GHOSTS IN THE TRANSMISSION: THE TRANSLATION OF GLOBAL CONSERVATION CONCEPTS TO LOCAL SCENARIOS: A CASE STUDY OF ECODEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL INDIA

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Abstract
Ghosts in the Transmission. The Translation of Global Conservation Concepts to Local Scenarios: a Case Study of Ecodevelopment in Central India.

This paper addresses the processes by which ecodevelopment concepts are transmitted from planning to implementation and the 'ghosts' or factors that intervene in this process, focussing on the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP) in Pench Tiger Reserve, Central India. The paper draws on interviews with village 'beneficiaries' and agents of the implementing agency – the State Forest Department (SFD) – and on documents from and discussions with planning agencies, especially the World Bank.

Ecodevelopment is a type of Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) that focuses on development for conservation via agreements between the Forest Department and villagers that assert the link between development benefits and reciprocal conservation actions, which is often weak in other ICDPs. The IEP stresses participatory microplanning as an important means to the Project goals of reducing the pressure of people on parks and of parks on local people. However, in translation from the World Bank documents to the ground realities in Pench, participatory methodologies, microplanning strategies and concepts of development for conservation have all shifted in important ways. Such shifts form the focus of this study.

The paper explores the diversity within the SFD as an important determinant of project success and as a factor affecting transmission of project messages, concluding that implementing institutions must be recognised as peopled by individual agents with varied agendas and attitudes who move within ordered, hierarchical work cultures. Their ability to implement projects is shaped by their understanding of the central concepts, their freedom to act within the organisation and their personal motivation to change their working behaviours as required by the project. These factors influence their interactions with beneficiaries to implement project activities. Villagers relate to the SFDs as entities that have power over their lives and simultaneously have negotiated relations with individual agents within the SFDs. Such relations, on both levels, have historically deep roots and are difficult and slow to change yet impact greatly on the implementation of the project. Rather than ignoring such factors and relationships, projects would benefit from analysis of these 'ghosts' which shape the understudied processes underlying implementation.

In this case study, the antecedent conditions for the Project were not conducive because of a lack of experience of such projects and a lack of trust between the parties. The groundwork needed for the required participatory mechanisms and relationship changes was still in its infancy as the Project drew to a close. Transmission of the Project ideas, ethos and methodology was severely limited, partially due to a lack of effective mechanisms for concept transmission and partially due to elements of both villagers and SFDs still being shackled by hegemonic power relations and resistance to change.

In practice, rather than 'ghosts' interfering in the project, it is more useful to perceive the project as a blip in the ongoing negotiation of relations between foresters and people, which may or may not act as a catalyst for more sustained changes and the development of locally appropriate solutions.

1 Introduction

1.1 Outline of the Paper

This paper addresses the processes by which project plans and key concepts are converted into actions and local understandings. It explores the transmission of such concepts from planning to implementation and the 'ghosts' or factors that intervene in this process.

The focal project is the World Bank's India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP) as implemented in one of the seven protected areas within its scope: Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh (MP), central India. The paper is based on analysis of the main Project documents from the World Bank, interviews with Forest Department agents involved in the implementation and surveys and extensive interviews with villagers targeted by the Project. Key Project concepts from the World Bank documents are contrasted with understandings operationalised by Forest Department agents and villagers, exploring the mechanisms of transfer and the barriers to transmission.

The analysis departs from standard project *impact* assessments by providing empirical insights into *processes* of implementation whereby global concepts become local actions. Too often the voices of beneficiaries are privileged over those of implementing agents and the process of implementation remains a 'black box'. In this research, Forest Department agents *and* local villagers were interviewed to expose both sides of the process and to explore the changes in forester-villager relations as means to Project implementation and as outcomes from Project interventions.

Previous studies (Barrett and Arcese 1995; Nepal and Weber 1995; Peters 1998; Wells 1992; 1996) have questioned the ability of single projects to meet conservation *and* development agendas. Here, project design is distinguished from implementation to explore whether ecodevelopment is a viable solution for India's protected areas *as conceptualised* and *as operationalised*.

Following this introduction, the origin of the ecodevelopment concept and its place within the Indian PA management context are addressed. Next the IEP is introduced with some of the major concepts inherent in its formulation of ecodevelopment. The subsequent section addresses MP Forest Department (MPFD) agents' responses to the IEP in Pench Tiger Reserve. Then there is an exploration into the extent to which local villagers have understood Project concepts and the ways in which the concepts have been translated into village-level interventions in the Pench area. The mechanisms by which transmission of Project concepts occurred are addressed in a final section of this paper before the discussions and conclusions.

1.2 Outline of the Research

In the 1980s and 1990s India greatly expanded its network of protected areas to 445, of which 85 are National Parks (Singh, no date). Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Madhya Pradesh is a minor protected area, lacking the tourist interest or the biodiversity value of India's famous parks such as Kanha or Ranthambore, but provides a typical example of the tensions between conservation and rural development in Central India. PTR straddles two districts and has a large reservoir in its midst. Its 758km^2 area comprises mostly teak forest and mixed and moist tropical deciduous forest (Jain 2001). There are no villages inside the core area (proposed National Park), but the buffer area includes 99 villages, in which the IEP is undertaking village ecodevelopment.

This paper addresses a subset of data from 11 months of PhD fieldwork in PTR and its neighbour, Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharastra[1]. The two parks and their respective ecodevelopment programmes were compared in terms of state responses to ecodevelopment, village level impacts and the processes of implementation and how they have affected villager-forester relations. This paper focuses exclusively on the MP data and addresses only the issue of translation of Project ideas from planning to implementation. 30 MPFD agents were interviewed and two villages were selected as focal study sites in which every household was surveyed. Longer, in-depth interviews were conducted with two thirds of the households. This data was supplemented by interviews with key informants from neighbouring villages, government departments and local businesses and participant observation data gathered over the research period.

2   Ecodevelopment

2.1   Ecodevelopment: the Concept

Ecodevelopment has become an overarching term to encompass interventions which use rural development programmes to wean natural-resource dependent people away from resource depleting behaviour (Kothari 1998 page 2). Ecodevelopment projects are thus Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) with a particular emphasis on development *for* conservation around protected areas (PAs). The concept has evolved from recognition of the importance of including local resource dependent people in protecting globally valued natural resources.

> *"The difficult challenge faced by the Government of India is to try to reconcile the legitimate needs of local communities with the conservation objectives of protected areas and to link conservation with development and poverty alleviation for the mutual benefit of both wildlife and people. The ecodevelopment approach has evolved as a response to conservation of protected areas in a context where enforcement alone cannot succeed but appropriate development is perceived as a tool to further conservation goals." (MacKinnon et al 1999 page 309)*

Baviskar (1999) and Redclift (1995) conclude that - theoretically at least - ecodevelopment is a participatory methodology of sustainable development, which addresses regional basic needs and environmental concerns in tandem. In practice, ecodevelopment projects typically include schemes to reduce local communities' basic resource needs, such as fuel, water and fodder and provide alternative livelihood schemes that are linked to conservation actions. (Baviskar 1999; Karlsson 1999; Kothari 1998; Pardeshi 1996; World Bank 1996).

Environmental critics, such as the Environmental Investigation Agency (no date), argue that resources for conservation are being 'wasted' on local people and critics from the development camp argue that such projects do not give priority to the needs of local people, and value wildlife over people (Kothari 1998).

2.2   The Indian Forestry Context

Simultaneous with the development of ICDPs, India has been developing participatory approaches to forestry with an increasing recognition of people's roles and rights in forests. With increasing problems of population pressure, poverty and personnel, the State Forest

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[1] The two parks are geographically contiguous, yet are managed totally separately as they fall under the jurisdiction of two States and thus two State Forest Departments.

Departments (SFDs) found it increasingly difficult to protect forests from people (Poffenberger and McGean 1996). Self-initiated occurrences of community forest protection were championed and several states began to initiate measures to replicate these successes and involve more people in forest protection. The 1988 National Forest Policy changed the tone and focus of forestry in India from a protectionist focus that maximises State benefits over local benefits to a more people-centred stance. In 1990 the Central Government wrote to SFDs to encourage Joint Forest Management (JFM): partnerships between community groups and SFDs to manage degraded forest areas.

> *"One of the essentials of forest management* [is] *that the forest communities should be motivated to identify themselves with the development and protection of forests from which they derive benefits." (Prasad, 1990 quoted in Natraj 1997a page 73)* [2]

However, areas designated under the Wildlife Act (1972) as Sanctuaries, National Parks (NP) or Tiger Reserves can not be targeted for JFM-type interventions because the Wildlife Act explicitly and unequivocally forbids any extraction from or commercial activities within these areas (Khare et al 2000). Any rights that any persons may have had within an area designated as NP are to be 'acquired' by the State prior to final notification (Natraj 1997b). Ecodevelopment aims to fill this gap by providing ways in which Forest Department agents can mitigate conflicts without stepping over the barriers of the Wildlife Act.

2.3   Forest Department as Implementing Agency
The main implementing bodies for the IEP are the State Forest Departments (SFDs). They receive support from local and national NGOs, to bolster SFD people skills and to increase credibility. The use of the SFDs was strongly criticised by several Indian NGOs because of the history of conflicting relations between foresters and villagers (CSE 1996; CSE no date). However, there is no other organisation in India with the reach, manpower and infrastructure to attempt to implement such a project. In practice, the implementation has been dominated by the SFDs and NGO input has been less than originally planned. One reason for this is that NGOs felt that their standing with the communities would be decreased if they co-operated too much with the SFD [Singh, 1999], in Pench the absence of locally active NGOs was the major factor.

The SFDs are comprised of several wings, of which the Wildlife Wing is responsible for protected areas. The Territorial Division is responsible for protection of non-PA forests and is usually active in the buffer zones around the PAs. Staff members are regularly transferred between and within the different wings. For the IEP, Wildlife Wing staff working in the PAs were used and supplemented with additional staff as necessary.

The basic hierarchy of the Park-level staff is Conservator of Forests (Park Director), Deputy Conservator (Deputy Park Director) and Assistant Conservator. Beneath these ranks are the Range Forest Officers and their ground level staff of Foresters (sometimes divided into Range Assistant / Deputy Ranger and Forester) and Forest Guards[3]. The last two ranks are those responsible for the patrol of the forests. Ground level staff, who do beat work and tend to live and work in the forest are practically and institutionally segregated from managerial

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[2] This quote is from the letter from the Secretary for the Government of India, Mahesh Prasad, to the Forest Secretaries of all States and Union Territories dated 1st June 1990.
[3] I use the term ground level staff to refer to all agents below the rank of Range Forest Officer. In addition the term 'forester' is used to refer to any agent of the Forest Department, as opposed to 'Forester', which refers to a specific rank within the Forest Department.

staff. Additionally, caste, class, education and age stratify the SFDs into complex heterogeneous groups.

3   Introduction to the India Ecodevelopment Project

The IEP is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) project with the World Bank as the main implementing agency. Thus the Project focus is on a GEF goal of biodiversity conservation, which distinguishes the Project from typical World Bank interventions in India. It is an ambitious US$67 million, five-year project working in seven PAs across India. It started in 1992 with workshops led by the Government of India's Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) funded by project preparation funds from the GEF channelled via the UNDP. It was launched in 1996 with a GEF grant of US$20 million and an IDA 'soft loan' of US$28 million. The remaining 28% of the funds came from participating state governments (13%), the Government of India (8%) and the actual beneficiaries (7% or US$ 4.6million). It was designed as a pilot for future expansion to 100-200 protected areas across India (MacKinnon et al, 1999).

There are three main components of the IEP: Village Ecodevelopment (VED - 54% of funds), Improved PA Management (23%) and Environmental Education and Awareness (8%). This paper focuses on VED in Pench Tiger Reserve. The Project's conception of ecodevelopment evolved during four-years of preparatory workshops, meetings and documents led by the MOEF. By the time the main project document (the Staff Appraisal Report – SAR) was written the working concept of ecodevelopment was defined thus:

> *"The* [IEP] *strategy aims to conserve biodiversity by addressing both the impact of local people on the protected areas and the impact of the protected areas on local people. Ecodevelopment thus has two main thrusts: improvement of PA management and involvement of local people. In doing so it seeks to improve the capacity of PA management to conserve biodiversity effectively, to involve local people in PA planning and protection, to develop incentives for conservation and to support sustainable alternatives to harmful use of resources. It supports collaboration between the state forest departments and local communities in and around ecologically valuable areas. Ecodevelopment addresses the welfare and behavior of local people and integrates these concerns into management of protected areas." (SAR page 3)*

3.1   GEF, the World Bank and the Government of India: Whose Project?

Whilst the IEP was designed by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) under contract to the MOEF, it has a distinct World Bank ethos and thus its 'Indianness' has been much debated (CSE, no date; CSE, 1996; Singh, 1999). In a footnote at the close of the SAR, the authors note that:

> *"This report is based on participatory preparation work performed by local people, state and national government officials, NGOs staff, and researchers. It reflects a project that is Indian in conceptualization and design ..." (SAR page 38)*

> *"MOEF prepared the project with the assistance of professional institutes, NGOs and state forestry departments and financing from the UNDP/GEF Preinvestment Facility. Bank staff and foreign consultants provided limited periodic comments and advice." (SAR page 6)*

In a recent paper, Shekhar Singh, who designed the Project for the IIPA directly addresses these issues, explaining that the concept of ecodevelopment arose out of a growing search in India for more people-centred approaches to conservation. He documents a process of

negotiation with the World Bank in which compromises had to be reached between traditional 'blueprint' approaches in the Bank and flexible, participatory approaches advocated by the IIPA. In fact, Singh heralds the result as a triumph of the Indian government over Bank inflexibility.

> *"By persuading the Bank to depart from its earlier practice of pre-planning for every paisa or cent, the Government of India had succeeded in introducing the sort of flexibility into Bank projects that had not been seen before." [Singh, 1999 page29]*

However, Singh and the World Bank faced criticism that the Project has built too much on Western notions of conservation, which are inapplicable in India where many people are highly resource dependent and have, historically, managed resources on a community level (Agarwal 1998).

> *"It* [the World Bank-GEF combination] *does not realise that biodiversity conservation in India does not mean importing Western ideas of conservation and project management, or muscling in with sacks of money. Conservation here rather means creating policies and processes that ensure that resources are managed by local people." (CSE, no date)*

Several NGOs, notably Pune-based Kalpavriksh, have called for Joint Protected Area Management (JPAM) as a 'home grown' alternative to ecodevelopment. JPAM advocates claim that ecodevelopment does not challenge the exclusion of local people from PAs, nor enable their true participation in PA management. By working within the confines of the Wildlife Act, ecodevelopment includes no potential for the joint management and sharing of benefits seen in JFM (CSE 1996; Kothari 1998; Saberwal et al, 2001). There are key examples of villages (re)establishing community control over resources and co-ordinating with government agencies to enable true community-led conservation, (Ghate 2000; Poffenberger 1996). These are used to demonstrate that people are interested in conservation and do not need external budgets to propel them to actively and sustainably manage local resources. Instead they need a *stake* in the resource, which, with PAs, is currently impossible with the Wildlife Act. JPAM calls for a change in the law and in the attitude of the State towards true decentralisation of conservation management to local people, whilst ecodevelopment works within the current legal and policy frameworks.

3.2 Underlying Ethos and Assumptions
The World Bank concept of ecodevelopment, as outlined above, contains important assumptions and discourses that reflect the ethos within which the Project is situated. Through an examination of these issues it is possible to expose gaps between planning and implementation.

From an analysis of the SAR and other project documents, five key points were drawn out: development for conservation, reciprocal agreements, forester-villager relations, participation and generating local support for conservation. These issues are explored from World Bank, Forest Department and villager perspectives in turn in the next three sections of the paper. In addition, the flexibility of the IEP is addressed: as designed, as implemented and as perceived by villagers.

3.2.1 Development for Conservation
It is clearly spelt out in the SAR that development initiatives within the ecodevelopment Project are simply means to the aim of conservation.

> *"But both PA authorities and village communities must agree that any proposed investment or action will result in measurable improvement to sustainable biodiversity conservation. Other issues in community development are only relevant if they contribute to project objectives; they can be eliminated from PRA and microplanning exercises unless identified by the community as their highest priority for helping to conserve the PA." (SAR Annex 8:120)*

Essentially, development activities are conceptualised in the SAR as 'incentives' for behavioural changes. Development activities must be linked to conservation aims in order to be *eco*development. In this way the IEP aims to improve on earlier ICDPs by making a more explicit link between conservation and development in the minds of the beneficiaries:

> *"Local people must perceive development benefits as incentives for conservation." (Annex 3:59).*

3.2.2   Reciprocal Agreements

In order to make this connection explicit the Project uses reciprocal agreements between foresters and villagers which specify what development components correlate to which conservation measures. During the planning process villagers are to debate and agree upon development measures that they would find suitable to enable and encourage members to follow certain conservation actions[4].

> *"Reciprocity would reside in the mutual quid pro quo of (a) specific measurable actions by local people to improve conservation and (b) investments that foster alternative resources use and livelihoods." (SAR page 12)*

3.2.3   Addressing Forester-Villager Relations

The Project as designed necessitates great changes in the relations between foresters and villagers. Such change is not only a means to this form of project implementation but is also an explicit aim.

> *"The quality of interaction between the PA authorities who regulate resource use and the various stakeholders with interests in the resource is an important element in the people-park relationship and a **critical variable in project success**. As agents of continuing restrictions on resource use, the PA authorities have generally had antagonistic relationships with most stakeholding groups. **Changing the quality of this interaction is an important project objective**." (Annex 18: 264 emphasis added)*

3.2.4   Participation

Both the project design and the plans for implementation are theoretically participatory. The design phase was led by the IIPA with extensive participation of NGOs, consultation workshops and PRA sessions (SAR Annex 4). The importance of local-level participation is outlined in Annex 18 of the SAR, although it is somewhat scaled down in the main body of the SAR.

> *"The extent to which these* [project] *impacts will be positive will depend on the extent to which the participatory microplanning and implementing process is really participatory. ... The tools to allow local communities to influence the direction of PA management significantly are built into this project to a far greater degree than normally found in the forestry or environment sector. Ideally, the ultimate outcome will be largely up to local communities." (Annex 18:278)*

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[4] Within specific World Bank guidelines, which are explored in section 3.2.6

VED planning was designed as a microplanning process on a village-by-village level. However, the design for community involvement in PA Management was hardly truly participatory, as it was scaled down to 'collaboration' that effectively negates any community input into decision-making.

> "Examples of actions to improve conservation include curtailing grazing, curtailing fuelwood collection within the PA, and increasing participation in anti-poaching efforts." (SAR page 12)

The planning and implementation of the VED activities require the formation of village or hamlet ecodevelopment committees (EDCs) of which all beneficiaries are members. The members are to elect the managing committee and the 'president' from among themselves. The 'secretary' is a local forester (usually of rank Forest Guard or Forester), appointed by the Forest Department. The SAR notes that provisions must be made to enable the participation of women and 'the excluded' in these institutions.

VED activities would then be chosen by EDCs and added to reciprocal agreements during the microplanning process. These microplans then form the basis of implementation and can be negotiated, developed and changed in annual discussions attended by all members.

Besides attendance at EDC meetings, villagers are expected to participate in the Project by contributing 25% of the costs (in cash or kind) of the VED components. This percentage is uniform for all beneficiaries and for all types of benefits. It is justified thus:

> "The local people will need to believe that they will directly benefit from and own the investment to be willing to commit to such [conservation] actions. ... Without cost sharing, such investments are highly likely to fail. If the village ecodevelopment investments fail, local people will not continue to commit to the actions that improve conservation." (SAR Annex 8)

3.2.5 Generating Local Support for Conservation

As noted above, mechanisms for participation in VED are more developed and more extensive than mechanisms for public involvement in PA Management. Yet, key Project objectives include providing a "firmer base of public support for PAs" and increasing "local people's support for and role in PA conservation".

The SAR does not spell out how these objectives are to be achieved, but there are four approaches mentioned in various parts of the SAR: benefit sharing, enabling sustainable resource use, conflict resolution and increased consultation with local people. As discussed above, benefit sharing in PAs in India is rather limited by law. Enabling sustainable resource use is the job of the VED components. Conflict resolution between foresters and villagers is to be addressed via mitigating the sources of conflict (reducing villagers' illegal use of resources) and by changing relations between them. Finally, increased consultation with local people is alluded to, but without reference to any enabling mechanisms.

3.2.6 Flexible Design for Locally Applicable Implementation

The Project designers made specific focus on flexibility to enable locally appropriate implementation (SAR; Singh 1999). In fact, the Project was seen to be almost revolutionary for Bank projects because of the use of indicative planning rather than a blueprint approach. Indicative planning involves the selection of a subset of sites for PRA exercises to establish typical budget requirements and investment types. In this way, the World Bank can allocate a total amount of resources to VED without having to account for every item of spending.

> *"Cost estimates are indicative only. They indicate the overall size of the project and amount of required financing but do not provide an approved blueprint for specific expenditures." (SAR)*

Thus actual activities, priorities and village-scale budgets are to be decided through the microplanning processes, with PA staff and village beneficiaries. However, the activities decided upon must meet specific Bank guidelines, which address eligibility, feasibility, acceptability, how the activity was selected and how the beneficiaries will contribute. Eligibility criteria include that the activity must conserve biodiversity, provide equitable shares of the benefits to all, be socially, culturally, technically and financially feasible and be "selected and owned by EDCs" (Annex 8).

Despite this flexibility, certain factors are set in stone. The per-village budget for VED spending is set at $285 per household to be released in three units over three years, with 25% of the costs of interventions to be contributed by beneficiaries.

4 Forest Department: Uptake of Ecodevelopment by Forest Agents.

In Pench, implementation has been by a mixture of in-situ Wildlife Wing staff and specially assigned ecodevelopment staff. At the Park management level, the staff have dual responsibility for the Park and the Project. At the RFO level, the workload is divided into Park RFOs with responsibility for a particular geographic region of the Park and 'Eco RFOs' with responsibility for one 'Eco-unit' – a number of EDCs. The EDC secretaries are a diverse group. Some, who were already placed in the Park, have the double-duty of their regular patrols for PA protection and ecodevelopment works, whilst others have only ecodevelopment-specific duties. Some are local men and a few are of the same tribal community as the majority of the villagers. Others have been drafted in from elsewhere in the State.

Ideas, issues and opinions in the following sections come from all interviewed foresters, from Wildlife, Ecodevelopment and Territorial divisions. The diversity of opinions reflects the heterogeneity of the group in terms of rank, responsibility, experience and education.

4.1 Development for Conservation

In total, over 50% of the Forest Department staff members interviewed thought that the main aim of the IEP was to reduce the pressure of people on the forest. This was the aim that most of the agents were working towards and this was the limit of understanding of the aims of the Project for many. Among the forest staff working on the Project, nearly 10% had "no idea" what the Project aim was.

Among the interviewees were 16 EDC secretaries. They were more divided between the perceived aims of reducing pressure on the park and increasing development, and most gave both these responses as the two main aims. The EDC secretaries placed greater importance on village development than their senior officers with planning roles.

> *"The primary aim is to bring forward this area because it is a very backward area. The secondary aim is to decrease dependence on the forest – the dependence can't be extinguished but it can be reduced. I am concentrating on the primary aim – to bring*

them forward – the dependence issue is not so important." (Respondent WFG7 – EDC secretary)[5]

Over a third of the respondents noted that the 'fit' between development actions and conservation aims was limited by the scope of the Project and the requirement for villagers to pay 25%. The most common example was irrigation.

> *"If there was better irrigation there would be better agricultural production and they wouldn't do any illegal work like cutting and selling trees. If they could produce more paddy then they would have more wastes for fodder so there would be less grazing pressure on the forest." (ERF2)*

But the scope for irrigation projects was greatly curtailed because wells and pumps are too expensive for people to afford 25% of the costs. Other ground level agents felt that viable alternatives were not being provided to enable people to make behavioural changes for conservation.

> *"The thing is that we should address their needs and problems first and only then tell them not to go to the forest. They need water, then they need milk animals, fencing, fertiliser and seeds. All this should be provided first and* then *we can tell them not to go to the forest." (WFG6)*

Moreover, some EDC secretaries noted that the projects were going *against* conservation suggesting that they would have preferred to see stronger links between conservation and development. Their understanding of the linkage is thus apparent, but the implementation of the Project is failing to operationalise this linkage.

> *"The villagers are not asked what kind of project they want. The people here don't have milking cows. Giving them milking cows is not the solution to the grazing problem." (WRA3)*

4.2   Reciprocal Agreements

The RFOs and management staff understood the concept of reciprocal agreements clearly.

> *"These agreements were written into the microplans. In return for the benefits of ecodevelopment, the villagers had to keep to these agreements and protect the jungle." (ERF1)*

However, the EDC secretaries were less clear, or had a more informal understanding of the 'give and take'.

> *"We have brought benefits to the villages and have made committees so there is now better co-operation of the villagers to the FD, especially in times of fire. There is less illicit felling and shooting. It is give and take – they think that they should help us because we have helped them." (WRA4)*

Although the on-paper (SAR) purpose of reciprocal agreements is to make villagers consider development activities as *incentives* to conservation, several EDC secretaries took a somewhat different take on this issue. Over a quarter of the secretaries (notably, the locals, adivasi and those trained in Social Forestry) were interested in developing the villages *for the sake of the villagers* rather than as a means to conservation.

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[5] To protect their anonymity, Forest Department agents have been given codes. The first letter refers to which wing of the Forest Department they are from. W = Wildlife wing, T = territorial wing and E = staff specially posted for ecodevelopment. The last two letters are their rank FG = Forest Guard, RA = Range Assistant, RF = RFO, SR = Senior Rank (Assistant Conservator, Deputy Conservator or Conservator of Forests).

"They have faith that I will do very good work for them, and will bring development to the village. They have faith in me and so I have a big responsibility for their welfare. This is very good. I really want to bring development to their village." (WFG5)

Around 15% of the ground-level interviewees (notably not EDC secretaries) still perceived the villagers as the 'enemy of the forest' and did not think development for conservation was the answer, preferring more direct conservation measures.

"But EDC members never look after the forest. In fact they destroy the forest. They are only interested in spending the money not in the best use – the best use would be jungle protection" (TFG1)

4.3   Relations with Villagers

Managerial staff members reported difficulties in changing the attitudes of their staff towards villagers within the available time. They noted that getting foresters who are used to policing roles to work with villagers had proved difficult.

Forest agents attributed problems in working with villagers to two factors: the difficulty of gaining the villagers' trust and the inability of older guards to change their attitudes.

"The eco process has changed the ways that the FD people think about their relations with villagers. Before, the sight of a man in FD uniform would put psychological pressure on the villager. He would be afraid. Now there is a friendly approach and the FD people's minds have changed. We have to change with government policy, just like rubber. The older foresters can't change – their minds are not flexible. It is my generation that can change." (WRF1)

Whilst there was a general distrust among villagers of the Forest Department as an entity, relations between villagers and individual ground level foresters are actively negotiated. In forests around poor villages, where the only fuel is wood, the watchmen and guards are in a difficult position between enabling their family and neighbours to get their necessities without losing their job. Tenuous balances are built up over time.

"The forest guard is the tongue between the teeth [between a rock and a hard place]. He has to restrict the tribals from many things and yet he also has to live with them. If he doesn't do his duty then he is in trouble with his seniors. If he stops the villagers completely then the villagers will be against him. But he has to live there and, importantly, his family has to live there." (WSR1)

"I am relaxed about [villagers'] *small needs that don't affect the forest. I am relaxed about timber for agricultural tools and house repairs. This helps the people and doesn't hurt the forest. I have a good relationship with them because I have relaxed the rules for them." (WFG8)*

Such balances are not often openly acknowledged and are not mentioned in the SAR, but are affected by the Project through staffing changes, capacity increases and the increased attention focused on the staff.

Not all guards or watchmen have peaceful relations with villagers. Pench has serious issues of fishing and poaching which lead to violent clashes between the Forest Department and the offenders. As most offenders are local, many are beneficiaries of the ecodevelopment Project. Guards with patrolling and EDC responsibilities are thus often in a position where they spend their days chasing the very people that they sit with for EDC meetings in the evenings.

> *"The thieves are now in charge of the EDC. I have to work in the core of the NP – catching poachers and fishermen – and in the buffer area as a friend to the villagers – it is a very difficult balance." (WRA3)*

4.4 Participation

The concept of getting villagers to participate in project processes was new and unclear to most respondents. To most of the Forest Department agents, 'participation' means getting villagers to attend meetings and then sitting on the floor with them and talking. EDC secretaries complained about the difficulty in getting people to come to the meetings and several noted that once villagers were told about the 25% contribution they stopped attending meetings. Additionally, some managerial staff expressed frustration that implementation was hampered because villagers were slow to come forward and express their opinions.

> *"All the funds have not been disposed because the people must decide what they want. It is not for us to decide how to spend the money, but they have been slow to come forward. They are not forthcoming so there have been delays so all the money is not yet spent." (WSR1)*

Motivations for working with villagers were generally low among the ecodevelopment and non-local staff. Local agents, without ecodevelopment training, who balanced villagers' needs against their professional responsibilities, perceived a participatory approach to be necessary.

> *"Some places have changed, but mostly there has been no change with eco. It is not effective. The big people are not interested in the problems of the people such as milk animals and growing crops. They just talk and then they go back to the office. They don't listen. These problems of the villagers should be given importance, their standard of living must be raised and their dependence on the forest must decrease." (WFG6).*

It is worth noting that the translation of concepts such as participation and PRA into Hindi was somewhat problematic. Managerial staff were interviewed in English (by their own choice) and would use the World Bank discourse. Ground level staff that had been trained in PRA clearly found the translation of the concept into Hindi difficult[6].

4.5 Generating Local Support for Conservation

There was no mention in the Forest Department interviews of getting local opinions about PA management or of any mechanisms for local involvement in conservation. The respondents were divided on whether they thought the Project instilled an interest in protection of the forests in the villagers.

> *"I have to say that people are now protecting the forest more, or rather showing more interest in protecting the forest. But then, before the project there was absolutely no interest – absolutely zero interest – in protecting the forest among local people. The interest in protection comes with awareness from the project." (WFG3)*

> *"But EDC members never look after the forest. In fact they destroy the forest. They are only interested in spending the money not in the best use – the best use would be jungle protection." (TFG1)*

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[6] For example, several interviewees told me that they had PRA training. When I asked what they understood by PRA they had problems explaining and neither knew the English for participatory rural appraisal, nor had any Hindi equivalent to hand. The concepts were clearly muddled and confounded either in the translations that they had received, or in their understandings of them. Either way it suggests that the training was insufficient to convey these concepts in meaningful, usable ways.

One forest village was reported by several people as an excellent example of an EDC working as a forest protection committee, with committed villagers reporting incidents to the Forest Department.

> *"We could not protect the forests without the villagers. There are some 'hero' villages which help marvellously with forest protection." (WRA3)*

Other foresters, inspired by JFM, focused on fostering conservation interest via benefits *from the forest* rather than benefits from ecodevelopment. This approach resonated with several ground level staff who felt that the villagers *wanted* to protect the forest, but needed encouragement and direct benefits from and a stake in the forest.

> *"I said 'The forest is your property and so you should look after it.' Their minds have changed and now they think that the jungle is theirs. They are protecting it and I think that in future they will receive all the benefits – even timber." (WFG5)*

> *"As education and awareness increase so people automatically think of protection. It is not good to ban them from the forest – then they would have no interest in protection. ... The increase in protection is due to locals learning and awareness, not from eco." (WFG2)*

Two schemes were implemented to enable local participation in conservation: employment as tourist guides and as watchmen. The foresters had nothing to do with the guiding scheme and none passed comment on that. The watchman scheme employed one man per village for about two months on rotation to help guard the forest. Although some ground level informants admitted needing the manpower, most were unhappy with this scheme.

> *"A watchman from* [the village] *EDC comes with me. This is a bad thing because the watchman co-operates with the woodcutters and not the Forest Department. Each watchman only stays 2-3 months and then it is a new person." (WFG6)*

4.6 Flexible Design for Locally Applicable Implementation

It is important to note that Forest Department agents generally conceptualised this as a 'foreign' or 'World Bank' project, or as an import from Delhi.

> *"Some of the works are ill-planned. These projects are designed in Delhi and then we are told to implement them. The villagers are not asked what kind of project they want." (WRA3)*

Certainly many secretaries felt that if they did not spend the money quickly enough, the World Bank would take back the remaining funds. Such spending timeframes are common in governmental programmes and differential 'rules' with the World Bank money had not been communicated. Even at the senior level the Project was conceptualised as belonging to, and run by, the World Bank.

The budgets, timeframe and 25% contributions from the villagers were the major problems foresters reported with the 'World Bank project'. Several had mentioned these opinions to the World Bank teams when they visited, but reported a lack of response. Others did not see any reason to voice their opinions:

> *"These are the World Bank rules and we can't say anything." (WRA4)*

5 Village Ecodevelopment: Villager Responses

5.1 Development for Conservation

Nearly 50% of villagers surveyed thought that the Project had come 'for the villagers', like a rural development project. Only 5% understood the aim of the IEP to be development *for* conservation. 6% thought that the Project had come to benefit the Park (and not the people).

Most reported and observed VED activities that had been implemented did not have explicit conservation linkages, so it is understandable that people did not see the difference between 'eco' and previous rural development schemes. Examples include poultry farming, loans for cattle, soil and water conservation measures and pressure cookers. Uptake of more directly conservation linked interventions such as biogas and gas cylinders had been low and those that wanted them had yet to receive the plants by late 2001.

5.2 Reciprocal Agreements

In the two focal study villages, understandings of the reciprocal agreements were very low. Only 5% of the survey knew that there was a concept of 'give and take' and nobody reported signing a formal agreement with the Forest Department or of any such agreement existing. Nearly 45% of the respondents made no link at all between development and conservation (over 30% reported insufficient understanding of the Project to comment). However, almost 20% of the villagers thought that the Project planned to increase resource restrictions on the villagers and did not perceive corresponding benefits in lieu of resources foregone.

> *"The restrictions have increased day by day because eco came and restricted us: from entering the forest, from cutting trees, killing animals…" (B16)*[7]

It is important to note that only 5% of the villagers perceived increased restrictions as *part of* a project and *in exchange* for other benefits. The 20% of villagers referred to above perceived increases in restrictions as a further burden and difficulty in their lives, without compensation. Thus this group saw ecodevelopment as just another way of the Forest Department pressurising them. Villagers living beside the PA had a strong sense of 'living on the edge' and further restrictions would push them over. One adivasi man joked that he would have to move to Pakistan!

5.3 Village-Forester Relations

Villagers reported a turbulent history of relations with the Forest Department since the Sanctuary was first created in 1977which worsened with the demarcation of the National Park in 1983 and the creation of the Tiger Reserve in 1992. This is largely perceived as an ongoing process of increased restrictions and decreased access. To 20% of the respondents, ecodevelopment is understood as a part of this process[8].

In addition, relations with foresters were reported as always being deeply inequitable. Many villagers described themselves as the 'poor people' in contrast to the 'big men' of the government. In the study villages, the majority of the poor, tribal populations were heavily subordinate to the 'big people': government servants, traders and even the richer men of the village. Even the lowest ranking Forest Guards had considerable power over the villagers as

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[7] To protect their anonymity villagers are given code numbers. The two villages are coded A and B and the numbers refer to households in the survey.

[8] In fact, some referred to 'eco' as the 'new park', using the term 'park' to mean a regime of restrictions.

they had the ability to fine and report them. Ecodevelopment, unsurprisingly, had not overcome such huge power imbalances.

> "[In the EDC meetings] *the people don't talk freely because they are frightened. The poor people can't talk to the chairman. Every meeting the big men sit up and the poor people sit around on the floor. The big boss comes sometimes, but not always. We are frightened by the ... sahib and we don't dare to speak."* (A20)

Thus, generating trust among villagers for the forest agents was clearly difficult. Women particularly reported being frightened of the foresters and unhappy with the increasing visits of forest agents to the village for ecodevelopment meetings. Many villagers found the onset of the Project alarming as they assumed that the Forest Department was plotting something – usually the fear was that the village would be shifted to a different area.

> "Our relations with the Forest Department were good before, but now they are very bad, there is so much trouble, it is all wrong. I'm scared that they will shift us away if we talk out. I don't want to be moved and I don't want all the government's money [ecodevelopment funds] to be wasted." (A35)

The release of funds was patchy and the explanations of the Project by the foresters were minimal so people had unfulfilled expectations that increased distrust.

> "There is a father-child relationship with them. They expect us to hold out our hands. We just have to say yes sahib, yes sahib. Then they make promises and give nothing." (A30)

5.4 Participation

During the early planning stages when the IEP was being launched in Pench, participation levels were evidently very low. Most interviewed villagers had not attended or known of any preliminary meetings and felt that the microplanning survey had been extractive and incomplete and that the plans had been written by the Forest Department – they certainly did not feel any ownership themselves. In a group meeting in one village I was told that the microplan had been "Written by the Ranger – by the Government". Whilst PRA should have been happening, "Officers came and said foreign money has come and a project will start. Then they surveyed the village and wrote the microplan." Several households were missed off the list. Villagers explained that they had to work and that if nobody was home at the time of the survey, they were excluded from the Project[9]. At this stage, the whole village should have elected the president and committee of the EDC. In practice, foresters nominated the president and full elections did not occur until two years later.

Following these planning stages, the main mechanism for popular involvement in ecodevelopment is via the EDC meetings, in which the microplans are to be followed and updated and all works and activities are to be discussed.

Almost half the 99 villagers surveyed said that they had never been to an EDC meeting. Only 18 said that they always attend meetings. Attendance by women was particularly low: over 70% of the women interviewed had never been to a single EDC meeting and only one woman attended every meeting. The women identified cultural and social factors that explained non-attendance and several noted that the presence of 'big people' at the meetings intimidated them. Most men found it hard to explain why the women did not attend, but many saw no reason for them to attend and were surprised that outsiders thought women should go to

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[9] Foresters explained that the villagers were not willing to take part at the beginning and that is why some were missed off.

meetings. As over 80% of the women in the two villages were illiterate, a lack of education and 'understanding' were additional explanatory factors given by men and women.

5.5   *Local Support for Conservation and Conservation Activities*
There were only four mechanisms for popular participation in conservation reported: employment as watchmen, employment as tourist guides, voluntary forest patrols and foregoing natural resource benefits. The watchman scheme employed one man per village for about two months on rotation to help guard the forest. This was not seen as very useful to the villagers, who were interested in on-going work. Seven local men became guides (although only two were trained) and received pay on a sporadic per-trip basis from the tourists and no funds from the Forest Department. This seemed to instil some interest in wildlife into those seven, but the impact over the 99 Project villages is unlikely to be very significant.

Voluntary forest protection had started in several villages, including one forest village. Worryingly, the motivation for this seemed to be largely due to expectations of future benefits from resources (like in JFM) which are illegal in PAs in the current legal context. Thus the only remaining mechanism for people to make conservation 'actions' in the PA are through foregoing natural resources. As detailed above, fear and increasing restrictions were the major motivations for such actions rather than active choice.

5.6   *Flexibility in the System and Ownership of the Project*
Villagers perceived the Project as coming either from some 'alien' source (World Bank or 'foreigners') or from a Government department (usually, but not always identified as the Forest Department). The 'rules' were perceived as set by outsiders and thus beyond the reach of villagers. At first, villagers in the two study villages did not believe that the expectation to pay 25% of the costs was really in the 'rules' and several villages refused to take part until arrangements were made to enable them to pay that 25% as unpaid labour. Village 'ownership' of the Project was hampered by this rule as their preferred projects cost too much for them to afford to pay 25%, so they had to settle for less popular alternatives. Irrigation was the primary need expressed by 50 of the 99 households, but bunding[10] of the fields was the most common intervention implemented, to the frustration of many interviewees.

> *"I suggested that there should be tube-wells or wells. The bunding is not a success because if there is much rain then they will just overflow. I have demanded wells, but they did bunding and now there is no water." (A9)*

Although EDCs were to be established to enable people to choose the interventions that they wanted and that would inspire them towards conservation actions, in practice villagers reported a lack of voice in the decision-making process. Suggestions were rejected or ignored by EDC secretaries and the great majority of village respondents felt that the implemented interventions were not of their choosing. Very few villagers (two households in 99) 'bent the rules' and were able to use their initiative to get benefits that they wanted.

> *"The Forest Department was talking about bunding. I didn't want bunding – it was irrigation that we needed. So we three brothers collected up the amount we would have got from eco and the EDC sanctioned collective spending for a pond." (A17)*

Whilst they may be few in number, such examples do inspire the hope that, with time, villagers will find ways of maximising the benefits from such projects.

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[10] Bunding refers to the building up of earthen walls around fields to conserve soil and water and enable the growing of paddy.

6 Mechanisms for Transferring Project Concepts

One underlying message in the above analysis is that there has been severely limited transmission of the core objectives and ethos of the IEP to many of the ground-level Forest Department staff and on to the villagers. This begs the questions: what mechanisms exist for transmission and have they been engaged? Forester interviewees reported low levels of training and many simply learnt as they went along from more experienced colleagues. Interestingly, EDC secretaries reported that they rarely talked with others about the job and there were no fora for sharing ideas and problems. Documents to guide them through the concepts and mechanisms of the Project had not reached the ground staff of Pench.

6.1 Training of Forest Department Staff

Of the 22 agents working in ecodevelopment, only 12 had received any kind of training, of whom five had only attended brief workshops. Of the remaining seven of the 22, two were from the highest levels interviewed and five were ground-level staff. The respondents from the crucial middle post of Range Forest Officer reported no actual training.

> *"The upper officers should take the RFO for lectures, workshops etc. Particularly I did not know how to interact with the villagers and how to hold meetings. There should have been some training on this." (ERF2)*

Many respondents claimed that on starting the job they received no guidance or training. Secretaries were sent in to set up or to run EDC in the villages with little or no prior experience and little notion of what they were aiming at.

> *"The ground level staff members need to start with high awareness. You want to know the direction the train is going before you step aboard. It was a very new programme and even the seniors did not know or understand much." (WSR1)*

> *"I had NO training – no booklets, no information, nothing. I just learnt on the job as I went along. I went to higher meetings and they told me some things. They said don't do any work until you have got the 25% contribution up front." (ERA2)*

What did those who had been trained learn? Some reported attending meetings with the 'big officers', and understanding little. A visit to Kanha to see a 'demonstration village' inspired those that went. One man learnt how to 'mix up' with the people: "we can't use pressure and we can't cheat the people" (TRA2). Three guards went on a training camp in Bhopal as part of the preparation phase of the Project. They described the training as being about sitting on the ground, wearing civil clothes, drinking tea and talking. They had also got the message about the ideas coming 'from the villagers not from the upper officers'. Amazingly, all three guards were not made secretaries until two or three years after their training. Even if the staff are trained they are not always posted into the roles for which they are trained, or they are transferred out of the area / Project during the project cycle.

> *"We needed practical training. But the staff members come and go. Those who are trained leave and the untrained come." (WSR1)*

6.2 Communication with Other Forest Department Agents

Interviews with Forest Department agents from the Wildlife and Territorial wings working alongside Project staff show they have been largely ignored and untouched by ecodevelopment issues, from RFO levels to Forest Guards. Most importantly, the agents patrolling the forests around ecodevelopment villages were not included in meetings or discussions about the project initiatives going on in the village:

> *"I am really not affected by ecodevelopment. The style of working by sitting with the villagers and having meetings has not influenced the way I work. ... I don't go to the*

EDC meetings. They are only discussing and arranging more meetings so it does not affect my work, so I do not go. I'm not asked." (WFG1)

"I don't mix up with people because I am afraid of being attacked. My work is very separate to that eco work: I defend the forest, I don't mix up with people. Only my people catch people. Those eco staff are not responsible for wildlife, only for the villages. We have to restrict people and deal with entry of animals into the forest, bringing of wood and the taking of plants from the forest. The people get angry with me and my staff and not with the eco staff. The eco people have an easy time, my job is difficult." (WFG6)

6.3 Communication with Villagers

The major method of communication from foresters to villagers about ecodevelopment is the EDC meeting, at which the secretary (often accompanied by a senior colleague) will talk with (or to) the villagers. The first step noted by most secretaries is 'convincing' the villagers to take part.

"It takes 8-10 months to tell the villagers and to make them understand. You can only convince them with time, through drinking tea together and eating biscuits and snacks whilst sitting together." (EFG3)

The secretaries had to 'change their minds' and gain their trust, because the villagers were suspicious and 'not interested'. Special funds were available for building confidence at the earliest stages, but were under-spent in Pench.

Most forester interviewees reported telling the villagers some or all of three main points: that the Project had come for the villagers, that the villagers had to decide what they wanted and that the villagers must stop going to the forest.

"The main purpose is to get the villagers to help the forest, to protect the forest because the FD is giving benefits to the villagers. The villagers know this. They understand because I say this in every meeting: we are giving you these benefits so you must look after the forest." (EFG4)

Frequently, forest agents displayed an attitude of 'I know what is best for them' and told how they had coerced the villagers to 'choose' biogas or pressure cookers because they would be most 'helpful' for decreasing villagers' forest dependence.

"The area is very backward and so they are very reluctant to adopt new things like biogas. Even with pressure cookers it was difficult. I did a practice demonstration in the middle of the village. Only then, when they saw for themselves how quickly things got cooked, then they adopted this." (EFG3)

7 Discussion

The empirical sections of this paper are distilled in Table 1, which reveals major conceptual and practical shifts from planning to implementation. Transmission of the Project ideas, ethos and methodology was severely limited, partially due to a lack of effective mechanisms, as addressed in the preceding paragraphs, and partially due to the major factors outlined in this section.

7.1   Power Relations and Participation

In the study villages, the majority of the poor, tribal populations were heavily subordinate to the 'big people', including agents of MPFD. Villagers' attitudes to MPFD operated on two levels. Firstly, there were negotiated, personal relations between villagers and specific ground level staff, which were highly variable, shaped by the 'fit' between the background of the forest agent and villagers and the willingness of the forester to relax the forest rules for the villagers. Such relations, redefined with each staff transfer, are dependent on the attitudes of the ground staff and the leniency (or ineffectuality) of senior officers. The negotiation of such relations did not involve all villagers and generally women were frightened of all foresters and did not get close enough to negotiate with them.

Secondly, there was a fear and resentment of the power of the MPFD as an impersonal agency with the ability to impose restrictions and punishments and thus influence the lives and futures of the villagers. Such power has its history in colonial forest laws and has increased with the transfer of Pench's forest lands through successively more restrictive categories, culminating in the Tiger Reserve. Kothari (1998 page 11) notes that:

> *"[None] of the ecodevelopment planners state how inequities between the state and local communities, arising from the history of take-over, are to be tackled in the ecodevelopment strategies."*

As noted in the table, participatory methodologies are heralded in the SAR as essential for project success, but there is insufficient recognition of the extent of attitudinal and relationship change this requires. There are three main reasons why participatory discourses were not translated into actions in Pench.

Firstly, true participation should involve a 'handing over of the stick' to enable local values, needs and understandings to be voiced and shared (Chambers 1994; Francis 2001; Hildyard et al, 2001) but this is antithetical to the hierarchical bureaucracy of the Forest Department. A sincere move towards collaboration with local people would require radical shifts of power relations, attitudes and motivation systems. There is no mention of such deep change, or of attitudinal shifts within the SAR, let alone mechanisms by which such changes could occur. Moreover, the IEP is only being implemented in one Park in each of the seven States rather than across the whole SFDs, so there are not institution-wide changes occurring and the park-scale changes are quickly diluted by influx of staff from the wider pool of the SFD.

Secondly, participatory concepts cannot percolate down to change individual attitudes quickly or smoothly, especially with low levels of training and a high rate of staff transfers. Personal experiences of violent clashes with poachers colour foresters' attitudes to villagers as much as experiences of overly zealous controls and punishments colour villagers' attitudes to foresters.

> *"... Field-level bureaucrats are not just linear extensions of a hierarchical chain of command, and ... their acceptance of the participatory agenda is an important determinant of its potential success. Field functionaries are also independent agents, and their decisions must be seen to reflect the details of their own personal circumstances as well as the structural imperatives which emerge from the institutional structure in which they are located." (Vira 1999 page 256)*

Thirdly, though the SAR calls for changing relations, it fails to address the barriers to co-operative relations that exist on both sides. Even if the 'confidence building' funds had been fully spent in the opening phase of the Project, it is unlikely that the history of distrust and

fear could be overturned within the Project timeframe. Such deep-set attitudinal barriers are hardly touched by such short-term projects.

7.2 Generating Local Support for Conservation

The Project not only failed to provide *mechanisms* for local involvement in conservation but also failed to address *motivations* for and against conservation. The SAR notes that:

> *"Local people, when traditional rights and access are limited by the establishment of PAs, often have little incentive to use natural resources in a sustainable way."*

Yet there is nothing in the IEP design to *increase* traditional rights or access to the resources. On the contrary, ecodevelopment reinforces the restrictions barring people from protected areas (Baviskar 1999). Kothari (1998: 4) notes that the SAR specifically does not recognise the "essential legitimacy of local community uses of resources". So why should local people use natural resources sustainably, let alone pursue active conservation measures?

In place of the incentives of rights and true *stakes* in the resources, the IEP offers the incentives of ecodevelopment benefits to draw people towards behavioural change for conservation. In this way the Project assumes that conservation support can be generated and that development 'benefits' are acceptable and effective substitutes for natural resources. The SAR even notes that:

> *"Increasing government protection and legal control have curtailed local communities' resource use and management, forced changes in traditional livelihoods, and removed incentives to use resources sustainably." (SAR: page 2)*

So how will increased government protection and control (via capacity building in the Forest Department) *increase* popular support for conservation?

7.3 Ecodevelopment and Previous Experiences of Governmental Intervention

This Project is perceived within the World Bank as a radical departure from mainstream policy, with unusual potential for community participation and locally appropriate solutions, yet it is understood in the villages as a rural development scheme and as a further tightening of governmental controls over their activities. Although practical impacts of development in the studied villages were minimal, there was sufficient exposure to the concepts for people to consider both the types of interventions and methods of ecodevelopment as broadly similar to those of government-run development.

Despite built-in flexibility in spending and planning, foresters tended to go through the motions of typical activities, trying to spend the money by specific deadlines and trying to coerce villagers to adopt particular interventions (especially biogas and pressure cookers). Despite soil and water conservation measures being unpopular with beneficiaries and even warned against in the SAR (as not sufficiently valued to motivate conservation actions) they were implemented in all 15 villages visited.

Both foresters and villagers lacked experience with participatory methodologies and microplanning. The World Bank planners themselves note that:

> *"Evidence to date shows that* [other] *government initiatives are generally employing traditional top-down approaches to project planning and implementation, even when program documentation has embraced the principal of a more participatory approach." (SAR Annex 2)*

Interviewees from all levels of the Forest Department and from the villagers expressed the view that if another project came, or if this one was extended for several more years, then they could learn to make it work. One villager, when asked about 'eco' said, "I don't know how to climb that tree" – such knowledge does not come instantly. In practice, the Project crept towards a typical top-down rural development intervention because that was all that the villagers and foresters had sufficient experience of. Whilst the practical impacts of the Project have been severely limited, the seeds of awareness of external interventions and alternative approaches have been planted which would provide more conducive conditions for future projects.

8 Conclusions

8.1 Ecodevelopment: A Suitable Concept?
The suitability of the ecodevelopment concept for India's PAs is thrown into question in the above analysis. In this concluding section, the *concepts* of ecodevelopment are distinguished from the experiences of implementation.

India's people-park problems are incredibly complex and context specific. The search for a catch-all solution to bring people out of poverty whilst saving the tiger, the jungle and the future of protected areas in India is a vain one. Whilst Pench is typical in many ways of small-scale parks in central India, it does not share the potential for ecotourism and sustained international donor investment of Kanha and Ranthambore. The main potential for income in Pench is from fishing in the reservoir which is illegal under the Wildlife Act and is fiercely contested in practice. For the overwhelmingly poor, marginal farmers living around the edge of the Tiger Reserve, the park contains resources of such value that the restrictions are deeply resented and the rules are often transgressed. Can ecodevelopment really raise their standard of living sufficiently to reduce the temptation of the reservoir and the products of the jungle?

To answer this, the four main conceptual shortcomings with ecodevelopment are explored. Firstly, ecodevelopment requires people to perceive benefits from the park authorities in exchange for activities to protect the park. Direct benefits are limited by the law and indirect benefits are too indirect and too insubstantial to inspire change and often they are not coupled to mechanisms to enable change.

Secondly, local people are afforded no agency and no right to participate in management of the PA, which is kept totally separate from village development. Their only legitimate conservation actions are to keep themselves and their animals outside of the park. Where people have a say in measures to mitigate negative impacts of the park on the villagers (an objective of the ecodevelopment that has been overlooked in implementation) and in the development of the park, then they can be important allies in the cause of conservation (Khare 1998; Western 1994). They can form a 'social fence' through which poachers can not pass, but this requires a significant stake in the park that villagers value and wish to protect. Such a stake is lacking in the concept of ecodevelopment.

Thirdly this type of ecodevelopment is a short-term, external project that is superimposed upon a complex set of relations and interactions with new methodologies and institutions. It does not include sufficient flexibility to mould to local conditions and does not address the changes needed to enable local conditions to adjust to the Project's requirements. Locally active institutions (Forest Protection Committees, Women's Groups, Village Councils) are bypassed and new EDCs are established which do not relate well to the former.

Fourthly, ground level staff and villagers alike were more interested in an approach that generated support for conservation through a real stake in the resource rather than an increased alienation of the people from the Park. Such an approach would be more sustainable though public support and through incentives coming from the Park and surrounding forests rather than external budgets. This fits more with a Joint Protected Area Management (JPAM) model than ecodevelopment.

8.2 Ecodevelopment: A Workable Solution?

A major problem with the Project as designed was the expectation of sustainable behavioural, attitudinal and relationship changes within a five-year period. Given the antecedent conditions of forester-villager conflict and inexperience with participatory methodologies, five years would probably be insufficient for even the groundwork of generating trust and fostering collaboration. This is exacerbated by the second major problem: the Park-wide rather than State-wide implementation, which has meant that Project staff are operating within a micro-institutional climate at odds with the macro. This has resulted in a lack of institutional support from the highest levels and, due to rapid staff transfers, a constant influx of staff without the training or approach needed for the Project.

These two factors have made transmission of Project concepts to all Forest Department agents difficult because there simply hasn't been the time or constancy of staff. The hierarchical culture within the SFDs remains untouched and acts as a barrier to transmission, prohibiting the flow of ground level ideas up the ranks and Project ideas down them.

To be effective implementing agencies for ecodevelopment, the SFDs would need to undergo intensive institutional change with extensive programmes of staff training and a realignment of institutional objectives and approaches. At present it is only the Wildlife Wings in certain parks that are exposed to ecodevelopment concepts, rather than all Wings of all SFDs at all levels. The majority of SFD works are still production oriented rather than focused on community collaboration or even conservation (Hildyard et al, 2001).

A final problem with the implementation has been the lack of unity of purpose. The agents of the MPFD have not been pulling in the same direction, with senior staff working towards different goals to ground level staff and great differences in motivations for change and understandings of means towards Project outcomes. In a paper about the IEP, members of the World Bank design team (MacKinnon et al, 1999 page 315] sum up the prerequisites for success.

> "For any biodiversity conservation project to succeed it therefore needs to have clear project objectives and a common understanding of those objectives among all stakeholders. The active participation and support of all beneficiaries and stakeholders, and the mechanisms for identifying and resolving conflicts between them, will be crucial for project success."

All three factors in the above quote were lacking in implementation.

8.3 Ghosts in the Transmission?

As outlined above there are conceptual and practical problems with the IEP as a solution for Pench's people-park situation. In this final section I return to the central theme of this paper: what are the ghosts to transmission of concepts into implementation actions. There are two main types of barriers to this transmission: mechanical and attitudinal.

The first set of barriers concern the engagement of mechanisms to relay concepts from planners to implementing agents. As discussed in section 6, these mechanisms were poorly developed and poorly utilised. Guiding documents were not provided and training sessions did not reach all the agents or provide sufficient guidance. Communication from foresters to villagers was also severely limited. Part of the problem here was lack of experience with such mechanisms among all parties. Participatory methodologies were alien to the villagers and foresters alike and there were no established communication channels between foresters and villagers.

Attitudinal barriers are the more problematic ghosts in the transmission of concepts of participation and ecodevelopment. From the foresters' side, there were barriers to talking with and helping villagers who were seen as 'the enemy' of the jungle and to enabling villagers to voice their opinions about the interventions that they wanted. Villagers had deep-set fear and resentment of the Forest Department and thus were suspicious of the Project and the Forest Department's intentions.

Thus the antecedent conditions for the Project were not conducive to either development *for* conservation initiatives or *collaborative relations* between foresters and villagers, as there was a lack of experience of such projects and a lack of trust between the parties. The groundwork needed for participatory mechanisms and relationship changes requires years and was still in its infancy as the Project life span drew to a close. Transmission of the Project ideas, ethos and methodologies was severely limited, partially due to a lack of effective mechanisms for concept transmission and partially due to elements of both villagers and SFDs still being shackled by hegemonic power relations and resistance to change.

In practice, rather than attitudes interfering in the Project, it is more useful to perceive the IEP as a blip in the ongoing negotiation of relations between foresters and people, the state and its subjects. Within the space of 5-6 years, the Project will pass through Pench, a mere blink in the eye of the long history of people-park interactions. What will remain is the trace of an idea and the experience gained through being involved in a project. With time and with suitable conditions, such remnants could grow into locally devised approaches to conservation and development applicable to the conditions of Pench Tiger Reserve.

Table 1: Changes in Understandings of Key Project Concepts from the World Bank Staff Appraisal Report to the Forest Department Agents and Villagers

Issue	World Bank[11]	Forest Department	Villagers
Development for Conservation	• All development activities must result in measurable conservation outcomes	• Lack of fit between conservation aims and development means • Focus on development at ground level and PA management at senior levels • Little focus on development *for* conservation	• Project perceived by majority as just a rural development project • Concept of development *for* conservation only understood by small minority
Reciprocal Agreements	• Essential for *eco*development • Prerequisite for all VED activities	• Clearly understood at senior levels • Reinterpreted as part of ongoing negotiations of give and take at ground level	• Largely unknown • Reciprocity not felt • Increased restrictions resented and not perceived as (adequately) compensated
Forester-Villager Changing Relations	• Necessary as a means to project success and as a direct aim	• Reported as difficult at managerial level • Negotiated balances between villagers and foresters upset • Project too short term and narrow focused to enable institutional change • Affected by constant staff transfers and lack of MPFD-wide implementation	• Project perceived as part of increasing restrictions • Power imbalances continue to divide foresters from villagers • Lack of trust of 'the FD' • Personal relations / balances also affected
Participation	• Essential for success • Via PRA during planning and EDCs during implementation	• Alien concept reconceptualised as 'sitting on the floor' • Surveys used in place of PRA • Appealing to some ground staff • Resisted by older 'protectionist' foresters • Hardly operationalised in letter or spirit	• Participation in microplanning minimal • EDC meeting attendance low, especially among women • Decision-making power kept in hands of big men of village and FD.

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[11] Staff Appraisal Report, 1996

Local Involvement in Conservation	• Important for success (but mechanisms lacking)	• Interpreted as encouraging villagers to protect forests and reduce forest dependence • Collaboration in conservation not prioritised or operationalised • PA management kept totally separate from VED	• No reported involvement in PA management / planning • Involvement in PA restricted to few, part-time / short-term jobs for men • Some increases in interest in protection
Flexibility	• Flexibility ensured via indicative budgeting and microplanning	• Perceived as inflexible because of World Bank 'rules', especially 25% contribution • Timeframes too short and too rigid	• Project perceived as alien with unpopular 'rules' • Perceived as largely typical of top-down government projects
Project Ownership	• Project should be owned by the Government of India • VED should be 'owned' by EDCs via microplanning and 25% contribution	• No sense of ownership at ground level or managerial level • EDC secretaries transferred to often to get sense of ownership • No notion of instilling ownership in villagers	• No sense of ownership at village level • Project perceived as government led • Contributions instilled hostility rather than ownership • Low participation (especially during microplanning) hampered ownership

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