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## Triage: Conserving Primates and Competing Interests

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## Keywords

primate, conservation, development, deforestation

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**Triage: Conserving Primates and Competing Interests**

Arthur Klages

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**Competing Interests**

It has become obvious to me that an academic discourse on primate conservation now needs to address two pertinent facts. First, that the major issue within discourses on primate conservation is the competing interests of the conservationists, indigenous populations, and both local and global development initiatives. This is the

issue that goes to the root of the interrelated problems of deforestation, habitat destruction, and hunting of nonhuman primates for meat (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:1; Peterson and Ammann 2003:1). Second, that the desires of these competing interests cannot all be satisfied (Harcourt 2000). Unfortunately, I believe the first issue does not receive enough attention, while the second is more-

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or-less ignored – most likely because it is not compatible with current discourses on conservation. That is why I have chosen to examine both these issues in this paper.

As primates are tropical animals, they are located in what are some of the most impoverished regions of the world. To clarify terminology and for simplicity, I will use the word “primate” to refer to the non-human members of the Order *Primates* throughout the text. The alleviation of poverty for people in these areas is often said to rest upon the development and utilization of the same lands that are essential to conservation efforts, but most discourses on primate conservation today take for granted that both goals can be accomplished (Kepe et al. 2004:143). Conservationists do not often stop to ask the following question: Can primates be conserved *and* can poverty be alleviated simultaneously, or does one have to be chosen over the other (Hutton and Leader-Williams 2003; Kepe et al. 2004)? Why is it conservationists have reached this conclusion? This also begs the question of what the correct choice is, and the correct choice for whom? The last question is the most difficult to answer, as the answer depends upon who is being asked the question.

The issue of primate conservation is relevant to the field of anthropology and should not only be of concern to biological anthropologists but to sociocultural anthropologists, as well. For the biologically inclined, conservation is relevant as primates are our closest living relatives, while for the cultural anthropologists it becomes relevant as the concerns of people are intertwined with those of conservationist and developers. As such, anthropologists are uniquely situated to bridge the gap between the competing interests of conservationists and those of the indigenous peoples who live sympatrically with the primates (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:5; Hill 2002:1188).

Primate conservation depends upon not only an understanding of their biology and behavioural ecology. It also requires knowledge of the cultural beliefs and desires of these local people - the people who will be ultimately responsible for the long term survival of these primate species (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:5; Hill 2002:1188). Unfortunately, it has also been noted that many well intentioned

individuals involved in conservation efforts are largely ignorant of the basics of behavioural ecology, while many biological scientists are guilty of tunnel vision and are prone to ignore the needs and wants of the local communities while pursuing their research (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:6). This has only recently led many primatologists to advocate a more holistic approach, one that includes both primatologists and anthropologists in the development of conservation strategies, one that I would fully endorse to rectify the problems listed above (Wright and Wright 2008:20).

Of course, one may ask if primate conservation is even necessary (Wright and Wright 2008). Are primates really essential to the survival of local ecologies (Wright and Wright 2008)? But a far more disturbing question arises in light of the ominous evidence we will encounter in this paper: *Can primates even be conserved successfully* (Lovett and Marshall 2006)? Some authors have come to the conclusion that this may not be the case, especially if one advocates policies in favour of development (Harcourt 2000; Hutton and Leader-Williams 2003). If that is the case, then hard choices will need to be made. I believe that it is here that anthropological concepts of positionality, marginality and interstitiality come into play. Positionality deals with the idea that different individuals will occupy different positions within a discourse, or that they may even be speaking to competing discourses. Their respective positions imbue them with a particular perspective.

In this paper I examine the positions of conservationists, scientists, developers, and indigenous people. Note that an individual may occupy more than one of these positions, as there are scientists who see themselves as conservationists, as just one example. Conservationists and scientists – who often find themselves at odds with one another – still occupy positions of interest that are broadly similar. At least they can speak to each other’s discourse. But both positions are often far removed from the interests of local populations. These local people are mostly concerned with their own day-to-day survival and sustenance and not with the long term survival of primates, who are most often viewed as just another animal in the forest, or a dinner for the

family. This is completely justifiable from their perspective, but these peoples' concerns are often the ones that are the most marginalized within discourses on conservation. They are marginalized in that they lie at the periphery of the discourse, and they often have the least amount of agency to realise their own desires.

If there is any hope to settle these conflicts, it may lie with anthropologists. Anthropologists may have an opportunity to play an interstitial role, one as a go-between in the discourses between scientists, conservationists, and local populations who each occupy different positions within conservation discourses. These positions also occupy different levels within a power hierarchy, and leave the more marginalized at a disadvantage in their ability to have their voices heard or their desires implemented. This is an area where anthropologically trained primatologists have an advantage over strict biological scientists and other conservation workers as they should be able to take up an interstitial position. It should be noted that long after these workers have left the field, it will be up to local populations to ensure the survival of endangered species of non-human primates. Thus, the participation of indigenous peoples is crucial for any success in primate conservation (Hill 2002:1191).

### ***The Current Status of the Order Primates***

Members of the Order *Primates* are facing ever increasing levels of endangerment, but some specifics might be in order to highlight their current plight. What follows is by no means an exhaustive list, but it can be read as a sample of the current status of primates today. At the approach of the new millennium, The Primate Specialist Group, whose members are responsible for the creation of the IUCN Red List of endangered primate species, estimated that more than half of primate species faced some level of threat (Chapman and Peres 2001:16). As for the great apes in particular, in 2003 it was estimated that only 3,500 Sumatran orang-utans (*Pongo albellii*) were left on the island of Sumatra; one of only two places where orang-utans can still be found (Wich et al. 2003:49). During the same period of time, western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*) were facing a new threat to their survival in the form of the Ebola virus (Bermejo et al.

2006:1522). Gorilla populations were decimated, with losses estimated at 5000 animals in one part of the forest alone, a mortality rate of 83% (Bermejo et al. 2006:1522). It is ironic that while elsewhere deforestation is the major cause of primate decimation, the decimation of apes by the Ebola virus has left large tracts of perfectly habitable West African forests devoid of great apes (Vogel 2006:1524). By 2007, Ebola deaths resulted in an elevation of the Red List status for populations of Western lowland gorillas from endangered to critically endangered, and was further exacerbated by the bushmeat trade (Hopkin 2007:127).

Of course, decisions regarding the assignment of threat levels to a given population are difficult to make. One approach - and one I would subscribe to - is to first try to estimate the minimum viable population (MVP); that is, the smallest population needed to sustain a viable reproductive population of animals (Harcourt 2002:237). The size of the MVP depends on the length of time you wish to maintain a particular level of genetic diversity, and is mathematical in nature (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:166). The implication of the MVP is that to conserve primates effectively over long time-scales, the MVP in the present may need to be quite large. After calculating the MVP, estimating what current population levels actually are is another task entirely. Much debate exists about whether certain species are actually *endangered* or not (Oates 2006:102; Walsh 2003:612). One has to be cautious when extrapolating local population estimates to species estimates, as there is no reason local declines need be representative of the entire species (Oates 2006:103). However, it also follows that species level estimates could be not only higher, but also lower than local surveys would indicate. It is for this reason that some conservationists are calling for more objectivity in ranking threats to species (Oates 2006:111).

The kneejerk approach of many conservationists to err on the side of caution and throw endangered species labels around on a whim may actually hamper conservation efforts. This might lead to conservation fatigue, the notion that people will eventually tune-out the repeated calls to conserve yet another endangered species (Oates 2006:111). There is a finite amount of both goodwill

and financial resources available to conservationists, and conservationists need to choose carefully where they wish to direct their efforts. Thus, they need to practice triage and not allow a blanket-approach to conservation to distract their efforts away from populations that really are in desperate need of conservation.

### **Deforestation**

Deforestation is *the* major cause of the decline in the number of primates and the major extinction threat facing primates today (Chapman and Peres 2001; Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000). Ninety percent of all primates are found in the tropics and, being primarily arboreal animals, they are almost entirely dependent upon their forest habitats for survival (Chapman and Peres 2001:16). In 2001, it was estimated that countries that are home to primates are losing 125,140 square km of forest annually (Chapman and Peres 2001:16). The survival of primate species, and any chance of conserving them successfully, is ultimately dependent upon the survival of their forest habitat. A detailed account of deforestation or forest conservation would be beyond the scope of this paper, but it needs to be reiterated that conserving forests is a must if one is to conserve primates. However, a brief look at the current situation yields an unpleasant picture for conservationists hoping to accomplish this.

Although there is much talk today about the benefits of sustainable forestry, a recent study of Brazilian rainforests recognized that 16% of selectively logged areas were completely deforested within one year of logging, and those remaining areas had an additional annual deforestation rate of 5.4% per year for up to four years after logging was supposedly completed (Asner et al. 2006:12947). These selectively logged forests were highly susceptible to drought and fire, and were left vulnerable to illegal logging by opening up what were previously impenetrable forests prior to selective logging (Asner et al. 2006:12947). Kalimantan's supposedly protected lowland forests have declined by 56% between 1985 and 2001, most likely due to this activity (Curran et al. 2004:1000). It might be easy to point the blame at these countries for not being good stewards of their lands.

However, developing countries face multiple pressures to develop: both from within, to increase the standard of living of its citizens; and from without, often to repay ever-growing national debts (Chapman and Peres 2001:17). Not only are forests cleared for the value of their timber, but also to clear the way for increases in agricultural production and settlement, all in the name of economic development (Chapman and Peres 2001:19). Agriculture expansion itself has accounted for 70% of rainforest loss in the past century, while the logging industry has been responsible for the rest (Tuttle 1998:5).

However, there is no reason why massive deforestation must occur. In French Guiana the government owns 92% of the country's forests, which may account for the relatively healthy status of forests as compared to other nations (de Thoisy et al. 2005:156). In situations such as this, there are opportunities to set aside large tracts of land that will support MVP of primates, but only if the will is there. This example is evidence that forest conservation is indeed possible, but just the establishment of protected forests on paper does not count as conservation if there is no political will to enforce these laws, a problem that conservationists encounter time and again (Tuttle 1998:5). It appears that decades of conservation initiatives and the establishment of protected parks has in reality done very little to turn the tide against deforestation. Perhaps conservationists should stop patting themselves on the back every time a new agreement on forest conservation has been put to paper (Hutton and Leader-Williams 2003:215; Kepe 2004:143).

### **Bushmeat**

Another major threat to primates is hunting and the bushmeat trade. I will discuss bushmeat in detail, because it is a very significant local issue, and it may be an area where conservationists can have some success in combating primate declines. Being local, and largely cultural, hunting and its effects on primates vary from species to species and from region to region. South American primates seem to be particularly affected by hunting. In French Guiana, hunting pressures seemed to be a major factor in determining current primate species richness (de Thoisy et al. 2005:149). In this case,

though the total number of primates hunted was low in relation to the total biomass of hunted animals, hunting still occurred above a sustainable threshold for large-bodied primate species (de Thoisy et al. 2005:149). Large-bodied species, and males specifically, were preferred by hunters as they maximized the return on investment, both in time and money (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:242; Peterson and Ammann 2003).

The bushmeat trade is distinct from traditional hunting practices in that hunting for bushmeat involves the creation of a marketable commodity. Bushmeat is sold in markets, often to the employees of logging companies (Chapman and Peres 2001:17; Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:258; Peterson and Ammann 2003:116). The logging industry contributes to the felling of trees and the pruning of primate populations alike (Peterson and Ammann 2003). Many hunters come from traditional hunting cultures, but hunting has switched from a subsistence activity to a commercial one, which means that the number of animals being taken is unprecedented and far above sustainable levels (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:258; Peterson and Ammann 2003; Workman 2004:348). The introduction of the shotgun as a widely available hunting technology, especially as part of the bushmeat trade, has had dire consequences for primate populations - leaving even the mighty gorilla vulnerable to individual hunters (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:251; Peterson and Ammann 2003:117).

Along with hunting for meat, primates are often consumed for a number of culturally specific uses. Primates are kept as pets and used for medicinal purposes in a number of cultures (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:264). As the easiest way to capture a *pet* is to shoot females of reproductive age to harvest their young, it is clear the pet trade is detrimental to primate survival (Chapman and Peres 2001:22; Peterson and Ammann 2003).

Primates are also used for medicinal purposes (Workman 2004:348). In Vietnam, primate body parts are used to supposedly increase intelligence or vigour, cure madness, and alleviate fatigue (Workman 2004:348). As primate body parts are of dubious value as medicines, this is one practice that should be targeted for elimination in

conservation strategies, especially through education of the local populations (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:264). This is one example where the idea of preserving a cultural practice or belief, especially one that is erroneous, should be ignored in favour of preserving primate diversity.

Bushmeat even finds its way outside of the tropics. In Brussels, it is consumed as a prestige food by African expatriates (Chapman and Peres 2001:21). Of course hunting of primates is banned in many countries, but if the bans are not enforced effectively – and this is often the case – then they are of little value to conservation efforts. As should be increasingly apparent, a lack of enforcement and a lack of resources is a reoccurring theme for conservationists who must deal with it on a regular basis (Chapman and Peres 2001:21). Of course, bushmeat issues can be a polarizing one between conservationists, development agencies, and indigenous peoples (Milner-Gulland 2002:1). The extinction of certain species of primates may seem of little importance to those that are advocating the elimination of poverty or to the impoverished themselves (Milner-Gulland 2002:1). However, as previously mentioned, the entire bushmeat issue would be rendered moot if the tropical forests on which the primates, rely were allowed to disappear (Milner-Gulland 2002:2).

### ***Why Conserve Primates?***

So far we have addressed the status of primates today, and the major threats to their future survival. But we haven't asked one simple and often overlooked question: Why conserve primates? What is special about them in particular that they should be the target of conservation efforts (Wright and Wright 2008; Lovett and Marshall 2006)? This is not a trivial question, nor entirely as self-evident as conservationists might like to think. For example, there were more than 16,000 critically endangered species on the IUCN Red List in 2007 (Hopkin 2007:127). Why should the *Primates* be singled out as an order apart from all the others? Primate conservation encompasses many competing interests - many that will question the necessity of preserving yet another subspecies of *Cercopithecus* monkey - especially when this monkey seems to be standing between people and large sums of

development dollars. The 'why' question should be one that conservationists are prepared to answer - and answer well - if they want to justify their calls for action.

I think there are different approaches to answering this question. I would begin with what I would term ecological approaches or, formulated as a question: Are primates essential to the conservation of an ecosystem? If an ecosystem is sustainable without primates, then the decline of primate populations will not be a major concern to those who wish to sustain the environment as a whole, for example individuals only interested in forest conservation. However, it appears, that there is evidence that certain species of primates are important to seed dispersal and thus forest regeneration (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:87; Hill 2002:1184; Lovett and Marshall 2006:113, Wright and Wright 2008:203). Species of frugivorous primates are among the most important seed dispersers in tropical forests (Lovett and Marshall 2006:113). In Madagascar, some species of fruit are dependent on a single and unique species of lemur to disperse their seeds, and thus there exists a symbiotic relationship between these species (Wright and Wright 2008:203). Monkeys have been credited with some forest expansion through the transporting of seeds out into the African savannah where they are later germinated (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:91).

However, many other species of primates play little or no role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:88; Wright and Wright 2008:203). Thus the justification for primate conservation is rather species specific, at least from an ecological basis. I believe conservation concerns are strengthened by these kinds of honest and specific analyses justifying the importance of a primate to an ecosystem because they are hard to refute. Shoddy and generic calls for conservation based on a fuzzy connection with the importance of all primates to all environments would be target for easy criticism, even if some primates that might not be critical to their ecologies are not protected by this approach.

A similar ecological approach can be applied to view primates as having an important role as a prey animal (Hill 2002:1185). This applies to both

nonhuman and human predators. Again, this would be a species specific situation, and in most cases primates only account for a small percentage of the diet of most predators (de Thoisy et al. 2005:153). As mentioned earlier, large-bodied primates and males are those that are preferentially selected by predators. Primates are undoubtedly considered prey in when it comes to the bushmeat trade. Since primates only account for a small proportion of the total meat harvested, a moratorium on the hunting of primates would have a negligible effect on the diets of local human, and this could be used as an argument in favour of their conservation (de Thoisy et al. 2005:153; Peterson and Ammann 2003).

The survival of primates is inextricably linked to the survival of the forest ecology that they occupy (Lovett and Marshall 2006:113). The majority of ecosystems would seem to be able to tolerate the loss of their sympatric primate species, but the primates most certainly cannot tolerate the loss of the ecosystem upon which they are dependent (Lovett and Marshall 2006:113). From a strictly ecological approach, I would be forced to conclude that in most cases there is not a strong justification to conserve primates - except in specific cases - if one's wish is only to preserve the general forest ecology. If ecological justifications for conserving primates are off the table, what do we turn to next?

A strong argument can be made to conserve some primates as part of a larger project in the preservation of biodiversity. Like the ecological approaches mentioned, this is based upon a scientific viewpoint, however in this case it includes a larger ethical component. This approach would selectively target species of primates which exhibit high levels of genetic diversity by focussing conservation efforts at higher taxonomic levels (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:291; Lehman 2006:238). Rather than trying to ensure the survival of yet another threatened subspecies of *Cercopithecus*, conservation efforts would be aimed at the conservation of species, genera, or families of threatened primates in the hope of preserving as much genetic biodiversity as possible. Genetic diversity increases the further apart two organisms lie from each other on an evolutionary tree. For example, an animal from a monotypic family such as *Daubentoniidae* that contains only a single species

within it - the well known aye-aye (*Daubentonia madagascariensis*) - should be given favoured conservation status over one of the many subspecies of brown lemur (*Eulemur fulvus*) which are genetically much more similar to one another (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2009:293; Lehman 2006:,239).

However, I concede that there may also be objections to the importance of maintaining high levels of genetic diversity on the planet, and particularly within the Order *Primates*. If that is the case, then the final justifications for primate conservation are those that I would term ethical. The ethical approach to primate conservation is the most powerful tool at the disposal of conservationists. While the most subjective of the approaches outlined, I would like to remind anthropologists that they have long abandoned solely objective approaches to culture, such as those views of culture solely in terms of functional or ecological adaptations of people to their environments. In a wholly subjective light, I believe primates are special among animals because of their close similarities to us (Hill 2002:1191; Lovett and Marshall 2006:113).

Among the primates, the great apes are our closest relatives and it has been easy for conservationists to generate empathy for them among humans, in fact this strategy has been by far their most successful (Peterson and Ammann 2003:206). As many years of intensive field studies have shown, the great apes are similar to us in both their appearance and behaviours. For example, great apes have demonstrated the use of both tools and medicines, once thought to be solely the domain of *Homo sapiens* (Peterson and Ammann 2003:11). There has even been much debate about whether or not apes express some form of protoculture. Many ape populations express different suites of learned behaviours in ways that are analogous to differences in learned behaviours among human cultures (Lovett and Marshall 2006:113; Peterson and Ammann 2003:12).

I believe that a strong argument for primate conservation is that our treatment of primates should mirror the way that we behave towards other humans. As primates are our closest relatives on this planet, they should be treated in a similar

manner as we would expect to be treated ourselves (Lovett and Marshall 2006:114). It is hard not to view the photographs of dead gorilla families and the severed gorilla head in Peterson and Ammann's (2003) *Eating Apes* without the elicitation of an emotional response by the viewer. For many, including myself, it is hard to view the primates, especially the great apes, as just another kind of animal (e.g., Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000, Peterson and Ammann 2003). That said, it must also be taken into consideration that a primates' cultural value will depend upon which culture is viewing the primate (Hill 2002:1185). In many cultures primates are viewed as nothing more than just another kind of animal in the forest (Hill 2002:1185).

### **Conserving Primates**

I support the approach of Cowlshaw and Dunbar in looking at both tactical and strategic approaches to primate conservation (2000). Conservation tactics are ones that apply to local populations in the short term, and are those which are most likely to return immediate results (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:330). However, tactical approaches are in reality nothing more than Band-Aid solutions. For real conservation to occur, a strategic or long-term approach is required (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000). These strategies must include the long term survival of forested areas that are both contiguous and cover a large enough area to support an MVP (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:289). Without long term strategies any tactical gains will be lost over time. Unfortunately conservation strategies are those which are hardest to enact, least likely to succeed, and are the locus of disagreement between conservationist and developers (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:289).

The single point of agreement within the conservation literature is that money, or lack thereof, is the major issue hindering conservation efforts (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:393; Harcourt 2000:258; Lovett and Marshall 2000:114; Peterson and Ammann 2003:193; Wright and Wright 2008:203). Ironically, since money is in such short supply, conservation efforts are usually targeted at the most desperate causes, but as they are already on the brink, these cases are the most unlikely to sustain a MVP (Harcourt 2000:262).

Conservationists will need to learn how to practise triage in the future.

In order to formulate successful conservation strategies knowledge of primate behavioural ecology is of utmost importance. As Cowlshaw and Dunbar (2000:6) point out in their discussion of ignorance among conservationists: "Social scientists' knowledge of ecology commonly varies between the lamentable and the non-existent, yet they have sought to define good conservation practice." Comments such as these have been called "unfortunate" by some, as they might offend those who are honestly concerned with the survival of endangered species (Rose 2002:674). However, if the survival of these species is as important as conservationists would have you believe, then there should be no shying away from what is necessary, whether or not toes are stepped on along the way.

This brings us to the most polarizing issue in conservation (Hutton and Leader-Williams 2003:215). If there are competing interests between local populations and endangered species, it may be the case that one must be chosen over the other. I believe that simply pandering to both sides and creating a lot of *feel good* and balanced accounts will do nothing but waste paper (Harcourt 2000:258). In fact, the whole notion of sustainable development has been called into question, and has led to polarization between the varied interest groups (Hutton and Leader-Williams 2003:215; Kepe 2004:143).

It has long been argued that primate conservation efforts are dependent upon public support (Lovett and Marshall 2006:114). It seems to be a given within the conservation community that any efforts that are unsupported by local populations and governments will fail. However, one issue that seems to be avoided in much of the literature surrounding conservation today is the notion that it is even *more* essential to have strong government regulations both in place and *enforced*, if conservation efforts are to succeed (Lovett and Marshall 2006:114). One reason the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Uganda has remained largely intact for a long period of time is because the government decreed it to be a reserve and actually punished those who disturbed it (Harcourt 2000:260). In reality, the successes of protected

areas are not correlated with monetary benefits to the local community or employment of its members. (Lovett and Marshall 2006:114). Nor does it seem to depend on local conservation education, nor on local development programs (Lovett and Marshall 2006:114). As we will see, development seems to be the antithesis of conservation, an idea running counter to most conservation efforts today. In other words, for conservation to be successful it seems to require placing the interests of the forests ahead of the interests of the local people (Lovett and Marshall 2006:114).

Other solutions include tourism, at least for some species. Ecotourism most likely saved the gorillas of the Virunga Mountains (Harcourt 2000:260). The mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei*) only number 700 animals today, but they have been kept off the critically endangered list thanks to the ecotourism effort (Hopkins 2007:127). However, ecotourism is more a tactic than a strategy. At best it can preserve small populations and it depends upon accessible locations and species that are aesthetically pleasing to tourists (Harcourt 2000:260).

For conservation tactics to be successful on a local level, taking into account the cultural beliefs of local populations is necessary (Hill 2002). There is some hope that cultural practices may be modified through education (Chapman and Peres 2001). As an example, tarsiers have been thought to be pests who were responsible for crop damages, but tarsiers are insectivores and cannot be responsible. This is an example where increasing the local knowledge of primate species could alter the perceptions of local populations (Merker et al. 2005:194). Many cultures also have taboos concerning the hunting or harm of primates, and these could be applied toward conservation efforts (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000:253; Hill 2002:1185). However, there are also customs which see primates as dangers to be eliminated, and perhaps these traditions could be reshaped by education (Merker et al. 2005:194). Regardless, consideration of local customs is essential for primate conservation efforts to be successful.

Historically, primates have been studied in relatively undisturbed areas, once thought to be unchanging over time and isolated from the larger

world (Chapman and Peres 2001:23; Strier 2003:23). Any given population of a primate species was viewed of as being *typical* of that species both geographically and temporally. Outside disturbances were more often than not ignored, and when primates did come into contact with the outside world, these interactions and their resulting behaviours were treated as anomalous or atypical from their “natural” behaviours (Chapman and Peres 2001:23; Strier 2003:23). This treatment of primate species and behaviours should resonate with those familiar with current anthropological theory, if one simply replaces the word “species” for “culture”.

However, anthropology has recognized that it is at the margins that anthropological insights are to be found. Cultures are no longer viewed as being self-contained within a space, nor are they thought to be static over time. Cultures are now seen as dynamic and fluid and are constantly changing in response to contact with other cultures and outside influences. Just as individuals within a culture are no longer to be thought of as *typical* it should be recognized that primate individuals and populations are no more typical, nor are there typical or natural primate behaviours. Primates, although to a lesser degree than humans, can alter their behaviour in response to new challenges in their environments (Strier 2003:23). If one is to discuss marginality, primates must indeed occupy the margins in a global discourse, namely as they completely lack their own voice.

Borrowing these ideas from anthropology could justify both ongoing research and the conservation of primates. Primatologists could document how these animals adapt, or fail to adapt, to their current circumstances (Strier 2003:24). For conservationists, those studies of typical primate populations and classic studies of behaviour may be of little use in the here and now. They will not be representative of behaviours expressed by primates facing constant threats and disturbances (Chapman and Peres 2001:23). In other words, primates should no longer be treated as they were living in the ethnographic present.

If primates are to be conserved there will be a real cost to another sympatric organism living in their ecosystems: people (Hill 2004:1184). There has been much hand-waving regarding possible

symbiotic relationships between humans and primates. Where this does occur, it appears primates are the ones that benefit from human interactions (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000). Some primates will actually thrive in secondary forest and many primates benefit from human cultivation, such as the macaques in Bali and Sulawesi (Wright and Wright 2008:203). There has also been discussion of how primates have cultural value to many human cultures (Wright and Wright 2008:203). In return, nonhuman primates actually provide little benefit to human populations from an ecological perspective (Cowlshaw and Dunbar 2000).

In general, the majority of human and primate interactions are detrimental to primates, while conservation strategies that are beneficial to primates, may stand in opposition to development initiatives that would benefit local human populations (Hill 2004:1184). It appears to me that it may ultimately be a question of choosing one side or the other; either conservation or development.

#### ***Development: The Antithesis of Conservation***

Much as I posed the question, “why should primates be the target of conservation efforts?” it may be helpful to ask, when is conservation necessary? I cannot phrase it better than Alexander Harcourt (2000:258) when he wrote:

“Conservation is necessary when ecosystems and species are endangered, the needs and wants of local people conflict with the survival of wilderness, the greed of the consuming West overwhelms the conservation laws of developing countries, and corrupt politicians, as well as the venal chief executives of logging and mining companies the world over who ignore the benefits of long-term management of natural resources in favour of short-term gain from their overexploitation.”

Harcourt (2000:263) also stresses a notion that is often forgotten in conservation practices: that conservation “is about conserving”. It is about doing rather than talking. The production of the papers, proposal, laws, and committees will not conserve anything.

Harcourt belongs to a minority of biologists and conservationists that have recognized many conservation efforts amount to exercises in futility (Harcourt 2000; Peterson and Ammann 2003). I

agree with their argument that conservation efforts are being increasingly tied to developmental projects, where the primary goal is the welfare of local populations and not the conservation of the local ecology. This is all as part of the belief that you must first have a "developed" human population before conservation efforts can succeed (Harcourt 2000; Peterson and Ammann 2003). It is also suggested that in the face of accusations that conservationists care more about animals than people, conservationists have begun to argue that they must save people first, and only then can they really begin to conserve the ecology (Harcourt 2000:258; Peterson and Ammann 2003:194). As in many issues where it has become more of a hindrance than a help, political correctness has infiltrated primate conservation as well (Harcourt 2000:258).

Corruption as an issue in conservation is one that is often neglected by conservationists (Smith and Walpole 2005:251). The elimination of corruption should also be a goal of the development lobby, as corruption is known to "limit development and fuel poverty" (Smith and Walpole 2005:251). Of course, as the corrupt are often government officials, how do marginalized conservationists - who are dependent upon these officials to make any progress - even tackle this issue (Smith and Walpole 2005:253)? As Smith and Walpole (2005) bring to light, admitting there is a problem must be the first step to any solution. In another ironic twist, the countries with the most efficient and transparent governments are the countries that retain the least amount of species diversity (Katzner 2005:260). The least developed countries, where the highest levels of biodiversity are found, are the ones most likely to have the highest levels of corruption (Katzner 2005:260).

This pattern of increased development and decreased biodiversity seems to keep reappearing. That should be a telling argument to those who believe that development actually leads to conservation. In fact, the whole notion of sustainable development has been called into question, and has led to a polarization between the varied interest groups (Hutton and Leader-Williams 2003:215; Kepe 2004:143). It can be argued that the links between governmental corruption and

levels of biodiversity do not form a causal connection, and it is not helpful to offend those in developing nations, which are themselves marginal (Walpole and Smith 2005:263). Also, sources for funding corruption most likely come from developed nations who are exploiting local and marginalized countries (Walpole and Smith 205:263).

The goals of development are to increase production, increase consumption, and increase wealth; goals that will also lead to increases in population densities in those areas that are benefiting from development (Harcourt 2000:259). Historically, the goals of conservation were to produce less, to consume less, and reduce ecological impact; goals that are most obtainable by limiting population growth in areas you wish to conserve. It should be readily apparent that these are mutually exclusive interests, yet conservationists have hitched on to the development bandwagon (Harcourt 2000:259). In their own self-interest conservationists are now commonly backing development (Harcourt 2000:258, Peterson and Ammann 2003:194). It appears that conservation may have become an industry of its own (Harcourt 2000:259). At some point, conservation interest realised that development agencies "were a lot richer, really a lot richer, than they were" (Harcourt 2000:258). As such, by backing development more money was available for their conservation efforts (Harcourt 2000:258). Although it may be asked: just what they are now conserving? "Benefit to humans, not preservation of wilderness" seems to be the ultimate goal of conservation today (Harcourt 2000:258). This is not to question the need to alleviate poverty in developing nations, or to minimize the plight of people living in impoverished conditions (Kepe 2004:143). I simply want to highlight the current conservation paradigm that is intractably tied to development (Harcourt 2000:258; Peterson and Ammann 2003:193).

### ***The Marginalized***

Of course in the developing world, local people often have little say in their own development. Their most pressing concerns are their daily struggles for existence. It should be no surprise that when Alexander Harcourt (2000:260) asked a local farmer of the Bwindi forest of Uganda

“why in God’s name are you cutting down the forest?” the farmer simply replied, “If I do not plant more land now, my family will starve”. The farmer had already admitted that this would eventually lead to destruction of the local watershed, but he felt he had no other choice if he wanted to survive today. These local people are trapped in a no-win scenario, where the conservation of a possible tomorrow is overshadowed by the necessities of a very real here and now. It is no wonder that a large majority of marginalized people are ready to embrace aspects of globalization and modernity and a chance at some prosperity, regardless of its malignant side effects (West 2006). Unfortunately, the marginalized local people, who have the most to lose and the least to gain from development, have little say in the development that is going to occur (Harcourt 2000:262).

Development efforts are often spun in terms of the needs of marginalized and impoverished local populations, and these are increasingly seen as being in opposition to the interests of conservationist, who are often labelled as Western and monied, and thus are accused of not taking the interests of the local people to heart (West 2006:39). Thus the question is asked, why should the preservation of an ape or monkey take precedence over the livelihood of people? It seems to me that in many respects the conservationists are also on the periphery when it comes to dealings with large development interests in the new global economy. The majority of conservationists are academics and sympathetic individuals who are trying to convince locals to conserve their own biodiversity. This is in the face of development interests who have the backing of multinational corporations and governments who have been pushing development for the past few decades. Thus, when viewed from this position, it is the conservationists who occupy the periphery. Issues of money have in recent years pushed many conservationists into the development camp. Thus, conservationists are pushing *sustainable* development as a key to conservation. This is in spite of the fact that development - which brings money, consumption, and higher population densities - is the last thing a real conservationist would want.

Ironically, it appears to me that from a global perspective those who are interested in real conservation also occupy a position of marginality. Even those locals who may wish to conserve their environments are often opposed by other locals that back development interest. Although I find it difficult to view the locals who are in favour of development too harshly, as many of them just wish to have a small taste of the benefits of modernity, along with a little hard cash. However, in competition with a conglomerate of locals, international development interest, NGO’s, international logging and mining corporations, and even anthropologists who trumpet the goals of development, it appears to me that conservationists are also to be positioned along the margins when it comes to discourses on conservation (West 2006). And of course one must not forget the primates who occupy the most marginal position of all.

### ***Triage***

Once we have decided that primates should be conserved, yet another question appears. Should we be interfering in other cultures with our Western notions of conservation? But anthropology itself has recognized that cultures are no longer to be viewed as discrete units trapped within a space and time bubble, where any outside disruption will shatter its internal structures. No culture – regardless of the word’s particular use or definition – exists in isolation. Cultural exposure and criticism occurs everywhere information flows between two cultures and they appear to be the fundamental ways in which people and cultures learn and grow (Peterson and Ammann 2003:206).

I named this paper *Triage* because it became clear to me that if conservation of primates – or of anything for that matter – is to occur, people may have to abandon well-intentioned notions that they will be able to save everything. If primate conservation is a worthy and obtainable goal, then people should not be afraid to speak honestly and do what is necessary to achieve this goal. If development interests and material gains of humans is to be the goal, then so be it, but people should not fool themselves into thinking that what they are doing is actually conservation. It appears to me choices need to be made, choices between

conservation and development, between indigenous populations and primates, and even between the survival of one primate species rather than another. I am not prepared to suggest that I am in a position to decide what choices should be made, but I believe it is time to acknowledge that these choices will *have* to be made. Seeing as the primates cannot speak for themselves, I choose to let Petersen and Ammann (2003:207) speak on their behalf: "We can be sensitive and let the apes die, or we can risk being insensitive, challenge cultural habits and practices... and perhaps begin to acquire some reason for hope".

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**Human Movement and the Concept of Place:  
The Influence on Ethnographic Research In Anthropology**

Ashley Haycock

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The aim of this paper is to explore the concept of human movement through the origins of diaspora. This paper also examines migration and the reconceptualization of this type of movement by anthropologists in relation to the modern phenomenon of globalization. Diaspora, migration, and their link to globalization will be examined, as will their role in the constantly changing practice of ethnographic fieldwork, specifically multi-sited ethnography.

Fennell (2007:1) describes diasporas as being the "dispersions of people to new locations due to abduction or to hostile circumstances in the lands from which they fled". This type of human movement is believed to distance families from the cultures to which they had originally belonged to – culture being the "learned beliefs, knowledge, practices, and behaviour with which people live as a group" (Fennell 2007:1-2). However, culture is a very problematic concept to define, one that has taken a lot of effort by many academics. For the purpose of this paper, the above definition will be used.

As a result of globalization, there is an increase in accessibility when conducting international research in the academic world. Researchers are able to conduct their research in many more places than they would have been able to previously, and therefore connections between varying places and groups of peoples are able to be made. As importantly, the global academic movement has increased the prominence of non-Western scholars in various academic discourses. This has a direct impact on the study of human movement, as it is an aspect of globalization and therefore links the entire world. Specifically, human movement is having an increasingly large impact on anthropological research, especially in terms of ethnography. Given our future of globalization and 'multi-layered evolution,' we cannot understand our own involvement or changing world without critical thinking skills (Tsing 2000:328). It is this critical way of thinking that is essential in order to view globalization holistically. Contributing to this idea is Appadurai (1988:16) who states that, "the problems