



Making sense of protected area conflicts and management approaches: A review of causes, contexts and conflict management strategies



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Protected areas
Conflicts
Literature review
Conflict management strategies

ABSTRACT

Although it has been established that there is a strong geographical component to conflicts, previous studies on Protected Area (PA) conflicts have tended to focus on assessing the underlying causes of PA conflicts without considering how these conflicts vary across development contexts. Our review therefore assessed the similarities and differences that characterise PA conflicts in developing and developed countries with the view to drawing the implications of the findings for management practice. We reviewed a total of 65 publications from an initial pool of 516 drawn from biological, ecological, social sciences as well as an emerging interdisciplinary literature in conservation conflict studies from 1993 to 2016. Results of this literature review indicate that: 1) the types of PA conflict, why they occur, where they occur and how they are managed varied between developed and developing countries and were determined by geographical location and specific socio-economic and cultural contexts; 2) while PA conflicts in developing countries were primarily driven by impacts on livelihoods, PA conflicts in developed countries were driven by social considerations including emotional, recreational and cultural values people attached to PAs; and 3) conflict management strategies that promoted participation of other stakeholders including local people in PA management and provided economic incentives to local people promoted cooperation and fostered the meeting of conservation goals while conflict management strategies which employed deterrent strategies such as guards, fencing and policing especially in developing countries often resulted in resentment and sometimes led to the escalation of the conflicts. Conflict management strategies must therefore take into consideration the differences in the context within which conflicts develop at various locations to inform the specific conflict management strategies to be applied.

1. Introduction

Protected areas (PAs) have increasingly become a strategy for protecting biodiversity, reducing deforestation and providing an array of ecosystem services including fresh drinking water, places in which to relax, and reservoirs of wild plants and animals (MEA, 2005; Andam et al., 2008; Coad et al., 2008). The number and coverage of PAs is constantly changing, as boundaries change and areas are added or removed. While there has been an increase in the number of PAs globally, coverage of the world's terrestrial and inland waters dropped from 15.4% in 2014 to 14.7% in 2016, thereby requiring the protection of an additional 3.1 million km² to meet the estimated 17% coverage in 2020 (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2016).

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) defines PAs as “a geographically defined area, which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives”. The International

Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on the other hand defines a PA as a “clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (Dudley, 2008, pp. 8). While both definitions are similar, the CBD definition does not broadly cover the diverse roles of PAs in biodiversity conservation. However, the definition of PA as per IUCN in terms of “through legal or other effective means” also contributes to conflict as at times green militarization is a source of conflict (Lunstrum, 2014; Marijnen and Verweijen, 2016). The IUCN further categorises PAs into category Ia-Strict nature reserves, Category Ib-Wilderness area, category II-National park, category III-Natural monument and Nature feature, Category IV-Habitat/species management area, Category V-Protected landscape or seascape and Category VI-Protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources (Dudley, 2008). Categorisation of PAs are based on different management

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objectives, including levels of protection, restrictions on use and who has power to make what decisions. These elements influence the relationship between managers of PAs and other stakeholders and therefore have the potential of triggering PA conflicts between them (Dudley and Phillips, 2006).

The idea of setting aside designated places for protection purposes is universal and dates back to over 2000 years where royal decrees in India protected certain sites. Similarly in Africa, the Pacific and Europe, some communities protected certain areas as sacred grooves, “tapu” areas and hunting grounds respectively. Modern PAs however started in the nineteenth century in North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and spread to other parts of the world (Dudley and Stolton, 2008). The objectives for creating PAs tend to differ across regions. Whereas in Africa, focus was with game parks, safeguarding the beautiful scenery as well as protecting the landscape were the driving forces for North America and Europe respectively. Currently, nearly every country has designated sites for protection and adopted legislation to guide their use and protection.

While PAs serve as refuges for wild plants and animals, they are also places where conflicts occur. Such conflicts are said to occur when two or more parties hold strong views over conservation objectives and when one of such parties tries to assert its interests at the expense of the other (Redpath et al., 2013; Young et al., 2010; Redpath et al., 2015). Protected area conflicts can therefore occur when parties representing conservation interests try to impose the objectives of conservation on others resulting in restrictions in the use of forests and wildlife resources or displacing and relocating locals from their initial abodes due to PAs expansion or creation (e.g., Vodouhe et al., 2010; Velded et al., 2012; Wells and McShane, 2004; Mombeshora and Bel, 2009). Such conflicts can also occur when direct interactions between protected wildlife and humans result in negative impacts on humans and their activities such as wildlife raiding of farm crops, livestock predation and retaliation killings or poisoning of wildlife (Redpath et al., 2013; Adams and Hutton, 2007; Dickman, 2010; Mateo-Tomás et al., 2012).

Since the establishment of the first national park in the world, Yellowstone in 1872, subsequent PAs have followed the conventional approach where many PAs have been established and run through an exclusionary top-down approach whereby local communities have little or no say in the establishment and management of PAs (Lane, 2001; Pretty and Smith, 2004). This approach has resulted in hostile attitudes towards conservation strategies (Hamilton et al., 2000; Hirschnitz-Garburs and Stoll-Kleemann, 2011) thereby undermining conservation goals through conflicts between park managers and local communities. These conflicts are particularly rife in developing countries where two-thirds of PAs are located (Zimmerer, 2006) and where many locals depend on forest resources for their livelihoods and have become used to the free collection of various forest products in areas that were later designated as national parks or reserves (An et al., 2002; Pote et al., 2006; Dzerefos and Witkowski, 2001; Fabricius and Burger, 1997).

Over the last three decades however, natural resource management policies have moved from a pure “preservationist approach” to more decentralized and participatory approaches (Gibson and Marks, 1995; Hulme and Murphree, 2001; Songorwa, 1999). These decentralized and participatory approaches promote participation and motivate local people to support conservation as they promote benefit sharing (Archibald and Naughton-Treves, 2001; Scherl et al., 2004) by aligning development needs with conservation goals (Albers and Grinspoon, 1997; Gandiwa et al., 2013). Proponents for participatory approaches further argue that they offer substantial promise for conflict management through trust building (Butler, 2011; Ho et al., 2016; Young et al., 2016), foster a sense of community empowerment (Plummer et al., 2012), ensure inclusive decision making and legitimacy (Berkes, 2009; Borri-Feyerabend et al., 2007; Jentoft, 2000; Sandström et al., 2014) and result ultimately in livelihood enhancement (Ming’ate et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2012). They conclude that, participatory approaches engender win – win outcomes through environmental management and

economic development (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2010).

Other scholars on the other hand also argue that participatory approaches including co-management have the ability of strengthening the state’s control over resources, their management as well as how they are allocated thus further marginalizing local communities in such arrangements instead of improving local communities (Castro and Neilson, 2001). These scholars argue that participatory approaches have failed to deliver the outcomes they promised and have resulted in inequitable distribution of power and resources (Songorwa, 1999; Castro and Neilson, 2001), uncertain economic and ecological benefits (Wilshusen et al., 2003), resulted in “consultation fatigue” (Richards et al., 2004) as well as “disenchantment” caused by long bureaucratic processes (Mosse, 2001). Indeed studies on integrative participatory approaches suggest that certain pre-existing conditions play a role in determining PA management success (Child, 2003; Berkes, 2004; Tole, 2010; Ostrom, 2007; Mannigel, 2008). Child (2003) for example points to the degree of involvement of local people and the scale of benefits accrued, Mannigel (2008) emphasizes the role of protected area goals, objectives, methods and mission, while Andrade and Rhodes (2012) (pp. 1) point to the ability of “protected area managers to reconcile biodiversity conservation goals with social and economic issues”. Institutional and governance conditions such as limited devolution of power and closed management structures have also been identified as factors that influence the success of participatory approaches (Berkes, 2004; Tole, 2010; Ming’ate et al., 2014). Beyond institutional and governance conditions, Ostrom (2007) also found that the complex constellations of actors involved could affect participatory approaches outcomes. The success of participatory approaches hinges very much on different yet inter-connected factors such as socio-economic factors and institutional factors and could result in varying outcomes even within the same context and settings. In reality however, most PAs are governed by a blend of bottom-up and top-down approaches whereby the state takes a central role in the management of the PA but delegates some management responsibilities to local communities (Petursson et al., 2013). In view of the uncertainty surrounding PA management approaches in the face of escalating PA conflicts, improving our understanding of PA conflicts including why, when and where they occur, is vital to contribute to their management and minimize their potential damage.

One important way for developing this understanding is from reviewing PA conflicts from different geographical locations in order to compare variations in conflict types, causes and conflict management strategies the world over. While it has been established that there is a strong geographical component to conflicts (Yasmi et al., 2006; Mola-Yudego and Gritten, 2010; Gritten and Mola-Yudego, 2011), previous studies on PA conflicts have tended to focus on reviewing or assessing the underlining causes of PA conflicts on a global or regional basis without comparing how these conflicts vary across development contexts. For instance, a review by West et al. (2006) examined the social, economic and political effects of conservation in places where protected areas exist but failed to demonstrate how these effects vary across geographical locations. Similarly, Castro and Nielson (2003) examined and characterized the underlying causes of PA conflicts from case studies from around the world including Asia, Africa and the Americas. However, Castro and Nielson’s book fell short of an overall synthesis of the 12 case studies to show how PA conflicts in these areas vary according to geographical location. A review of PAs to compare PA conflict types, causes and conflict management strategies across different geographical locations is therefore necessary to highlight the variations that characterise PA conflicts in different development contexts and to draw the implications of these for future research and PA management practice.

Our review is based on the assumption that PA conflict types, causes and management strategies differ across geographical locations based on their specific socio-economic and cultural contexts. This review intends to provide a broader understanding of the context of PA conflicts

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