

PROTECTED AREAS: FROM VERTICAL INSTITUTIONS TO COLLABORATIVE DYNAMICS

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By shedding light on nature/society relations, the articulation of complex networks (Murdoch, 1998) is revealed. It is essential, however to consider the heterogeneity of such arrangements - composed of human actions and non-human counterparts. Within this framework forest fringe communities are seen as a network of micro-power relations (Kumar, 2002; MacDonald, 2005). From two cases studied, I bring into the debate arena the institutionalisation process of protected areas. Through Serra da Capivara National Park case, in northeast Brazil, I seek to illustrate the National Parks concept and the patrimonialisation of the territory. The research questions in one hand socioeconomic processes undergone by fringe communities on the face of institutionalisation, and on the other the challenges of park's conflict management. Seen as a step ahead on the management perspective, not only optimising resources but also recognising the importance of local networks on the issue of biodiversity protection, the case of Ankasa Conservation Area in Ghana furthers the discussion. It questions the institutional initiative of community empowerment in resource management and its expectations. Overall, I seek to locate the agenda in which biodiversity protection is inserted, both internationally and locally. Therefore empirical analyses are sensible to the cultural milieu, sometimes requiring the change of lenses so as to perceive the richness of local livelihoods contingencies to the institutional arrangements and the impact from the introduction of alternatives.

The participatory approach of contemporary policy-making brings into discussion strategies not only for conflict resolution but to promote socio-economic inclusion into the decision-making process and, therefore a development that is more sustainable. However, the attempt to secure social, ecologic and economic sustainability is met by the challenge of coalescing interests of conservation and uses of natural resources. It means that protected areas should not be considered as ecological islands but recognise the importance of off-reserves' participatory rural development. Management alternatives aiming integration of rural communities and devolved authority - such as benefit sharing, community-based management and multilateral panels - are then included into the modern preservationist agenda.

Keywords: Collaborative strategies, fringe communities, forest management, protected areas.