

## Beyond the rock and the hard place: Africa, the environment and biodiversity governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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Environmental policies are painstakingly extricating themselves from beaurocratic planning and the legacy of their colonial history. The current decade has seen the emergency of a new doctrine for protected areas that repositions governance and people at the heart of the project to reorganize our relations with other species and the environment. This evolution remains fraught with conflicts. Leading conservation biologists make the case that in the face of new global extinction, protracted areas have ceased to meet the special and temporal requirements of biodiversity conservation. But they also advocate an antidevelopment agenda backed up by compelling remote sensing imageries targeting development free ecosystems particularly in Africa and Latin America. By contrast landscape scale partnerships such as those promoted by the international model forest network see development as the driver of sustainability and biodiversity governance in such ecosystems.

There are nearly three billion poor and half a billion hungry people in rich biodiverse environment around the world and it makes little sense to believe that the latter can preserved in the long run at the expense of the former. There is a need to reinvent a popular economy of the environment, but debate or in Africa laws and policies.

A large and growing number of community conservation initiatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America are taking place outside the formal confines of conservation projects or bureaucratic decision making. All demonstrate the capacity of local society to formulate and carry out conservation endeavors that are profoundly liberating, without necessarily resorting to the discursive and instrumental rationality of conventional forms of conservation, decentralization or electoral politics. These evolutions and contradictions constitutes an opportunity for rethinking Africa's environmental and economic future in relation to web of related issues, particularly tenure, natural resource governance, development capabilities, climate policies and democracy.

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