Political Ecology of Conservation and Sustainable Development: A Case Study of World Wildlife Fund Community-Based Conservation in The Iténez Protected Area (PD ANMI), Beni, Bolivia

by

Alejandra C. Camacho

A thesis accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Global Studies

Thesis Committee:

Derrick Hindery, Chair

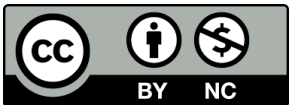
Yvonne Braun, Member

David Meek, Member

Galen Martin, Member

University of Oregon

Spring 2024



THESIS ABSTRACT

Alejandra C. Camacho

Master of Arts in Global Studies

Title: Political Ecology of Conservation and Sustainable Development: A Case Study of World Wildlife Fund Community-Based Conservation in The Iténez Protected Area (PD ANMI), Beni, Bolivia

For years, Bolivia's cultural and environmental diversity has been threatened by indigenous marginalization and resource exploitation directly linked to waves of political and economic reforms that shape its people and ecosystems. This thesis examines a community-based conservation (CBC) initiative by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Bolivia in the Iténez Protected Area, applying a political ecological framework to analyze human-environment interactions over a complex network of spaces and time. The study advocates for the re-envisioning of conservation action, scrutinizes the role of NGOs, and highlights the influence of global power dynamics. It calls for genuine community participation to achieve sustainable development and environmental stewardship, challenging traditional conservation methods and power imbalances.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Alejandra C. Camacho

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, Global Studies, 2024, University of Oregon
Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management, 2023, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Science, Anthropology and Geography, 2016, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Political Ecology
Geography
International Development
Latin American Studies
Anthropology
Nonprofit Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Program Manager, Green Empowerment, 2022- 2024
Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Oregon, 2024
Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Oregon, 2023
Engagement Coordinator, Green Empowerment, 2021- 2022
Grants Coordinator, Green Empowerment, 2020- 2021
Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Intern, World Wildlife Fund Bolivia, 2019
Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Oregon, 2019-2020
Undergraduate Academic Advisor, University of Oregon, 2018-2019

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Slape Award, University of Oregon, 2020

Slape Award, University of Oregon, 2019
Thurber Award, University of Oregon, 2019
Latin American Studies Program Grant, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo 2019
Promising Scholar Award, University of Oregon, 2018
Exceptional Achievement in Environmental Geography Award, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 2016
Latin American Studies Program Grant, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo 2015

PUBLICATIONS:

James Keese, Alejandra Camacho & Aurora Chavez (2017) Follow-up study of improved cookstoves in the Cuzco region of Peru, Development in Practice, 27:1, 26-36, DOI: 10.1080/09614524.2017.1257565

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my most sincere appreciation to the chair of my committee, Derrick Hindery, for his unwavering support and patience during this process. His dedication to the people and geographies of Bolivia is aspirational, and his passion for his work is what led me to life-changing experiences that greatly shaped this research. His support in securing an internship with World Wildlife Fund Bolivia was key to conducting this research and provided opportunities for professional development and field experience that will serve me beyond this work. This would not have been possible without your kindness, compassion, and encouragement. I would also like to express gratitude to the Department of Global Studies that has been very accommodating and understanding of my situation, which enabled me to complete the program. This includes my committee members: David Meek, whose teachings of political ecology shaped the early vision for this thesis; Galen Martin, whose guidance within higher education and life led me to a fulfilling career; and Yvonne Braun, whose kindness and helping hand came at a moment it was needed the most. Thank you all for seeing this through with me until the end.

I also want to express gratitude to the staff at WWF Bolivia for hosting me for six months, particularly during a time of political unrest in the state. They served as my gatekeeper and guide, introducing me to the communities and landscapes of the Iténez region and Santa Cruz. Special thanks are due to the Indigenous groups of the TCO Itonama and other surrounding populations of the Iténez region, who graciously welcomed me into their communities and agreed to participate in this research. Their willingness to openly discuss their personal experiences, history, and challenges was integral to writing this thesis.

I would also like to thank all the friends I made during my time at the University of Oregon, specifically the MA cohorts of the Global Studies department. This network of driven,

intelligent, and awe-inspiring women in research offered a support system that extends beyond the bounds of this thesis and into lifelong friendships. Thank you for sharing the power and love in community building.

I also need to thank my family for always supporting my decisions and staying by my side every step of the way, even with the physical distance between us. This achievement would not have been possible without you. To my sisters Claudia and Aliza, thank you for your never-ending wealth of advice, love, and friendship that I can always count on. Their sisterly love is something I cherish, as they continually show up for me through the happiest of moments, the most challenging times, and everything left to come. To my Dad, thank you for your unconditional love and support that shaped me into the person I am today. His love for my sisters and me, coupled with his humility, compassion, and desire to help others were critical to witness during my formative years. He has been an important role model to me from a young age, and I will always look to him for inspiration and guidance. Finally, I would like to thank Rob, my loving partner and best friend who invested countless hours in emotional support and personal guidance. This would not have been possible without his unwavering love and support throughout this entire process, which gave me the strength to complete this thesis. Thank you for always believing in me and never doubting for a second that I could do this.

To the person who first taught me to expand my worldview and critically examine the people and environment around me. Mom, this is for you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Bolivia is a country with a wide range of cultural and environmental diversity. For years, this diversity has been threatened, historically seen by the marginalization of indigenous peoples and the exploitation of natural resources. Additionally, as a country relatively young in shaping democratic processes, the last 50 years have been characterized by massive political and economic reforms impacting Bolivia's people and ecologies.

These elements present an interesting case study for analyzing cross-cutting topics in Bolivia, such as conservation and biodiversity, national economic and environmental agendas, rural and indigenous community development, and civil society. Therefore, this thesis specifically analyzes a case study of community-based conservation (CBC) implemented by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in the Protected Area of Iténez in the Department of Beni, Bolivia. A political ecological framework is applied to assess this complex intersection of human-environment relations and the various factors influencing the dissemination of community-based conservation. This also presents the ability to analyze NGOs' role within this environmental and geo-political landscape as common implementers of inclusive development models such as community-based conservation.

Statement of problem and research objective

Based on my subsequent review of the literature on modern conservation, I argue conservation initiatives ought to be re-grounded in grassroots, local efforts. Community-based conservation has become popularized by participatory and community-based development NGOs as community members' results and perceived benefits are often significant. However, further critical analysis is needed to uncover the full impact of these approaches and their influence on

modern conservation theory, economic politics, and power imbalances that perpetuate environmental degradation and can directly impact development patterns and knowledge production in rural small-scale farming and indigenous communities. Only once this context is further assessed can genuine community participation and engagement be implemented to promote long-term environmental, social, economic, and political sustainability. These actions would also be consistent with the current climate in Bolivia that promotes enshrined rights to indigenous peoples as social movements and new laws advance self-determination and autonomy.

This thesis addresses the complexities of participatory development and community-based conservation with diverse communities by taking on a simple research question: How is a local region shaped (culturally, environmentally, and economically) by community-based conservation and its implementation by NGOs?

After reviewing the literature, both conservation action and human development patterns are influenced by global power dynamics, capitalist forces, and Western bodies of knowledge that shape community-based conservation. Simultaneously, NGOs are critical implementers of conservation action and community-based projects, often aligning these efforts to either fill a gap or gain support from state governments attempting to advance their state's economic, social, and environmental development. Within this complex setting, NGOs increase their risk of perpetuating community-based conservation that inherently devalues the long-term development, health, and sustainability of vulnerable communities and their local ecologies.

Therefore, I argue that while community-based conservation aims to bridge the gap toward inclusive and environmentally sustainable models of development and can demonstrate some success through best practices and positive experiences, it is an approach that needs to be

critically analyzed and re-envisioned into a practice that dismantles traditional conservation theory, neoliberal agendas, and power inequalities to champion local communities to shape their development through meaningful decision making and collective stewardship of the land.

Summary of Contents

I begin by providing context to the general study region to address this research question. Chapter 2 specifically provides context to the country of Bolivia as a brief overview of its distinct geographies, social fabric, economic standing, and political agendas. This demonstrates the diverse landscape and complex history shaping current realities among various actors.

Moving into Chapter 3, the literature review further grounds my research question while diving into the more specific aspects that shaped this research. This includes a thorough explanation of Political Ecology as the theoretical framework for this study and the purpose of using this approach to address complex human-environment relationships. The literature review also focuses on research-specific concepts such as conservation, protected areas, and community-based conservation.

Chapter 4 shares additional history about the research site and the various actors in the area. This includes the history of WWF Bolivia, detailing how they established a presence in the region and the rise of community-based conservation. An overview of the four natural resources managed as part of WWF programs and their activities is outlined, as are the communities visited. For the communities visited, general socio-economic descriptions and basic demographics of the group interviewed are provided.

Chapter 5 is the bulk of my thesis, and here I dive into significant themes that emerged from the *sistematización* of experiences during data analysis. This section aims to share the experiences of local communities while integrating critical analysis for a deeper discussion of

my research findings and connections back to bodies of literature. Specifically, this chapter examines the experiences, such as the initiation of the protected area and projects, community participation in local governance, and finally, the impacts of community-based conservation.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I aim to summarize my overall conclusions from the discussion to demonstrate key findings and takeaways from this study, guided by a political ecological approach. Also discussed are potential ways forward for WWF and community-based conservation based on my findings and experiences as part of this study. I end this thesis with ideas for future potential research, particularly how this study can be further elaborated.

Research Site

Over six months, research activities began in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, where the WWF Bolivia office headquarters is located. Then, a one-week field visit to the Department of Beni was coordinated to visit the WWF Bolivia field office and WWF's community-based projects. After field visits were completed, the remainder of the time was spent in Santa Cruz, where follow-up research activities continued, and data analysis began.

Field research for this study was conducted during one week in the Iténez Departmental Park and Natural Area for Integrated Management (PD ANMI Iténez), located in the Iténez Providence of the Beni Department, Bolivia. WWF programs in this area were selected with the support of the WWF Bolivia staff, as they are an interesting case study to analyze rural and indigenous communities participating in the sustainable management of local forest resources in a remote area historically underrepresented.

Covering approximately 1.4 million hectares, PD ANMI Iténez (referred to as the Iténez Protected Area for this thesis) is concentrated in the Magdalena Municipality and extends to

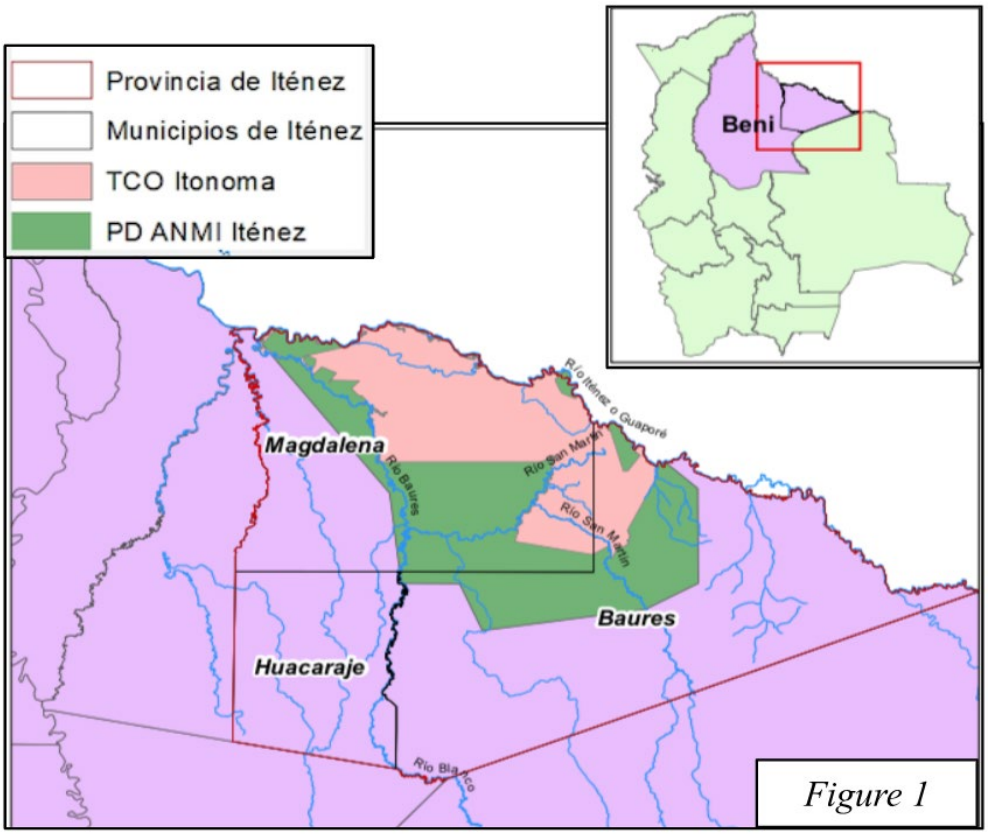


Figure 1. Map of the Iténez Protected Area and the TCO Itonama situated directly within the protected area's boundaries. Map generated by author in ArcMap GIS

parts of the Baures Municipality, as seen in Figure 1. As the most populated municipality, Magdalena Municipality comprises local urban, peasant, and indigenous communities whose economies are based on subsistence agriculture, hunting, and fishing. This is important to note, considering that 100% within the boundaries of the Iténez Protected Area is the legally recognized indigenous territory TCO Itonama, which covers 713,864 hectares (Green Carbon Bolivia, n.d.). TCO Itonama is politically represented by Magdalena in the Iténez province, of which approximately 70% of the municipality consists of the Iténez Protected Area that hosts

several local actors (institutions, NGOs, etc) that help promote the integrated management of the Protected Area (Winter, 2002).

Research Methodology

Findings from this thesis are based on primary research conducted with rural and indigenous communities participating in WWF Bolivia programs for the sustainable management of forest and river resources. Secondary sources were also analyzed to ground and inform the research question and study before field activities and provided the basis for a thorough literature review. Upon completing this literature review, political ecology was established as the theoretical framework for this thesis. This framework offers a grounding approach to the multidisciplinary nature of this thesis that analyzes the intersection of human-environment relationships.

The qualitative research design is informed by seven semi-structured group interviews held within five communities participating in WWF programs (six community group interviews and one local management committee interview). Each interview group voluntarily participated in group interviews, and each individual was asked for consent to participate (confirmed with verbal agreement) and record sessions. The length of group interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. After field research was completed, audio recordings were transcribed (to Spanish), and data was reviewed to prepare for analysis.

To analyze the data, I applied a research methodology popular in Latin America known as the *Sistematización de experiencias (*systematization of experiences) used to assess the practical experiences of communities. This methodology is used across social science fields, "especially in the areas of social intervention: health, education, development projects, human rights, etc., even in others such as agricultural training and environmental protection" (Jara,

2012). Further, a *sistematización* is defined as "the reconstruction and analytical reflection of an experience in which what happened is interpreted to understand it. Therefore, this allows us to obtain consistent and sustained knowledge, communicate it, compare the experience with others and with existing theoretical knowledge, and thus contribute to an accumulation of knowledge generated from and for practice" (Ruiz Botero, 2001). In practice, this process includes organizing all data into significant themes or categories mentioned by communities to analyze further and understand local experiences. Given the context of the research question, site, and design for this thesis, this methodology is best suited to explore the experiences of local communities.

Positionality

My views on the topics discussed in this thesis, specifically international development and its consequential impacts to human populations and the environment, have most definitely been influenced by my personal politics and experiences as a second-generation Mexican-American.

As an American-born citizen of Mexican descent, I identify as a Mestiza Latina- a person of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry. Latinos in the United States face a complex debate surrounding racial designations, and my position within this context feels most recognized by this mestizo identity. Being mestiza not only signals a bloodline shaped by colonization of and by my ancestors, but also denotes the historical oppression that created nuances of whiteness and middle/upper-class racial privileges. Ultimately, this means there are privileges and power inequalities associated with being mestiza that cannot be ignored, especially when conducting research with indigenous communities. These privileges are important to recognize, as well as the ways they are further multiplied by my US citizenship.

My identity as a Hispanic mestiza from the US had advantages and disadvantages. For starters, as a mestiza with some indigenous passing features (at a few points, even mistaken as indigenous), I was very well received and could easily conduct group interviews with communities that all spoke Spanish, especially when speaking with women. However, it was clear to community members that my Spanish was not from this region, and once sharing my nationality as a US citizen (shared during introductions) it was clear this carried a certain weight. Recognizing this place of privilege and power, I was sure to explain that I was a student partnering with WWF and visiting the area for purely academic purposes.

Another layer of complexity to my positionality is my gender identity as a cisgender female. Conducting this study in a patriarchal setting and alongside predominantly male WWF staff members, there were times during group interviews when men felt more comfortable addressing the male WWF staff directly instead of me. This did not hinder my ability to conduct interviews or ask relevant follow-up questions, but it was even noted by WWF male staff, who assisted in redirecting the questions and discussion back to me.

Finally, my position in this study is also influenced by my upbringing in the Central Valley of California. Raised by activist parents working with the United Farm Workers of America, a farmworker labor union born out of the Chicano civil rights movement, I was exposed to subjects like social change movements, environmental justice, and structural power dynamics at a young age. As I entered the field of international development, this equipped me with a unique understanding and awareness of the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. However, when more deeply engaging the sector, I faced harsh realities as I uncovered the degrees to which international development and aid can fail the populations they are meant to serve, often at the hands of global agendas. This revealed the interconnected nature of a

globalized world, demonstrating the ways globalization infiltrates many facets of local realities. Even further, the way global power dynamics and political economies can drive development patterns.

In this study, this is most clearly observed by the presence of the World Wildlife Fund, an international NGO working with rural and indigenous communities on economic development in remote areas of the Bolivian Amazon. Most important to mention within this study is the NGO-beneficiary relationship that is established when providing aid or some degree of resources (direct services, technical capacity, finances, etc.) to underrepresented populations. Even in the case of WWF, the organization aims to frame its relationship with rural and indigenous communities as a collaborative partnership. However, it is important to call out the underlying power dynamics within this relationship, considering it is cultivated and maintained by WWF, as an international entity, funding projects that provide technical support and physical materials to communities. Therefore, even though my position as a student was made clear, with WWF serving as my gatekeeper to communities, it is important to recognize my position in this study as a WWF intern and, thus, a WWF representative in the eyes of community members.

Limitations of the Study

Notably, the topic selected for this research is rather complex, cross-cutting multiple disciplines that could take years to unpack and analyze thoroughly. That said, I can recognize a few factors that may have affected the quality and scope of this body of work. For instance, it was initially planned to incorporate the perspectives of WWF Bolivia staff and another Bolivian-based NGO, Cejis, to inform NGO relations (success and challenges) with the state. While some of the interviews were conducted, they were not incorporated as part of this research due to time constraints and the decision that the findings from those interviews fell outside this thesis's

current scope. Instead, it was determined that those findings would serve better as part of future research.

Additionally, interview plans were hindered by political unrest during the field research period. After a 13-year administration, ex-president Evo Morales faced mass criticism for favoritism towards his indigenous group and endorsement of environmentally destructive extractive industries and capitalist ventures. For instance, originally supporting indigenous resistance by banning the controversial highway through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS) ecological reserve, Evo Morales reneged on these promises and vowed to advance the project despite environmental and social concerns, thus highlighting tensions between development and environmental conservation (Hindery, 2013).

These sentiments eventually culminated in weeks of civil unrest and peaceful protests after allegedly fraudulent general elections in October 2019, leading to his forced resignation on November 10th, 2019. This civil unrest proved to limit the additional time that could have been spent collaborating with WWF staff on findings from this study, as a civil shutdown of the entire state left the office closed and stay-at-home advisories in place.

CHAPTER II: BOLIVIA LANDSCAPES

Geography

Situated in the center of South America, the landlocked country of Bolivia is often praised for its biological diversity and distinct geographies. Home to a wide variety of terrains, Bolivia has "well-defined geographic zones — high plateau (*altiplano*), temperate and semitropical valleys of the eastern mountain slopes (*yungas*), and tropical lowlands (llanos) of the Amazon River Basin." (Ibisch, 2005) These zones house some of the most famous natural wonders, such as the highest navigable freshwater body, Lake Titicaca, the world's most extensive salt flats of Uyuni, and the Amazon basin. This diversity in geography has undoubtedly been the foundation for what would eventually shape the exploitative natural resource extraction industry that has long afflicted the area.

As early as pre-Columbian times, the indigenous people of Bolivia extracted natural resources from the land. Most famously, the Incan Empire, which spanned the entire Andean Mountain range, collected precious stones and minerals that became the eventual pursuit of European colonizers, setting the stage for extractive practices. The Bolivian altiplano, specifically, "contains a wealth of mineral deposits that have been exploited from pre-Columbian times to the present … mark[ing] this region as one of the greatest mineral zones of the world" (Klein, 2011). Additionally, in the country's lowlands, the oil boom of the 1970s made the Amazon basin the target of oil and gas development that has infringed on remote ecosystems (Hindery, 2013). These examples of natural extraction that would later come to be legalized do not consider lucrative illegal animal and plant trades, such as the "international demand for cocaine [that] would begin to generate an important new market for Bolivian products" (Klein, 2011).

Throughout Latin America, this pattern of extraction has become the norm in a globalizing world, and countries rich in natural resources either willingly participate in the industry or become the victims of exploitation (legal and illegal). In looking at the geography of Bolivia, we can begin to understand how extractive industries have emerged from the ecology and its abundance of resources, thereby establishing a cyclical trend of political and economic outcomes that continue to reshape the geophysical and social structures. These distinctive ecological zones and their abundance of natural resources ultimately shaped human life and interaction with the landscape into what we see today.

Socio-Economy

Along with its distinctive geography, Bolivia is also a country with great cultural distinctiveness. Pre-European contact, each ecological zone was inhabited by various indigenous groups that would be met with brutal outcomes, namely physical and environmental exploitation by colonial and imperialist powers. However, these indigenous leaders would begin demanding changes to years of unequal treatment and "... proposed a series of changes concerning the nature of Bolivian identity and the role of the indigenous peoples in modern society and stressed ethnic problems as much as class issues" culminating in a new, powerful indigenous movement that gave rise to "its most coherent and powerful expression in a new mass political party that would emerge in the late 1990s" (Klein, 2011)

Especially with the election of Evo Morales in 2006 as the first indigenous president, the unique demographics of Bolivia allowed for a continued path toward drastic political and social changes. Adopting the name of Plurinational State in 2009, Bolivia now has 36 recognized Indigenous Peoples that "have consolidated their collective ownership of 25 million hectares of

land in the form of *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* (Community Lands of Origin / TCO), representing 23% of the country's total area." (IWGIA, 2024). The scale and complex network of indigenous organizing significantly characterize the social landscape of Bolivia and demonstrate the abundance of diverse indigenous communities in the region.

However, these achievements were not without years of extreme political instability, stemming from multifaceted social-political-economic conflicts and competition over valuable land/resources, which no doubt impeded advances in investments and economic development (Ibisch, 2005). During the 1980's neoliberal movement, Bolivia became the testing grounds for this economic model that "sought to deregulate state-run economies and open the market up to foreign investment…" (Clements, 2009). Typically, the promises of "economic liberalization and privatization lead[ing] to increased private sector productivity and decentralization accompanied by administrative reforms lead[ing] to greater democracy, more efficient public sector investment, and faster local development" (Kohl, 2002). Instead, these policies led to increased rates of poverty and inadequate support for public services, proving to be a stain in the economic history of Bolivia that incited social protest and rejection of these policies into the present (Clements, 2009; Kohl, 2002).

This history still impacts the country's global reputation. Despite extensive diversity in people and natural resources, Bolivia is commonly identified as one of South America's poorest and least developed countries. As of 2022, the World Bank calculates Bolivia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at $3,523 (World Bank, 2022). For comparison, the GDP per capita for the US in the same year is calculated at $76,399 (World Bank, 2022). As a metric established for analyzing countries within the global economy, the country's true wealth is overlooked when further analyzing this interpretation of Bolivia as an impoverished country.

This conception of an innately poor country is somewhat backward, considering extractive industries have historically taken advantage of its impressive diversity in ecology and culture through neoliberal policies. As of 2021, the top five exports include gold (in unwrought forms), natural gas, zinc ores, silver ores, and oil cakes of soya beans (World Bank, 2021). Even after years of recovery from political instability in the battle for these valuable resources and more, these exports continue "attracting development capital that is rapidly changing the country's realities without necessarily reducing poverty" (Ibisch, 2005). For instance, the country continues to pursue new, modern ventures and, more recently, promised investments of $1.4 billion for lithium mining and processing plants to supply the high demand intensified by the use of batteries (Associated Press, 2023).

However, the exploitation of a country rich in natural resources has left this highly exporting country with very little economic prosperity remaining in the country. While participation in the global economy is expected to become a means toward economic development, trickle-down economics does not 'uplift' those in poverty when global interests privatize and/or monopolize resources for exclusive gains by elites (Kohl, 2002). Instead, global powers' exploitation of natural resources significantly shaped the hierarchy of local societies, with many local and indigenous people historically participating through physical labor yet excluded from the true extent of the economic wealth generated (Clements, 2009; Kohl, 2002). This systemic oppression by these powers enables the perpetuation of poverty, forcing participation either through direct labor or involvement in the sale of high-value goods for profit in the global market.

In addition to the destructive harvesting practices of these industries, the damaging precedent for extraction without remorse or respect for the natural resources and the

consequential impact on the land was also normalized. Therefore, a movement toward conservation and protection of the natural land recognized these impacts on local ecologies and peoples that rely on the health and resources of the land for their livelihood and well-being. Assessing the interconnected nature between the socio-political, economic, and environmental factors provides the foundations for discerning the complexity behind conservation and human development.

Conservation Practices and Human Development

In Bolivia, some of the earliest reported conservation efforts date back to the 15th century Incas, calling for "forest relicts [to] be protected because of soil degradation caused by the intensification of agriculture around the Lake Titicaca" (Ibisch, 2005). As is common among indigenous peoples, the Incas were protectors of "*pachamama*" (mother earth), and as an agrocentric society practiced sustainable agricultural techniques such as their famous terrace systems (Ibisch, 2005). Post conquest, the country went through a gradual adoption of conservation practices, such as the protection of specific species of plant and animals (cascarilla-tree, 1826; and chinchilla, 1832) and the establishment of protected areas (Sajama National Park, 1939) (Ibisch, 2005).

It wasn't until the introduction and popularization of sustainable development at the international level in the 1970s that efforts moved toward integrated approaches (over classical afforestation), ultimately fueling more concrete and intensive nature conservation through institutionalized protected areas in the 1980s (Ibisch, 2005). This was partly due to a development and deforestation boom in the Santa Cruz area that began an era in the 1990s that saw deforestation rates increase by 200% (Ibisch, 2005). Therefore, with rapid development and

urbanization centralized in this lowland area, development activities began to migrate into eastern Bolivia's remote regions, increasing the need for state management.

With a clear definition for Protected Areas written into The Political Constitution of the State (2009), this shaped the way for other essential laws such as “the Framework Law of Mother Earth (2012) [that] points to the Protected Areas System as one of the main instruments of defense of Mother Earth” (Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, n.d.). This demonstrates that at the state level, there are institutional initiatives to achieve cooperation among the environmental, cultural, social, and economic functions in the name of sustainable development.

Today, these cooperation efforts are headed by the National Service of Protected Areas (Spanish acronym SERNAP). SERNAP is the primary institution responsible for safeguarding the country’s protected areas, as it is a decentralized Ministry of Environment and Water branch. Established in 1997, SERNAP is responsible for the central coordination and planning of protected areas within a strategic framework of the National System of Protected Areas (Spanish acronym SNAP), which includes national, departmental, and municipal protected areas at varying levels of designations (Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, n.d.). Recorded in SNAP are 123 protected areas (covering 23% of the country’s total area) under the supervision of local governments, 22 of which are National Protected Areas (covering 17% of the country’s total area) directly under the management of SERNAP (Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, n.d).

As a country with a strong indigenous movement, there also becomes a heightened need for strategic alliances that directly promote the protection and integrated management of conservation practices. With indigenous groups inhabiting and owning land rights within state-defined boundaries of protected areas, SERNAP is also tasked with managing networks with the central state and autonomous territories, and “Some indigenous peoples have become actual or

potential allies because they are the legal authorities of large territories (TCO: Tierras Comunitarias de Origen)" (Ibisch, 2005). The 22 National Protected Areas house around 200,000 inhabitants, coexisting with nearly one hundred municipalities and coinciding with 14 original peasant indigenous territories (TICO) (Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas, n.d). This collaboration thus promotes indigenous cooperation, as some argue that "the declaration or creation of conservation areas, protected or with restrictions covering part of the territories, has been an important defense strategy against State decisions that violate Indigenous rights and jeopardize the environmental stability of their common assets" (IWGIA, 2023). While the true motives of state cooperation with indigenous movements are still widely debated, the country's conservation efforts and human development are interconnected. Unsurprisingly, then comes the influx of NGOs and civil society to serve as mediators to these cross-cutting issues during civil and political restructuring in the state.

State relationship with NGOs and facilitating participatory methods

As a state with a long history of power imbalances, the Bolivian government began moving toward democratic processes shaped by the 1980s neoliberal wave that pushed for decentralization. This process became even more complex once coupled with a highly biodiverse landscape and ethnically diverse people that historically posed challenges to how Bolivian citizens participated in governing politics, with social, physical, and structural barriers limiting equal and equitable participation.

Therefore, as part of political reforms being popularized globally, at the state level, Bolivia began implementing decentralization processes that institutionally attempted to promote equal representation and participation in decision-making. This was even further promoted by indigenous marches and mobilization as the movement gained momentum. Examples within

Bolivian legislature include laws such as the 1994 Law of Popular Participation (LPP and recognized legally as Law 1551) that worked to institutionalize the relationship between the state and civil society, attempting to promote equal representation and participation in decision-making at the municipal level (Nijenhuis, 2002). Similar laws and policies were passed during the Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada administration (1993-1997; 2002-2003), whose rise to power notably came from the support of key indigenous groups during a growing indigenous movement, placing pressure on the President to address indigenous rights and incorporate democratic forms of participation.

As part of the ruling *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR) party, Sanchez de Lozada amended the constitution to define Bolivia as a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation while also pushing for reforms to decentralize the government (Postero, 2007). These reforms were integral during a time in which the state and indigenous people were reshaping their relationship, resulting in "one of several softer 'neoliberal multicultural' reforms that reflected compromises neoliberal proponents made because of intense resistance from indigenous and other popular movements" (Hindery, 2013). For instance, indigenous organizations began forming across the Bolivian lowlands during the 1980s, and these groups united to organize the Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad (March for Territory and Dignity) in 1990, which "without a doubt, changed the face of Bolivia forever" (Postero, 2007).

In analyzing the original legal document (*Ley 1551,* 1994), the purpose of the law is to involve the indigenous, peasant, and urban communities in local-level political and economic decision-making through decentralization. Institutionalizing the process of popular participation hopes to place preventative measures for corruption and inefficient systems of bureaucracy that inhibit local development. Further, the law promotes the equal distribution and administration of

public resources and “Strengthens the political and economic instruments necessary to improve representative democracy, facilitating citizen participation and guaranteeing equal opportunities at the levels of representation for women and men.” (*Ley 1551,* 1994, Title I, Chapter I, Article 1, p. 1). Ultimately, the law was designed to improve the quality of life for Bolivians through the establishment and facilitation of the participation process.

Therefore, this institutionalization of participatory laws not only increased citizen participation but also signaled an opportunity for additional stakeholders to support and facilitate structures for participation that shaped the country's economic, social, and environmental development. Notably, the rise of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) during this same period facilitated their intervention to reinforce participatory efforts, such that “During the fifteen years preceding the LPP, both municipalities received considerable NGO attention, and since the passage of the law both have received ongoing NGO investments for training in participatory planning, project design and implementation, and administration.” (Kohl, 2003). This example highlights one of the many ways state actions and policy share an important relationship with NGO interventions that will be further examined in this thesis.

Today, in Bolivia, numerous conservation NGOs and grassroots organizations uphold the country's rich biodiversity and cultural diversity. The importance of localized environmental action became even more pronounced in 2005 when the first indigenous president, Evo Morales, was elected by popular vote (Postero, 2007). The Morales administration was elected with great support from civil society as many “NGOs working with Bolivia’s social movements were instrumental in bringing Morales and his MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party to power.” (Achtenberg, 2015). This shift in leadership from a country once deeply positioned within the

1980s neoliberal counter-revolution (Argent, 2007) created the expectation for a government that would push for more inclusive development plans and policies, providing a platform for alternatives like community-based conservation (CBC) to thrive through strong roots within civil society. However, much debate still surrounds the future of Bolivia's development model. Recent controversies arise among NGOs of indigenous, environmental, and civil society as Bolivia still claims dependence on an extractivist development model pushed by the Morales administration, painted as a necessary evil to support the internal, economic support for a transition towards 'communitarian socialism' (Achtenberg, 2015).

Therefore, as a country that denounces histories of oppressive neoliberal interventions (also historically for Bolivia seen through imperialist and capitalist extraction of resources such as natural gas, oil, timber, and other minerals), there seems to be still this interest to promote participation in the global economy in a manner that will advance the country's economic success. For this reason, relations between NGOs and the state have more recently become strained due to external motives that affect an economy that heavily relies on extractive industries to fund major government social programs, which comes at the expense of the high demand for alternative development and environmental protection promoted by NGOs and further creating tensions with claims to undermine Bolivian autonomy (Ellerbeck, 2015). This demonstrates a current shift in the relationship between the state and NGOs, as their collaborative efforts to develop and carry out environmental and development agendas evolve into mistrust and doubt.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Ecology Framework

To ground this thesis study and its findings, a literature review was conducted to understand this case study within the broader scope of the research. This chapter provides the general findings from this academic literature review and the foundational framework used to analyze primary research.

As evidenced by the country's brief history described in Chapter 2, Bolivia has a complex network of actors and stakeholders that depend on natural land and resources to shape their outcomes. In this sense, this thesis aims to apply a framework of analysis in which social, political, and economic factors can be addressed in our understanding of environmental changes and their effects on human development.

To accomplish this, it is important first to acknowledge that "Ecological change is imbued with political meaning," thus making it apparent that environmental challenges, such as "Global warming, forest degradation, soil erosion, biological simplification, and growing land, water, and air pollution, reflect but also modify political processes at the local, national and international level" (Bryant, 1991). Therefore, a political ecological approach provides a framework to unpack the complex nature of human-environment relationships.

Arising in the late 1980s as a dominant framework of analysis, "Political ecology is regarded to have been developed in response to the more narrow perspective offered by cultural ecologists, particularly the lack of attention given to the political and social contexts of environmental change" (Jones, 2008). That is, previously lacking in studying human-environment relations was unpacking the politics that govern people and environments while also considering those who truly wield decision-making power. Therefore, from this gap in

critical analysis, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) popularized the approach, and "the emergence of political ecology has facilitated a significant deepening of the analysis of environmental problems in the developing world, not least by combining attention to local specificity and 'the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources'" (Jones, 2008).

As Jones eloquently explains, "Political ecology is characterized by attention to the diversity of ecological environments; a sensitivity to the role of the state and the wider global economy in fashioning environmental change; contextual analysis of multiple scales of influence; emphasis on the diverse responses of decision-makers; and affirmation of the centrality of poverty, exploitation, and inequality as causes of ecological deterioration (Jones, 2008). To further elaborate, political ecology is also "…defined as an inquiry into the political sources, conditions, and ramifications of environmental change… focus[ing] on the interplay of diverse socio-political forces, and the relationship of those forces to environmental change" (Bryant, 1991). For this study, it feels important to apply a framework of analysis that can holistically analyze environmental changes and the intersections between people, political economy, and power.

This framework is especially relevant in studies of sustainable development and challenges the field to consider key political themes as fundamental to analysis. Thus, "By examining the politics of environmental change, political ecology acknowledges that environment and development, wealth and poverty, are inextricably linked" (Bryant, 1991). That is, political ecology explores how environmental changes are integrated into the political and economic relationships that shape a physical area and reveals the ways these relationships reinforce or challenge certain interests as well as "exposes the inequities of such relationships precisely to suggest ways in which sustainable and equitable development may then take place"

(Bryant, 1991). Therefore, through a political ecological approach, the environment can be distinguished "...as an arena where different social actors with asymmetrical political power are competing for access to and control of natural resources" (Vaccaro, et al., 2013).

Additionally, applying a framework such as political ecology provides the lens for analysis in exploring the impacts of neoliberal agendas concerning and at the detriment of conservation efforts. Neoliberalism became more mainstream in the 1970s and had a particularly interesting relationship with conservation as both evolved alongside each other. That is, over the decades, conservation policy has "become infused with a neoliberal economic philosophy, promoting, among other elements: 1) the creation of capitalist markets for natural resource exchange and consumption; 2) privatization of resource control within these markets; 3) commodification of resources so that they can be traded within markets; 4) withdrawal of direct government intervention from market transactions; and 5) decentralization of resource governance to local authorities and non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs)" (Fletcher, 2010).

Therefore, analyzing this relationship questions how inequality has become embedded in conservation, pushing for a framework that "incorporates concepts of territory, biodiversity, life corridors, local economies and territorial governability, and alternative development. (Escobar, 1998). A political ecological approach then provides the framework to assess the impacts of neoliberal politics that facilitates "the means by which wealth, power, and resources are appropriated by the few at the expense of the many ", thereby creating and heightening social, political, and economic inequality (Fletcher, 2010).

These impacts also directly affect sustainable development plans and action (or inaction), increasing the need to analyze the power hierarchy implicit in political decision-making and its

disproportionate capacity to change environments (Braun, 2006; Li, 2007; Hindery, 2013). For instance, even if a state favors sustainable development measures, implementing reform may have limitations, given other stakeholder interests and powers at play (Bryant, 1991). For these reasons, it is within this political ecological approach that this thesis considers the multifaceted and complex interactions between the social, political, economic, and environmental factors at play to analyze the underlying relationships and power dynamics within human development and conservation efforts.

Finally, this framework also helps to conceptualize temporality as a critical component for analyzing the impacts of conservation action over time and spaces. As an aspect underexplored within resource extraction and development, "The analytical tools of political ecology bring greater attention to the material and political dimensions of resources and power, which are shaped by temporal and affective dimensions" (Braun, 2020). Therefore, a temporal approach helps to understand and reveal an "ongoing and dynamic series of consequences over time", demonstrating the importance of temporality to "our understanding of the complex, multi-faceted consequences of resource extractive [projects]…" (Braun, 2020). In this sense, a political ecology approach helps to incorporate elements of temporality, exploring how discourses about conservation and development by those implementing conservation action change and evolve over time and, more specifically, over the course of key moments of intervention with local communities. For this study, this approach will serve well in analyzing WWF's intervention over the course of time in a specific, localized area as well as within in the sector of conservation and environmental planning in Bolivia.

Conservation and Protected Areas

Although topics on biodiversity and conservation have decades-old history, there is more recently a pressing need for global action toward environmentally focused initiatives. Human-environment impacts are increasing as societies and landscapes evolve dynamically and simultaneously, resulting in heightened loss of biodiversity and instances of climate change. Conservation has been promoted as a means to address these environmental challenges potentially, and "According to the IUCN/WWF/UNEP World Conservation Strategy Definition, conservation is the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-support systems, the preservation of genetic diversity, and the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems" (MacDonald, 2003). While this definition is among those widely accepted within the literature on conservation, many subtleties to the sector of biodiversity and conservation prompt a critical perspective of this definition and its origins. While this thesis does not seek an 'accurate' definition of conservation, the goal is to demonstrate the conservation sector as inadvertently a political topic.

As early as the nineteenth century, classical conservation theory developed in Europe to protect cultural objects and sites that claimed value and heritage worth preservation (Muñoz-Viñas, 2005). Preservation efforts have historically been at the forefront of classical conservation theory and emphasize the protection of "three kinds of integrity: physical, aesthetic and historical" (Muñoz-Viñas, 2005). Within the environmental context, this would, in theory, leave biological matter (physical) and natural ecosystems (aesthetic) valued over all other people and activities.

Moving towards contemporary conservation theory, the emphasis on biodiversity emerged in the sciences and development in the late 1980s, where at the global level, institutions

like the UN and global nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were coming together to unify discourses of biodiversity through treaties like the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio) as well as other reports to Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects that triggered discussions of conservation practices that strictly defined action through protection, preservation, and sustainable resource management in areas that faced loss in biodiversity (Escobar, 1998). Therefore, definitions of conservation have historically been dynamic and become even further complicated by the constantly shifting human-environment relationship that intersects with culture, environment, and policy.

From the broader literature on biodiversity and conservation, it also becomes evident that distinctive discourses around biodiversity have inadvertently shaped the definition and thus action toward conservation, specifically one that aligns with Northern/Western-centric knowledge, understanding, and meanings of conservation. In this sense, it is this Western-produced knowledge that dominates the current discourses surrounding conservation "To focus them on modernist behavior, in the form of state policy, scientific knowledge, and bureaucratic action, all [in line] with a modernist definition of Conservation" (MacDonald, 2003). Therefore, while much of the literature attempts to understand the culture and people that inhabit distinctive ecological landscapes, there is little regard for local understanding of conservation practices. Thus, critiques of conservation as a mostly Western-biased and dominated field demonstrate the preferred discourse on conservation that comes with the emergence of default to systems and bureaucratic mechanisms to accomplish conservation action that prioritizes productivity and outcomes.

In addition to this discourse, the sector is one that "fosters a complex network of actors, from international organizations and Western NGOs to scientists, prospectors, and local

communities and social movements," creating multiple layers of mismatched ideas, goals, and actions to conservation efforts (Escobar, 1998). As more actors become involved, so too increases the perspective and political stakes that mark increased roles of NGO, state, and global intervention in conservation, more recently as a means to development through the improvement of livelihoods with the hopes to simultaneously combat the negative effects of climate change and loss in biodiversity. Critical analysis of the literature then exposes the different stakeholders and definitions of conservation, often crafted by those of varying interests and power hierarchies that ignore and discredit local definitions of environmental conservation practices.

An increase in stakeholders ultimately led to varying levels of policy and management of conservation efforts, such as the creation of protected areas. While these preservation efforts were promoted within fundamentalist conservation theory as a means to protect and preserve natural lands, in contemporary times, the protected area has an undeniable link to the rights of access (Vaccaro et al., 2013; Hindery, 2013; Martin, 2003). Protected areas quickly evolved into a popular tool to decrease the loss and destruction of biodiversity while simultaneously supporting several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve long-term sustainable development for those who inhabit or rely on the areas for their livelihood. Recognizing that protected areas are also the source of goods and services for many humans through subsistence or industries like ecotourism (Martin, 2006), the need arose to create integrated practices within protected areas that promote the sustainable use of natural resources that would facilitate economic development.

True to its name, protected areas create specified borders with distinct jurisdictions that outline exclusionary rights, and "...are implemented by different social and institutional actors (often powerful), suffered by other social groups (often not so powerful), and enjoyed by yet

another set of players (tourists and scientists)" (Vaccaro et al., 2013). Although establishing protected areas is a geographic activity in defining boundaries, it is just as equally a social activity with its own political and economic consequences in which stakeholders' interests and preferences lead in shaping the environment (Vaccaro et al., 2013). While this practice may prove successful in preventing certain external entities from inserting themselves into ecosystems, it just as easily enables how other interests can gain access. This occurs simultaneously as indigenous people are stripped of land management and decision-making rights to land that they have inhabited for generations.

Further, as these areas are managed through Northern/Western conceptions of conservation, this creates the opportunity for certain global political economics to infiltrate the sector. Specifically, the neoliberalization of the conservationist market has set the stage for "an emerging multiplicity of social agents: the national public institutions develop intricate networks and relationships with the international NGO complex, and the corporations interacting with them (Vaccaro et al., 2013). As these kinds of entities with unequal power dynamics enter the space and apply their prioritization of discourses, the circumstances arise when terms such as conservation, economic development, and sustainable resources management can be defined interconnectedly. That is, "A commercial potential has pushed conservation, a field traditionally dominated by public institutions, science, and collective heritage ideals, into a dialogue with private operators…[where] nature is extracted from the public domain and becomes yet another commodity interacting in a multifactorial market in which conservation, extraction, or gentrification have similar standing" (Vaccaro et al., 2013).

For these reasons and more, protected areas are one of many classical nature conservation tools under scrutiny in contemporary and emerging conservation theory and practice, prompting

the rise of alternative approaches such as biocultural diversity (Boillat et al., 2013). While protected areas are promoted as integrated to support both people and the natural resources, a critical analysis requires further consideration of the relationship between those receiving the rights to access resources (institutions and local/indigenous peoples), the management practices being implemented to enable harvesting of these resources (governments, NGOs, private entities), and the beneficiary of the outcomes to these practices (local, national and global now gain access to resources via participation in the global market).

Community-based conservation and Adoption by NGOs

As criticisms of classical conservation practices grew within the literature, so did the emergence of human-environment approaches that take a deeper consideration of humans and our proximity to conservation. As protected areas were being challenged for their limited inclusivity in governance and even, at times, harm to biodiversity, emerging concepts rose to advocate for conservation practices that considered both the environment and humans. In the last two decades, alternative approaches to conservation have been popularized, such as "the concept of biocultural diversity… [which is] based on the observation that there is an "inextricable link" between biological and cultural diversity (International Society of Ethnobiology 1988; Posey 1999) and that these two kinds of diversities often face common threats (Harmon 2002; Lepofsky 2009)" (Boillat et al., 2013). Through this lens, conservation has been pushed to emphasize the need for a strategy that is inclusive of both biological and cultural diversity, specifically through "...approach[es] for integrating human development and biodiversity conservation initiatives, especially when indigenous and traditional communities are involved" (Boillat et al., 2013).

This ultimately created a gradual shift toward approaches to conservation with mutually beneficial outcomes to humans and biodiversity and thus set a precedent within conservation

action seen to date. To promote holistic conservation practices, there became the need to ground efforts to apply "a more nuanced understanding of the nature of people, communities, institutions and their interrelations at various levels" through the integration of conservation and development seen by community-based conservation (Berkes, 2004). Therefore, moving away from protectionist conservation that separates people and nature, community-based conservation includes a range of localized practices to establish integrated approaches to protecting biodiversity and natural resources with and alongside local communities for mutual benefit (Berkes, 2007).

Within the protected areas strategy, community-based conservation became a welcomed response in leveraging human-environment relationships to achieve conservation goals. That is, to address the delicate balance in biocultural diversity within protected areas, the success of these initiatives was understood to be dependent on the fact that "effective and long term environmental protection… must accommodate the needs of local people so as to secure sustainable livelihoods and enhance their well-being" (Oldekop et al., 2016). Thus, community-based conservation came to serve as a means to achieve two key outcomes within protected areas: conservation of biodiversity and the economic development of local peoples, most commonly through sustainable resource management.

Given the need to apply localized approaches to conservation and development projects, community-based conservation quickly rose in popularity as a means to meet shared goals in conservation and improving livelihoods. Since community-based conservation aims to increase local people's benefits (often economic) through alternative livelihood activities, the expectation is that human threats to conservation will be curbed in this process (Berkes, 2007). In this sense, "Community-based conservation (CBC) interventions take a variety of forms, from community

outreach to integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) in which development and conservation goals are equally prioritized" (Waylen et al., 2010).

Therefore, as states fell short in providing adequate support toward conservation efforts such as protected areas, the limited institutional resources and funding available typically went toward nongovernmental organizations to adopt and manage initiatives. During the late 20th century, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the global and local scale quickly increased to fill gaps in services not provided by the state and were further popularized through their strengthening of local civil society and support toward grassroots movements and organizations (Berkes, 2004; Escobar, 1998). NGOs and other civil society organizations were quick to assume the role of mediator to bridge the gap between state entities and local peoples, as seen in much of the literature on biodiversity and conservation that emphasizes the need for participatory approaches to conservation efforts that highlight the importance of civil society to empower indigenous peoples and community groups, functioning within the realm of alternative theories of development (Berkes, 2004).

Therefore, community-based conservation emphasizes bottom-up approaches to development that counter top-down economic models historically enforced onto emerging nations to achieve environmental and cultural conservation that relies on local knowledge and contexts to inform conservation discourse and action. Although emerging from the clear need to integrate human impacts and well-being into the conservation sectors, the efficacy of community-based conservation is still widely debated in the sector, with many split on the benefits and limitations of its practice.

Benefits and Limitations of Community-Based Conservation

The sector more easily recognizes the benefits of the community-based conservation approach. This is considering that the various approaches arose from a need for inclusive conservation action to address human needs and protect biodiversity. Not to mention, these approaches developed typically as "a reaction to the failures of state-run exclusionary conservation, [and] were more inclusive and sensitive to local needs" (Berkes, 2007).

In the 1990s, community-based conservation moved toward creating a link between conservation and benefits to local peoples, explicitly establishing incentives for people to protect biodiversity and practice long-term sustainable resource management (Berkes, 2007). Studies have been conducted to test this assumption, and "Many suggest that provision of local economic benefits acts as an incentive for pro-conservation behaviors…." while others "...found that ICDP [Integrated Conservation and Development Projects] success is indeed associated with good market links and greater provision of benefits and use of natural resources" (Waylen et al., 2010). Therefore, many point to the motives for this inclusivity as being directly linked to the financial incentives that generated economic development opportunities for locals.

Another defining characteristic of community-based conservation emphasizes the need to incorporate local knowledge and participation within development initiatives and theory, specifically including local voices in the conservation narrative. As is inferred in the name, participation is key to community-based conservation and the promotion of conservation and is desirable considering "local involvement can allow incorporation of local knowledge and entails greater interest in and ownership over the resource in question, and so greater concern for its conservation" (Waylen et al., 2010). Additionally, local knowledge often spans generations of indigenous and small-scale farming communities, providing much-needed contextual

background and insights into natural processes and landscapes from natives that have long lived off the land. Thus, incorporating local knowledge and including mediums for local participation is argued as necessary for defining the success of community-based conservation interventions.

These are among just some of the benefits that advocates of community-based conservation promote, emphasizing the direct impact on human and environmental outcomes. However, along with purported benefits, several limitations also challenge the efficacy and motives of community-based conservation. As a more 'modern' approach, the sector quickly marketed and adopted community-based conservation for the innovative integration of humans into the conservation movement. However, it is also important to consider "pre-existing assumptions about the "right" approach to conservation [that] often obscure important differences in both power and understanding, and can limit the success of policy and programmatic interventions" (McShane et al., 2011). Thus, despite the limited successes experienced with community-based conservation activities, these are far outweighed by a growing body of critiques of the approach.

Although community-based conservation was implemented as the more inclusive governance strategy for protected areas, some argue that "in many cases this change seems to have been merely rhetorical" (Boillat et al., 2013). In theory, community-based conservation was meant to be the intersection of human development, conservation, and cultural knowledge through community participation. However, even within this approach, there is a widespread challenge to the degree to which inclusivity is achieved and by whose definition this success is measured. More often, exclusive conservation strategies created, implemented, and managed by external entities (state institutions and NGOs) can negatively impact local people and harm biological diversity, which is "especially the case in cultural landscapes, where humans have

been interacting with their environment for a long time" (Boillat et al., 2013). Therefore, while community-based conservation typically includes the physical participation of local communities, meaningful participation is questioned when considering local/indigenous conservation knowledge, governance structures, and those that actually claim the decision-making power.

Considering the little to no standards in the quantity or quality of local participation, critiques of inclusivity also sparked debates on the over-saturation of community-based conservation as the new solution to achieve global conservation goals (Brosius et al., 2005). As the popularity of community-based conservation grew among institutions and NGOs, some argued that the approach had a certain loss of integrity. Taking a more critical stance, opinions in the sector have called out the trendy nature of community-based conservation approaches, such as Jeffery Hackel stating it would eventually "be difficult to find a rural conservation project that does not define itself as community-based" (Hackel, 1999; Berkes, 2004), as well as Barrett et al. that noted, "the current fashion for community-based natural resource management overemphasizes the place of local communities in …conservation efforts, much as the previous top-down model under-emphasized [it]" (Barrett et al., 2001; Berkes, 2004). Therefore, as non-inclusive conservation approaches become more heavily criticized, the sector seemingly overcorrected in emphasizing community participation yet still administering these community projects in the familiar top-down style.

This over-prescription of community-based conservation approaches also reveals another limitation that analyzes the state's role and motives in promoting community-driven projects. Historically, in conservation, "government policies for the protection of natural resources have consisted of conventional measures of expansion of natural parks or social forestry programs

with little or no community participation" (Escobar, 1998). As public opinion shifted toward advocacy for community involvement, community-based conservation presented an opportunity for states to adopt the approach or align themselves with entities carrying out these activities (i.e., NGOs).

Further, as the criticism for the protectionist 'fortress conservation' model grew and was "replaced in many places by a seemingly more participatory community-based conservation (CBC) approach, the CBC model has itself been widely critiqued… [for] its common failure to achieve substantial conservation and … its implication within neoliberal ideology" (Fletcher, 2010). Examples of this are especially present in Bolivia, such as when the "establishment of the [Chiquitano Forest] conservation program demonstrated that despite the reputed rise of community- based conservation in the 1980s and 1990s (Adams and Hulme 2001), fortress- style conservation had triumphed once again, representing a shift "back to the barriers" (Hutton et al. 2005; Lauermann 2011)" (Hindery, 2013). This history specifically implicates WWF in promoting fortress-style conservation action despite indigenous resistance, which will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Thus, a more critical lens claims governments leveraged economic development opportunities for rural communities that allowed the state a level of access to these conservation areas and their natural resources to extract natural resources for sale at local and global markets. That is, through certain governing institutions and sustainable resource management programs, local communities could theoretically gain access to the global market for increased economic opportunities, but through participation in a system that has historically exploited marginalized groups and questionable methods of sustainable resource extraction.

In addition to the adoption of community-based conservation by governments and NGOs, some challenge the unequal burden of responsibility these institutions place on local and indigenous communities to respond to loss in biodiversity. While the sector can agree that the extreme loss in biodiversity is human-induced, conservation solutions seem to be mostly targeted toward resource management and control by local communities. However, these solutions overly emphasize the human-induced habitat destruction by local peoples from activities such as hunting, land use change, and overconsumption of forest resources, as well as dwell on the rise of these pressures on protected areas and conservation as the needs of local populations continue to increase (Oldekop et al., 2016). While these concerns hold more weight in terms of ensuring resources can sustain growing populations in the long term, this narrative also places the responsibility of conservation efforts on local and indigenous people, even though they are not the main offenders nor contributors to the mass destruction of ecosystems. Specifically, in the Bolivian Amazon, the culprits of land degradation include clearing forests for large- and small-scale cattle ranching and soy cultivation (Prijatelj Videmšek & Krivic, 2023).

Especially considering that rapid loss in biodiversity is a generally new phenomenon accentuated by a global economy fueled by consumer markets, critics claim that prescribing Western conservation solutions (such as community-based conservation) to solve Western-created problems disregards the larger culprits, such as major corporations, government agencies, and other private entities, and the magnitude of biodiversity destruction they cause. In this sense, regardless of the fact that indigenous people have "...contributed the least to climate change, [they] are among the first to face its direct effects." and are forced to take action to secure their future (IWGIA, 2023). Therefore, assigning local people to tackle the preservation of biodiversity through solutions like community-based conservation is counterproductive toward

advancing conservation goals that will always take a back seat to the motives of a globalized market. Even more so, solutions created by dominant Western discourses of conservation lack respect and cultural competency for Indigenous wisdom that has "cultivated knowledge systems and customary practices for countless generations…to manage and protect the ecosystems...which have historically contributed to the efforts to conserve ecosystems and biodiversity (IWGIA, 2023). Thus, the current discourse in conservation is filled with culturally biased and loaded terms, such as nature and environment, that claim preconceived definitions (often informed by those in power) and disregard indigenous expertise to their surroundings (West et al., 2006).

CHAPTER IV: CASE STUDY: PD ANMI ITÉNEZ

Introduction of PD ANMI Iténez and TCO Itonama

Covering an area of 600,000 km2 (approximately half the country's land mass) and holding an abundance of plant and animal biodiversity, the Bolivian Amazon is an obvious candidate for protectionist conservation initiatives (Singh et al., 2022). The 1970s marked a time in Bolivian history when the state began declaring protected areas as high-priority regions during an initial push to preserve precious habitats and wildlife. This included the region of Iténez, which was declared an Immobilized Forest Reserve (Decreto Supremo N° 21446) and prohibited the public from hunting and harvesting resources.

For many years, this has proved controversial as the area is home to many rural and indigenous communities that have long been living off the land and natural resources. This conflict ushered in a new trend for participatory governance in protected areas starting in the mid-1990s, eventually resulting in the creation of the Iténez Departamental Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management (PD ANMI Iténez or Iténez Protected Area) on April 8th, 2003 (Resoulcion Prectural N°047/2003) in the Department of Beni, Bolivia. Therefore, this state-led conservation intervention and its impact on the local people presents an interesting case study to observe development patterns and outcomes within the Iténez Protected Area.

Situated 100% within these state-defined boundaries of the Iténez Protected Area is the legally recognized indigenous territory TCO Itonama (Figure 2). According to the 2012 census, the Itonama population totals 16,158 people throughout the country (INE, I, 2015). The highest concentration of their population is in the Beni Department at 7,158 people, of which approximately 5,564 (927 families) reside within TCO Itonama (INE, 2015; Ministerio de

Educación, 2014). TCO Itonama is organized under the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB) and represents the people that inhabit the Bolivian Lowlands, "with eight organizations of regional or ethnic character grouping the 34 indigenous peoples "occupying this region (IWGIA, 2010). These organizations that compose the CIDOB are further broken down into local organizing groups, with TCO Itonama falling under the Itonama Indigenous Peoples Subcentral (SCPII) of Magdalena that is part of "the Central of the Indigenous Peoples of Beni (CPIB).. which groups 10 indigenous peoples organized in eight

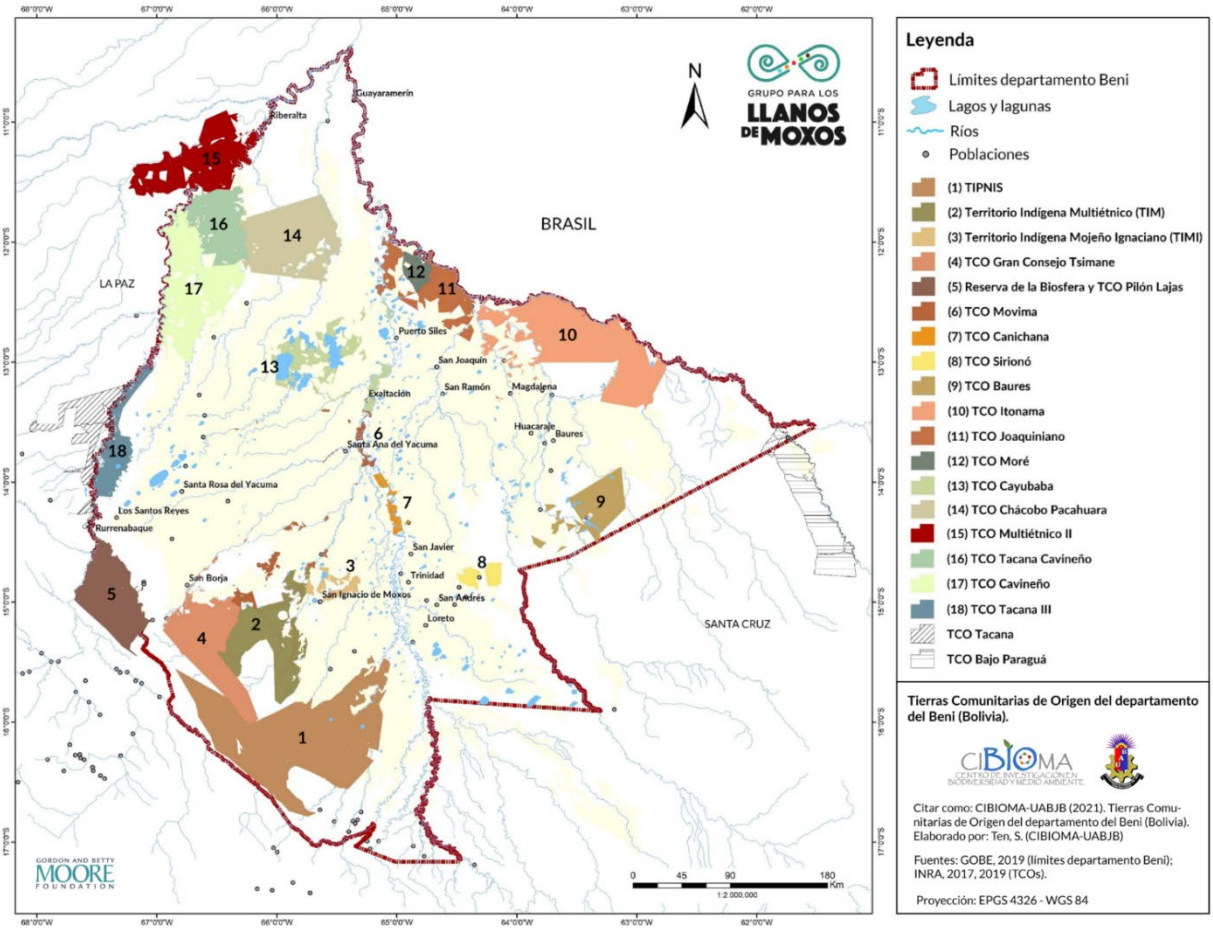


Figure 2. TCOs of the Department of Beni, Bolivia. TCO Itonama is #10

Source: CIBIOMA. (2020). Tierras Comunitarias de Origen tituladas – Beni [Map]. Retrieved from https://mapoteca.cibioma.edu.bo/mapoteca/tierras-comunitarias-de-origen-tituladas-beni/

centrals and 26 sub-centrals." (IWGIA, 2010). The formal designation for TCO Itonama came in 1996 when representatives of CPIB and SCPII presented their request to the national government for the legal representation of the multi-ethnic indigenous groups that now make up the TCO Itonama (Winter, 2002).

Therefore, the need for equitable representation is heightened in this setting, as the decisions made at the municipal level for the Iténez Protected Area impact not only the livelihoods of 29 local communities (approximately 850 households within the protected area) but also various actors all dependent on activities within the Iténez Protected Area.

WWF History in the Region

The Iténez Protected Area is a region of great importance to the World Wildlife Fund Bolivia (WWF Bolivia) work. Their work is guided by their organizational objectives of encouraging strategic ecosystems, integrating the management of protected areas, protecting species such as the pink river dolphin (locally known as *bufeo*) and the giant otter, and promoting organizational strengthening and sustainable livelihoods of diverse Amazonian communities. These goals also align well with Bolivia's National Biodiversity Strategy, which aims to "Develop the economic potential of the country's biological diversity, ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems, species, and genetic resources" (MDSP, 2002). The Strategy even further emphasized the need for human-led activities to achieve this 'economic potential' through increasing the productive capacities of the various actors of the protected area coupled with the equitable distribution of benefits generated to be contributed "... towards national development through improving the quality of life in the population" (MDSP, 2002).

WWF Bolivia's work in the Iténez area was first initiated in 2003 when the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) partnered with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (GBMF) to lead the Amazon Headwaters Initiative (AHI), which was simultaneously implemented in Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil (World Wildlife Fund, 2012). This program provided a comprehensive framework for a nine-year initiative to support the management of the protected area, including organizational and institutional platforms, natural resource management, sustainable production and harvesting, and fair markets. Even more notable, within the five-pronged strategy, the initiative aimed to achieve its objectives through "(iii) participatory management of PAs; [and] (iv) natural resource management within and around PAs" (World Wildlife Fund, 2012).

Given the alignment of this initiative with Bolivia's National Biodiversity strategy, WWF established strategic alliances with local governments and state institutions. This included signing cooperation agreements with the Prefecture of the Department of Beni in favor of "consolidating the PD ANMI Iténez's Management Committee, as well as strengthening its protection system through participatory processes involving local actors and organizations…" (World Wildlife Fund, 2005). This was to be achieved through planning and management activities supported by the local municipalities and outlined in the operative annual plan of the Iténez Protected Area in order to represent collaborative efforts "of the conservation strategies and sustainable use of resources in the Iténez – Mamoré Corridor (CIM), an area recognized by the Bolivian Congress in 2004 as an ecological corridor of national importance…" (World Wildlife Fund, 2005). Therefore, even with the conclusion of the Headwaters Initiative in 2012, WWF and state officials maintained an interest in continuing and strengthening the line of work with the communities of the Iténez Protected Area, specifically projects associated with the production and sustainable management of forest and river resources.

Now, after 19 years of working in the area, WWF Bolivia has forged strong relationships with the local communities of the protected area, establishing a level of trust that has allowed for programs to be further integrated into local livelihoods. This is also the result of regional partnerships that WWF Bolivia facilitated by introducing external institutions and organizations to the area and local communities. Over the years, this has included working relationships that WWF strategically leveraged to reinforce projects in the area alongside institutions such as Bolivian Food Company and Derivatives (EBA); Institute for People, Agriculture and Ecology (IPHAE); NGO Faunagua; and Foundation For Participatory Community Development (Fundepco). Therefore, for the Iténez region, there has been a clear increase in support from external entities since WWF Bolivia arrived in the area, as well as the subsequent conservation projects implemented alongside local communities.

From this history of intervention, it is important to recognize WWF Bolivia's efforts to integrate the social and economic outcomes toward environmental conservation and how it establishes a pathway for the state to realize economically driven strategies to manage the harvesting and sustainable use of local ecosystems within protected areas. In fact, it is even more important to recognize the globally acclaimed conservation NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) that "started to redefine concepts such as nature, use, or jurisdiction in order to consider nature and culture in their work" with resulting international agreements "...designed to integrate pre-modern forms of environmental management and local communities into conservationist institutional networks", and further resulting in changing "discourse[s] and practice[s] of conservationist ideology in regard to the acceptance of human use and habitation inside protected areas" (Vaccaro et al., 2013).

It is also important to touch on WWF's conservation initiatives and its historical reputation in the country. Most notable were activities carried out in the Chiquitano Forest, in which "…WWF was involved in some community-based conservation initiatives in the region (not directed exclusively at Chiquitanos), [and] its interests were more oriented toward biodiversity conservation— as its subsequent involvement in an exclusionary conservation program demonstrates" (Hindery, 2013). In an effort to conserve critical forests, WWF entered agreements with private oil companies to denounce a US government-funded pipeline and establish the Chiquitano Forest Conservation Program, which later would be "…touted by the companies and conservationists as a model for community-based conservation, [but was] in fact is a contemporary form of "fortress conservation," one that epitomizes green imperialism and green neoliberalism." (Hindery, 2013). As Chiquitano indigenous resistance arose against top-down conservation programs that excluded indigenous communities and the government from negotiation and governance, "Conflict over the pipeline and the exclusionary conservation program would mark the beginning of rising mobilization during the country's 2000– 2005 anti-neoliberal rebellion." (Hindery, 2013).

After a couple of years, WWF withdrew their activities, acknowledging their mistakes and stating that the conservation program paradoxically endangered the Chiquitano Forest's conservation, which only "… highlights the persistence of fortress style initiatives despite the reputed rise of community-based conservation." (Hindery, 2013). Within this context, a deeper analysis of conservation activities conducted by NGOs and backed by state governments/third parties should be more critically addressed. In this case study, this is particularly of interest when considering the rural and indigenous communities of Iténez did not seem to be aware of this controversial WWF history.

Regardless of local awareness of this history, this only further demonstrates the importance of understanding temporality and its lasting effects (Braun, 2020). With failed attempts at meaningful community-based conservation, ideas and conditions changed that prompted WWF to reconsider how to present itself and its work. And even though there are currently attempts to reinvent its image, reputation, and engagement with local communities, this history is still present and actively shaping current realities. Although intervention in the Iténez Protected Area was just beginning for WWF, their previous conservation action and tensions with indigenous communities existed alongside new intervention planning and project development for the region.

WWF Community-based conservation Projects

WWF Bolivia's most recent operations continue programs within the Iténez region that help support the management, harvesting, and sales of natural resources with funding support from WWF Switzerland since 2012. Within the WWF project tracking system, these programs fall under the project name "Sustainable management as a strategy for conserving biodiversity and improving livelihoods of indigenous people and rural communities in the Eastern Bolivian Amazon". As alluded to in the title, these projects are an effort to reduce the conversion of forests, strengthen local livelihoods, and support the management of the protected area through greater appreciation and appropriation of the area by community members. While these resources were previously harvested primarily for subsistence and/or opportunistic sales, it is critical to note that this WWF approach to projects is aligned with green capitalist philosophy. That is, these projects are market-based to promote income generation rather than strengthening traditional subsistence harvesting practices.

Specifically, this refers to the sustainable management of forest and river resources, which within their programs currently includes wild cacao, *castaña* (brazil nut), *Yacaré* (caiman), and commercial fishing with the communities settled within the Iténez Protected Area. One of the early projects introduced to the area was targeted specifically toward managing and commercializing cacao. From this came a second phase in which the *castaña* was adopted (with similar project goals to that of the cacao project) along with managing river caiman hunting and diversifying commercial fishing. Each of these natural resources has a distinct history that WWF programs have further shaped. A brief summary of these histories is provided for additional context to the establishment and realization of projects that promote community-based conservation. It is also important to note that while all natural resources are referenced throughout this thesis, there is a particular emphasis on forest resources (cacao and *castaña*) that are discussed.

Wild Cacao and Castaña

Cacao and the *castaña* are both native to this region. However, each has its own history and perceived value by local communities. Some communities in the area have traditionally harvested either *castaña* or cacao (or both) but with great difficulty. Most communities mentioned the intensive labor required for these products, and for low quantities in yield and prices on the market. However, out of necessity, many communities were left with no choice but to take the time and energy to harvest these crops for low returns. Therefore, efforts in these projects provide community members with the skills and equipment to access and operationalize these crops to their full potential. While the cultivating and harvesting of these resources are very different, both projects are similar in that they aim to provide training on best practices for each respective crop to increase the quantity and quality of the product, overall increasing the income

generated when sold to regional markets. Specifically, with the recent popularity of *castaña* in regional markets, emphasis has been placed on organic farming practices that can be sold at a higher profit. Similar certifications are being pursued for cacao, but it had not yet been implemented at the time of research.

Yacaré - river caimán

Yacaré is a regional species of caiman that local populations have traditionally hunted for subsistence and is locally known as *lagarto*. Hunting for this species has long been practiced in the area and, over time, has become a popular delicacy in the region. However, before the establishment of the Iténez Protected Area, outsiders to the area exploited this new market, and overharvesting drastically reduced caiman populations. This ultimately led to restrictions by the state on caiman hunting in the early 70s to preserve the species. Unfortunately, due to this ban, the practice has slowly declined as the skills and knowledge to hunt caiman have mostly been maintained by older populations. To date, there are minimal caiman hunters left as only a few elders passed the tradition on to younger generations.

Initially prompted by community requests, this project aims to maintain and strengthen traditional caiman hunting. The project focuses on carefully managing and maintaining caiman populations through hunting quotas and regulations. Project activities predominantly rely on training on best practices for hunting caiman, informed by local populations and institutional experts. These practices restrict the hunting of females and young males (distinguishable by size) and rely on hunting larger males past the point of reproduction. This project also promotes and trains local hunters to take advantage of the full carcass by treating and selling the hide not traditionally practiced in the area.

Paiche

Regarding commercial fishing, this project works to reduce the pressures of harvesting the local and endangered species of fish known as *pacú*. Historically, *pacú* was favored over other species regardless of their smaller size, as their abundance (at one time) and size proved easier to catch than other species. To lessen this pressure, commercial fishing is monitored (particularly that of *pacú*) and targeted toward other fish species, particularly an abundant and invasive species known as *paiche.* Further, for this project, the shift in focus requires equipment and training on *paiche* fish practices, including a large harpoon due to its large size, which ultimately claims higher profits on regional markets. This project also promotes generating fishing regulations and quotas with local communities and Iténez Protected Area officials to maintain sustainable fish populations, further supported through training on best practices, fish registries, and local monitoring of commercial fishing by community members to reduce overharvesting of fish species.

Although each natural resource has a unique background and approach, each project is also supported by establishing direct connections with communities and local buyers without the need for third-party sellers. Therefore, program training also teaches communities the bargaining power to negotiate fair, competitive prices for the products they sell. These projects aim to revive the value of natural resources in the Iténez Protected Area to encourage the sustainable use and management of resources by local communities to shape their own development and, by extension, promote healthy human-environment relationships within the protected area.

Community Visits

At the time of research, the WWF Bolivia programs within the Iténez Protected area supported 12 communities: 4 small-scale farming and eight Indigenous. Approximately 470 households participated in the program, all living within and sharing an intimate relationship with the protected area and its natural resources.

Although all four projects are active within the area, each community decides to participate in the program that best fits their needs. Of the communities visited for this case study, all participate at varying levels in WWF Bolivia community-based conservation projects, with some participating in the management of one, two, or all four natural resources. In this sense, some households participate in multiple projects by managing the harvest and sale of their natural resources. Specific to this research, one small-scale farming community and four indigenous communities were visited.

It should be noted that community interviews aimed to represent experiences with natural resources from all four projects. This meant that regardless of the community's overall participation in WWF projects, each community interview typically focused on the experiences of a specific natural resource. Over a one-week period, the communities visited (in order of the dates visited) were Versalles, Mategua, Nueva Brema, San Borja, and Bella Vista (Figure 3).

Versalles is a community of roughly 35 households located on the eastern edge of the protected area along the Iténez River, separating the Bolivia and Brazilian border. Host to a variety of ecotourism, the community identifies as indigenous and takes great advantage of *castaña* with every household participating in this project. As part of the group interview, 12

community members (nine male, three female) participated. In attendance was the founder of the community and the president of the indigenous town hall.

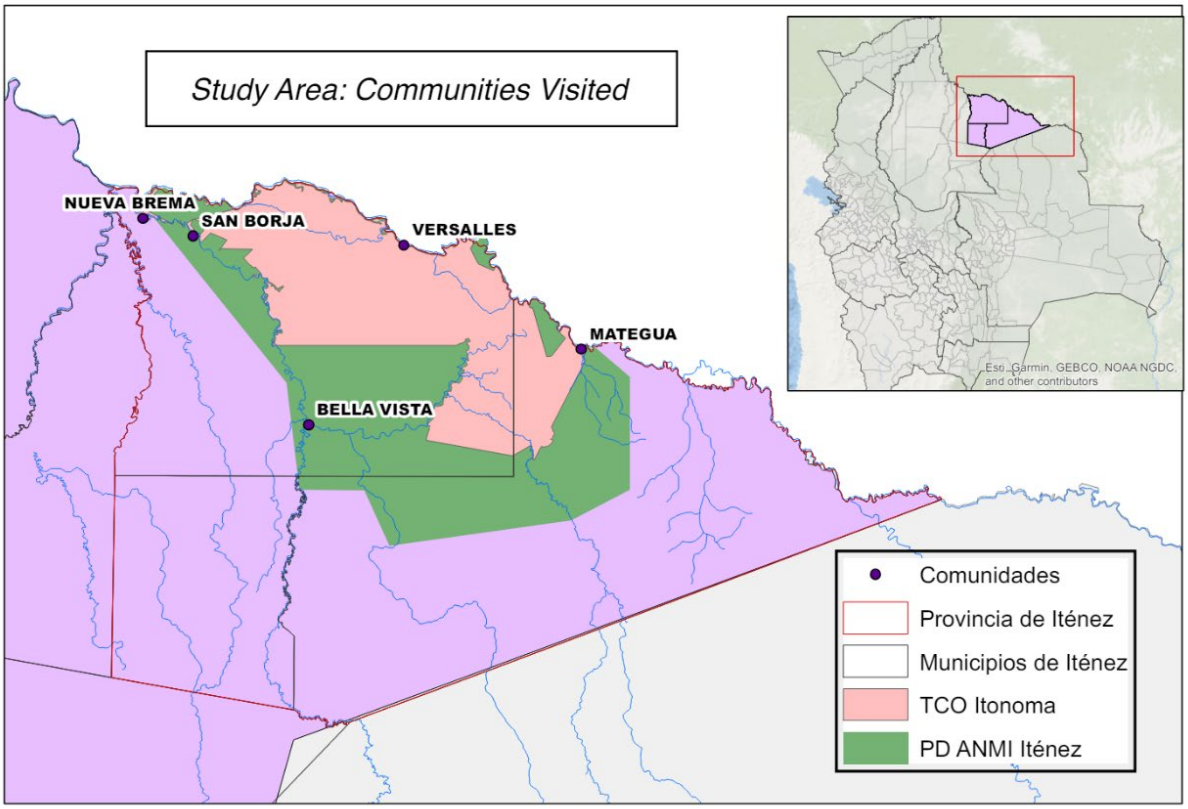


Figure 3. Communities visited as part of this study in the Iténez Protected Area. Map generated by author in ArcMap GIS

Mategua is also located along the Iténez River in the south-eastern corner of the TCO Itonama and Iténez Protected Area. Participating exclusively in the *castaña* project, this is the only community within the WWF Bolivia program situated in the Baures municipality of the Iténez providence. The community consists of roughly 37 households, all of which participate and rely on castaña as their primary source of income. Mategau is the most remote community visited, being a 6-hour boat ride from Versalles and a 12-hour boat ride to the next largest town of Costa Marquez, Brazil. The mayor of this community was the only female in attendance and

recruited 4 (male) community members to participate in the group interview (a total of 5 in attendance).

Nueva Brema is located in the north-western corner of the protected area and TCO Itonama, along the Rio Blanco. This community is home to approximately 63 households, with 14 harvesting cacao and 47 harvesting *castaña*. Although this community has households that participate in harvesting *castaña* and cacao, only three cacao harvesters (all male) were in attendance during the group interview, including the mayor and president of the town hall. This was an intentional decision to learn more about the experiences with cacao, seeing as the two previous communities visited gave thorough accounts of their experiences with *castaña*.

San Borja is another indigenous community located along the Rio Blanco in the northwest region of the Iténez Protected Area. This community also participates in harvesting both cacao and *castaña*. The community comprises roughly 52 households, with nearly majority participation in projects demonstrated by 17 households harvesting cacao and six harvesting *castaña*. In this community, two separate interviews were conducted. The first interview was conducted with the ex-president and current president of the Management Committee (*comité de gestion*; to be elaborated in Chapter 5) to learn the local perspectives on the institutionally established governance systems within the protected area. A second, separate group interview was then conducted with 11 cacao harvesters. Harvesting cacao has long been a traditional crop for this community and historically an activity dominated by women due to the meticulous nature of cultivating, harvesting, and processing the crop. This gender dynamic was evident during the interview as 8 of the cacao harvests were female, and only three were male. This was the only community in which the female participants outnumbered the male. One of these

women also held a local governance position as president of the Rio Blanco Agroforestry Products Association.

Bella Vista is the largest, and only small-scale farming community visited. Situated near the western edge of the Iténez Protected Area, this community is the dead end to the only maintained road into the area. With roughly 600 households, this community is more commonly called a township and is one of the largest towns in the protected area. All four projects are active in this town, with ~60 families involved in commercial fishing, ~30 hunting caiman, ~13 harvesting cacao, and ~256 harvesting *castaña*. Currently, Bella Vista is the only community participating in the caiman project within the region and is one of only two communities participating in the fishing initiative.

Two separate interviews were completed in Bella Vista. One group interview was held with seven individuals (all male), all participating in either fishing, caiman, cacao, or *castaña* projects (some participating in up to 2). In this interview, it should be noted that many members of the Bella Vista *castaña* Association (to be elaborated later) were in attendance, including the current president, secretary, and first representative, who navigated the conversation primarily toward *castaña* initiatives, with some discussion on commercial fishing and caiman harvesting. For this reason, a second interview was conducted with two (both male) local caiman hunters to learn about the experiences of this traditional practice and its recent revival.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In order to organize the themes and topics that arose from the *sistematización* of experiences collected and analyzed for this study, this chapter is laid out in a temporally linear manner. First, I present the initial reactions and perceptions of community members toward the Iténez Protected Area and WWF community based projects. This is followed by the eventual local governance mechanisms implemented to secure community buy-in and participation. Finally, I analyze the impacts of community-based conservation felt by communities and its implications. Exploring time within conservation and development projects, "The temporality of the phases of the project…reveal more layered and wide-ranging consequences from the social and environmental changes that result, sharpened by greater attention to how these changes unfold across multiple timescales and sites of the project" (Braun, 2020). Therefore, by organizing the discussion like so, the temporality of this case study can reveal not only the social changes in ideas and lived experiences over time, but also the way past and existing narratives and power dynamics presently shape physical environments through community-based conservation (and will continue to do so into the future).

Initial rejection: Outsider presence and knowledge

As the state began promoting the conversion of protected areas toward participatory and integrated management models, there was evident support from regional organizations and institutions championing environmental justice and indigenous rights. However, as clear as the benefits seemed at higher levels of government, local communities were not as convinced. Particularly in the beginning years, as the Iténez Protected Area was established, there was an initial rejection of the protected area, outside organizations, and other institutions. The new

designation as a protected area state park (PD ANMI) was intended to bring much-needed support and visibility to the area. Unfortunately, community members were not included in the initial process of the state's decision to legalize the protected area.

Bolivian law and regulations distinctly lack (or rather provide weak attempts) at integrating free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) into state declarations like the constitution. This is a global trend, as even higher institutions like "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) originally included the stipulation that 'indigenous peoples … have the right to require that states obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories and other resources', which was eventually changed to 'the states shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned … in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent'" (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2016). Within this case study, this lack of engagement left communities misinformed and fearful for their loss of autonomy over natural resources.

As early as 2005, community members of San Borja and Versalles recounted this initial rejection and even hostility toward WWF and partner institutions. Specifically, the former president of the *comité de gestion* (Management Committee) shared a story of local communities kidnapping a park official in the early years to send a message to the state. He was returned home unharmed but was held for several hours to demonstrate the disapproval of external entities in those early years. These physical conflicts are not uncommon among indigenous peoples (West et al., 2006), such as the emblematic indigenous resistance and marches against fortress conservation efforts in the Chimane Forest in Bolivia (Reyes-García et al., 2014).

This initial rejection demonstrates a common struggle seen across the state between local communities and state regulations that historically stripped rural communities of their rights and resources. These top-down approaches to conservation and environmental protection, coupled with histories of neoliberal privatization, have left lasting friction among rural communities that drives mistrust and apathy toward projects and programs when state support and resources are provided for remote areas (Barrett et al., 2001; Berkes, 2004; Clements, 2009). Within the broader scope of literature, this rejection by local communities is further grounded in the common uneven impact of protected areas, as impacts can be "...felt most intensely at local rather than national scales and… benefits tend to accrue to the wealthiest and most powerful and costs fall on the weakest and poorest" (Oldekop et al., 2016).

In the beginning, park rangers for the Iténez Protected Area were placed to monitor and regulate park activities. Community members took this to mean that these outside authorities would negatively impact or exploit their rights to harvest and collect the natural resources of the area. The caiman hunters even directly reference the prohibition on hunting placed in the 70's (1979) by the state, banning the harvesting of wild animals and plants, including a local caiman delicacy *lagarto*, in the name of preservation (Ibisch, 2005). Thus, as seen in the literature (Vaccaro et al., 2013), the intrusion of the state through the establishment of protected areas did, in fact, play a role in this rejection of the park and projects by communities who feared the loss of power and control over land and natural resources. It took time and rapport building, but after numerous efforts, the communities finally agreed to meet with WWF and partner organizations.

Community members shared other reasons for rejecting the park and projects presented by newly welcomed institutions. For instance, some communities were reluctant to adopt the cultivation and harvesting of cacao. Although native to the area, the initial introduction of cacao

into the program was facilitated by partner organization Institute for People, Agriculture and Ecology (IPHAE) who supplied young hybrid saplings in an attempt to provide a more resilient plant. However, these efforts were abandoned, and as one community member explained:

> "[IPHAE] brought seeds from outside, but most of it was hybrid cacao... They spoke about a large quantity of production with fewer seedlings, but when they distributed, it was a failure because the plants did not produce" (Nueva Brema, cacao).

Introducing hybrid varieties is a common phenomenon within conservation practices, as the management of natural resources for community-based conservation is typically dependent on increased yields for greater income generation (Boza et al., 2014). Hybrid varieties were thought to be more beneficial for the higher production. Yet, their ineffectiveness seems to point to a larger issue in which potential profits and the commercialization of natural resources were prioritized over actual sustainable practices (Waylen et al., 2010; Fletcher, 2010). In the end, many projects were forced to abandon hybrid varieties and adapt to the use of local varieties, which, in the end, will have the strongest resiliency within their native landscapes.

This initial failure of the hybrid plant also proved to be a barrier for many communities already hesitant to adopt certain crops, like cacao. Within the region, it is common knowledge of the labor required for cultivating, harvesting, and processing cacao, which meant the additional task of changing the local mindset to take on this crop. This experience mirrors others within the development sector and the need for culturally appropriate solutions for the successful adoption of development projects (Keese, Camacho, & Chavez, 2017). Versalles and Mategua both reference the disinterest of their community in adopting cacao, which to this day is not as widely adopted as neighboring communities, such as San Borja. Similar views were shared for the

castaña, which historically was only cultivated by locals out of pure necessity. The native *castaña* groves are not easily accessible and, in the past, required much labor for little return in harvest and sale on the market.

Therefore, even though community-based conservation is argued to be grounded in local contexts and people, these initial experiences toward the projects demonstrate a lack of engagement in local wisdom, and the history of native crops is an example of limitations to these practices as evidenced by the literature (Boillat et al., 2013; Escobar,1998). In fact, it was not until the introduction of institutions like IPHAE (along with NGO Faunagua and Foundation For Participatory Community Development-Fundepco) entered the area and began training on organic farming practices that the benefits to projects were felt, with not only increased production of crops but also notable economic incentives to motivate the larger adoption of organic cacao and *castaña* for more competitive prices at local markets.

However, as communities that have long been underserved and isolated in the far eastern corner of the Bolivian Amazon, communities gradually changed their perception and agreed to participate in projects. Additionally, many began to take notice of the return of natural resources, such as the fish and caiman that were at dangerously low populations. Overall, many mentioned the new opportunities afforded to them directly from the establishment of the Iténez Protected Area and their participation in WWF projects, speaking of the ways in which these projects continue to incentivize communities to take advantage and carefully manage the natural resources in the area. Both WWF staff and local communities attribute this change in perception and eventual acceptance to the direct impacts and benefits of these participatory projects.

Integrated approaches to local governance

For the state, establishing the Iténez Protected Area was meant to address the environmental risks facing the area and the need for intervention to protect the natural resources from years of exploitation. In this sense, increased protections and management of park activities first included state-appointed park rangers to enforce park regulations and limit illegal activities by third-party interest groups. As demonstrated, this initial perception of the protected area was not well received by the community, as underserved communities that encounter state interventions often experience a great loss of autonomy. Therefore, the integrated management approaches to the Iténez Protected Area (designated as a Departmental Park and Natural Area of Integrated Management-PD ANMI) aimed to create an inclusive governance structure to grant communities and stakeholders a greater sense of visibility within the park. This is particularly important considering the TCO Itonama is 100% within the protected area's boundaries and, per park guidance, provides local and indigenous communities no less than 50% of decision-making representation (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua, n.d.).

This section aims to highlight the experiences of communities participating in local governance and its effects on both the Iténez Protected Area activities and WWF projects. In this sense, it is important to note that not all the experiences were direct components of WWF project activities but are directly linked to the integrated management of the Iténez Protected Area and WWF's participation in these spaces that facilitated the implementation of WWF community-based conservation, enabling and shaping experiences in local governance.

Decentralized model of governance: Who participates in the management of the Iténez Protected Area?

It is important first to elaborate on the political landscape that undoubtedly influenced the formation of the Iténez Protected Area and its governing bodies (Bryant et al., 1991; Jones, 2008). During the wave of neoliberal decentralization, participatory governance legislature like the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) arose out of resistance, as indigenous-led marches advocated for softening neoliberal policies (Postero, 2007; Kohl, 2003). This meant establishing governing bodies that incorporated the numerous stakeholders from local governments, institutions, and civil society present in the area in the participatory management of park activities (Clements, 2009; Kohl, 2002; Brosius et al., 2005). The fundamental basis for decentralization came with the LPP's formal recognition of new municipalities (structured from the territorial jurisdiction of the *secciónes provinciales*) and the inclusion of rural communities not formerly recognized or included in democratic processes. Thus, popular participation launched the legal recognition of c*omunidades campesinas* (peasant communities), *pueblos indigenas* (indigenous peoples), and *juntas vecinales* (neighborhood organizations) as formal representatives of populations and civil society through Organizaciones Territoriales de Base (Grassroots Territorial Organizations, OTB) (Congreso Nacional de la República de Bolivia, 1994).

Thus, gaps created by decentralization patterns paved the way for several institutions and stakeholders to help manage and aid in regional planning and land management, particularly considering environmental planning coincided with crucial state development plans. These processes of decentralization were key to the invitation for numerous civil society organizations (CSOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to establish their participation in the

planning and management of protected areas (Fletcher, 2010). Many of which would become key actors in developing the national environmental agenda, such as the World Wildlife Fund introducing ecoregional and corridor planning in the early 2000s (Ibisch et al., 2001; Ibisch, 2005).

Within this framework of participation and the local governance guidelines developed by SERNAP and WWF, the Iténez Protected Area officials established the *comité de gestión* (management committee) to reinforce integrated approaches to management in the area and organize decentralized entities (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua, n.d.). Since 2005, the *comité de gestión* has consisted of representatives from communities (locally elected), the cattle ranchers association, the Itonama *subcentral* (indigenous governing body of TCO Itonama), the small-scale farmers *subcentral*, the municipalities of Baures and Magdalena, the protected areas directorate (Iténez Protected Area officials), the Department of Beni prefecture, various institutions, and any other relevant stakeholders (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Diagram of the actors that make up the *comité de gestión* based on SERNAP guidelines.

Source: Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua (n.d.). Guía para comités de gestión. Retrieved from https://wwflac.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/guia-para-comites-de-gestion-final.pdf

As a primary objective of these integrated approaches, participation in local governance is facilitated through the collective development of the Iténez Protected Area *Plan de manejo* (Management Plan) by the *comité de gestión*. Among many responsibilities, the *comité* decides permissible activities and quotas for harvesting natural resources in the protected area, with the goal of ensuring equal participation in decision-making and promoting ownership in the protection, sustainable use, and management of natural resources in the Iténez Protected Area.

In the early years, it is also worth noting that a WWF Bolivia representative served in the *comité* to act as a mediator to not only promote community participation in the *comité* but also advocate for specific natural resources management plans in line with their projects. Therefore, WWF Bolivia did, in fact, play a pivotal role in the formation and development of the Iténez Protected Area environmental policies, demonstrating their role as deeply embedded and influential in the area beyond just project implementers.

Effects of participatory governance

The *comité de gestión* aims to address historical imbalances in equity, access, and power by providing a process to both meet the needs and empower communities long mistreated and underserved. Specifically, this inclusion of numerous actors affiliated with the protected area aims to promote what Quick et al. (2011) define as ‘communities of practice’ by providing the space to combine the collective efforts of rural communities and local actors to manage the activities within the Iténez Protected Area.

Before the park's establishment, communities noted the lack of oversight or authority to prevent outsiders from exploiting the land and natural resources. In fact, quite different from the initial reactions to state presence, they are now particularly grateful for the extended support and

regulation in the area. As attitudes toward the park and projects shifted, communities began to engage and notice the benefits of participating in local governance. Specifically, communities feel more included in decision-making spaces for the management of the protected area, which was not previously accessible to them.

Communities are grateful for the ability to participate in collective management and decision-making processes alongside important actors and stakeholders within the area. Involvement at this level of governance has generated enthusiastic engagement that has motivated communities to take on responsibilities not just for the projects but also for guarding and protecting the park. Specifically, when interviewing members of the *comité*, they mentioned:

> "We as a management committee also act as guards, protecting our resources so that [others] do not take them from us." (San Borja, *comité de gestión*)

Thus, communities note that this participatory governance structure enabled locals to become more involved in the park's management and feel they can take direct action and responsibility in shaping the park's activities through participation in the *comité de gestión*.

Many community members even attributed this level of engagement in local governance to the success of projects, which incentivized greater participation and management of the natural resources in promoting the overall health of the park. For communities, the health of the park and its natural resources is closely tied to harvesting natural resources, and activities left unchecked could negatively impact their livelihood. Therefore, as community members become motivated through WWF projects to manage the area's natural resources, they simultaneously become interested in leadership roles through the *comité de gestión* to help monitor and regulate park activities. Therefore, participation in local governance becomes significant as the role of

communities evolves beyond participation in an NGO project. They feel that it is their individual responsibility to protect the park, maintain their resources, and (as will be elaborated later in this chapter) organize themselves.

Another advantage communities noted from participatory governance structures was the increased accessibility to external organizations and stakeholders participating in the *comité de gestión*, seen as entities that could bring new opportunities.

"All the institutions that were working in the protected area were there at the management committee meetings….There are 14 organizations that participate" (San Borja, *comité de gestión*)

This was particularly the case with WWF Bolivia, who was concurrently supporting local environment planning alongside partner organizations and regional governments, thus securing their seat on the *comité de gestión* during the earlier years. Many communities felt that without the creation of the park and its governing bodies, organizations like WWF would not have had an interest in reaching these remote areas. In this sense, communities felt that the establishment of the protected area provided various opportunities that otherwise would not have been afforded to them, such as WWF projects. For instance, communities distinctly recognize WWF and their partners as integral to acquiring the knowledge and technical training to utilize the park's resources to their fullest potential.

Participation, representation, and power in local governance

There is no doubt that overall, the *comité de gestión* is an important mechanism for local communities to participate and engage in local governance and that communities feel a level of

access to decision-making spaces that were previously denied. However, as evidenced by the literature, there are often doubts as to the extent to which these participatory models truly promote inclusivity and decision-making power. Regardless of whether there are measures to promote inclusive decision-making power, presence and voice can often be disregarded when considering participation with local communities (Quick et al., 2011).

Within this study, there were instances during the interview with members of the *comité de gestión* that reinforced doubts about the true intentions and efficacy of decentralized governance bodies in promoting participatory spaces. Arnstien (1969) specifically emphasizes a fundamental element "that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless" (Arnstien, 1969). Thus, analyzing levels of citizen representation can be used to interpret power dynamics within democratic processes as well as analyze the extent of citizen participation.

From Riccucci et al. (2017), the distinction in the different forms of representation, defined as passive, active, and symbolic representation, provides some context into understanding varying levels of participation when working with underrepresented communities. Further elaborating on the three forms of representation, "passive representation indicates the extent to which public workforces have become more diverse. Active representation indicates whether the representation or diversity translates into critical public policy outcomes or outputs. Symbolic representation suggests that diversity in government workforces (passive representation) helps promote policy outcomes by enhancing the legitimacy of government and, thus, the cooperation of citizens (Ricucci et al., 2017). Concerning then in this context are the ways in which the *comité de gestión* advances passive representation. For starters, this was demonstrated alone by the fact that decentralization has created a scenario for 14 separate entities

and interests to serve on a single *comité,* further emphasizing the need to analyze levels of representation.

Particularly when asked if the members felt the *comité* lacked anything to function better in serving the protected area, one member shared:

> "...we have always done an analysis of previous meetings, which [last was] held in Buena Vista. [Since 2017] There has been no organization. The management committee has not been taken into account in two years" (San Borja, *comité de gestión*)

Committee members then shared that at the time of research, there were no current agreements to the frequency at which the *comité* is expected to meet, nor were there channels of communication (that they are aware of) for them to request support in scheduling the next meeting. This lack of outreach by the state to uphold and organize the *comité* demonstrates potential tokenism of local voices, a tactic the state may use to placate vulnerable populations to maintain social stability to better serve their interest in the continued production of natural resources (Kohl, 2002; Arnstein, 1969). That is, as long as participatory models are established with passive representation, the efficacy of such models to promote true inclusivity (symbolic representation) is of lesser importance for the state to realize.

Thus, allowing passive representation of certain groups with a seat at the table also seems to point to the state's power asymmetries in the protected area's supposed participatory governance (Vaccaro et al., 2013; Jones, 2008). While representation at the local level is important for the progression to active and symbolic representation (Ricucci et al., 2017), it is important to recognize that equal participation is often favored over equitable participation.

As one committee member recounts:

> "...we are not recognized by the government. Because without the support of the government, … the park will never work. And without taking into account the park because it is not convenient for [the government, they].... do not change the purpose of how the park should work either….[The park] has to be reorganized and the management committee has the full authority to decide… The entire management committee has to decide, because they are … parts of the communities. And the one who has to choose and decide is the management committee, not [park authorities]. [Since] 2017 I was complaining like this… but nothing was being organized, neither the management committee nor the communities are taken into account, because [park authorities] no longer visit." (San Borja, *comité de gestión*)

In a moment of frustration, they are emphasizing the unequal power dynamics felt, particularly when there are no advancements made toward developing new or revised management plans due to the state's shortcomings. Specifically recognizing that the state holds the highest power to advance agendas, but communities are limited by the *comité* as their only medium for their collective voice to be heard when advocating for the changes they want to see. Ultimately, this demonstrates that "citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under [certain] conditions they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful" (Arnstein, 1969). In question, then, is the equitable participation and symbolic representation of the members of the *comité* (communities and stakeholders alike) to wield true decision-making power.

Impacts of Community-based conservation

Upon visiting communities, years of trust, rapport, and delivery of promises have left a lasting impact on community members. Through this carefully cultivated relationship, WWF has proven their intentions and community members felt great respect and support from WWF. In this sense, much of this successful relationship is attributed to various impacts felt by communities as they participate in WWF's community-based conservation projects within the Iténez Protected Area. Additionally, this experience is further shaped by another facet of

temporality since these projects are relatively young, and older generations preserve narratives of 'life before the projects' to contrast their current experiences (Braun, 2020). These insights provide valuable perspectives toward intervention, participation, engagement, and adoption patterns at local levels. Therefore, sharing some of the impacts from projects felt by communities is significant to elaborate, as are the accomplishments and challenges experienced by community members in direct response to WWF Bolivia's community-based conservation efforts within the Iténez Protected Area.

Within this study, three significant themes regarding the impacts of projects were identified as significant during the *sistematización* of experiences. The three themes analyzed include improved standard of living and better quality of life, local empowerment, and sustainability of projects. These themes were the most voiced components that shaped the community's perception of WWF projects. A deeper analysis of these observed benefits demonstrates the experiences and perspectives of the communities interviewed that trigger their motives for continued engagement and participation in community-based conservation, falling in line with the benefits and challenges mentioned in the literature review.

Improved standard of living and better quality of life

An important component of community-based projects is their ability to improve livelihoods and further promote poverty alleviation. Within the development sector, improvements to the quality of life are expected to shape livelihood outcomes, including achieving a level of empowerment or other social, economic, or political stimulation to propel the internal development of poor rural communities. For local communities of the Iténez Protected Area, improved standards of living are a distinct and notable benefit that is clearly

linked to WWF projects that generate new or greater sources of income. Many community members noted drastic improvements in their standard of living directly linked to higher incomes achieved with a higher quantity and quality of products when managing natural resources.

Among communities, the influx in household income meant direct changes to their daily lives as they could now purchase their basic necessities and more. For instance, as a region with limited road accessibility, dependency on river transportation makes boat equipment a necessity. Therefore, higher incomes not only provide the necessary equipment to supply and fuel boat transportation but also further facilitate their ability to purchase their necessities and sell their products. Also, communities mentioned that, with increased income, they can now purchase modern appliances and utilities such as refrigeration, electricity, Wi-Fi antennas, and mobile telephones, allowing them to live more comfortably.

In fact, community members spoke directly of the better quality of life that accompanied these improvements to the standard of living. Communities shared that part of living comfortably comes from having basic needs met, but also the fact that they no longer have to struggle just to meet those needs. Therefore, community members recognize that these projects not only facilitated access to basic needs but also decreased stressors associated with acquiring these needs, enabling them to live and work in a way that is calm, comfortable, and just.

> "Well, the benefit that one has is the feeling of seeing a better and calmer life…Because he is living a more comfortable life." (Mategua, *castaña*)

Additionally, educational opportunities were also mentioned as becoming more accessible with improved standard of living and impacted their quality of life. Education for children was the most common response among communities, with many parents grateful they

no longer have to rely on their children to contribute to household income. Although still a familial activity, harvesting resources became a more efficient process, with products selling at higher and fairer wages. Therefore, the time savings awarded by these projects meant that families could now prioritize sending their children to school and even created opportunities for children to attend schools in larger, neighboring towns/cities.

Finally, with their lives no longer revolving around work and basic needs met, community members recounted how they now devote time to the internal development of their communities. Directly referenced were the improvements to local infrastructure, such as sanitation, road construction, and other service utilities, as well as improvements to social services like education and health centers. While some of these efforts were community-implemented (construction of schools, home improvements, minor road paving, etc.), this also included community-driven demands for infrastructure development by institutions and local governments, often with community counterpart funding supporting these infrastructure projects.

As evidenced by the literature, these improvements to the standard of living are expected as part of the foundational arguments toward promoting community-based conservation and the benefits to local communities (Berkes, 2007; Waylen et al., 2010). These impacts on local communities are, without a doubt, life-changing, and community-based conservation is quick to use these kinds of markers (particularly stimulating local economies to prompt internal development) to define successful projects toward local development. While these are important indicators that demonstrate the positive impact on local realities, they seem to only scratch the surface when considering the long-term development and sustainability of communities and environmental landscapes. In this sense, the impacts are compelling in the short term, but the long-term implications will be addressed later in this chapter.

Local Empowerment

Another significant impact of community-based conservation is local empowerment. Partially seen through the participation in local governance structures previously discussed, this section elaborates on additional demonstrations of local empowerment.

While a great emphasis of the Iténez program supports best harvesting practices for the area's natural resources, the other significant component of these projects includes community capacity building in competitive sales of products. According to community members, key distinctions to the significant increase in household incomes have been attributed to both overall higher production and learning to competitively sell these higher quality products to regional buyers. As part of project activities, communities participated in training that covered topics of market strategy and negotiations to achieve fair prices for their products. Communities were taught to value their products accordingly by comparing and analyzing local market prices and then using this knowledge to negotiate fair prices. In Versalles alone, communities recounted a nearly 730% increase in sale prices for *castaña,* noting:

> "Right now, a bag of chestnuts is worth 500 bolivianos. At that time [before projects] it was worth 60 bolivianos a bag" (Versalles, *castaña*).

Therefore, as communities develop this skill, they feel a great sense of control over the sale of natural resources through newly acquired bargaining power.

Further, when projects were initiated in the area, WWF partner organizations accompanied community leaders to local buyers and businesses willing to purchase their products. This introduction eliminated traditional sales through third parties or middlemen,

which could have reduced overall direct profits to communities, and they were granted access to sell directly to buyers for direct trade. Presently, community leaders coordinate directly with the buyer when selling, settling on a price, and selecting a pickup or drop-off date for products independent of NGO facilitation. This level of self-reliance from their experience with projects is also significant to note as communities now feel empowered to independently approach new buyers, if necessary, to guarantee a fair price.

For WWF projects, it is important to distinguish between the combination of market knowledge and direct communication with buyers, contributing to communities' self-sufficiency in their sales. While WWF facilitated introductions to buyers, communities quickly managed this relationship with buyers independently. For communities, this is an integral component of projects and seen as a direct benefit to their harvests, now claiming great control to ensure and maintain fair prices directly with buyers.

> "...We are free to sell our product at the price we want." (Mategua, *castaña*)

> "We are able to go out and do the business ourselves. Being able to say that we have this [quantity] and we want the *castaña* to be worth this [price], with whatever fair price is on the market" (Bella Vista, *castaña*).

As communities become empowered to negotiate and sell their products to local buyers, they also explain the greater sense of control in their livelihood provided by a steady, fixed source of income. The natural resources selected as part of WWF crop harvesting projects (specifically *castaña* and cacao) traditionally claimed a reputation of high labor for low returns. This low-income return was attributed to not just lower product quality and quantity or middlemen sales but also inconsistent third-party and individual buyers. Even further,

individuals that historically harvested resources noted that they were forced to sell to whoever was willing to buy their products, with little bargaining power. Therefore, this dependency on opportunistic sales left communities with irregular and inconsistent incomes, often at the will of those buying their products. Now, with the ability to sell directly to buyers at competitive prices, communities feel they have a greater sense of control in securing steady incomes. For communities, this consistent and reliable source of income is directly linked to the projects and increased control. Now equipped with market knowledge and negotiation tactics coupled with direct access to buyers, communities have achieved a level of self-sufficiency, feeling empowered by the WWF projects to manage the sale of their crops for fair prices, thus ensuring a steadier source of income.

The local empowerment of communities was also noted through their efforts to internally organize and take on local leadership roles to better manage natural resources and the internal development of their community. In this sense, communities mentioned the ways WWF projects promote collective, communal organization in their management of resources. Specifically concerning projects, it is significant to note how they have facilitated community members' desire to organize internally. Harvesting and selling natural resources was historically an activity by individual households. Therefore, community members made a key distinction in the new internal organization systems for both labor and sales practices. For instance, communities that harvest *castaña* noted that they now distribute labor in cultivating and harvesting among the entire community.

> "Since the time that WWF and IPHAE appeared in our area, we have had a significant improvement in our work and in the organization of the community." (Versalles, *castaña*)

Additionally, in working as a collective body, communities also work together to tackle the high energy and tedious labor required to cultivate and harvest *castaña*. Therefore, communal labor facilitates an even faster process on top of project training that aims to cultivate and harvest the crop efficiently. This level of internal organization not only saves time and energy, which they can devote to other activities but also, communities note that working together is a much safer practice from forest dangers.

Another notable emergence of internal organization was the creation of associations for each natural resource linked to WWF projects. These associations were self-initiated by communities to organize harvesters of the same resources within the protected area into a collective body with similar interests. Before these associations, communities rarely worked amongst each other due to the sprawling nature of the Iténez Protected Area. Now, they organize themselves as a collective, selling their crops in larger batches to negotiate better prices with buyers as well as keeping detailed records of harvesting practices and sales. These records include data points such as monitoring lot sizes, member sales records, and storage at the collection center. Additionally, they use these data points to help manage the sustainable use of natural resources as well as the accounting of sales. For instance, they track harvest quotas (and prevent overharvest), as well as the productivity of harvest, and set harvest goals to develop standard budgets for internal development (infrastructure, utilities, etc.) and other community-prioritized needs.

Finally, another finding within this research that falls under the theme of local empowerment was gender empowerment. This experience of women participating in projects proved to be significant not just for the adoption of projects but also as a demonstration of how

gendered approaches to community-based conservation should be considered to achieve greater levels of inclusivity and integration of local knowledge.

The social organization of the indigenous communities of the TCO Itonama, as well as small-scale farmers in this region, is defined as patriarchal. Although not overtly oppressive or regulatory to the activities of women, traditional gender roles designate women as homemakers and caretakers. Therefore, this social system is enforced through normalized gender roles that influence patterns of men dominating social interactions, spaces, and local positions of power. For this reason, during interviews, women were addressed directly as often as possible to provide their perspectives and insights into the broader discussion. Also, the larger group was asked general questions on gender equality and participation in relation to WWF projects. From these questions, communities revealed the ways in which projects (specifically harvesters of cacao and *castaña*) have empowered women to not only participate in projects but also engage in local leadership.

As mentioned, harvesting *castaña* was once labor-intensive, time-consuming, and typically harvested as individuals (mostly males) based on need. As seen, communities now internally organize to divide the labor and selling activities. However, also interesting to note in this internal organization is the increased participation of the family, particularly women. As internal organization facilitated productive use of time and energy for the harvest, this level of efficiency made *castaña* a higher and even sole source of income for some communities. Particularly for the communities of Versalles and Mategua, they explained the new found value in *castaña* that ultimately incentivized the inclusion of the whole family to participate.

Further, as women began to participate in the communal cultivation, harvest, and, at times, sale of *castaña*, these shared responsibilities seemed to shift traditional roles. Most

noticeable for women was increased influence in both communal and familial decision-making. Therefore, it is significant that both the women and men of these communities spoke about how participation in projects has fostered local empowerment of women both in the home and community.

Even more distinct to gender empowerment are the cacao harvesters of San Borja. The community of San Borja has long participated in the cultivation and harvesting of native and wild cacao, even before participation in WWF projects. Similar to *castaña*, historically, cacao had established a reputation as timely and laborious in the area. While still physically labor intensive, cacao is also notorious for the meticulous and intricate fermentation and drying process necessary to sell the beans. Further, it is significant to note the traditional harvesters of cacao and current leaders of projects in San Borja are women, known as the '*chocaleras.'* As explained by the women, they characterized the lengthy and delicate process required to achieve the end product of the cacao beans as better suited for women.

> "The whole family participates with the [cacao] collection. But mostly men don't do it every day like women do." (San Borja, cacao).

Before WWF projects, cacao was not as highly valued socially or economically, and men often showed disinterest and focused efforts on other income-generating work. For this reason, women harvested and processed the crop as supplemental income, exchanging skills and knowledge of cacao amongst themselves. Therefore, when WWF introduced the opportunity of the cacao project, the women were most interested in attending workshops to improve their quality and quantity of production. Community members recounted the failed attempt by men, in the beginning, to oversee and manage these activities once they recognized women were gaining

higher returns on their products. However, it quickly became apparent that through their experiences, the women were more qualified for leadership roles in the project. To this day, women have a distinct role in the cacao project in San Borja, and it is significant to note the success of these women in leading, claiming, and maintaining dominion over the management of this natural resource.

As women explained their elevated role in the family and community enabled by projects, women's overall participation in local leadership and governance was also significant. In communities, women mentioned the opportunities presented by shared labor and responsibilities in WWF projects that enabled interests in higher positions of power in the community and within the Iténez Protected Area. This increase in civic participation ranged from communal leadership roles, local positions with the associations of the region, and appointments to the *comité de gestión*. Even during the interview with San Borja cacao harvesters, it was impressive to note that many women included their communal and regional position titles as part of the introductions.

Although there are still strides further to promote gender equality and equity within WWF community-based conservation, it is significant to note the Iténez Protected Area program's facilitation in empowering women to take on new familial, communal, and regional roles. However, it is interesting to consider whether the *chocaleras*, with this historical experience and knowledge of cacao, were consulted as part of initial project planning. Given the initial challenges with the hybrid cacao plants, it may be safe to assume they were not.

Overall, the various displays of local empowerment are interesting examples of achievements possible through community-based conservation, such that local communities are

empowered to facilitate the sustainable management and harvesting of natural resources (Berkes, 2007; Waylen et al., 2010). Further, within this case study, community-based conservation was an effective mechanism for initiating knowledge exchange through capacity building, internal organization, and gender empowerment.

Sustainability of Projects

The final noted impact of community-based conservation was that of sustainability. A crucial expectation and intent of community-based conservation is to achieve projects' social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Projects are typically designed to foster responsible human-environment relationships and promote ownership for their long-term, sustained benefits. For communities, the concept of sustainability was most commonly understood within the context of the environment. In this sense, sustainability is seen as the protection and maintenance of healthy, natural landscapes. It is considered especially important for natural resources to thrive in the area. While the connection to environmental sustainability seemed more evident to communities, unsurprisingly, these factors were also closely related to benefits within the context of economic and social sustainability. That is, framed within the context of environmental sustainability, there were clear references to the benefits to livelihoods and future generations.

Within this case study, it is significant that communities attributed the environmental sustainability of the forest and its natural resources as a direct benefit to securing incomes. As seen, many community members noted overall improvements in their lives, which they attribute directly to higher proceeds from project participation. In two cases (Mategau and Versalles), harvesting *castaña* has become the primary source of income, with many explaining that without the natural resources, there would be little to no income for communities. Therefore, there is a

high demand to promote sustainable practices for healthy forest ecosystems that contribute to the consistent production of natural resources. Significant then is the commitment communities embody to sustainably manage and harvest resources in the area with a vested interest to benefit from the long-term cultivation, harvest, and sale of natural resources.

Also, in seeing the positive impacts of projects, communities now feel equipped to manage healthy ecologies to ensure these benefits for the long term. Therefore, community members noted resource sustainability as important for current improvements and ensuring long-term benefits for future generations. Through proper management and care of the forest and its resources, communities feel they are securing opportunities to further pursue the internal development of their communities and livelihoods. In this sense, communities see these forest resources as their legacy to leave behind for future generations to continue to use and benefit from. This, in turn, established a greater sense of responsibility to undertake sustainable practices to help support and maintain a thriving park. Even more so, they also referenced the importance of laying the groundwork for sustainable practices to be passed down to younger generations. In thinking of the long-term benefits of environmental sustainability, it is clear that communities also aspire to promote social sustainability of projects.

Before the Iténez Protected Area and projects emerged, community members noted the declining health and ecological stability of the area and its natural resources, attributed to poor land use practices and outsider exploitation. Further, they recounted that risks to environmental sustainability mostly came from outside influences and the devaluation of resources by community members. From discussions, it is assumed that basic knowledge and small-scale harvesting practices promoted environmental sustainability before the protected area was established. However, it was greatly undervalued or ignored in the area due to the low return on

time invested. As seen, communities noted a change in higher value and practice of environmental sustainability, connected to economic and social sustainability benefits. Further, the idea of sustainability is linked directly to the effectiveness of projects and the regulation of outside activities. Therefore, from this study, it is significant that communities have embodied a greater value towards sustainability, so much so that the benefits have empowered local communities to re-adopt their role as champions for healthy ecosystems.

Within this context of sustainability, it is important to recognize that the environmental sustainability of natural resources is directly linked to economic and social incentives of natural resource management. While communities did feel a sense of responsibility in stewarding natural resources, this connection creates doubts about environmental stewardship that is economically motivated by these projects. That is, environmental protection seems financially motivated to ensure the sustained commercialization of natural resources for profit rather than healthy ecologies. Therefore, it is important to critically assess these kinds of resource-market projects as scholars note that "as a general rule, intensification of profitable land uses results in territorial expansion rather than its reduction in area" (Oliveira & Hecht, 2016).

While most community members understood the benefits of best practices to sustainably harvest resources (limit over-harvesting, long-term harvest security, preserve native lands), younger generations, with arguably weaker connections to the land, felt the need to produce even more. For instance, in Bella Vista, community members mentioned the desire to scale their production of *castaña* after its commodity value increased among local buyers.

"I think that with [*castaña*] we are going to make the group a company." (Bella Vista).

This push is to not only participate in the larger regional markets but could also mask motives to eventually have high enough yields to expand into global markets. Therefore, the sustainability of community-based conservation faces challenges, and even more so when "These human-induced pressures on [protected areas] and conflict between biodiversity conservation and the needs of local people are predicted to increase due to numerous factors, including market forces and a reduction in distance between PAs and human population centers" (Oldekop et al., 2016)

Further, the ethical issue arises for NGOs like WWF that promote local empowerment and indigenous autonomy yet urge communities to a limited number of 'efficient plots' of crops in the name of environmental sustainability. Specifically, when the desire to increase overall profits to benefit the whole community outweighs notions of conservation. Thus, local communities have the right to manage and harvest natural resources to levels agreed upon within the Iténez Protected Area management plan and may advocate for increasing allowable quotas. Therefore, the question then becomes whether NGOs' prescription of market-based solutions for environmental conservation is inherently contradictory. That is, dependence on a natural resource for economic livelihood could set the stage for a slew of harvesting/farming practices that put conservation efforts at risk (overproduction, clearcutting, monocropping, etc). These risks to conservation are already happening at local markets, where communities and states alike want to expand their activities with certain natural resources that fetch a competitive price.

Another concern for the commercialization of resources that poses a risk to environmental conservation is the notion that increases in the efficiency and output of a product can lead to an escalation in consumption. This phenomenon is known as Jevons Paradox, and "suggests that improvements in efficiency do not necessarily lead to a reduction in resource

consumption; in fact they may lead to an increase in resource consumption." (York, 2006). Arguably, in participating in capitalist, global markets, conservation efforts are at risk. As resources are further incorporated into the market, the ease of price accessibility and availability drives up demand more than direct consumption by populations. Even more concerning, then, is the state's oversight of areas such as the Iténez Protected Area, as demonstrated by their unequal power within the *comité de gestion*, which could grant them some level of access to these resources when it serves their interests.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

Political ecology of community-based conservation

This thesis addresses the dynamic and multifaceted intersection of environmental conservation and human development, only further complicated by the various actors at each of these levels. Thus, applying a political ecological approach, the discussion in Chapter 5 attempts to organize findings temporally to incorporate a broader perspective of time (WWF's position in conservation and their progression through the implementation of community based conservation) and understanding (the power dynamics that shape bodies of knowledge) (Braun, 2020). Thus, this leads to two general concepts as they relate to human-environment relationships emerge: 1) state-defined structures for participatory governance and local power inequities within the management of protected areas and 2) the human experiences and impacts of community-based conservation and implications to environmental sustainability. As part of this conclusion, these concepts will be summarized to demonstrate the key findings and takeaways from this research, as well as highlight contributions to the broader body of literature.

As it currently stands, state-defined structures for participatory governance are not serving communities in the way they were intended. Establishing the *comité de gestion* has proven successful in demonstrating efforts to organize inclusive bodies of planning; however, in the Iténez Protected Area, it seems to serve mainly to placate local desires for visibility into decision-making spaces. Further, this sheds light on the power maintained within state-level control without plans or intentions to redistribute power to local communities to participate in environmental planning for future land management within the protected area. This reality was enabled by neoliberal decentralization that perpetuates unequal power hierarchies within a space like the *comité de gestion* that now lacks equitable participation and symbolic representation.

Even with requirements outlining a minimum of 50% local representation in the *comité*, these guidelines seem arbitrary and are not effectively implemented in practice.

Additionally, unpacking WWF's role in the early stages of regional environmental planning and participation in the *comité de gestion* confirms the often intertwined efforts of NGOs with state agendas. In the case of the Iténez Protected Area, this is demonstrated by state and WWF-defined priorities in facilitating and promoting participation in local governance for integrated management of the protected area and its natural resource programs. Therefore, as WWF continues to advocate for participation in governance structures like the *comité de gestion*, where citizens have less power, they also run the risk of prioritizing state agendas over others that could potentially better serve the improved livelihoods and development of communities.

Therefore, regarding the implications of all this for WWF's community-based conservation, it is important to note that WWF programs for sustainable harvesting of natural resources are dependent on participation in integrated management models within protected areas. They rely on the *comité de gestion* to establish standards for harvesting and best practices in land management. Thus, participation in these systems casts doubt as to whether WWF community-based conservation is promoting the best practices for inclusive development opportunities for local communities.

This research contributes yet another case study to be added to the literature on political ecology, human geography, and conservation demonstrating the continued failures in promoting these state-run participatory governance models for the management of protected areas and how they do not work without recognizing power inequities. Even more egregiously, this study finds that NGOs like WWF continually insist on grounding their collaboration efforts with the state rather than prioritizing local power and autonomy to the communities they serve. Analyzing

WWF's positionality within the temporal context of conservation and Bolivia, there are still experiencing limitations to the ways they 'empower local communities,' lacking systems or structures for a true redistribution of power back to local peoples.

Addressing the next key concept, from the research conducted it is evident that WWF's projects have demonstrated success in advancing community-based conservation, specifically by generating local benefits and developing communities. Among the biggest achievements is the progress toward improving livelihoods and empowering local organizing to effectively manage natural resources. As evidenced by the literature, these are two markers of successful implementation of community-based conservation; economic benefits and collective organizing are propelling internal development in communities. Even more compelling are the positive experiences shared by community members as they increasingly value the sustainable management of forest and river resources.

While these achievements are important when addressing the benefits of community-based conservation, it is also necessary to critically assess some of the limitations. For starters, the conceptualization of WWF programs for the sustainable management of natural resources within protected areas has lasting impressions of Western-informed conservation practices. In the case of the Iténez Protected Area, WWF attempted to remedy these concerns by adopting new approaches like community-based conservation that reemphasized local consultation and knowledge to inform inclusive practices and collaboration with external entities. However, early rejection of programs due to lack of community consultation, coupled with adopting an integrated management plan within a state-sanctioned protected area (functioning under protectionist conservation theory), points to failures in eliminating Western knowledge of conservation practices and advancing toward community-centric practices.

Additionally, WWF aligns its planning and conservation actions with national agendas to achieve conservation and development goals within the country. While this strategy attempts to address and satisfy multiple interests, it again raises concerns about prioritizing national interests that typically align with Western (or even historically neoliberal) agendas that disregard conservation planning (West et al., 2006). Therefore, this highlights overall concerns as to whether community-based conservation, implemented by WWF in the Iténez Protected Area, is, in fact, suitable as a long-term solution for communities. That is, with WWF programs maintaining some influence of Western bodies of knowledge, it is unclear if actual long-term solutions for communities are critically being considered.

Even more so, research demonstrated that community-based conservation projects achieve a level of adoption and acceptance by local communities to promote environmental conservation, stewardship, and protection of the protected area and its natural resources. However, the motives behind the sustained participation in WWF programs are also notable in this ownership of management activities. Interestingly, in this case study, responsibilities for environmental conservation were commonly incentivized by economic gains to local livelihoods. That is, playing a significant role in improving livelihoods, the sustainability of these natural resources (particularly those linked with WWF projects) was directly linked with sustained economic opportunities.

Finally, in considering the long-term sustainability of natural resources, solutions based on the sale of natural resources seem concerning. Specifically, the counter-intuitive idea of prescribing the commercialization of natural resources as an environmentally sustainable solution seems grounded in Western/capitalist thought. This ties into the green capitalist criticism, which leads to overproduction and, ultimately, price drops. Historically,

overproduction of *castaña* and cacao has caused price declines, posing risks for communities, especially if their production is not diversified.

Therefore, it was interesting to note that some farmers requested support in scaling their productions within the park in hopes of increasing both the harvesting and sales of *castaña*. This is of even greater concern when further considering this specific context of this area as characterized by the protected area, neoliberal agendas, the recently empowered communities, and organizations like WWF, as any of these actors may shift toward prioritizing profits over conservation and sustainable land management.

This case study aims to contribute to the critiques of community-based conservation within the literature of political ecology, anthropology, human development, and conservation. By sharing the human experiences and impacts of community-based conservation, this case study demonstrates the complexity behind understanding the implications of environmental sustainability. Aligning income-generating activities for the development of local livelihoods is counter to conservation efforts that promote environmental sustainability. Even more so, WWF promoting these solutions as 'long term' for communities that experience limitations to exercising power and autonomy to control natural resources brings to question these sentiments of 'sustainable' projects.

Specifically, when reading this case study of WWF community-based conservation in the Iténez Protected Area, the intent is that these experiences can be viewed as not just as a capture or a singular moment of time, but rather a small snippet of a much longer and broader history that continues to shape current realities, both locally in the Iténez Protected Area and in other regions of the world. Therefore, it is my hope that in sharing this research, we can critically analyze yet another moment among many that can help bridge the understanding of what we can

expect for the future if we do not work toward dismantling traditional conservation theory, neoliberal agendas, and power inequalities present when implementing community-based conservation.

Moving Forward

As mentioned, WWF Bolivia and community relationships have a strong foundation of trust. To support this relationship, initial findings from the *sistematización* were shared with WWF to shape findings into lessons learned and actionable next steps in addressing community feedback. For instance, they have already adopted a partnership model with local organizations and institutions to support communities in increasing their independence. Recognizing the potential of this relationship and generally the roles NGOs and civil society play, I still believe that NGOs have the greatest potential for partnering with local communities. While their positionality needs to be considered at the organizational level, I believe NGOs and civil society are best positioned to incorporate shifting ideologies and power redistribution into programs, strengthening and broadening their capacity as organizations to better support the communities they serve.

While this case study examines mistakes historically repeated in the sector and by WWF, this research can provide a space to consider how we can improve in the future. Therefore, this research also aims to contribute to the new conservation debates that explicitly acknowledge the complexity of decisions that need to be made when working in the conservation and human development sector. As this study demonstrates, "Win–win scenarios, where both natural resources are conserved and human well-being is improved in specific places over time, have been difficult, if not almost impossible, to realize. Compromise, contestation and conflict are more often the norm" (McShane et al., 2011).

Within new debates, “A new challenge… is emerging for conservationists: to find ways to identify and explicitly acknowledge the trade-offs and hard choices that are involved in advancing conservation in specific places and through specific approaches” (McShane et al., 2011). Using past failures and shortfalls allows us to recognize the realities of a world in which people and humans are so intrinsically tied and prepare for the difficult decisions that encompass this work. Further, these debates challenge conservationists “to be explicit about losses, costs, and hard choices so they can be openly discussed and honestly negotiated” (McShane et al., 2011).

It is within these new debates that I see the potential for WWF to re-enter the space of conservation, leveraging its history (the good and the bad) as a tool to critically assess its interventions with human development and conservation. I believe this is where WWF can change its approach to one that embraces shifting ideologies and redistributes its power back to local people. This presents an opportunity for WWF to move forward and promote alternative ways of thinking. We already know what to expect if we advance the current course, and “To continue to feed this cycle benefits neither nature nor people” (McShane et al., 2011).

Future Research

As part of future research, it would be interesting to observe a deeper look into NGOs and their positions within the state. NGO studies, particularly those of larger entities, should be further addressed to understand their position within the global political economy. Additionally, the interviews conducted with WWF staff and *Cejis* could be further analyzed to understand yet another layer of a complex relationship between Bolivia's state, civil societies, and NGOs.

References Cited

Achtenberg, E. (2015). What's Behind the Bolivian Government's Attack on NGOs? Retrieved from http://upsidedownworld.org/archives/bolivia/whats-behind-the-bolivian-governments-attack-on-ngos/

Arnstein, S. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35(4), 216-224.

Associated Press. (2023, April 24). Bolivia's lithium resources attract global investment. AP News. Retrieved May 21, 2024, from https://apnews.com/article/bolivia-lithium-resources-15e170b6f2f42079b750d262da9c258a

Barrett, C. B., Brandon, K., Gibson, C., & Gjertsen, H. (2001). Conserving tropical biodiversity amid weak institutions. BioScience, 51(6), 497-502.

Berkes, F. (2007). Community-based conservation in a globalized world. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 104(39), 15188-15193. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0702098104

Berkes, F. (2004), Rethinking Community-Based Conservation. Conservation Biology, 18: 621-630. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2004.00077.x

Boillat, S., Mathez-Stiefel, S.-L., & Rist, S. (2013). Linking local knowledge, conservation practices and ecosystem diversity: comparing two communities in the Tunari National Park (Bolivia). Ethnobiology and Conservation, 2. https://doi.org/10.15451/ec2013-8-2.8-1-28

Boza, E. J., Motamayor, J. C., Amores, F. M., Cedeño-Amador, S., Tondo, C. L., Livingstone, D. S., et al. (2014). Genetic characterization of the cacao cultivar CCN 51:its impact and significance on global cacao improvement and production. Journal of the American

Society for Horticultural Science. J. Amer. Soc. Hort. Sci. 139, 219–229. doi: 10.21273/JASHS.139.2.219

Braun, Y. A. (2006). "Large Dams as Development: Restructuring Access to Natural Resources in Lesotho." Pp. 151-171 in Globalization and the Environment. Edited by Andrew K. Jorgenson and Edward L. Kick. Leiden, NL: Brill Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047409618_010

Braun, Y. (2020) "Lesotho's white gold: the political ecology of temporality and the economy of anticipation in resource extraction and large dam infrastructural projects", Journal of Political Ecology 27(1), 853-876. doi: https://doi.org/10.2458/v27i1.23250

Brosius, P. J., Tsing, A. L., & Zerner, C. (Eds.). (2005). Communities and conservation : Histories and politics of community-based natural resource management. AltaMira Press.

Bryant, R. L. (1991). Putting Politics First: The Political Ecology of Sustainable Development. Global Ecology and Biogeography Letters, 1(6), 164–166. https://doi.org/10.2307/2997621

Clements, M. (2009). A Look at Neoliberalism in Bolivia: The Water War to the Present. Mountaineer Undergraduate Research Review, 1(1), 4.

Congreso Nacional de la República de Bolivia. 1994. *Ley n°1551 de 20 de Abril de 1994, Ley de Participación Popular* La Paz, , Bolivia

Ellerbeck, Alexandra. "Red Tape or Repression? NGOs Fight for a Place in the New Bolivia They Helped Evo Morales Create." Mongabay Environmental News, 25 Aug. 2015, news.mongabay.com/2015/05/red-tape-or-repression-ngos-fight-for-a-place-in-the-new-bolivia-they-helped-evo-morales-create/.

Escobar, A., (1998) “Whose Knowledge, Whose nature? Biodiversity, Conservation, and the Political Ecology of Social Movements”, Journal of Political Ecology 5(1), 53-82. doi: https://doi.org/10.2458/v5i1.21397

Fletcher, R. (2010). Neoliberal Environmentality: Towards a Poststructuralist Political Ecology of the Conservation Debate. Conservation and Society, 8(3), 171–181. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26393009

Green Carbon Bolivia. (n.d.). *TCO Itonama*. Green Carbon Bolivia. https://greencarbonbolivia.com/index.php/tco-itonama/

Hackel, J.D. (1999), Community Conservation and the Future of Africa's Wildlife. Conservation Biology, 13: 726-734. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1523-1739.1999.98210.x

Hindery, D. (2013). *From Enron to Evo Pipeline Politics, Global Environmentalism, and Indigenous Rights in Bolivia* (First peoples : new directions in indigenous studies). Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Ibisch, P.L. (2005). Biodiversity Conservation in Bolivia: History, Trends and Challenges. In: Romero, A., West, S.E. (eds) Environmental Issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3774-0_3

Ibisch, P.L. (2001). Bolivia is a megadiversity country and a developing country. In: Barthlott, W., Winiger, M., Biedinger, N. (eds) Biodiversity. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-06071-1_15

INE, I. (2015). Censo de población y vivienda 2012, Bolivia. Características de la población. La Paz: Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (2024). *The Indigenous World 2024*. Dwayne Mamo. https://www.iwgia.org/doclink/iwgia-book-the-indigenous-world-2024-

eng/eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdWIiOiJpd2dpYS1ib29rLXRoZS1pbmRpZ2Vub3VzLXdvcmxkLTIwMjQtZW5nIiwiaWF0IjoxNzEzMjkyNTQ5LCJleHAiOjE3MTMzNzg5NDl9.NYMwEJvs58zk7jBq3TuAqMDlv2FV7DOrpW1SSrwzzig

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (2023). *The Indigenous World 2023*. Dwayne Mamo. https://www.iwgia.org/doclink/iwgia-book-the-indigenous-world-2023-eng/eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJzdWIiOiJpd2dpYS1ib29rLXRoZS1pbmRpZ2Vub3VzLXdvcmxkLTIwMjMtZW5nIiwiaWF0IjoxNjgxNzcwMDMxLCJleHAiOjE2ODE4NTY0MzF9.PxHbwjCHHzLhC5V4CSm9QD0ZwrRgqSEZOAP38mX6h9c

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (2010). *The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples The Cooperation Between Denmark And Bolivia (2005-2009)*. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications//0462_EB-DANIDA-BOLIVIA-ENGELSK.pdf

Jara, O. (2012). La sistematización de experiencias. Práctica y teoría para otros mundos posibles, 8-258.

Jones, S. (2008), Political Ecology and Land Degradation: How Does the Land Lie 21 Years after Blaikie and Brookfield's Land Degradation and Society?. Geography Compass, 2: 671-694. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00109.x

Keese, J., Camacho, A., & Chavez, A. (2017). Follow-up study of improved cookstoves in the Cuzco region of Peru. Development in Practice, 27(1), 26–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2017.1257565

Klein, H. S. (2011). A concise history of Bolivia. Cambridge University Press.

Kohl, B. (2003). Nongovernmental Organizations as Intermediaries for Decentralization in Bolivia. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 21*(3), 317-331.

Kohl, B. (2002). Stabilizing neoliberalism in Bolivia: popular participation and privatization. Political geography, 21(4), 449-472.

Li, T. M. (2007). The will to improve: Governmentality, development, and the practice of politics. Duke University Press.

MacDonald KI. 2003. "Community-based conservation: A reflection on history." Unpublished MS.

Martin, G. R. (2003). Contested space in Cahuita, Costa Rica: Conservation, community and tourism on the Caribbean Coast. University of California, Davis.

Martin, G. R. (2006). Conservation and recreation planning on the Caribbean coast: Cahuita, Costa Rica. In Environmental Planning in the Caribbean (pp. 141-166). Routledge.

McShane, T. O., Hirsch, P. D., Trung, T. C., Songorwa, A. N., Kinzig, A., Monteferri, B., Mutekanga, D., Thang, H. V., Dammert, J. L., Pulgar-Vidal, M., Welch-Devine, M., Peter Brosius, J., Coppolillo, P., & O'Connor, S. (2011). Hard choices: Making trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and human well-being. Biological Conservation, 144(3), 966–972.

Ministerio de Educación. (2014). *Culturas Vivas: Compendio de la Síntesis de los Registros de Saberes y Conocimientos de los Pueblos Indígena Originarios y Afrobolivianos*. Ministerio de Educación. https://red.minedu.gob.bo/repositorio/fuente/6520.pdf

Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua (n.d.). Guía para comités de gestión. Retrieved from https://wwflac.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/guia-para-comites-de-gestion-final.pdf

Muñoz-Viñas, S. (2005). Contemporary theory of conservation. Amsterdam: Elsevier-Butter Worth-Heine mann.

MDSP (Ministerio de Desarrollo Sostenible y Planificación), 2001, El Proceso de Participación en el Diseño y Formulación de la Estrategia Nacional de Conservación y Uso Sostenible de la Biodiversidad de Bolivia, La Paz, Bolivia.

Nijenhuis, Gery. (2002). Decentralisation and Popular Participation in Bolivia : The link between local governance and local development.

Oldekop, J.A., Holmes, G., Harris, W.E. and Evans, K.L. (2016), A global assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas. Conservation Biology, 30: 133-141. https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12568

Oliveira, G., & Hecht, S. (2016). Sacred groves, sacrifice zones and soy production: Globalization, intensification and neo-nature in South America. The Journal of Peasant Studies, 43(2), 251-285.

Postero, Nancy. 2007. “Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia.” Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Prijatelj Videmšek, M.& Krivic, M. (2023, July 17). Bolivia's Amazon is burning. The Boston Globe. Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/07/17/opinion/bolivias-amazon-is-burning/

Quick, K. S., & Feldman, M. S. (2011). Distinguishing participation and inclusion. Journal of Planning Education and Research, 31(3), 272-290..pdf

Reyes-García, V., Paneque-Gálvez, J., Bottazzi, P., Luz, A. C., Gueze, M., Macía, M. J., ... & Pacheco, P. (2014). Indigenous land reconfiguration and fragmented institutions: A historical political ecology of Tsimane'lands (Bolivian Amazon). Journal of Rural Studies, 34, 282-291.

Riccucci, N., & Van Ryzin, G. (2017). Representative Bureaucracy: A Lever to Enhance Social Equity, Coproduction, and Democracy. *Public Administration Review, 77*(1), 21-30.

Ruiz Botero, L. D. (2001). La sistematización de prácticas.

Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas. (n.d.). Presentación. http://sernap.gob.bo/presentacion/

Schilling-Vacaflor, A. (2016). Who controls the territory and the resources? Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) as a contested human rights practice in Bolivia. Third World Quarterly, 38(5), 1058–1074. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1238761

Singh, M., Sood, S., & Collins, C. M. (2022). Fire dynamics of the Bolivian Amazon. Land, 11(9), 1436.

Smith, G. (2009). Democratic innovations : Designing institutions for citizen participation (Theories of institutional design). Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Vaccaro, I., Beltran, O., & Paquet, P. A. (2013). Political ecology and conservation policies: some theoretical genealogies. Journal of Political Ecology, 20(1), 255-272.

Waylen, K.A., Fischer, A., Mcgowan, P.J.K., Thirgood, S.J. And Milner-Gulland, E.J. (2010), Effect of Local Cultural Context on the Success of Community-Based Conservation Interventions. Conservation Biology, 24: 1119-1129. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2010.01446.x

West, P., Igoe, J., & Brockington, D. (2006). Parks and Peoples: The Social Impact of Protected Areas. Annual Review of Anthropology, 35, 251–277. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25064924

Winter, K. A. (2002). Subsistence Use Of Terrestrial And Aquatic Animal Resources In The Tierra Comunitaria De Origen Itonama Of Lowland Bolivia (Doctoral dissertation,

University of Georgia). University of Georgia Libraries. https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/winter_kimberly_a_200212_phd.pdf

World Bank. (2022). GDP per capita (current US$). Gender Data Portal. https://genderdata.worldbank.org/indicators/ny-gdp-pcap-cd/

World Bank. (2021). Bolivia: Trade Summary. World Integrated Trade Solution. https://wits.worldbank.org/CountrySnapshot/en/BOL

World Wildlife Fund. (2005). *WWFolio Issue 6*. World Wildlife Fund. https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwfolio_nr6_ingles.pdfWorld Wildlife Fund. (2007). *WWFolio Issue 11*. World Wide Fund for Nature. https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwfolio_11_ingles.pdf

World Wildlife Fund. (2012). *Adaptive Harvesting Initiative Monitoring and Evaluation Report*. World Wildlife Fund. https://files.worldwildlife.org/wwfcmsprod/files/Publication/file/8bdpelqjoz_AHI_M_E_report_FINAL_111712.pdf

York, R. (2006). Ecological Paradoxes: William Stanley Jevons and the Paperless Office. Human Ecology Review, 13(2), 143-147.