H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

William M. Adams, Martin Mulligan, eds. *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era.* London and Sterling: Earthscan Publications, 2003. xii + 308 pp. ISBN 978-1-85383-749-4; ISBN 978-1-85383-750-0.

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Published on H-SAfrica (December, 2003)

For twenty years environmental justice and the redress of racial and other political and social inequities in nature conservation have been addressed in the literature and by a number of major international forums and meetings. Because of the high international profile of "national parks," much of this attention has focused on formal state-protected areas in those countries that have had a deeply divided and racist history. How to incorporate the previously politically marginalized in the nature conservation endeavor has recently been prioritized to the extent that the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' (IUCN) 5th World Parks Congress, held in Durban in September 2003 (the first such meeting in Africa), had as its theme the explicitly social agenda of "Benefits beyond Boundaries."

The generation of practitioners and philosophers of eco-social nature conservation that based its ideology on "sustainable development" has been augmented by new scientific ideas about biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services that protected areas' supply. Publication in this broad subject-field is burgeoning. Marcus Colchester's *Salvaging Nature: Indigenous Peoples, Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation* has a bibliography of more than twenty pages in small print, and even at this length, does not include many familiar publications.[1] *Decolonizing Nature* is another book on this subject, but aims to be an analysis of the history and effects of British colonization on nature, and to highlight "the present and future challenges to conservationists of contemporary global neo-colonialism." Neither of the two editors (who are also contributors) is a historian. William M. Adams, a reader in the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, has published two books about future conservation scenarios, and Martin Mulligan, environmental activist and Aboriginal rights supporter, based at the School of Social Ecology and Lifelong Learning at the University of Western Sydney, recently co-authored a book that details the life-stories of a number of prominent Australian environmentalists.

The back cover blurb of *Decolonizing Nature* begins with the statement that "British imperialism was almost unparalleled in its historical and geographical reach, leaving a legacy of entrenched social transformation in nations and cultures in every part of the globe. Colonial annexation and government were based on an all-encompassing system that integrated and controlled political, economic, social and ethnic relations, and required a similar annexation and control of natural resources and nature itself. Colonial ideologies were expressed not only in the progressive exploitation of nature but also in the emerging discourses of conservation." Historians of imperialism and colonialism will find fault with this oversimplification of a process that was uneven and that was related to specific contexts of chronology, geography, and the specific communities that were colonized. One can also profitably argue that other imperialisms (Portuguese, German, French, Belgian, Spanish), and sub-imperialisms on a smaller local, regional, or national scale and international relations at a larger one, have also played their crucial roles and cannot be discounted as drivers of the historical environmental process in much of the developing world. My first reservation, therefore, is that this book does not interrogate or define its use of "colonization," which, because of the way the tone of the book has been framed, limits its utility in terms of the lessons for the future that it contains.

The concepts of British imperialism and British "col-

onization" used in the book are unsophisticated. For example, on perusing the contents page that lists the various chapters, I was concerned about Scotland being categorized as "colonized"–and thus subject to the same British imperialism that might apply to parts of Africa, Canada, New Zealand, or Australia–in a chapter called "Decolonising Highland Conservation" by Mark Toogood (geographer at Lancaster University). But I did concede that there was merit in discussing modern Scottish politics of separatism and sub-nationalism in the context of nature conservation, and appreciated that English-Scottish (although not British-Scottish) relations have been fraught for centuries. However, this book also has a chapter by Adrian Colston (National Trust property manager for Wicken Fen) titled "Beyond Preservation: The Challenge of Ecological Restoration" that "discusses the challenge of nature conservation in the lowlands of the United Kingdom, using the Fens of East Anglia as an example" (p. 249). The inclusion of this chapter is defended on the grounds that the book includes the metropole as well as the periphery. (Scotland too can be considered both metropole as well as periphery because a very great many colonial conservationists originated from Scotland). In terms of future strategy that this book promises, my question here would be whether wetland policy in the Fens will be applied as "appropriate conservation" by the metropole to the periphery in the twenty-first century as it might have been in the nineteenth.

In addition, the colonization of South Africa is extremely complex, quite different from Australia's experience (these two regions are the focus of this book), and much of its racist environmental history is not as directly tied to British imperialism as it is to proletarianization, industrialization, and the modern apartheid policy of "surplus people" being relegated to rural "Bantustans." There is, for example, a chapter in this book on the community conservation initiatives in the Kruger National Park. However, the early game reserves (Sabi and Singwitsi) that later comprised parts of the present Kruger National Park were established in the Transvaal which was an independent Boer Republic dominated by a Dutch-speaking majority population (seeking access to land as well as independence from British rule in the Cape Colony) from 1852, and which was a British colony for twelve years–from April 1877 to February 1881 and from May 1902 to May 1910. Thereafter it was a province of the Union of South Africa. The national park itself was proclaimed by the government of the Union during a period of rising Afrikaner nationalism and strong anti-British sentiment, while its consolidation as a bastion of white recreational privilege and Afrikaner affirmative action employment occurred mainly in the period after 1960 when South Africa had been expelled from the British Commonwealth. Afrikaners have outnumbered English-speakers for many decades and it is an Afrikaner nationalist and apartheid past, rather than a "British" one, that the current black majority South African government wishes to erase.

If there is an analogy to Australia in South Africa, it would be the provincial parks in KwaZulu-Natal, which had a somewhat different trajectory from the central government's "national parks" and their history would certainly fit better into an argument about what British colonization brought to bear on game reserves. Certainly the editors state in their introduction that they are aware of the complexity of the colonial process, but nowhere in the book are any of the different colonial experiences explored in terms of how the Indian, New Zealand, Sudanese, or South African experience differed as to colonial environmental policy in a variety of natural and social environments, what this meant for conservation in the past, and what specific circumstances were created that would impact on the future differently in different parts of the world.

My other reservation would be about the point at which the authors and editors would argue that "colonization" by Britain might end and the actions of post-colonial governments come into play. There are also newer (or older) inequalities of power relations that affect national parks and protected areas. For instance, a traditional local African community under a chief living on the borders of the Kruger National Park has recently requested that a new entrance gate be constructed into the park that is easily accessible from their communally owned land. Such a gate would link the community outside the park with the wildlife within, so that the local people could begin to develop a tourism industry, an endeavor that would be greatly enhanced if visitors could conveniently visit the national park while lodging with the local communities, buying local produce, relying on local transport, learning about indigenous local knowledge, etc. The request has been refused and the community is very aggrieved about it. Strong feelings of antagonism against park personnel are being harbored, because it is believed that legitimate wishes are being dismissed in an arrogant manner and that this particular community is being victimized. The reason given by parks authorities for their refusal is that the community has not adhered to the prescribed policy for community conservation initiatives pertaining to South African National Parks (a paras-

tatal body established by a democratic South African government in power since 1994), but this particular community does not want to do it "the SANParks way" and considers that it has a more appropriate strategy for its geographical position and its circumstances. This tension is not one created by a former colonizing power, so how should we best take into account new post-colonial conflicts between differing structures of authority? Another example of oversimplification relates to the editors' contention (quoting Tom Griffiths, whose work pertains directly and only to the Australian experience) that early colonial ideas around conservation were about taming the wilderness (p. 5), an observation that does not apply to game reserve or national park establishment in southern Africa.

I also found this book to lack clear internal organizational cohesion. There are thirteen chapters, including an introduction and conclusion and the two chapters mentioned above on Scotland and the Fens. Of the other nine, two are on southern Africa (South Africa and Zimbabwe–an author of both chapters is James Murombedzi, an employee of the Ford Foundation, with Hector Magome of SANParks the co-author of the South African chapter) and the rest with an Australian focus. Each chapter seems isolated from the other, does not lead on from one to another, does not reflect points of similarity or difference or specific common themes. Perhaps the problem is more that the editors do not give the reader sufficient clues as to the over-arching argument that they want the chapters to build up. I was therefore left to work out a scheme of my own and I had some fundamental questions.

The first related to why the editors decided to leave such large geographical gaps in the impact of British colonization on nature protection. India is missing. So are New Zealand, Canada, West Africa, East Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya), Malawi, Zambia, Namibia, Egypt, and the Sudan. In all these countries and regions, the traditions of nature protection under a British imperial or colonial regime are evident and would be enlightening in terms of developing "strategies for conservation in a post-colonial era." The literature exists. Works such as *People, Parks and Wildlife* by Saberwal, Rangarajan, and Kothari (2001), *India's Wildlife History* by Rangarajan (2001), and *Battles over Nature*, edited by Saberwal and Rangarajan (2003), are just three of the very many cases in point.[2] India is a particularly fertile comparison for inclusion in a book such as *Decolonizing Nature* because since 1947 a number of innovative and inclusive conservation strategies might well serve as appropriate or inappropriate (as the case may be) alternative strategies for post-colonial era nature politics.

It may well be that the editors would disagree with my thinking that other parts of the former British Empire or Commonwealth need to be included because they believe that Australia, Scotland, the Fens, Zimbabwe, and South Africa have particular aspects that mutually inform each other, but they give little indication that this is the case. I feel that the editors have not done their duty of knitting the chapters together in their introduction or conclusion, explaining to readers how links might be made, where the similarities and differences between outlooks, geography, systems of national and conservation governance might lie and how one might explain differences in colonization and decolonization and different routes to post-colonial conservation strategies.

The editors might also have emphasized the various constructs of very different indigenous groups (which the book elides together as "indigenous people" with common cultures, histories, attitudes, and aims) that impact substantially on the direction of protected areas, and more generally, on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the future. For the purposes of future biodiversity conservation, just how does one fruitfully compare South Africa's majority African citizenry–who in precolonial centuries were often urbanized in large groups, international and regional traders, technologically skilled and sophisticated miners, builders, weavers, potters, hunters, agriculturalists and pastoralists with wealth, political hierarchy, and a strict division of labor–with Australia's minority Aboriginal people with a hunter-gatherer culture more akin to South Africa's San? (Speaking of whom, a chapter on the current extremely contentious eviction of the San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve by the Botswana government might have thrown some light on a very difficult, but not entirely isolated, decolonization conservation challenge.) Cultural and economic differences between indigenous or autochthonous people in different regional political and environmental contexts are crucial to postcolonial strategies. These differences translate into widespread demands in South Africa (indeed, it is government policy) that protected areas replete with dangerous species of wild animals translate directly from the ecotourist industry into employment for black Africans in the tourist and other related sectors, economic empowerment, and regional upliftment.

In Australia, on the other hand, the call appears to be that Aboriginal communities need to be given free

access to ancestral land that contains the wellspring of their cultural identity. One of the problems of setting up a discourse that contrasts all-powerful colonizers with an exploited/marginalized/ignored/vicitimized colonized population is that the colonized are denied any form of agency or action seemingly in perpetuity, a characteristic that does not apply to black South Africans. And while the precolonial conservation practices of Aboriginal Australians are dissected in some detail in this book, there is nothing similar for southern Africa–there is no indication of what indigenous or authentic Tswana, Pedi, or Nguni conservation strategies of the environment might have been, nor how they might be revived or integrated into modern conservation biology and management as is happening in parts of Australia.

I have indicated that "colonization" and the "colonized" are employed in an oversimplified manner, and I wonder in the same vein about the categorization of "conservationists." This body of people, whether in postcolonial or decolonizing countries or in international funding and governance agencies, is highly fractured and their relations are fraught with internal and external politics. But the editors give explicit advice to "conservationists," as though they were a coherent group of eco-imperialists, with a common agenda acting in concert with each other (pp. 294-296). For example, "conservationists have an ongoing problem with their relations with indigenous people"; "conservationists have rarely engaged in dialogue with those remote from corporate or metropolitan power"; "conservationists have been obsessed with 'preservation' and removing human impacts upon nature." I wondered just how many of those thousands of "conservationists" of many hues and attitudes who attended the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 or the "Benefits beyond Boundaries" Durban World Parks Congress in 2003 would recognize themselves here, let alone the "conservationists" employed in the South African national and provincial protected area structures. Certainly there are many environmental "greenies" and "preservationists" in the United States and Europe (many of whose societies, such as the International Fund for Animal Welfare [IFAW], fund biodiversity conservation in the developing world with strings attached), but the editors state that "while organisations such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN more commonly known as the World Conservation Union) have shifted further and further towards a view of conservation as sustainable resource use, the dominant Western ideology regarding conservation has remained paradoxically, preservationist" (pp. 9-10). If the international nature of the IUCN does not, in the editors' view, represent the international perspective, I wondered exactly who did, who the "preservationists" were, and how their influence was quantified in different parts of the world.

Although my comments above are critical of *Decolonizing Nature*, I would nevertheless urge people interested in nature and the sustainability of natural resources to read this book. Unequal power relations and conflicting demands over natural resource use exist at local, national and global levels, and whether these owe their origins to previous forms of government (including the precolonial) and society or whether they have emerged since the end of rule from without, it is those power structures that will ultimately determine the forms that environmental or biodiversity protection takes in different localities at different times. The deployment of natural resources is a political issue.

It seems to me that chapters 2 and 10, both by William Adams, and chapter 9 by Penelope Figgis (author and director of many Australian environmental non-governmental organizations) fit together into a logical argument. In chapter 2, "Nature and the Colonial Mind," Adams discusses those characteristics of colonialism that have impacted on nature protection. He argues that these include European "rationality," science (taxonomy and ecology), the ideologies of "degradation" or "wilderness," hunting and ideas of authority, and the "fortress" model of medieval game preserve. In his second chapter (chapter 10, "When Nature Won't Stay Still: Conservation, Equilibrium and Control"), Adams interrogates more closely the specific aspects of rationality and science. He shows how the colonial paradigm of the "balance of nature" that was once imposed on nature conservation management as being scientifically appropriate is being replaced by the newer neo-colonial scientific paradigm of adaptive management and disequilibria that biodiversity managers are beginning to implement. Figgis (chapter 9, "The Changing Face of Nature Conservation: Reflections on the Australian Experience") gets to grips with explaining a menu of creative new strategies that may be apposite either to rethinking or new thinking about nature protection in Australia in the twenty-first century. In a brief overview of Australia's conservation history, Figgis discusses "New Drivers," "New Models," and "New Mechanisms" and in so doing, makes a significant contribution. This is a practical, rather than theoretical, chapter, in which the author explains how issues such as the "retreat of government," "bioregionalism,"

"multiple use" and "indigenous protected areas," "private sanctuaries," "voluntary conservation agreements," and "market mechanisms" might engender new ways of conserving biodiversity while meeting the challenges–social, economic, political, and environmental–that lie ahead.

The latest literature on rethinking global natural resource issues has begun to probe the weak interstices of "community conservation" as an overarching paradigm. *Decolonizing Nature* recognizes this fresh trend and tries to come to grips with it, particularly in the two chapters that deal with southern Africa. Providing two case studies, James Murombedzi (Ford Foundation) and Hector Magome (South African National Parks) explain the mixed lessons of "success," "failure," and difficulties facing community empowerment since the 1990s in two South African national parks and their neighbors: the Makuleke in the Kruger National Park and the Nama community of the Richtersveld National Park. The restitution of rights in land that were removed from Africans by racially based legislation after 1913 are often most publicized when claims are made against state land and national parks. In South Africa, communal land that comes under the control of "chiefs" who are not elected leaders and who were on occasion the pawns of the apartheid state, is an issue that the new democratic government has yet to grapple with, and SANParks is in some respects the butt of political disputes that fall outside its purview to solve. The chapter by Murombedzi on Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE project–a community-based rural development initiative based on natural resource extraction/utilization but outside of any formal protected area–is likewise balanced, measured and informative. It is clear from both chapters that in poverty-ridden postcolonial southern Africa the crucial ingredient to power is control over land in order to ensure economic survival in a cash but post-industrial economy in which ecotourists are very powerful.

Marcia Langton (academic and prominent Aboriginal Australian) addresses commercialization–one of the issues that affect both South Africa and Australia–in her chapter, "The 'Wild', the Market and the Native: Indigenous People Face New Forms of Global Colonization." Recreational facilities in South Africa's national parks are being privatized. South African "game farming"–husbanding of wildlife herds for the burgeoning venison home and export market–is booming, as environmental limits to pastoralism are being recognized and agricultural subsidies and markets contract. Most South Africans favor the use and sale of ivory from sustainable elephant culling. The commercial kangaroo meat market in Australia does not seem to be valued in the same way. There are no "kangaroo farms" and meat for pet food or for upmarket restaurants seems, ironically, to come from the culling program that is supported by the Australian government to protect the livestock industry. Langton's chapter prioritizes traditional uses of natural resources by Aboriginal Australians rather than economic empowerment or employment. The other Australian chapters are "Decolonizing Relationships with Nature" by Val Plumwood (author and activist); "Responding to Place in a Post-Colonial Era: An Australian Perspective" by John Cameron (University of Western Sydney); and "Feet to the Ground in Storied Landscapes: Disrupting the Colonial Legacy with a Poetic Politics" by Martin Mulligan.

Australian concern with landscapes as cultural places and spaces has prominence in these chapters, whether the concern by Aboriginal Australians or second settlers. Unlike white settlers of Africa, white Australians once considered their continent to be *terra nullius* and much of their economic activity and landscape aesthetic was devoted to turning Australia into a clone of Britain. The current sense of unease that white Australians have about their relationship with the Australian environment– the natural one so fragile that thanks to their Europeanist management interventions many parts of it are in various stages of collapse, and the social one challenged by ideas around what an Australian identity means and who is entitled to it–does not resonate substantially either with white minority or black majority in Africa and certainly does not apply to protected area management. African governments or conservation or funding agencies would not therefore gain a sense of new postcolonial conservation strategy from the section on "The Debate over Place and Belonging" that focuses on the work by Peter Read in Cameron's chapter or ideas of kinship with small localized environments and the biota that are part of the rich cultural tradition of Australia.

There are errors of fact and some sloppy proofreading. Just a few examples: page 30 contends that game laws in the Cape colony were first passed in 1886. The first game protection legislation harks back to Dutch East India Company rule in the late 1600s and the Cape Colony under British rule had its first comprehensive legislation in 1822, 1846 in the independent Transvaal, and 1866 in the British colony of Natal. The date 1892 is provided on page 40 for the establishment of the Sabie [sic] Game Reserve (later the Kruger National Park). The Sabi Game Reserve was established in 1898 and it formed only a small southern portion of the Kruger National Park of 1926. Typographical or proof-reading errors include ref-

erences on pages 5 and 13.[3] The IUCN, although often mentioned, does not appear in the index.

Notes

[1]. Marcus Colchester, *Salvaging Nature: Indigenous Peoples, Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation* (Montevideo and Moreton-in-Marsh: World Rainforest Movement and Forest Peoples Programme, August 2003).

[2]. Vasant Saberwal, Mahesh Rangarajan, and Ashish Kothari, *People Parks and Wildlife: Towards Coexistence* (Hyderabad, 2001); Mahesh Rangarajan, *India's Wildlife History: An Introduction* (Delhi, 2001); Vasant Saberwal and Mahesh Rangarajan, eds., *Battles over Nature: Science and the Politics of Conservation* (Delhi, 2003).

[3]. These include references on pages 5 and 13 to T. Griffiths and L. Robbins, eds., *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Keele University Press, 1997), while just four lines later on page 13 the editors are T. Griffiths and L. Robin (the latter is correct). The place of publication is given as Keele; it should be Edinburgh.