

On parks and people: towards a social geography of productivity, preservation and profit.

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Resumo

O conhecimento aprofundado das relações subjacentes entre as sociedades europeias e a conservação da 'natureza' é analisado com vários exemplos de actividades europeias no mundo. O estatuto sócio-político percebido parece ser mais significativo do que qualquer aspecto ligado à conservação/preservação, e os conflitos urbano-rurais são entendidos como um problema maior.

A relutância em deixar o território ficar no seu estado selvagem é, sem surpresa, inversamente proporcional à distância do indivíduo ao território em causa. Porém, a distância parecerá relevante apenas porque está auto-correlacionada com a urbanidade, entendida esta como a medida da distância pessoal em relação a práticas agrícolas. É sugerido, talvez de forma um pouco herege, que uma maior atenção a estes atributos da ecologia social humana fará mais pelas políticas e práticas de conservação do que qualquer número de estudos científicos na área das ciências naturais.

Palavras-chave: ecologia social humana, conservação da natureza, conflito rural-urbano

Abstract

Insights into the underlying relationships between European societies and conservation of 'nature' are gained in the light of some examples of Europeans'

activities in the wider world. Perceived socio-political status appears to be more significant than any conservation/ preservation issue, and rural-urban conflict is seen to lie even deeper. Reluctance to release territory to wilderness is, unsurprisingly, inversely proportional to distance from the territory involved. However, distance may appear relevant only because it is auto-correlated with urbanity, a measure of personal distance from direct involvement in agriculture. It is suggested, somewhat heretically, that attending to these attributes of human social ecology will do more for policy and practice in conservation than any number of scientific studies in the natural sciences.

Keywords: human social ecology, conservation of “nature”, rural-urban conflict

Résumé

On peut gagner une connaissance plus profonde des rapports entre les systèmes sociaux européens et la conservation de “la nature” en étudiant quelques exemples d’autres activités européennes. La position socio-politique ainsi perçue paraît plus significative qu’aucune question de conservation/préservation, et le conflit entre les intérêts ruraux et les intérêts urbains se trouve encore plus profond. Plus on est loin d’une région désignée à être retournée au sauvage, plus on est content que cela se passe. Néanmoins, il se peut que la distance soit relative à la situation seulement à cause de son rapport avec l’idée de la vie urbaine, une mesure de leur propre distance de la vie rurale pour ceux qui n’ont aucun contact avec l’agriculture. On suggère, peut être en rôle d’hérétique, que l’attention donnée à ces attributs de l’écologie sociale de l’homme puisse produire des résultats beaucoup plus utiles pour la pratique et l’idée de la conservation que ne pourraient d’innombrables études techniques dans les sciences naturelles.

Mots-clé: écologie sociale de l’homme, conservation de “la nature”, conflit ruraux-urbains

Introduction

It would seem appropriate for an outsider to confine himself to setting a context for the thorough and exhaustive economic analyses of the Portuguese situation, which will undoubtedly form the substance of this volume. There is no way in which the whole field can be covered but it may be helpful to draw attention to some universalities

that are pertinent to the Portuguese situation; especially the more inconvenient ones that are commonly conveniently forgotten. To do this we shall consider experience from a wider context where starker basic circumstances can, meantime, be allowed to override the subtleties of the gentler Portuguese circumstances in order to illuminate and emphasize the underlying realities.

Reserves and parks in modern society

A major cause of confusion and dissatisfaction is the perennial issue of the type of reserve that is involved under the title 'National Park'. Despite various official terminologies, day to day citizen use of the term is, not unreasonably, quite casual. In one conversation the meaning may range from the pure wilderness concept, to the affluent suburbanite driving their respectably maintained family vehicle through an apparently open, but actually thoroughly fenced, pseudo-habitat for big game.

In that zoo, who is in the cage?

This leads directly to the vexatious question of the role of the reserve in modern society as a whole, and in the communities of which that society is composed. Any park will be, in some significant degree, an island. It has to be, because it is different. If it is not different it is not worth being identified as a separate entity – a reserve. This, in itself, leads to isolation from the surrounding human society that carries the perceived identity of 'community'.

The next element is the role of parks, in the general sense of the term, in the evolution of modern post-industrial society; a society that is cocooned and protected from a thorough awareness of its own history of conquest, exploitation, and utilisation of nature. Underpinning the whole process are the laws of thermodynamics and the part played by entropy in the underlying science of life. Onto this is grafted the history of the expanding frontiers of humanized landscapes, a process which intensifies in the era of European expansion and breaks the bonds of nature in the industrial revolution. The improvements in life, for some, that followed industrialism also made possible the release of space; be it territory once hard earned in the endless struggle to contain the wilderness, or original wilderness perceived as unneeded by those sitting in the hearts of civilized societies. That feature is very common.

Those who release the space are not those who have to endure the consequences on their own doorsteps. This is an idea to which we shall have to return; the 'overwash' effect of cosmopolitan centres onto peripheral areas.

Less dramatic, but no less heatedly argued, are the differences in viewpoint between the suburban day-tripper, the 'green' activist, and the farmer, as to the nature

of the relationship between the rural and the natural. For the moment we can accept the stereotypes, though clearly the groups are not mutually exclusive. In part of the highly cultivated agrarian landscape of north-eastern Scotland, farmers were faced with the prospect of legislation to establish a relatively low level of countryside preservation. The reaction was immediate – “What for?” “We already are a countryside park!”: a very perceptive comment on the way the average suburbanite views the countryside. It was also a justifiable reaction in terms of hawks, deer, foxes, hares, badgers, swans, otters, and even red squirrels. Indeed almost all the ‘countryside’ that is bemoaned as lost to modern agribusiness is there, all day, every day – *but not where the casual or infrequent visitor can guarantee to see it, and be prepared to pay for the privilege.*

Enter the conservationists. It is the old argument. The ‘wildlife’ foxes from the farmland steal the eggs from the birds in the nature reserve, whilst healthy otters, whose very presence proves the good condition of the river waters, have healthy appetites for fish, which can seriously affect the income from fishing rights. Now consider the wilder highlands, quite conceivably overgrazed by deer; for want of wolves! Who is prepared to accept wolves, bears, even beavers? : not farmers, not fishermen, and not the ‘deer-stalking’ estates. There is space enough but no longer the underlying ecology – yet.

So whose ‘nature’ is it?

The intra-society, inter-community interactions have yet more layers. A large part of northern Scotland, like remote northern Norway, could be virtually returned to wilderness; a concept towards which the military are somewhat ambivalent. These isolated peripheries are strategically vital areas. Effective occupation is important but there are fewer incompatibilities in the idea of a militarized nature reserve than at first sight appear. The wildest animals and worst predators are at least under some sort of control. The economic, as opposed to the social and personal, impact would be minimal on a national scale, and probably positive.

If reserves are to pay for themselves then, given their inherent non-production, the best way to make them pay is to use them to save in other areas, perhaps by releasing military land for economic forestry?

In Scotland depopulation has been done before: badly. With help from the central authorities, in this case the English and, worse still, the Scottish military, an archaic, anachronistic, and moribund way of life in the periphery was uprooted and destroyed to make way for profitable modernization for the benefit of central interests. The bitterness is still there. Be it in Edinburgh or Oslo, Lisbon or London the lesson is the same. That Scottish core-periphery, historico-social interaction is a typical, if somewhat dramatic, example of the underlying issue in national parks: *the distinction*

between the legitimate use, heedless misuse, and the calculated abuse, of politico-social power that skulks within the overbearing of peripheral interests by cosmopolitan central authorities.

Parks, power and human ecology; the case of Tanzania

Leaving to nature or returning to nature is a matter of outsiders' viewpoints, as is the concept of what is the 'correct' nature. An excellent example is the case of East Africa, and in particular Tanzania, for which Kjekshus (1977) assembled a powerful and effective review of the human-nature interaction and the issue of ecological control. In the 1970s some 25% of Tanzania was national park or game reserve and very strongly tied into hard-currency tourism; though what proportion of the income remained in Tanzania is both a key issue and a moot point. Even more pertinently, where within Tanzania did the Tanzanian share go?

'¿Cui bono?' is an issue no less relevant in Britain or Portugal.

All of these Tanzanian natural/national parks and game reserves are not 'natural' at all but rather the result of major changes within little more than the last century; the heirlooms of the imperial era. Though seemingly ignorant of previous Portuguese experience, or at least affecting to despise it, the British and German sources from the era around the late nineteenth century 'scramble for Africa' provide a clear picture of the effects of policy on human ecology. Frequently heedless rather than malevolent, and blinkered rather than perverse, the imperial authorities proceeded with policies the consequences of which were commonly unseen, and much less considered, by those who formulated, as opposed to executed, the policy. De-industrialization, labour levies, forced migration, taxation, and dependency upon proto-globalization, reduced the ability of the population to maintain ecological control of the landscape. To this creeping debilitation, exacerbated by intra- and inter-*imperium* conflicts was added the major destroyer of all societies which are somewhat buffered by isolation – disease. Within a decade came rinderpest, introduced via Italian and British supply lines from Asia; the sand-flea (*Sacropsylla penetrans*), allegedly introduced by a British ship from Brazil; and a resurgence of smallpox in a debilitated community. Everywhere in the interior, human effectiveness in the landscape was lost, the bush returned and with it the tsetse fly, *ngana*, and sleeping sickness. In short the tourist income from parks and game reserves represents the ill-gotten gains from a major loss of population, productivity, and human control. Both vegetation and fauna are in one sense 'natural', but the game reserves are imperial constructs and the landscape is, on a larger scale, reversional from a high tide of human endeavour:

which is exactly what is happening in the upland margins of Western Europe, and not for the first time either.

The area of the Selous Game Reserve was described in 1860 as ‘(here)... forests alternate with heavily populated cultivation land’ (Decken C.C.1869). In the 1950s the elders spoke of a time when the landscape was so occupied and cultivated that ‘people made special trips to the west in order to verify that an elephant was indeed as big as a hut.’ (Crosse-Upcott A.R.W. 1956: in Kjekshus H. 1977). The much-reduced population of the 1950s was conveniently described as ‘vagrant’ and therefore could be ‘readily transplanted’. Forty thousand people were arbitrarily removed to make the game reserve.

The Ngorongoro crater in 1882 was reported as “ a thickly populated Masai district with many villages. The country is full of big game *harboured in the neighbouring forest.*” (Farler J.P. 1882). In the 1890s rinderpest wiped out the cattle, and the Masai. A German settler claimed about a third of the crater floor for a cattle and ostrich ranch, which, after 1918, was sold as enemy property to a U.S. millionaire. He set up a hunting lodge. The wild had returned, and the first reserve was set up in 1928.

The area of the Lake Manyara National Park had no game in 1892 (Baumann O.1894). It was tsetse free. On the north side of the lake there was game. In 1935 the park area was proposed on the west shore of the lake! It was turned down by the Governor on the very reasonable grounds that, “ it cannot be sound to close a rich agricultural area in the interests of game when there are unlimited areas which are useless for cultivation and equally suitable for game on the Serengeti and in its vicinity”(Kjekshus H.1977 p.76). The park went ahead a few years later and became a game-rich, tsetse infested, area. The conflict had been between man and nature. Then it became between the native cultivators/pastoralists and conservation/tourism, two communities within the one human society;

not so different from Britain and Portugal.

One interpretation could be that as one form of human ecological pressure was removed, another moved into exploit the niche by using wild animals. Using them almost naturally, until the lure of safari-tourism’s dollars leads to management and manipulation. Would it start disguised as disaster relief, when a major natural catastrophe threatens to eliminate the photogenic?

In Scotland and Portugal our animals are smaller, but are we doing anything different?

Through the looking glass? National Parks and the Corporación Autónoma Regional de los Valles del Magdalena y del Sinú (CVM)

A more complex and subtler state of affairs can be seen in the case of Colombia's Corporación Autónoma Regional de los Valles del Magdalena y del Sinú (CVM). The history of this organization, now long since superseded and adsorbed into subsequent administrative structures is a gem for those interested in the relationships between development, reserves, tourism, and conservation. We can learn a lot from the history of a development organization that was dragged unwittingly into a quagmire of misguided doctrine, confused aims, and inadequate understanding of the different communities of interest with which it was obliged to interact. So much the more so as the resultant internecine warfare in the committee rooms in Bogotá spawned highly interesting memoranda¹ whilst on the ground the CVM was conservationist in the face of pioneering, and established, farmers but developmentalist in its National Parks.

The CVM's active national park function was concentrated in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta which, during the decade or so of the CVM's existence was one of Colombia's last remaining, unoccupied, mid-altitude, sierran environments. Here pioneering farmers were still moving in during, and after, the various outbreaks of 'violencia' from 1948–1956. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta also had, within a semi-circle of about 50 km. radius, the whole range of tropical environments from coast to glaciers and from arid to wet. Living in the heart of this area were amerindian communities whose cultivation and trade system was geared to migration between the vertical zones. Given the superb range of, apparently virtually untouched, environments, it is not surprising, that national parks were proposed.² But it was not a simple, single, piece of legislation. To understand the predicament of the CVM we have to turn to some history.

As in any European context, there is a history of competing interests to unravel.

The legal basis

The indians are descended directly from the pre-columbian communities. They had withdrawn into the sierra in the sixteenth century, leaving an empty zone, which

¹ Much of the material on the CVM comes from internal memoranda some of which the author was able to microfilm at the time. Relevant published material is listed in the bibliography. For further information and sources *vide* Loder J.F. *op cit*.

² One or two biologists were uneasy and with good reason. The forests were not untouched. The historical evidence was there to support the doubts raised by field-work. It took some finding – but that is another story.

we can regard as effectively unbreached until the early twentieth century. Their territory, however undefined, was officially part of a state within a state and the responsibility of the Departamento de Asuntos Indigenas in Bogotá; a form of federal territory in an emphatically unfederal state. Next, there had been a long history of regard for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta as a potential resource for development; a true national reserve going back to the sixteenth century attempts to produce wheat in the higher areas. Some marginal areas had been drawn into the regional economy; forest products in the seventeenth century (De la Rosa.1742; Julian 1787), coffee and cacao in the eighteenth (Narvaez y la Torre 1778), coffee again in the nineteenth (Flye O.L 1933) and in the twentieth century irrigation water for United Fruit's banana plantations on the plains to the west. It was here that a vital change of attitude began. The reserve to be developed was quietly transmogrified into a reserve **not** to be developed. Decree 178 of 1933 formalized the state forest reserve for the benefit of the Zona Bananera's water supply, but it also specifically allowed the cultivation of coffee and other crops that would not affect run-off. Moreover the boundaries set were rational watershed units. All very reasonable and inoffensive since at that time the pressure for forest clearance was minimal, and access was largely controlled by the large estates, which were party to the legislation.

In 1936 the notorious Law 200 was passed; the law that promised land reform in a decade, in order to take the steam out of a simmering rural revolution and a wave of invasions of large estates. Helped by the boom prices for raw materials in wartime and various political shenanigans, this promise was held off until the late 1940s, when its non-implementation became a factor in the evolution of the 'violencia' (Duff E.A.1969. Hirschman O.A.1963). The same law was the foundation for key elements of the land reform legislation of the 1960s, which produced the Instituto Nacional Colombiana de Reforma Agraria (INCORA). This then is one thread for which we have no effective comparator in Western Europe today, an open frontier. Dying out and anachronistic though it was, it was ultimately to bring about the demise of the CVM.

The relevant legislation for forest policy was passed in the 1940s. It was intended essentially to resolve the problems of the occupied lands of the interior where all the elements of social organization were, to some degree at least, present. Law 2 of 1959 concerning National Forest Reserves provided the legal basis for non-occupation, and the management, or restriction, of water use, fishing, hunting, burning etc. Decree 1910 of 1960 aimed to conserve and develop natural resources, reinforced the 1959 legislation, and declared all snow-peaks to be National Natural Parks - extent to be decided later! It also made provision for other, unspecified, parks – again with the details left open but laying down basic rules that effectively barred any economic activity except, possibly, tourism: no land grants, no land sales, occupied land may be

expropriated. This legislation was the basis of the CVM's existence. The CVM was born with built-in conflict – to conserve **and** develop resources. Furthermore it could only administer parks/reserves within its area, which happened not to cover all the old forest reserves.

Cumulative legislation does leave loose ends, which can, and will, inhibit the effective implementation of that legislation. Financial management is not exempt from this effect.

Space, place and territory: the CVM in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

What then was the CVM's territory? Originally it had been conceived of as a basin management operation, modelled strongly on the TVA experience of the North American advisers behind the inception of the CVM. Because the CVM was to be overseen directly by the President of the Republic, it was politically impossible to have some 30% of the occupied area of the country apparently converted into a presidential fiefdom. Thus was an inherently logical plan utterly subverted. The upstream limit was set at Honda in the middle Magdalena, which meant there would be seven Departments to be represented on a controlling 'junta' chaired by a presidential nominee. How did parks figure in this? They didn't: not yet. This was still primarily a resource development operation focused around the new railway being built to link the capital, and the ageing jumble of local lines in the interior, with the ports on the Caribbean coast. This would provide economic stimulus to an isolated, and under-utilized, lowland. (CVM 1960 Programa de desarrollo económico del Valle del Magdalena y norte de Colombia).

The underlying geography, not least the awesome cost of bridging the Magdalena river somewhere in its lower reaches, combined with a pre-existing 80km. line from the Banana Zone to the port of Santa Marta, meant that the lowlands of the left bank and the much larger port of Barranquilla were, in reality, bypassed. The political solution was actually economically rational; include the neighbouring basin of the Sinú. It had the same conditions and development problems as the lower Magdalena and could be treated as a watershed unit, which added a dash of technical rationality to a political decision. In contrast, the situation on the right bank was very untidy. Much of the southern Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta drained to the Magdalena via the César, but the south-eastern part is drained by the Rio Rancheria through what was the Intendencia of the Guajira, a military-governed border territory with no part in the Magdalena basin. Moreover the Intendencia's border with the Department of Magdalena was under dispute. The northern Sierra Nevada drained directly to the sea via several powerful, but short, rivers and the western Sierra Nevada's waters flowed indirectly

to the sea via the Ciénaga Grande. But the west face was forest reserve for irrigation in the Zona Bananera, a key area for extending resource development through which the new railway ran to the port of Santa Marta.

As heir to previous legislation, and true to its developmental role in relation to the new railway the CVM acquired the management of the western Sierra Nevada drainage basins. These basins reached up to the snow peaks and glaciers that were already, legally, natural parks, and by their very nature extended some unspecified way down into, at least, the northern and southern faces of the Sierra Nevada. Because of the legal issues involved, the problem of possible park extension into the Guajira was sidelined. Because of the undefined limits of the snow-peak parks the CVM's boundary was not set technically but politically at the boundary of the Department of Magdalena. (Currie L. pers.comm. 1967) This brought in the superb range of environments that justified the creation of major National Parks which included the snow-peaks, did not match the old forest reserves, overlapped with the undefined territory of the Asuntos Indigenas, and abutted onto the Guajira where the CVM had no authority at all. Lastly, and ultimately fatally, much of the lower levels of the new National Parks were actually quite heavily occupied by pioneer farmers: not a good basis for gaining international recognition, and thereby essential UN funding, for the National Parks. The social and geographic position of the parks within the nation and the national territory, combined with their legal background set in a jumble of undefined territories, did nothing to simplify the conflict inherent in the management doctrines that were to be thrust upon the CVM.

And that is a state of affairs that is by no means peculiar to Colombia.

The question of access, and the farmer-tourist symbiosis

To focus on the parks and their management is to misrepresent the greater part of the CVM's existence and function. Nonetheless the ramifications of park management ultimately reverberated through the organization and lead to its ultimate re-structuring into the wider ranging and more diffuse Instituto Nacional para el Desarrollo de Recursos Naturales (INDERENA).

The key problem was simple physical access (Schrimpff E. 1967; Grimwood I. 1968). To a pioneer, forest-clearing, farmer any track or trail is a major asset, especially trails that improved outward access to markets from the desirable, middle-altitude, forest belt. Even the forecast of one being opened up, to allow police/rangers access to their patrol areas, was enough to draw pioneering activity to an area. It did not matter that INCORA had publicly declared it would never grant land titles in the reserved area in, and around, the National Parks. For a while the CVM, now administratively attached as an independent wing of INCORA, simply by planning to open up trails to

aid park management, was supporting a land settlement operation that was more effective than any other in INCORA!

‘Vigilancia forestal’ needed trails but tourism needed better than that, and what a market it offered to struggling farmers; locally available, wealthy, transient, and self-regenerating. Clearly, tourist money was the way to fund conservation parks, but tourist money accelerated deforestation. How to separate the two processes? Three tourist types were identified.

Firstly, the Colombian middle-class tourist presented a growing and potentially large market. It was an already established type: family holidays at the beach, and definitely no interest at all in soul-cleansing trekking along endless forest trails with nothing to see or do. Perhaps a half-day, vehicle ride for a picnic up at a good viewpoint, as a change from the lowland heat? Not a major *per capita* money-spinner and, as numbers grow, so does the market for farm produce.

The second strand was the Caribbean tourist circuit; cruise liners, expensive package holidays etc. to which was added the potential influx from Venezuela, or more precisely Maracaibo. There are several considerations here. Santa Marta was not on the Caribbean circuit. It had El Rodadero, a one village mini-Algarve, but massive investment would be needed to raise standards and modify attitudes all round. The harbour at Santa Marta would be excellent for cruise ships and shore trips are essential to that trade, which leads directly to the last option, specialist tourism.

Yes, even in the 1960s specialist tourism was foreseen and considered in the CVM. In fact it was actually beginning to happen in the interior. In the Parque Arqueológico de San Agustín there were very urban cosmopolitan citizens from the capital, playing at Arcadia, on hotel-based horse-riding holidays; each dressed in an urbanized, sanitized, version of Colombian ‘cowboy’ clothes. Alongside such highly profitable touristic charades there was a limited, but steady, stream of ‘cultivated’ tourists, genuinely interested in the archaeology. But that was in the interior, and that was the difference. The landscape was occupied. From Bogotá, in a good car, it was not too far to drive. Maracaibo to Santa Marta was a shorter journey, but a very different matter.

In the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta the position, in all senses of the word, was different. The schemes for low-impact, high-price tourism were wild and wonderful. Light aircraft, helicopters even, would be used for all transport to a complex to be developed deep inside the reserve on the margins between the forest and the dramatic glacial scenery. It would, of course, also be right in the heart of pure Indian lands. “So what? They’ll be an extra tourist attraction” so said the North American ‘*eminence grise*’ whose concepts lay behind the creation of the CVM.³ Not quite the view of Asuntos

³ The author was very fortunate in being able to meet with Lauchlin Currie in Colombia. His readiness to openly discuss and analyse many aspects of the origins and policies of the CVM provided many otherwise unavailable insights. We have moved on thirty years but his help is still gratefully remembered

Indigenas whose remit it was, even if they were actually doing nothing at all to help matters. The scheme could have worked, but it would have needed a huge investment, a long establishment period, and major infrastructure support in Santa Marta. That investment could not be made without attracting major tourist operations justifiably seeking to make fullest economic use of that infra-structure; a superb incentive for farmers to clear more forest.

It was an idea born in another world.

The Maracaibo concept: foreigners and aliens

All these big ideas were in the hands of the cosmopolitans, the wealthy and urbane in the major cities. Too far away socially, economically, and culturally, they were in effect aliens; too few, too distant, and totally out of touch with life on the agrarian frontier. The Maracaibo idea encapsulated the whole issue. It was almost a caricature of itself and the whole relationship between parks and tourism.

The idea was based on three assumptions: firstly that there was a rich population with leisure time, true enough up to a point; secondly that there was no equivalent to the Sierra Nevada parks in Venezuela, again true enough but it would not take the Venezuelans long to set up some competition; and lastly that the new spur to the Pan American highway running along the coast from Santa Marta to Maracaibo would make access easy for the wealthy, vehicle-based Venezuelan tourist. This was the major problem. The road was on the map, but it was not built. There was a dirt road running along the coast east from Santa Marta; no bridges over the rivers and impassable in the wet season. It ran well into the park area and petered out where high ground came right down to the sea. There was also a typical gravel/dirt main road from the Venezuelan border through the Guajira. It stopped at the Rio Palomino, just one river crossing short of the park boundary and fifty kilometres from Santa Marta. The Palomino did have a modern bridge, built with sub-standard materials and broken by a local tornado. The road ended at the border of the Guajira, and in the Guajira the CVM had no standing. So, even without the constraints of hierarchical mindedness and the concept of centralized control through the CVM's Santa Marta office, no base for park tourism would be established at the obvious point of entry for visiting Venezuelans.

The central policy-development team in Bogotá had no idea of the reality on the ground. There was no clear channel for the information to be passed along, not least because many of the senior planners in Santa Marta had themselves not been to see. Moreover, because the plans were for the future, it was easier, and seemed politically wiser, to assume that the road would be finished in time. After all it was always going to be finished 'next year'.

An extreme example perhaps but the principle is common enough, even in Europe. The unintended limitations imposed by the geography of administration override the opportunities presented by the geography in the landscape.

But had the road been built, the deforestation would have been much further into the park. The relatively isolated indian villages would long since have been taken over by incomers, effectively denying any semblance of the pristine to all but the highest nival and sub-nival zones. In short the grand plans to use the Venezuelan market could not have worked, would not have worked, and should not have been tried. For all the wrong reasons the apparently most promising, but actually most dangerous, market never materialized; a clear demonstration of the perspicacity and good understanding of the original legislators. *Legislators who understood that parks and reserves were inherently a construct of developed urban societies, and so, whilst wisely leaving as much as possible to be defined when necessary, took pains to confine their specific recommendations for parks to snow peaks - territory they expected to be unwanted for anything else.*

The CVM in Colombian society; the place of reserves and parks in society-revisited

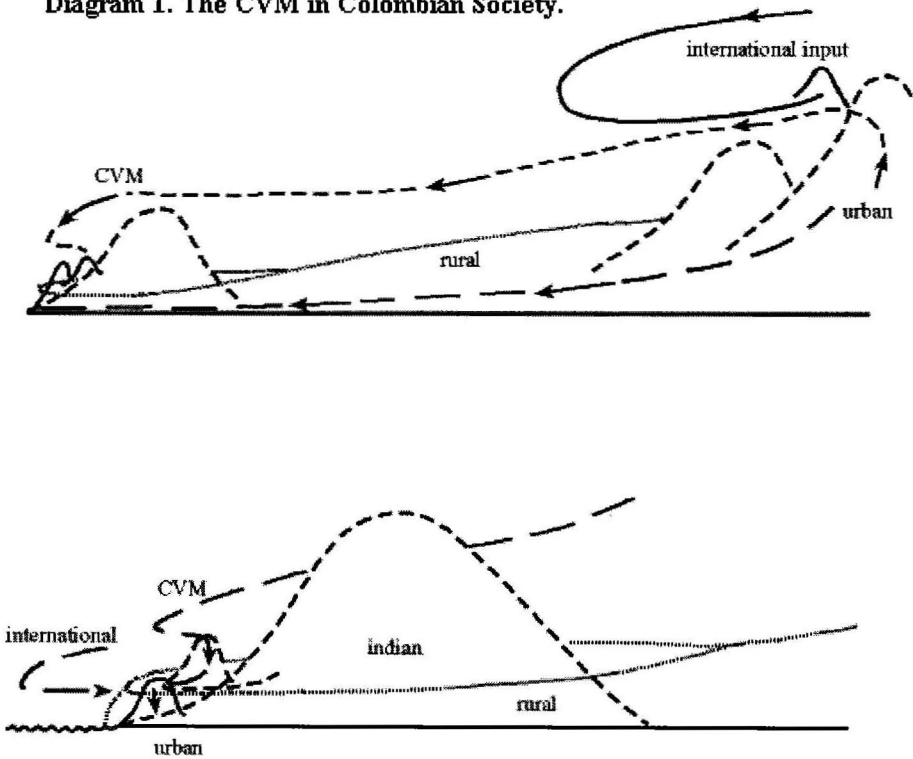
The CVM was left with a long-term future for its key reserve park, provided the pioneering farmers could be restrained or better still diverted, and a beach based, bus transported, coastal tourism heavily zoned into the area most affected already by agricultural activity. And the farmers? The plan was to develop in parallel, so that the increasing productivity of agriculture would match demand without significantly extending the area under cultivation. The problem was with the next generation of farmers. To stop them clearing more land elsewhere in the Sierra Nevada, there has to be respected, gainful employment and that means tourism, more tourism. More tourism means more demand for cropland and pasture and as land prices rise the incentive to sell out and clear another patch elsewhere grows greater, and who better to finance it than a family member with a good job in tourism? To hold a perfect balance would be impossible, but an imperfect one that would much reduce forest clearing could hold off the worst for a generation, provided there was no influx of 'outsiders' for tourist work.

To carry out this very carefully balanced process the CVM was utterly understaffed, and underfunded. More significantly its incompatible responsibilities had embroiled it in an impossible confrontation with the local rural population. Grossly weighted towards forest management specialists and sylviculturalists, the CVM staff in Santa Marta had no anthropological, sociological, or any other human orientated

professional staff – except lawyers⁴; a *misplaced application of professional skills that is not confined to forestry in developing countries.*

Figure 1. is an ascular diagrammatic summary of the CVM's position in Colombian society. The lower part of the diagram is an enlargement of the left hand end of the upper diagram, representing the circumstances around the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The developed, urbanized, interior of Colombia is represented by the peaks on the right. International input passes through a small peak representing the resident and transient foreigners attached loosely at the uppermost and most cosmopolitan level. The influence of the urban interior is shown as falling away very rapidly with any distance from the interior core area, forming only minor, localized, resurgences such as that shown representing the coastal port of Santa Marta. The CVM does not emerge from the normal spread of urban society but directly from the cosmopolitan upper echelons of society, passing way above the heads of normal rural

Diagram 1. The CVM in Colombian Society.

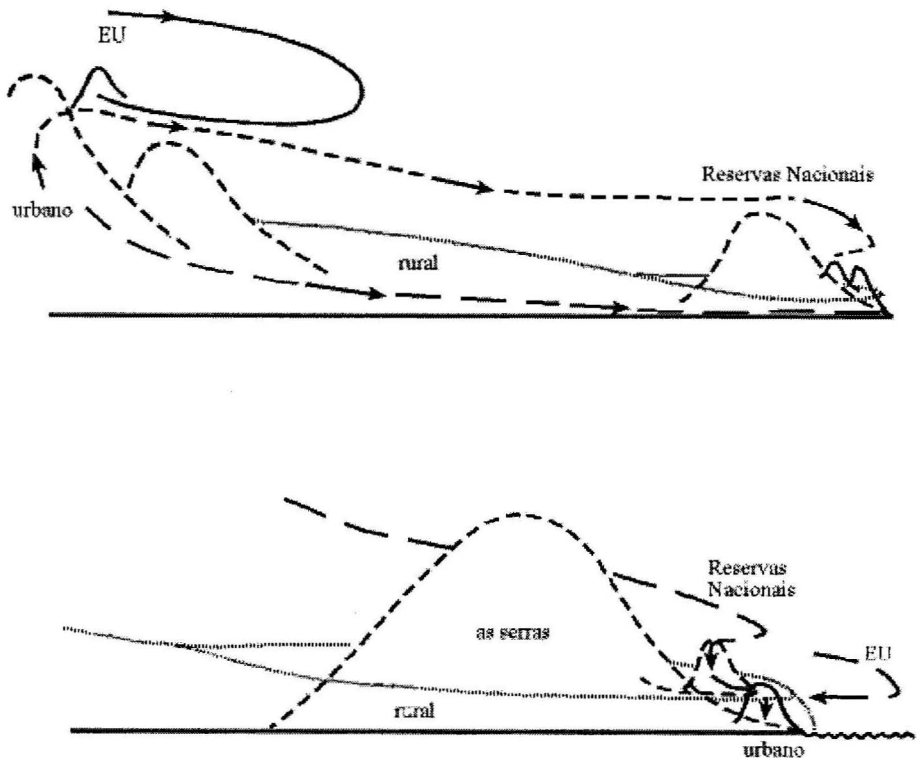


⁴ These, to their credit, gave thoroughly balanced advice on the question of farmers' rights, showing an awareness of history and, unlike some others, a readiness to accept inconvenient evidence from the CVM's own archives; aerial photographs showing agrarian settlement in key areas dating back to the 1940s.

development to anchor itself in the upper echelons of the local urban society, which itself receives a definite, but limited, direct input from the international sector. Outside the core areas, rural society predominates over urban, extending, in practice, fully around the base of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to accurately represent the isolation of the amerindian communities. It is not without reason that the CVM is placed with its base in contact with the indian and urban communities of the coast, but above, and barely in touch with, the day to day activities of rural society. The CVM's obligation to work through established policing structures is shown as a continuation of its line down through the coastal urban society through which its impact is translated into rural society – a very accurate representation of the actual physical processes on the ground.

Bearing in mind the references made in passing to European circumstances, and some of the wonderland aspects of 1960s Colombia, devotees of Lewis Carroll and those interested in the Portuguese situation may wish to consider the implications of Diagram 2.

Diagram 2. Portugal : As Reservas Nacionaisis



Epilogue

Despite all this, the saddest part of the tale is that after ten years the CVM was actually beginning to make a little progress. This was more because the supply of new forest-felling immigrants was drying up rather than anything more positive; yet one of the reasons for that fall off in immigration was precisely because it was becoming known that there were problems with the CVM and no hope of support from INCORA. At this point the aliens withdrew to regroup. Under the guise of re-energising the organization with the 'Integrated project for the Sierra Nevada' the working end of the CVM was deliberately given a ridiculously impossible time scale to work to and the inevitable failure provided the excuse to dissolve the CVM into INDERENA.

In human ecological terms there is a strong case for identifying the CVM as the pioneer species that leads the invasion. It does not survive but it prepares the ground. Today there is tourism and there are tours to a 'lost city'. The tourists stay in 'eco-habs', modernized native huts, two whole days as part of a tour or an extension of a cruise. The Caribbean has come closer, and the anachronistic frontier phase has almost faded even in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. As always, there are big schemes afoot, but the would be pristine environments of the northern Sierra Nevada are now history;

just like the native forests of Portugal where Europe now comes closer and agro-tourism modernizes the native huts. The animals are where the people aren't and millions of trees are just boring. The market is urban. Give them an open-air zoo, a boating lake, even an arboretum, and as many interpretation centres as you like. Only the very few can relate to the truly rural life or to the non-existent true wilderness: so don't expect it. There is no wilderness, no open pioneer frontier here, so let them pay to play. The parks do better that way.

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