Stakeholder Inequalities in Integrated Coastal Management Projects

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ABSTRACT. Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) projects bring together diverse stakeholders to share knowledge, power, and responsibility for local and regional planning. As such, ICMs may be viewed as microcosms of international conferences on development and environment. In each case more powerful stakeholders support an environmental conservation agenda at the expense of the socio-economic development interests of the less powerful stakeholders while concealing inequalities in influence through a discourse of cooperative management. A case study from coastal Kenya is used to illustrate these parallels.
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Out of the first United Nations conference on human-environmental issues at Stockholm in 1972 came recommendations and international treaties for the protection of endangered species, ocean dumping, and whaling as well as the creation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) (Newton and Dillingham 1994). While such advances pleased representatives from wealthier countries, delegates from the two-thirds world questioned how impoverished people in their countries could be asked to safeguard the environment when their lives were already so difficult.

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro. Representatives of the wealthier countries arrived with notions from the an earlier conference in Nairobi and the Brundtland Report that poorer countries should not develop the way the richer countries had, but live sustainably without polluting or diminishing the resource base (Newton and Dillingham 1994). The wealthier countries argued that environmental conservation, as a long-term goal for the good of all, must come first. Poorer countries countered once again that conservation objectives were not realistic until people could meet their basic needs.

In the end richer countries set agendas at UNCED that limited the possibility of any discussion of short-term livelihood issues (Newton and Dillingham 1994). An Earth Charter for environmental behavior was drawn as was Agenda 21, a list of environmental and to a lesser extent, social priorities for the next century. Similar rhetoric on the need for poverty reduction was heard from leaders of wealthier countries at the recent UN Summit on Sustainability (http://www.johannesburgsummit.org). Yet their policy actions since promising the same in 1992 have not reflected their supposed concern for the poor.

Agenda 21 has been used to frame several recent Integrated Coastal Zone Management (henceforth ICM) projects (Cincin-Sain 1993 cited in Nichols 1999). These projects, like international conferences on development and the environment, are organized with the supposed goal of cooperative management. In cooperative management representatives of user groups, government agencies, and the scientific community should share power, knowledge, and responsibility (Little 1994). Such sharing is meant to improve upon traditional top-down environmental initiatives that have not only drawn resentment and opposition from local communities but also failed to meet conservation objectives.

This paper examines an ICM at the Nyali-Bamburi-Shanzu beaches of Kenya. I argue that this ICM and others like it replicate at the local and regional level the unequal power and opposed interests of stakeholders evident at international environment and development conferences. Whereas ICM rhetoric is often that of cooperative management and equal participation, the practice remains hierarchical and favorably inclined toward the wishes of the wealthy. I use a political ecology framework to explain the failure of cooperative management programs to overcome the shortcomings of traditional conservation approaches.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

Political ecologists view environmental crises as inextricably linked to a much wider development crisis, including a growing gap between rich and poor and the increasing number of people globally living in absolute poverty (Dorraj 1995; Bryant and Bailey, 1997). In this context, environmental change is viewed as meaningful to individuals and user groups largely in terms of whether it provides an opportunity or presents a problem (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987).

Stakeholder groups which are typical members of cooperative management projects such as ICMs include multilateral institutions (for example, United Nations organizations and the World Bank), state agencies, business (transnational and local), environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), and local people/grassroots actors (Bryant and Bailey 1997). These groups often have conflicting interests with regard to environmental change.

For this study, I draw on several dozen interviews from a larger study of marine management undertaken over thirteen months in 1994 and 1995-96 in coastal Kenya. Interviewees were from various levels of authority within multiple stakeholder groups. Interactions with collaborators took place at international conferences, formal stakeholders meetings (of fisheries and wildlife service officials, artisanal fisher and boat operator cooperatives, environmental activists and marine researchers, and ICM funders), and informal meetings in people's homes, offices, and beachfront work areas. There are great disparities in income among these stakeholders, which contribute to the groups holding different degrees of power to assert their political will.

COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Over the past several decades there has been a marked growth in the number of marine parks and protected areas worldwide, especially in coral rich areas of tropical developing countries. Marine parks and the tourism associated with them are often at the heart of Integrated Coastal Management plans.

Kenya's first marine parks were established in the late 1960s. Prior to the establishment of the most recently created marine protected area local people were not consulted about the problems park establishment might pose to their livelihoods (Erftemeijer and Mwakoyo 1995).

INTEGRATED COASTAL MANAGEMENT: PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO CONSERVATION WITH DEVELOPMENT?

The innovativeness of ICM, as opposed to wise use management approaches that have dominated conservation efforts for much of the last one hundred years, is in its stated inclusiveness. Yet, some researchers now suggest that ICMs may polarize local coastal communities and extra-local interests by virtue of their bias in favor of activities that stimulate national and international economic development. For example, ICM projects may serve growth-driven industries such as coastal tourism, commercial fishing, and aquaculture to more effectively extract resources while threatening to regulate out of existence local activities such as artisanal fishing (Nichols 1999).

Thus, while some stakeholders view an ICM project as effective means to conserve environmental resources, create aesthetically pleasing landscapes, and promote economic development, other stakeholders view the same as a threat to their ability to control local resources or to earn a livelihood. In a sense, ICM projects may be viewed as microcosms of stakeholder meetings at international conferences. In each case, debates over issues of

environmental conservation and aesthetics versus livelihood concerns are carried out across lines of unequal power.

At the Stockholm and Nairobi Conferences, UNCED, and the UN Summit on Sustainability as at an ICM project on the Kenya coast at Nyali, Bambui, and Shanzu beaches, it is the wealthier, more powerful stakeholders who insist livelihood concerns must take a back seat to aesthetic considerations and the conservation of biological resources.

OVERVIEW OF COASTAL KENYA AND THE NYALI-BAMBURI-SHANZU ICM PROJECT

Tourism became Kenya number one exchange earner in 1987, surpassing both coffee and tea. It remains a top earner in Kenya, although unrest related to elections in 1997-98 as well as the embassy bombing in August 1998 hurt the industry (Akama 1996; Honey 1999). Coastal tourism accounts for more than half of Kenyan tourism (DeGeorges 1990).

In the early 1990s the Nyali-Bamburi-Shanzu beach area at the newly created Mombasa National Marine Park and Reserve was selected as an ICM project pilot site (Amaral 1999). Assessment of successes and failures at this site will be used to create a broader plan for the entire Kenyan coast.

The establishment of Mombasa Marine Park eliminated all of the traditional fishing territory of fishers operating from Shanzu beach and removed part of the traditional territory of those operating from Bamburi (Kenyatta) beach. The remaining waters of Bamburi-Nyali were designated marine reserve. Reserve waters are to be fished only with traditional, non-environmentally destructive techniques. The use of spear guns and pull seines is banned in these waters. Combined, these two gear uses account for one third to one half of all fishers on the

Kenyan coast (Glaesel, 2000). Fishers forced to relocate or abandon fishing because of park or reserve establishment were not compensated for lost access or offered retraining in the use of acceptable gear.

Consequently, since its establishment Mombasa Marine Park has twice been reduced in size (in 1994 and 1995) by KWS in response to on-going violence and protest (including poaching) by fishers at the ICM pilot site. Protest has been greatest among fishers who lost part but not all of their traditionally fished waters. The concession of park officials to fisher demands is more apparent than real however, and reflects the complex relations between these groups. KWS leaders admit that in anticipation of fisher protest they initially marked out an exaggerated marine park boundary so that when protests inevitably came they could shrink the park back to its legally designated size giving the impression they had compromised. Thus, when protests did occur, the park service appeared responsive to smallholder concerns.

According to ICM project literature, a participatory process was used to reach broad consensus on how to address critical coastal management issues at Nyali-Bamburi-Shanzu (URI Coastal Resources Center website). Yet, the same literature notes that tourism industry interests are key because they are significant contributors to the local and state economy. Furthermore, it indicates that the site was selected because of increasing conflict between the tourist industry and other activities, and that the conflict needs to be resolved before there can be additional tourist industry growth.

Participation in this ICM, as at UNCED and other international conferences on development and the environment, is thus a limited type of pseudo-participation which includes consultation and informing but precludes true partnership through delegated power and cooperation. True cooperative management is further limited in that the ICM funders, United

States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) set the project's structure to fit a standard United Nations Regional Action Plan.

The Nyali-Bamburi-Shanzu ICM leaders view the project as participatory because stakeholder input was solicited at a workshop in June 1995 from 80 people. This information was used at a conference later that year for experts held at a luxury beach hotel. All poorer and non English-speaking stakeholders were excluded from attending the conference but some were "included" by unwittingly appearing in slide presentations and ICM brochures (Glaesel 1997).

By, June 1999, ICM organizers had spent a modest $155,000, due to withdrawal of USAID funds during unrest related to national elections in the intervening years. Approximately two-thirds went toward consulting fees and operational costs (meetings, fuel) of the more powerful stakeholders and the remaining one-third for physical structures and other in-country costs. The purported rationale for the spending was to fund projects that would impact the greatest number of beach users (Amaral 1999). Yet all of the physical structures funded fit within the more powerful stakeholders' objectives of resource conservation and aesthetics. Small-scale stakeholders livelihood concerns only have been addressed when they also meet aesthetic or conservation criteria.

POWERFUL STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORT BEACH CLEAN UP

The interests of more powerful stakeholders, namely those with the most state-level and international ties, can be summarized in the phrase beach cleanup. Beach cleanup refers not only physically cleaning beaches of washed up sea grasses and litter, but of removing any unwanted persons from supposedly public beaches.

A key objective of beach cleanup is to eliminate roaming independent sellers of crafts, boat rides, and other tourist-related services under the rubric of public safety. The plan calls for confining sellers to designated locations to which interested buyers may venture. This supposedly protects tourists from unscrupulous unlicensed local youths and eases the lot of legal vendors who must no longer comb the beaches for customers. Vendors counter that loss of freedom of movement restricts their customer base and new licensing procedures include additional financial costs. Furthermore, they worry that tourists are increasingly turning to hotel gift shops and hotel operated recreational boats for services.

SMALL STAKEHOLDERS STRESS LIVELIHOOD CONCERNS

Small-scale stakeholders, like the developing countries at UNCED, asked those with greater power and wealth primarily for financial assistance (donations to cooperatives), items to undertake their livelihoods (fishing gear, motor boats, canoes), technology transfer (boat engine repair workshops), and sovereignty over resources (continued public access to beaches). They are less concerned with biodiversity and aesthetics. Yet, ICM project spending on infrastructure has included a parking lot, fish marketing platform/fisher shelter, improved toilet facilities, mooring buoys, a Wildlife Service watchtower, beachfront benches, tree replanting, and food kiosk repositioning; all are largely aesthetic changes and conservation initiatives which may indirectly benefit fishers, boat operators and other smallholders, but do not address their primary concerns.

Items that benefit smallholders more than other beach users, such as the fish marketing platform/fisher shelter have been funded slowly and sporadically.

The next $70,000 in ICM pilot project funds will come from FAO. It has been earmarked to address water conservation program interests of the hotel industry and to hold additional conferences (Amaral 1999). USAID is also offering $100,000 to $1,000,000 for use over the next year for conservation-related causes at the Nyali-Bamburi-Shanzu ICM (Amaral 1999).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The most successful cooperative management initiatives are those in which communication is facilitated within groups and between stakeholder groups of unequal power. As in traditional environmental management approaches, often the weakest, but most needed links are those between groups experiencing the greatest social distance and power differentials as measured by the likelihood that they will interact. Such links typically are tied to the size of the management area. In general, the larger the project, the less likely the most powerful groups will have direct or frequent contact with the weakest. This phenomena can assist in explaining the greater general success, environmentally and in terms of local livelihoods, of small as opposed to large scale projects.

Although the Nyali-Bamuri-Shanzu pilot site is small, ICM project organizers have approached it less as a unique site than as part of a large scale scheme. Yet, a poor understanding of local social dynamics, including competing interests is often key to cooperative management program failure (Little 1994).

Third world political ecologists might charge that for ICM and similar cooperative management initiatives to succeed, the most powerful stakeholders must turn a critical eye on themselves. For example, more powerful stakeholders should not divorce the issue of free-roaming agents (curio sellers, boat operators, and unemployed youths) from the wider one of

unemployment. As is, they have reframed a social problem in terms of the aesthetic quality of a place, labeling certain people as out of place as litter and in need of containment (Cresswell 1996). Similarly, issues of social justice, such as ensuring that tourist hotels cease illegally blocking public access routes to the sea, must be addressed.

The Nyali-Bamburi-Shanzu ICM is a success in that many rival state-level organizations have been brought together and worked toward cooperating with each other over the past several years. The top-down links across major power differentials still need strengthening.

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