

Not our Friends

Joyce Hambley, GEN and Simone Lovera, FOE-I

It would be naïve to complain about the lack of transparency when all the contact groups end up in a huddle, as 'Friends of the Chair'. We are all aware of how much work gets done in private conversations, 'liaisons dangereux' in the corridors. The Friends of the Chair process only confirms what we knew: that NGOs and other major groups are not considered to be friends. Your Friends are big powerful countries - Party to the Convention at stake or not - that might give you money, that have a strong say in the World Bank, that are your trading partners, or that pretend to become your trading partners once you have given their industries the chance to rip you off your resources and compete all your own industries out of your county. Of course, the extent to which the negotiations are being referred to Friends of the Chair, is a symptom, or a crisis indicator of no progress, divergent interests and the clash of neo liberal trade versus life on earth.

The CBD is only a legislative structure, it is the COP and its delegates, that have to decide what their interests are. Although the ideas behind the CBD is groundbreaking for a UN institution, the resulting agreements can only ever be as radical as the sum opinions of these delegates. All of us are 'privileged' to be part of this process, some more privileged than others - it is a sad fact that the experts on delegations here are often part of a state oligarchy that

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Discussion on NGOs and the WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development)
Venue: NGO Office, Basement
Date & Time: Tuesday, 16 April, 4pm

The intergovernmental segment of the WSSD is taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 Aug to 4 September 2002. NGOs and other civil society organisations all over the world are preparing for this monumental 10th anniversary of the UN Conference on Environment and Development that took place in Rio in 1992. The Global NGO Forum, taking place from the 18 to 25 August will be hosted by the WSSD Civil Society Secretariat based in Johannesburg. The aim of this discussion is to share some ideas around participation/collaboration/ linkages in current initiatives being planned for the WSSD, e.g. People's Earth Summit, Farmers Convergence, the Sustainability Hearings, Women's Tent, Youth and Cultural Biodiversity event, The 2nd South-South Biopiracy Summit (to be co-hosted by Biowatch South Africa & SEARICE), etc.

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All representatives of NGOs are welcome to join the NGO coordination meetings, every morning 9-10am, Carel Willink Hall.

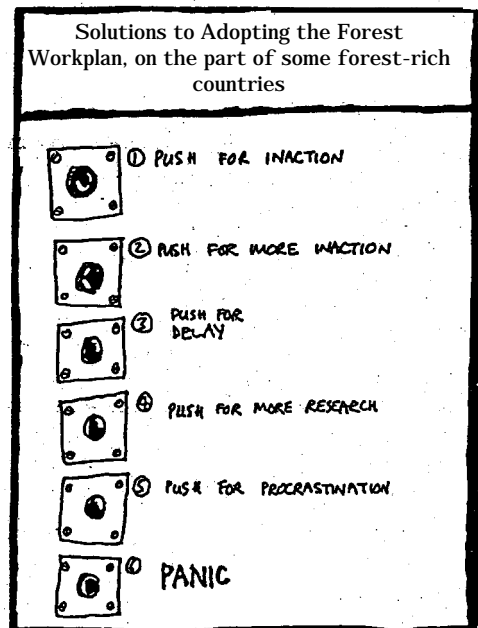
have never thus far, championed the best interests of the communities and peoples it claims the mandate of - nor have those diverse communities and peoples been consulted for their visions and solutions to their felt needs.

The Press Room downstairs is still empty. Industry, after the fools they made of themselves at COP V, are keeping a low profile, discreetly passing around briefings on patents, on liability, on TRIPS.

So everything's normal, there is no spotlight on this process, nobody is going to ensure that Non Parties are excluded from speaking, from being invited to Friends of the Chair meetings. Nobody is going to press release what you said yesterday, back home for your children to read.]

You can ignore the NGOs, when it pleases you. You can carry on being persuaded of the importance of the vested interests presented to you. You can give it all away...you can sell your souls if you wish.

But if you think that whatever you decide will be swallowed wholesale, that there will be no resistance among common people, who live with and care for biodiversity, which is life on earth, then you are fooling yourselves. The custodians of life on earth are all more actively involved in protecting biodiversity from the threats it faces, than you realise. And if you lose their confidence, as it appears you are



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Bringing the CBD Home: The “protection” of biodiversity and neo-colonial protected areas in Ghana

Lambert Okrah

The IUCN side event on Friday night entitled “On the Road to COP 7 - Indigenous and Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas” focused on the importance of social justice within parks creation and management. While protected areas have proliferated within the decade since Rio, the extent to which these ‘parks’ and the governments who create them, respect the rights of people living within or near these parks varies considerably. While it may be too late in areas which have already experienced the neo-colonial imposition of parks, perhaps COP 7, which will focus on protected areas as a main issue, will learn from examples like Ghana presented below.

Interview with Lambert Okrah, by Jessica Dempsey.

J: Tell me about your research project?

L: The institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), who I work for, examined a protected area in Ghana, Kalakpa Reserve, to see what the possibilities and challenges were for increasing community participation in the reserve.

J: Can you give us a bit of history on the park? And perhaps the location within Ghana?

L: Kalakpa is located in the Volta region of Ghana, a few kilometres from Ho, the regional capital. Before the park was created, the land was occupied by migrant farmers, who had an arrangement with land owners. These people live on the land legitimately - and had been there for generation after generation. The park was created when the landowners made an agreement with the government.

J: What happened to the people living within the reserve boundaries?

L: These people are still living within Kalakpa Reserve, undertaking their normal economic activities. They are trying to continue their lives and livelihoods. They are now coming into increasing conflicts with the wildlife department who police the Reserve and try to stop these people from undertaking their economic activities. For example, the department will challenge people who carry a gun because they assume that they are hunting - even though they officially have permits to carry local guns.

J: What attempts have been made to rectify the situation?

L: The farmers are challenging the authorities they want to continue the economic activities, the want to see their rights to remain in the area respected. The government has responded by attempting to compensate the people monetarily. But the valuing process is very questionable. We cannot look at people’s livelihoods in terms of money. The price tag does not represent the value that people place on the land. The land that has sustained and provided for them year after year. The people do not want to

accept money and relocate. This is their home, they don’t know any other place.

J: What kinds of conclusions did your research yield? What sort of possibilities for community participation exist in Kalakpa, and what are the challenges?

L: I am pessimistic about the possibilities for community participation in the reserve. This mostly stems from the way the park was created. The communities living in Kalakpa were not consulted about the creation of the reserve. The consultation was limited only to the land owners who had earlier consented to the settlement of the farmers. The farmers interest was overlooked. This is the main problem and challenge. The people were not considered at the outset. When you start with a relationship like this, it is very hard to move forward. However, there may be opportunities to integrate farming activities into the protected area - and working with the people to lessen their impacts, perhaps through more intensive agriculture, or other activities. Further, enhanced dialogue between the stakeholders might result in an amicable solution where people accept proper compensation and leave the area. This will be subject to intense negotiation. These people are not squatters, they are long-standing inhabitants who must have a voice in land use activities and changes.

J: Can you leave us with a lesson?

L: There is a clear message emanating from this case study: All stakeholders must be adequately consulted, regardless of the amount of stake they have. Protected areas are valuable, but livelihoods must be taken into account, and we cannot violate fundamental human rights in the process. Unless the creation of a reserve is done properly, you may have a protected area, but biodiversity cannot be guaranteed.

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Krall in the Reserve: The new wildlife?

Plantations a Panacea for Forest Conservation

Wally Mene, Plantnet, South Africa

Misguided thinking has led to a situation where many governments have adopted policies and definitions that classify industrial timber plantations (ITPs) as forests.

This has resulted in a strong reaction from environmentalists, NGOs, and communities to whom it is clear that ITPs are not forests. They do not contribute to biodiversity, and are in fact damaging to natural ecosystems. By destroying the resources upon which their culture is based, they threaten the continued survival of local communities and cultures.

The definitions that have been imposed on developing countries by organisations such as the FAO and the OECD are clearly in conflict with this view of ITPs. In order to attempt to clarify the situation, the following table of comparative values has been compiled:

Distinguishing Characteristics of Forests and Plantations



High species diversity within complex mosaic of specialised plant communities
Multi-age, multi-stage successional processes in place
Permanent bio-community. Greater value obtained through conservation
Fully developed eco-tone in mature forests
Not damaging to biota of adjacent ecosystems
Contribute to conservation of water and control release
Support indigenous animal life
Provide diverse products on a continuous basis
Support adjacent land uses
Support human community subsistence usage
Substantial educational value as 'outdoor classrooms'
Control soil erosion. Humus layer buffers soil loss
Minimal disruption during sustained harvesting
Few off-site impacts – forests co-exist with the communities that utilise them
No ecological disturbance –
Supports continuation of evolutionary processes
No social displacement as forests do not replace other land-uses
Most benefits accrue to local people and wildlife
Retain and protect original natural vegetation together with endangered species
No pollution of soil, air and water
All life forms indigenous
Spiritual value associated with natural wilderness
No spread of alien invading species in or around undisturbed forests
Multiple products and services
Diverse landscapes
Do not require the use of man-made chemicals
Contain a great variety of biological interactions which lead to abundant soil nutrients and long term sustainability.

Mono-specific tree plantings in either small 'woodlots' or large estates
Uniform age – Clear felling prevents successional processes
Temporary agricultural crop
No value derived from conservation
Alien tree seedlings spread into adjacent land
Damaging to adjacent natural vegetation
Consume excessive water and cause increased runoff
Threaten indigenous animal life
Supplies product at a specific time e.g. 10 years
Replace other land uses
Undermine human community subsistence
Comparatively little educational value
Increased soil erosion from repeated disturbance/exposure
Devastation of the environment at harvesting
Severe off-site impacts – e.g. Road transport to mills and Harbours. Mill pollution
Major ecological disturbance – destroys original vegetation type and disrupts evolution locally
Cause of migration from rural areas due to loss of access to resources
Most benefits accrue to multinationals
Cause destruction of natural vegetation on establishment and during harvesting
Major contributor to pollution both on and off site
Usually only alien species
No spiritual value. Can cause mental illness
Contribute to spread of alien invading species in and around plantations
Limited range of products
Monotonous landscape
Heavy applications of chemical pesticides
Minimal biological interaction and a steady depletion of soil nutrients. Not sustainable beyond the medium term

David against Goliath: A farmer's struggle to protect his field against Monsanto's genetic contamination

"I've been using my own seed for years, and now farmers like me are being told we can't do that anymore if our neighbours are growing (genetically modified) crops that blow in. Basically, the right to use our own seed has been taken away"

Percy Schmeiser, Canadian Farmer

Percy Schmeiser is fighting against the wind. The wind, that contaminates his fields in Saskatchewan, Canada with the genetically modified seeds of his neighbours. He is also fighting against Goliath: the world's largest agrochemical company, Monsanto, that instead of paying him compensation for the damage caused by the genetic contamination has filed a lawsuit against Percy and other farmers for "illegally using GM canola varieties". At the end of March 2001 a Canadian judge ordered Percy to pay Monsanto thousands of dollars. Percy fought on: Canada's Court of Appeal will hear his case on May 15th and 16th, 2002.

Happily, Percy is not alone in his fight against Goliath. Millions of farmers all over the world are fighting against the forced introduction of GMOs in their countries, communities and fields. In Bolivia, FOBOMADE, a nation-wide network of development NGOs, has been persistently fighting attempts to conduct field trials with genetically modified potatoes, which could form a severe threat to this centre of origin of potatoes.

Likewise, local communities and NGOs in countries like Costa Rica, Indonesia and South Africa have been fighting the conversion of natural forests into fruit and eucalyptus plantations. NGOs have been exposing official government support to French and other companies involved in illegal logging practices. And NGOs and local communities have been exposing and fighting increasing corporate control over governmental decision-making in the CBD, the WSSD, and the WTO.

Percy himself, and other representatives of NGOs and local communities fighting the Goliaths of this world, will be presenting their struggles at a side event at the COP, on Tuesday lunchtime.

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doing, how valid is all your talking, and whose mandate do you carry?

The CBD started as a vision, the making possible a dream. Ten years later, most of the world is living a nightmare, as communities watch their ecosystems being eroded and destroyed - while people here meet for coffee and diplomatic flattery, claiming responsibility for decisions on the lives and livelihoods of millions.

The question for each and every delegate here is 'what have you done, personally, to earn yourself the honour of being called responsible?'

For critical reporting on COP 6, go to www.resistanceisfertile.com/radio or www.aseed.net/radio. In Den Haag go to 104.2 FM from 20:00 – 22:00; Amsterdam 96.3 FM 16:00 – 18:00; Leiden 97.4 FM after 18:00. After the COP, Archives will be stored on the above websites.

STUMP of the DAY AWARD on Friday was unanimously awarded to *Canada*, in recognition of its unwillingness to agree to international priorities, its ongoing greenwashing of its own forestry at home, and for blocking the prioritisation of primary forests, despite being the wealthiest forested nation in the world.

STUMP of the DAY AWARD on Monday went to *the Netherlands*,

1. For continuing to allow illegally logged timber to enter into the Netherlands, despite the destruction illegal logging causes. As we speak, Greenpeace activists have for the last 24 hours been blocking yet another ship found trying to import illegally logged Amazon timber into the Netherlands.
2. For hosting this meeting and yet failing to demonstrate sufficient political leadership for an action oriented forest work programme, including protecting primary forests and other forests critical for maintaining forest biological diversity;
3. For its incredible failure to consult with NGO Caucus stakeholders on the agenda for the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue, and for further failing to include forests on the Multistakeholder agenda, despite forests being the main theme of this CBD COP; and,
4. For preventing the NGO Caucus and its members from using the Conference Center facilities over the weekend, in addition to its failure to provide adequate basic support for NGO participation, such more than one computer for 50 people, contrary to usual practice at such international meetings.