices were in the business of seeking out funding to implement projects in a variety of locales around the world and found themselves sometimes in conflict, sometimes in partnership with other institutions doing similar work (e.g., Himalayan Wildlife fund – fear that contacting IUCN for assistance would turn the project into an IUCN project and impede the work they wanted to do – i.e., take control out of their hands). The degree of communication between the commissions, members and the new practice-focused dimension of the Secretariat decreased substantially, to the point that the 1990 General Assembly called for a focus on Programme Support rather than specific project funding from donors. The obvious goal was to put decision-making power back in the hands of the three original components of the organization (Membership, Commissions, Secretariat). This, to a large degree, is unrealistic. The Secretariat remains permanently staffed because of project donor dollars, the Commissions are made up of many people who derive additional income from project consultancies, and the Membership is composed of government agencies that are well-familiar with the project-focused mode of operation. This situation has, however, created a further dilemma. IUCN has developed a programme management format, without the money to support it, while most donors still prefer providing funds for specific projects.

The final development that I want to talk about has taken place over the last ten years following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Though there is general agreement that the conference resulted in relative inaction,

several outcomes are important in understanding IUCN's position today. One was the establishment of the Global Environment Facility and its connections to the World Bank and an extensive funding base; two was the popularization of the concept of biodiversity; and third was the clear role of neo-liberal economics in structuring the role that conservation would play in national development policies that were reliant on multi-lateral financial institutions. This has had a clear impact on decision-making within IUCN. On the one hand, IUCN now finds itself in the position where the international has been replaced by the global, leading to a new name change – The World Conservation Union (though the letters IUCN have been retained because of “brand identity”); two is a new scientific paradigm that governs many project activities – the protection of global biodiversity (protection is back in); but third and most importantly it finds itself, having become reliant on project-based financing and consequently in intense competition with other international agencies with similar mandates and operational formats.

### **Structural Constraints**

The institutional history of IUCN is one in which different program objectives have been incorporated through normative changes in understandings of human-environment relationships (eg., the linkages between poverty and env. conservation) but the ability of IUCN to satisfy these objectives has been subject to structural constraints. There is little doubt that IUCN as an institution has adapted. It has, over a span of time, found new means to achieve its ends, while the ends themselves have not changed, and it has restructured its programs accordingly. This has not happened without dissent, but if we take organizational survival as the test of adaptation, IUCN has done well. Membership has increased through time, though the number of government agency members has decreased recently (possibly due to restricted budgets and increased internal expertise). The adoption of sustainability early in what was to become a very popular public rhetorical shift provided the organization with a degree of legitimacy that helped to expand membership (whether it has carried through on this is another question). Seeking the motivation for this adjustment is a more difficult process. Certainly, the increase of NGOs as members, and the expansion of commissions to include greater emphasis on the social aspects of conservation drove changes in the Secretariat that encouraged an emphasis on sustainability. But there is a question of whether we can separate that motivation from the experience of resistance to the goals of the organization on the ground. These include a long history of local communities being deprived of access to resources through the establishment of protected areas, the violent use of the police powers of the state in quelling subsequent unrest, and the emergence of illicit use of resources after such legitimate use had been criminalized through the establishment of protected areas. It was clear that enforcement of legislation and the protection of boundaries was an expensive disciplinary affair using standard measures.

This resistance and the expense in dealing with it must also be seen as a motivating factor behind the adoption of sustainable use initiatives within IUCN.

### **Demise of the Social Policy Group**

There are also questions of commitment to certain forms of adaptation. For example, the concern with sustainable use combined with the increased legitimacy of concepts such as local or indigenous knowledge and its relevance for conservation led in the 1980s to the concept of community-based or collaborative management. The basic motivation for this was that communities resisted conservation efforts because of a perceived threat to their sovereign use of the environment, and that communities with long standing presence in some environments had a good understanding of ecosystem dynamics. Of course, this also grew out of the notion of participatory governance that had been growing in Western democracies, particularly around environmental concerns (public hearings, citizen's advisory committees, and the like). IUCN, in an effort to grapple with these issues established the Social Policy Group within the Secretariat in 1992. Composed mostly of Anthropologists with development related experience this group provided theoretical, policy and methodological insights in developing collaborative management agreements that would help to achieve IUCN's objectives and overcome historical problems of resistance. After a short period of operation, this unit gained increasing prominence within the organization and extended the credibility of IUCN among Commission members and a broader academic and NGO community who had been suspicious of IUCN's claims to be accommodating social justice concerns within conservation programming. After what many see as a successful period of operation, this group was disbanded in 1998, and the membership resolution on co-management adopted at the World Conservation Congress in 1996 was effectively deprived of momentum and support. The reasons for disbanding the organization are unclear as they were never discussed at a membership level. This was a decision of Secretariat upper management. Part of it certainly involved a restructuring of the organization. Social Policy concerns have not been dropped altogether but re-organized within the Secretariat. They now take the form of what has been called a Specialist Network. Part of this specialist network includes the **Social Policy Global Team (SPGT)** which is:

*“conformed by social policy staff and focal points from IUCN global, regional and country offices. It works as decentralised institutional body within IUCN and focuses on catalysing institutional change, providing institution conditions to ensure that social dimensions of conservation become integral part of policy development and strategic planning within the Union.”*

In other words, it is composed of a group of people in disparate locations around the world who are expected to maintain communication and incorporate social concerns as part of IUCN policy. It is clear that the restructuring of this group has moved social policy out of the main focus of IUCN and to a peripheral position in Secretariat decision-

making. As I say, the reasons for this are unclear. My own suspicions are that the effectiveness of the Social Policy Group was threatening the power of the Secretariat and incorporating too much in the way of radical conservation planning, in effect decentralizing the experts and foregrounding the concerns of people who were directly effected by conservation efforts.

The restructuring of the Social Policy Group had a number of ramifications. First, as I suggested, it reinforced a perception among some members that IUCN's commitment to sustainable use was delimited by particular ideological positions created by the entrance of new epistemic community into IUCN's body of knowledge, particularly those concerned with ecological economics. It further caused concern in the academic community that comprises much of IUCN's commission base that the Secretariat was pulling away from a commitment to collaborative management at the behest of particular interests, particularly governments who were not committed to programs of decentralization particularly when these involved minority groups. Finally, it caused concern that the Secretariat was increasingly pursuing strategic paths separate from those approved by the Membership. Decentralization of the organization in general, has contributed to concerns that the Membership is increasingly being distanced from the governance of the Secretariat. Perhaps this is to be expected. With an increasingly professionalized Secretariat, more regionally and locally focused than in the past, no longer necessarily dependant on Commission members for its base of knowledge, with a large and unwieldy Commission structure, and Membership meetings spaced 4 years apart, it is not surprising that the Secretariat, would become distanced from these bodies and assume a heightened role in the governance of the organization. This is typical in the development of NGOs. While they may begin as broad consensus-based organizations, the development of specializations, the need to secure an institutional niche, and the need to co-ordinate with other hierarchically structured organizations, leads them to adopt a more corporate structure of management. That this is the case in IUCN can be seen by following the incorporation of the Corporate Strategy Group as a main governing body of the Secretariat. Recent meetings of the membership have also been to some degree dominated by concerns of developing what is called a "business approach" to conservation. I'll say more about this in a minute.

Next, however, if we can say that IUCN has effectively adapted to change, can we say that it has learned?

Learning is not quite so obvious as adaptation. Though it's hard to say that some learning has not gone on within IUCN, if the ultimate test is a re-evaluation of goals, then the answer would have to be no. Beliefs of cause and effect have not been radically challenged. To some extent re-evaluation has occurred but this has focused on how better to achieve the ends and has largely occurred by accommodating new epistemic communities and attempting to heal the vulnerabilities of the organization. In IUCN's

case, the primary vulnerability has always been funding. On the one hand, IUCN characterizes itself, and acquires legitimacy, through its claim to scientific knowledge. Yet this is not successful in generating the revenue the organization needs to survive. It also, to a large degree, prevents the organization from developing a public visibility that other agencies, able to overcome resistance to popularizing science, have been able to achieve. This can, in part, be seen as the fault of the Commission structure, with members that place a great deal of importance on their *identity* as scientists, something they are not willing to sacrifice on an altar of popularity. Certainly part of the blame falls on a lethargic management, who have assumed that the scientific reputation of IUCN would pull it through.

In many ways IUCN's problem to be solved has not changed through time, nor has the organization seriously examined the implicit theories underlying its programs. It really has until recently had no venue or forum in which to do so. To some degree, this was to have been the function of the Congress, but aside from the fact that debate does arise, the Membership is really a like-minded body. Indeed, a condition of membership is the agreement to abide by and work toward the mission of the organization which implicitly carries an understanding of the theories underlying its problem, and the path to solution. One potential change in the organization that could provide the capacity for reflection (and reflexivity) is the recently established monitoring and evaluation initiative (in headquarters). External evaluations had called for such a unit from 1993 on, but the unit is still not complete (hence the name initiative). Resistance has come from a desire to evade self-criticism, seen as a threat to the public image that IUCN seeks to develop. It still has not established an Evaluation Policy or a set of Evaluation Standards. It does seek to put in place:

1. The provision of M&E support to managers regionally and globally at project, programme and senior management and governance levels with the aim of improving skills, knowledge, learning and institutional capacities in monitoring and evaluating the relevance, effectiveness, accountability and efficiency of IUCN's programme.
2. Support for the generation and use of performance related data and information to support programme, project and organizational improvements, including the support to internal, external strategic reviews.

On the one hand, this is encouraging in that the actual need for an assessment of outcome is now recognized. On the other, there is a suspicion that this is another part of a corporate strategy to bring IUCN more in line with the operating systems of conventional NGOs within which Monitoring and Evaluation exercises are notoriously incompetent. Reading the documents of the M&E initiative enhances this fear, as they are not geared toward a reflexive consideration of the organization and its actions, but to

a normative consideration of operations to develop means better able to achieve stated ends, or conversely to back away from a project when it is not believed that those ends can be satisfied. This is not ineffective in itself, but is unlikely to lead to a form of introspection that would generate organizational learning.

Has IUCN questioned its purpose? Most of the evidence says no. It has altered the means to achieve ends but the ends have not changed nor has the rationality underpinning them (e.g., the establishment of formalized protected areas as the basis for Biodiversity. Protection – rather than realizing that protected areas at best can protect a minuscule amount of biodiversity, and that operating through other mechanisms might well be more effective in securing their ends and might encourage a reflection on those ends). IUCN's history is one of adding new goals without addressing their coherence with existing ends. So change is incremental without any attempt at nesting goals logically. While new theories of achieving conservation have to some extent been adopted by IUCN, the ontology of conservation has not radically altered. This is not to say that the organization has not adopted a new language of conservation. Certainly ecosystem management and biodiversity are two important concepts that were largely absent from IUCN in its formative stages. But these have not been introduced by new normative communities. Rather they have entered the lexicon of conservation through developments within epistemic communities that have long been a part of IUCN's membership.

### **Institutional context**

One of the major changes in IUCN that has shaped the reflective capacity of the organization is its reliance on other institutions for their funding base and for project approval. IUCN, like any other organization operates within an institutional context that is at one and the same time a set of power relations. While IUCN contains within its membership many of the organizations that are part of this context and operates in a position of power by granting access to funding for these organizations, the organization itself, has become increasingly subject to the institutional agendas of more powerful actors. Certainly some of these are the bi-lateral donors, but more importantly are organizations with a more solid base of funding than IUCN. This is not a new situation. IUCN's origins lie in its relationships with other organizations such as UNESCO and later UNEP, but as these organizations have seen their influence wane within the UN system, IUCN has also suffered and sought out other benefactors. The switch to a project format, that I've already mentioned, helped to bring in bi-lateral donors and more recently, the operational experience of running projects has made IUCN a regular partner of more resource-rich multi-lateral organizations like the Global Environment Facility, The World Bank, and the FAO. The effects of this are still playing out within IUCN, but what is apparent from my own work is that IUCN projects are increasingly tailored to the agendas of donor agencies and shaping the direction provided by the Membership. This support has strengthened the Secretariat but acted as a constraint on

the possibility for change, given the dependency on these organizations. Of course, these bi-lateral and multi-lateral organizations are accountable to their own overseers, so that IUCN, to some degree has become a node in an organizational hierarchy that flows from Government and inter-governmental agencies through IUCN to the locales where projects are implemented.

I want to turn now to a description of a research project that I have been working on for some time as a way of indicating the outcome of these developments. It pulls together the issues of decentralization, professionalisation, the emergence of a new epistemic community, and the problems of abstraction that hinder possibilities for reflexive governance.

### **Global Ecology, Capitalized Nature and Sustainable Use in Northern Pakistan**

The programme and project focus, starting with the World Conservation Strategy, that has achieved dominance in IUCN has led IUCN increasingly to intervene in the livelihoods and human-environment relations of communities in locales around the world. One of these locales is northern Pakistan. Pakistan was one of the first countries in which IUCN established a country office and it has grown dramatically since it was established in 1985. Since then, the focus of much of IUCN's activities has been in the mountainous north of the country, which is a region still under dispute between Pakistan and India.

The village of Hushe, a small community of about 100 households lies at the head of one of the outermost valleys of mountainous northeast Pakistan. As part of an agro-pastoral society Hushe controls access to lands and resources in much of the uninhabited regions that extend north east from the village toward the Chinese and Indian borders. In 1996, IUCN approached leaders in Hushe with a plan meant to conserve the officially endangered stock of Ibex (*capra ibex*), a wild mountain goat, native to the region. The plan, in line with the market ideology of many contemporary conservation initiatives, was essentially a "cash for wildlife" swap. Based on ill-grounded assumptions that village-based hunting was responsible for an assumed but undemonstrated decline in ibex numbers, IUCN offered to generate cash for the village by selling a limited number of hunting permits to foreign hunters in exchange for an agreement from village leaders that villagers would discontinue hunting ibex for subsistence purposes. The project, accepted by village leaders, carried with it a number of unexpected, or at least unstated, outcomes. The capitalization of what had been a material and symbolic commodity, ibex, set in motion a shift in the local meaning of "nature". It transferred what had been an important symbolic and social activity, hunting, into, at least on the part of some proponents of the project, a crime against the community rather than the state. It inserted tensions within an admittedly fragmenting social structure. It allowed some villagers, those with access to capital resources, to capture and distribute the benefits of the project in particularized ways. It strained long-

standing reciprocal relations between Hushe and neighbouring villages. And it created the incentive for directing changes in ecological practice that would encourage the containment of what is essentially a fugitive resource, ibex.

While these localized outcomes can partially be explained through an absence of careful social and ecological research by the institutional proponents of the project, much more of the explanation can be read through the texts of project documents that, at least superficially, provide insight into the conceptual apparatus used in project formulation. Read as a map of social relations and the ideological representations that influence them, the project proposal navigates away from the particularized and localized context of Hushe to broader scales of social knowledge and geographical position. The project in Hushe came about as part of a wider \$6 million Global Environment Facility (GEF) initiative entitled “Maintaining Biodiversity in Pakistan with Rural Development” that linked three international NGOs: The Global Environment Facility (GEF); IUCN; and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). As the implementing agency, IUCN was responsible for helping villages to prepare “Village Biodiversity Management Plans” in an effort to link the objectives of biodiversity protection with those of rural community development. The aim of this project was to “demonstrate how conservation of Pakistan’s biodiversity [could] be enhanced by providing rural villages with the technical skills to manage wild species and habitats for sustainable use and to assess the effectiveness of rural village management of natural resources.” This objective falls within a wider GEF/UNDP interest “to test and perfect a new approach in conserving biodiversity, **replicable both nationally and internationally.**” These statements deploy meaning laden terms such as biodiversity and development, but they also point toward a strategic goal of normative environmental management. The assumptions contained in these statements are quite apparent. Rural villagers, to be able to manage wildlife effectively need to be subjected to and adopt technical practices and standards that satisfy **externally** defined goals of effectiveness and efficiency. The divide here is as much epistemological and ontological as it is material. Constructs such as “rural villagers”, “community”, “biodiversity” and “development” are taken by IUCN to be singular cohesive uncontested entities. As such there is no need to address any differentiation internal to these terms, nor to question their ideological roots. This strategy is typical of the labeling practices deployed in the exercise of development (and many other forms of bureaucratic management) (Escobar 1995). The statements, however, also contain understandings of a material divide reminiscent of earlier development ideologies. Institutional worldviews and related agendas external to the objectified “community” set objectives that “the community” must contribute to. The community is seen not to be contributing to those objectives because of a lack of suitable knowledge, skills, or technology. And those ‘assets’ can be transferred to “the community” in order to satisfy institutional objectives. This is a classic “expert”-“practitioner” dichotomy. In this case, “experts” situated in global institutions – organizations that represent themselves as entities concerned with global problems, and are located within a network of

associations that connect specific nodes around the world – determine what localized adjustments must be accomplished to meet institutional objectives and set the parameters under which “communities” and other organizations will adjust. If we take the Hushe case as an example, we can see that the logic is not quite this simple. IUCN “experts”, in a particularly Weberian manner realized that incentives could be used to encourage appropriate adjustment and took advantage of a desire for cash that could be used to acquire the stuff of modernization (conveniently packaged in the concept of “rural development”) to provide an incentive for villagers to modify ecological practice – i.e., to refrain from hunting. Though not wholly successful, the capacity to get villagers to obey an authority that had no internal legitimacy (IUCN), relied on the use of ‘booty’, or reward. However, the foreign market for hunting exotic game, which provided the booty, was deployed in the name of something with much more global significance – the protection of biodiversity.

As I discussed earlier, IUCN has established this goal as its *raison d’être*.

This goal of biodiversity protection and the role of IUCN – “the world’s oldest and largest global conservation body” – rely on an appeal to a global image of an interconnected web of life. It is this appeal, and the assertion that international institutions know best how to co-ordinate responses to an environment understood as such, that are used to claim wildlife as global property. In effect, it is the appeal to the “**global**” **significance** of individual species and localized environments that is used to deterritorialize those species and environments from the human contexts that they have emerged in interaction with. It is also this appeal that legitimates the intervention of organizations like IUCN that set about restructuring human environment relations and reterritorializing them in modified, but “planned”, forms. That international institutions have over the past 30 years increasingly gained greater influence over shaping the policies and practices which regulate human-environmental relations has, to some extent, become a truism. It is fairly clear that in many situations, despite localized efforts at resistance, the ability to direct environmental use is being distanced from those who live with the immediate consequences (Flitner 1999, Zerner 2000). This isn’t to portray some romantic norm of equality in access, decision-making, vulnerability or benefit in those places. It is merely to say that, even taking account of inequitable power relations at a micro-scale, decision-making has often “jumped scale” so that, in line with Giddens’ remarks on distanciation, the decisions that affect localized and particularized human-environment relations are increasingly being made in institutions and places distant from those locales **and** in the absence of an appreciation of context.

In the case of environmental decision-making, including ‘policy-making’, ‘planning’ and implementation, a realm or regime of distanced practice has developed over the past 150 or so years emerging out of colonial era administrations or private elite organizations which have subsequently evolved into contemporary organizations like IUCN. And the ability of institutions to exercise this spatial and governmental “sphere of authority” has much to do with the rise of environmentalism as a political force over

the same time period, but a concern with the environmental consequences of action has never been divorced from the (class, race, gender, etc) positionality of those acting. Value judgments regarding the knowledge and capacity of actors have always factored into considerations of the source and significance of environmental impact<sup>1</sup>. Certainly in the case of Hushe, the **idea** of an incapable local population is used to try legitimate the intervention of IUCN, an agency that effectively uses discourses of ecologism and globalism to accumulate political power. But at root access to Hushe is structured through inequity: a desire on the part of, at least some, villagers for cash, and the ability of the institution to provide this cash. Absent this leverage of 'booty', it is unclear how intervention would have been facilitated. Similar relations of inequity can be seen to facilitate state sanction of IUCN activities. Given that the state of Pakistan assumes sovereign jurisdiction over all environmental resources contained within its borders, IUCN cannot operate in Pakistan without the sanction of the state. But in many cases, the government is pleased to have IUCN assume responsibility for implementing environmental programs. Indeed the *Pakistan National Conservation Policy*, a document that guides internal environmental research and policy formation was written largely by representatives of, or consultants hired, by IUCN, WWF, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Some of the reasons for this willingness to cede authority are fairly straightforward. It allows a fiscally beleaguered state to shift a financial burden onto an NGO, which in turn contributes to its ability to meet the public spending reduction demands of International Monetary Fund representatives, and help satisfy debt service costs. All of this can be accomplished without ceding the legal authority to curtail NGO activities where they are seen to be in sufficient conflict with state interests. Once again, without the inequity that structures this relationship between IUCN and the state, intervention would be unlikely.

The extension of international conservation interests in northern Pakistan described above is directly related to the production, and circulation, of a discourse of global ecology. This discourse emphasizes the protection of biodiversity, but it is very much grounded in the legitimating value of science and the ontological status of ecology that incorporates distinct political environments into a global commons. The dominance of 'global ecology' has come about in part through the **power** of transnational institutions like IUCN to produce and circulate knowledge, and their control over access to funding that local governments can use to pursue developmentalist goals. This network of power sets up conditions through which a discourse of global ecology wends its way into national level institutions and emanates from them through regional and local level nodes until it takes on a material reality in the form of specific projects in very localized environments. While a discourse of global ecology can be seen as emerging from the 1960s, the institutional processes employed by international environmental institutions has a much longer history and an important part of any institutional ethnography must

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<sup>1</sup> It is in these judgments that we can locate much of the current emphasis on knowledge transfer, capacity building, and "best practice" within environment and development institutions that operate in much of the so-called third world.

be to recognize these historical continuities which have contributed to the spatial expansion of such institutions. Ironically, this historical pedigree tends to give groups like IUCN-The World Conservation Union more credibility with inter-governmental bodies than some more recent organizations tinged by the radical environmental politics of the 1960s.

IUCN has developed as an institution as it has effectively pushed for an acceptance of transnationalism and the legitimacy of supra-national institutions in dealing with problems similarly constructed as global. It has extended its spatial reach outward to more and more of the globe. Its ability to do this has been strategically facilitated by association with other transnational or supranational institutions and bi-lateral donors. In doing so, it has become what Rosen calls a center of calculation, and a center of accumulation (Rosen 2000).

In using these terms, Rosen means to describe organizations, not simply as hierarchies, but as sites (often multiple sites) where **selective** knowledge is accumulated and action designed. From, these sites, knowledge and action flow to distant places.<sup>2</sup> This flow, while not necessarily unidirectional or dominating demands a response from those distant places. We can imagine this response as taking different forms. Individuals or social groups may resist categorization; they may accommodate, but manipulate, assigned labels. But the demand is persistent - to rationalize and then modify local knowledge or practice within ideological boundaries of understanding subscribed to by IUCN. Of course, this is not what necessarily happens.<sup>3</sup> Often there is little correspondence between demand and the response, but a response there must be and it occurs within and through a network of 'local' power relations that is increasingly connected to these institutions operating at a distance.

This institutional demand and localized response delineate a network of relations that stretch across space to connect distant institutions and their ideational underpinnings with localized and particularized social and ecological communities. Based on regular fieldwork, it is fairly straightforward to map these power relations to some extent. In the case of the IUCN project I have described above, a chain of relations can be seen as extending from the village of Hushe to IUCN headquarters in Gland. At the outset of the project, IUCN had already established a country office in

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<sup>2</sup> Using IUCN as an example, we can consider it to be a site of accumulated knowledge incorporating a diverse subject matter related to issues of conservation. Of course this material is selected and archived according to particular ideologies of environment, nature and conservation, and we must recognize that IUCN is also subject to the 'authority' of associated institutions and their handlers such as UNDP UNEP, UNESCO, GEF, all of whom Rosen would call 'big picture' players aimed at achieving and managing consent.

<sup>3</sup> Though the language of ecologism becomes the *lingua franca* of the dialogue and imposes upon the excluded community the need to learn and apply that language, if nothing else – hence the expansion of 'environmental education' programs developed, emplaced and sponsored by Int'l. Conservation Organizations (see IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication).

Pakistan and was in the midst of establishing regional offices in the north of the country. Representatives from IUCN visited the village, designated it as an appropriate project site and established contact with individuals in positions of power within the village. Simultaneously contact was made with government officials in the district headquarters. The connections between village households and installed local leaders vary in terms of intensity and resiliency typically along kinship lines. Connections between village leaders and local elites, however, are more complex and are affected by such factors as membership in regional political parties, kinship ties, patronage demands, and access demands on the part of local political elites (that would, for example, allow them to continue to hunt while villagers are subject to a moratorium). Moving away from the village and into the main administrative centre of Skardu, and increasing number of actors enter the picture: connections are established between local IUCN staff and local political elites. In this relationship, local staff find themselves relatively powerless in relation to political elites (e.g., vulnerable to bureaucratic stalling, sanctions on their activities based on differing interpretations of cultural appropriateness). They also find themselves tied into relations with more senior IUCN staff from the major offices in Islamabad and Karachi and with IUCN consultants who have direct connections to the head office in Switzerland. To some extent, these sites of interface, sites where knowledge and action - as they flow from the center of the institution outward - can be translated or ideologically delimited, are observable, depending of course on issues of access. But the ease of observation rapidly decays as we move away from the particularized locale of a project and toward the intellectual centers of the organization that devised and are responsible for implanting that project. As we move away from the localized site of the project, the subject of observation becomes increasingly nebulous difficult to bring into focus. This is where the invisibility of rule begins to take shape, not simply for us as ethnographers, but also for those who reside in the more localized webs of power. The connections go on, of course, but it is not so easy to observe and map out power relations as we move away from the localized context of the village toward the organization(s) responsible for implementing the project.

The connections that I have sketched above express the physical and social distance between the actors, but each set of actors exist similarly in locales that can be studied much as we study "the community". Working from within a village like Hushe, I can only guess at the broader context within which an institution like IUCN operates, and hence the network of relations into which they invisibly situate villages like Hushe. From this standpoint, my understanding of the ramifications of institutional intervention stops at a particular scale - generally the borders of the village. But when we realize that those borders are porous, that situated individuals are connected to others across much greater reaches of time and space, the borders of the village, or the ecosystem for that matter, as the bounds of study become less helpful in understanding the how local material ecological relations are increasingly shaped by agendas formed at a distance.

## Studying Scale and Institutions

### Operations of Scale

What is important in addressing the connections involved in modifying localized human-environmental practice is understanding how organizations like IUCN engage in the production of scale and rely on authority attached to the image of 'global' as a means of gaining access to particularized spaces. If we accept Rosen's definition of organizations as instruments for the attainment of goals and instruments of power underlain and mediated by cultural and ideational processes, we can begin to appreciate how the idea of scale is both an instrument in that accumulation and a basis for the formulation and attainment of goals.

Bruno Latour's work offers insights into understanding the effects of producing scale. These center mostly on mechanisms of abstraction and representation used by practitioners and the ways in which these mechanisms, derived from disciplinary knowledge provide the possibility for re-definition and degrees of certainty. In addressing questions of scale, Latour is implicitly asking what it is that allows the passage from ignorance to certainty among agents. His answer is the possibility of reference to pre-existing modes of categorizing knowledge, what others might call labeling practices. In relation to the project I am dealing with in Pakistan, it is clear that IUCN has a categorical map that guides its passage from ignorance to certainty in understanding the 'place' they will work upon. This produced knowledge is revealed in part through the absence of local research undertaken prior to project formulation or the development of goals.<sup>4</sup> Some of this can be written off to the simple capacity of the institution to intervene based on a history of privileged position, and often backed by the force of the state. More significant though is their subscription to a set of ontological objects that are universal and not open to question (biodiversity, ecology, wildlife, community) that may vary by context but nonetheless serve as vessels for the organization of knowledge. It is these objects that provide a frame of certainty that allows institutions like IUCN to operate universally. But in doing so, they tend to annihilate context. If, for example, we take the object of "community" common to many 'conservation as development projects', it is typically treated as a monolithic entity with little attention paid to the very real tensions and divergent interests that operate to structure community in particular ways. The institutional perspective on community, however, is delimited by the institutional agendas reflected in project goals or objectives, formed at a distance from the communities to be affected by those goals. Project documents certainly represent the village under consideration, but they do so selectively. Only those objects of concern that are of interest to the practitioner

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of ICUN's project in Hushe, for example, no research was undertaken to validate the assumed decline in ibex numbers, no research was undertaken to gain an appreciation of localized social structure or social relations, and no research was undertaken to understand the material and symbolic significance of wildlife within the community.

(according to their pre-set filters) make it into policy, project documents, and implementation plans. This process of selectivity is directly related to an engagement in institutional tasks that are deeply embedded in the scales of knowledge production and consequent action.

Distance from objects of study characterize the activity of many organizations and allow them to exercise the power of scale. Distance, Latour reminds us, allows the exercise of a unifying gaze which can consult diverse examples and submit them to comparison and it is this facility for consultation, comparison and unity under a single institutional gaze that facilitates the emergence of dominating notions such as “best practice” or “capacity building”, a logic that annihilates context. In the act of comparison, the observer/practitioner can disassemble and re-assemble the elements of observation – “the facts” – in ways that allow a shift in the context of the original observations. They can turn interpretations into facts through a process of vetting and categorizing. All of this amounts to what Latour calls oversight - a practice which means domination by sight – at once looking at things from above (or beyond) and ignoring them. The capacity for oversight, of course, implies looking from a distance that allows the ability to take in a wide view. In the case of ‘global’ institutions, the ‘gaze’ is one which incorporates a ‘world’ of knowledge.

Under such a gaze, within ‘conservation as development’ projects, communities can find themselves and their ecological practices detached, separated, preserved (if we take preservation to imply an interpreted condition of stasis) classified, and tagged (for certain ends) by institutional practices. They are represented, in terms of their relevance for criteria set by the institution and subsequently classified as a particular type of community amenable to the goals of the project. People, and the localized environments that surround them, are described, and re-assembled in text, and the imagination, according to the principles and goals of the researcher/practitioner and the institution that shelters them. As understandings of ‘community’ flow through systems of communication to distant agencies, we can think of the social relations that affect that community as having scale, but just as two-dimensional representations of place sacrifice detail for area, so to is the detail of community sacrificed to abstraction that allows comparability between communities and facilitates the application of a managerial logic.

In this move, this abstraction, we are not simply jumping from community to the idea of community, we are moving from continuous and multiple ecological and social interactions to a discrete unity with associated boundaries locatable in space through x,y co-ordinates. Here then, an inequitable relation which is temporally liminal and spatially marginal (i.e., the relation between institutional actors operating in centers of accumulation and calculation, and villagers) strip ‘community’ of context and create a homogeneity in which individuals are conceptually removed from a social structure which is unseen or ignored by those intervening and inserts them en masse into a new

social structure created out of the institution's cognitive resources which include historical ideological representations of people and place that position local communities as incapable of managing localized ecosystems and situating them both as the source of the ecological 'problem', and, with appropriate alterations in local ideologies of nature, elements of the 'solution' (cf. Rosen 1991).

My main point here is that organizations like IUCN not only act on scale (i.e., distant institutions act on localized environments), they actively produce the connections that facilitate this action by taking advantage of inequity and their privileged access to material resources that facilitate the production, accumulation and circulation of knowledge. In the case of institutions that position and represent themselves as global, this provides them with the capacity and the authority to act globally on local spaces. It is this ability to act from a distance that highlights the importance of studying institutions as they transcend scale to operate extra-locally. As institutions that have used a history of scalar relations of power and the emergence of globalizing discourses (real as some of the material bases for these discourses may be) to allow them to produce and gain access to localized environments, strive toward the implementation of normative, standardized practice, an appreciation of context, in all its complexity, is deemed irrelevant at best and as an obstruction at worst.<sup>5</sup> That these same objects of knowledge – communities – cannot or do not identify themselves as trans-local entities is in part a question of identity politics but also a function of inequities in access to the resources that allows institutions like IUCN to claim trans-local authority. Scales of operation, or “spheres of authority”, are then, inequitable phenomenon grounded in a history of inequitable power relations.

The combined operation of the interests I have described in this paper is not simply a form of innocuous intervention. Rather, it can be seen as a new form of governance that has accompanied the rise of environmentalism. Luke has referred to this as green governmentality which has been coincident with the ways in which “the environment, particularly the goals of its protection, has become a key theme of many political operations, economic interventions and ideological campaigns to raise public standards of collective morality, personal responsibility and collective vigor.” (Luke 1999, 122) This form of green governmentality, however, relies on a discourse that “tells us that today's allegedly unsustainable environments need to be disassembled, recombined and subjected to the disciplinary designs of expert management”. (Luke 1999, 142) The example I've presented here is but one case among many where assertions of unsustainability and a discourse of global ecology are used as the lever through which IUCN enters a community in order to apply expert designs to a local environment. The goal here is to redirect a local environment to fulfil the ends of new scripts; in this case the script of biodiversity protection and the international managerial

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<sup>5</sup> Again, these are goals established by institutions, presumably arising from the need to control and direct efforts in an efficient way and from the demand for standardizations and centralization that makes results uniformly comprehensible by other participating institutions

and administrative directives that accompany it. For this redirection to occur, however, existing means of regulating ecological spaces must be constructed as ineffective. Old modes of domination must be replaced. New instrumental rationalities need to be put in place. And it is the capitalization of nature and consequent attempts to instill a 'new set of environmental values' through projects such as "Maintaining Biodiversity in Pakistan with Rural Community Development", that subjects local ecologies to normalized global management procedures. Trophy hunting, in effect, serves as Weberian 'booty' through which the realization of nature as capital acts as a means to extend the reach of a western scientific rationale for environmental management into local spaces; resulting in the creation of trans-local ecologies.

The important points that come out of this example are that projects, such as sustainable use initiatives, are not grounded in field level research of particular contexts BUT designed according to abstract universalist goals meant to satisfy institutional interests (expand on this using global ecology example). And, more importantly, that these interests are not uniform even within the organization. To a large degree, they emerge from routine practice, from the desire to find new ways to achieve old goals. The notion that people will give up hunting for economic benefit, for example, relies on the acceptance of that old notion of *homo economicus*; the assertion that we are all at base economically rational beings. To say that this is believed by the entire constituency of IUCN would be wrong. But to say that it has found a prominent place in the organization through routine action and interaction would be correct. It arises from the hiring of advertising executives, to find ways to promote conservation, it arises from the hiring of economists, who bring with them base beliefs about human rationality (not that all economists share these beliefs), it comes from the reported success of similar projects conducted by other organizations in other parts of the world. But it does NOT come from reflection. It is, as I have emphasized above, another form of adaptation to altered institutional context.

Institutional programmes and subsequently projects are shaped to a large degree not through empirically informed reflexivity but through the availability of material and intellectual resources. The availability of these resources is not divorced from politico-economic interests. More resources are available for projects that satisfy a dominant view or a research paradigm, and those resources are deployed not in establishing alternatives or in challenging the tenets of that view but in confirming it. The challenge, on the other hand, always comes from outside the purview of the institution, from beyond its epistemological gaze, and therefore often takes the institution by surprise. Institutions are rarely in the forefront of epistemic change, rather they lag behind until change, and the maintenance of credibility, have been forced (use community-based management. as an example in IUCN) upon them.

The contemporary emphasis on achieving wildlife protection through the realization of their exchange value is an excellent example of this. Whereas this is often couched in the

language of sustainable use incentives, and as a way to provide a willingness for local communities to participate in conservation initiatives (i.e., they achieve direct monetary benefit), in many ways it is a reflection of the funding constraints that are imposed on organizations like IUCN and by the incorporation of a new epistemic community that adheres to a form of neo-liberal economics in which all potential commodities can and should be (it is a moral statement) subject to market evaluation, i.e., their potential use to the highest bidder. The original idea here was that market forces could be contained by regulatory processes – i.e., the market would operate within certain limits imposed by non-market institutions (if there is any longer such a thing).

Ironically, this approach has marked similarities to IUCN's starting point in the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of Empire, itself reflexively constrained by the dominant ideologies of its time. Nature is protected through the interests of power. During a colonial regime, the emphasis was on the protection of threatened game species, because of the symbolic and material value they held within colonial ideologies of masculinity. Currently, threatened species are marked for protection for a variety of reasons, but the possibility of protecting them is becoming increasingly related to their market value for groups more powerful than those who have historically regulated their use. There is little doubt that this generates revenue. The allocation of that revenue is a much larger question (i.e., who and how many benefit?), as is the effect on species conservation.

### **Institutional Context**

IUCN's history is one in which it has not simply interacted with other institutions but depended upon them for funding and, as a consequence, for the direction in the development of programmatic priorities and actions. Despite the guiding role that membership played in establishing the aims or roles of the organization, operational realities have been delimited by the ideological positions of these institutions.

In many ways, then, IUCN exists as one node in a network of institutional social relations and it is a mistake to see it as an independent or disassociated actor. These social relations, of course, involve relations of power. The ties that IUCN has cultivated with these networked institutions mean that the operating capacity of IUCN – its ability to operated freely and independently at the behest of its membership – is circumscribed by the altered political circumstance of a broader institutional context. As the power – the agenda setting influence - of these institutions shifts, so does the organization and the operational reality of IUCN, and its capacity for reflexivity.