

In all these examples there is plenty of evidence (Botane 2000; Jones 2000; Koch and De Beer 2000; Murphree 1997) that an emphasis on *community* ownership and control as the basis for natural resource management, and as the context from within which business opportunities need to be explored, originated from local residents themselves. It was not imposed by 'left-leaning intellectuals', or anyone else for that matter. This is not to say that the notion of 'community' is unproblematic, in CBNRM as in development more generally. Problems of group identity, internal differentiation, gender inequality, power dynamics, and effective rule-making and enforcement continue to be central issues, but difficult to resolve. Most CBNRM practitioners (and theorists) have long recognised this, and reflections on practical experience continue to inform analysis and the search for appropriate institutional arrangements.

This is not to say that examples of poor practice and failed projects in CBNRM cannot be found. Some may indeed display the faults Fakir claims to have seen. But which ones? And how common are these faults? Drawing general lessons from a narrow range of specific experiences is always hazardous, and requires careful analysis of the causal processes at work. Fakir's polemic is an unfortunate example of how NOT to do it.

Fakir calls for opportunities for 'pragmatic partnerships' with the private and public sector to be explored, as in the CPPP initiative in South Africa. Yet he also criticizes CBNRM in the region for 'failing to address the fundamental problems of the structure of rural economies', for being isolated interventions not linked to national policies such as land reform, and for not being 'part of any radical discourse or political movement'. He fails, however, to make clear any connection between pragmatic partnerships and emerging business opportunities, on the one hand, and the radical, structural changes he appears to be calling for (using a great deal of 'left-leaning' jargon), on the other.

Fakir's parochial bias is clearly evident in the invidious contrast he draws between South Africa and other Southern African countries. He claims that SA's land reform programme has provided an 'inspirational boost' for CBNRM, but in the 'less than democratic' countries in the rest of the region, policy rhetoric has served only to disguise an inability or unwillingness to address the real issue of rural poverty. Donors and NGOs assisting CBNRM projects have provided governments with an 'expedient cop-out'.

There is little justification for South Africans attempting to claim the high ground in relation to CBNRM. Post-independence policies addressing structural inequalities in the distribution of land and other assets have provided the context and some of the impetus for CBNRM programmes in other Southern African countries too (eg. Zimbabwe and Namibia).

The views expressed here are not that of the IUCN, but the opinion of the author(s)

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SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE – BUT WHAT IS IN THE PIE?

Replying to Saliem Fakir, Ben Cousins says that CBNRM in Southern Africa needs high quality debate not inaccurate and badly-argued polemics

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Fakir is right to argue that we should openly acknowledge the wide range of discourses and approaches present in the sector, and engage in more debate on fundamental questions. But his piece is not a useful contribution to these debates. Many of Fakir's arguments are of dubious worth, display internal inconsistencies, are not backed by solid evidence or reference to research, and embody the arrogant "we know best" attitude towards other countries in the region that South Africans are notorious for.

Tellingly, not one example is provided as a basis for Fakir's sweeping generalizations about CBNRM across the region. Which projects have seen important business opportunities neglected as a result of inappropriate interventions by 'anti-business lefties'? Which NGOs have promoted inappropriate notions of 'tradition' and 'community'? Which theories, as propounded by whom, have 'fixated on the primacy of tradition over organic adaptation'? In which community based projects have conservationists and 'lefties' become direct investors in commercial enterprises? Are there, in fact, any examples of these?

Even a cursory examination of the empirical evidence reveals that many of Fakir's generalisations are false. Thus wildlife-based CBNRM projects across the region are generally premised on the involvement (not exclusion) of private sector hunting or safari enterprises, and in some complex business partnerships with communities have been formed (eg. Masoka in Zimbabwe). Harvesting, processing and marketing of wild products, as proposed by Fakir, are being undertaken in many contexts (eg. Khwai in Botswana). Entrepreneurial leadership from within communities has been crucial to some successes (eg. Makuleke in South Africa), where support from NGOs and other outsiders has played an invaluable role. In Kunene in Namibia communities have developed innovations in rules and in governance that enhance the decision making role of women in natural resource management; here 'organic adaptation' was facilitated by outsiders.

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As in South Africa, failures on the part of governments to fully devolve authority over resources to local groupings (within secure forms of group land holding), and to facilitate a transition to democratic and accountable systems of local governance, have hamstrung these programmes. Land reform in South Africa, as elsewhere in the region, has yet to transcend the dualism inherited from the colonial economy, and recent shifts to give priority to the land needs of emergent commercial farmers will only reinforce the divide.

Despite the limitations of most post-colonial reforms and well-founded skepticism about the real commitment to democratisation on the part of their governments, some countries in the region have engaged in CBNRM over a much longer period than South Africa has, and have gained valuable experience. South Africans have much to learn from them. One-upmanship is both distasteful and a self-imposed barrier to learning.

Crucial issues, entirely neglected by Fakir, are land and resource tenure, and the related question of the definition and distribution of property rights within business partnerships. As pointed out recently by Stephen Turner and Shamim Meer in a careful analysis of lessons from the TRANSFORM experience, the prospects for community based (eco)-tourism and other forms of CBNRM in SA are integrally linked to successful tenure reform. Professional marketing and finding a creative role for investors (which they give due weight to), as well as the design of appropriate governance arrangements, will not be enough; clarity of underlying tenure rights is a fundamental requirement for sustainability.

But South Africa has yet to embark on meaningful tenure reform in the former bantustans where nearly a third of its population still lives. This will severely constrain the CPPP initiative in which Fakir's own organization, IUCN, is participating. This is clear from analysis of the problems faced by the CPPP's sister programme, the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) (Mahlati 2000; Kepe et al 2001). Rather than railing against imaginary 'anti-business lefties', Fakir would have done well to focus his attention on more pressing problems: securing of rights, co-management arrangements which work, capacity development, gender equity, realistic understandings of rural livelihoods, and the real problem of marketing CBNRM projects and products in a highly competitive market economy (Turner and Meer 2001).

Fakir urges CBNRM practitioners to focus on the exploitation of commercial opportunities, to 'sing a song of sixpence'. But all that his pie reveals, once opened, is a mish-mash of half-baked ideas. The sector deserves a better diet than this.

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