

CONSENSUS BUILDING IN ECOTOURISM



CONCEPTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

DEFINITION

- The World Conservation Union (IUCN) :
“environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features-both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor negative impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations”.
- The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) :
responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.

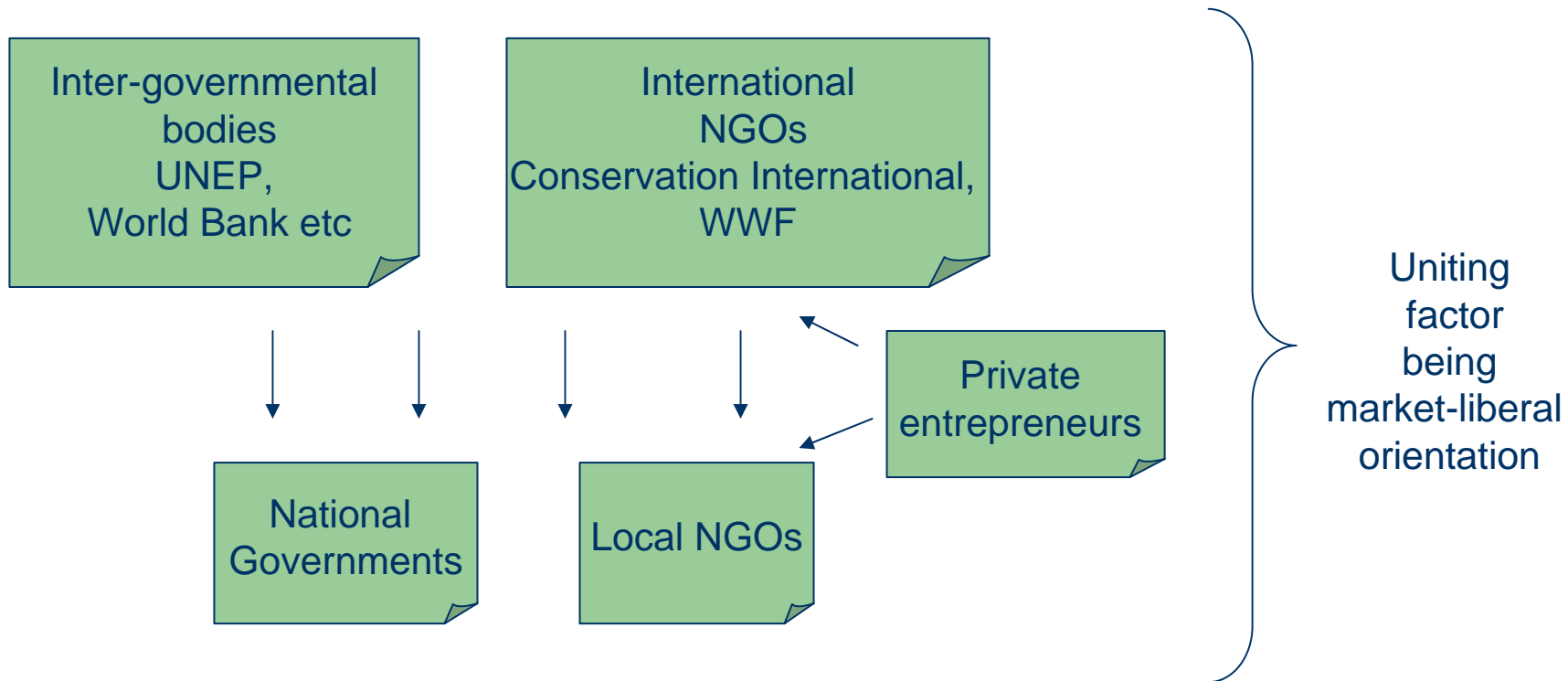
BROAD QUESTIONS

- What are the concepts that are used to present or legitimize a picture of consensus in ET.
- Nature and drawbacks of these concepts
- Function of vague concepts
- Why the need to critique concepts

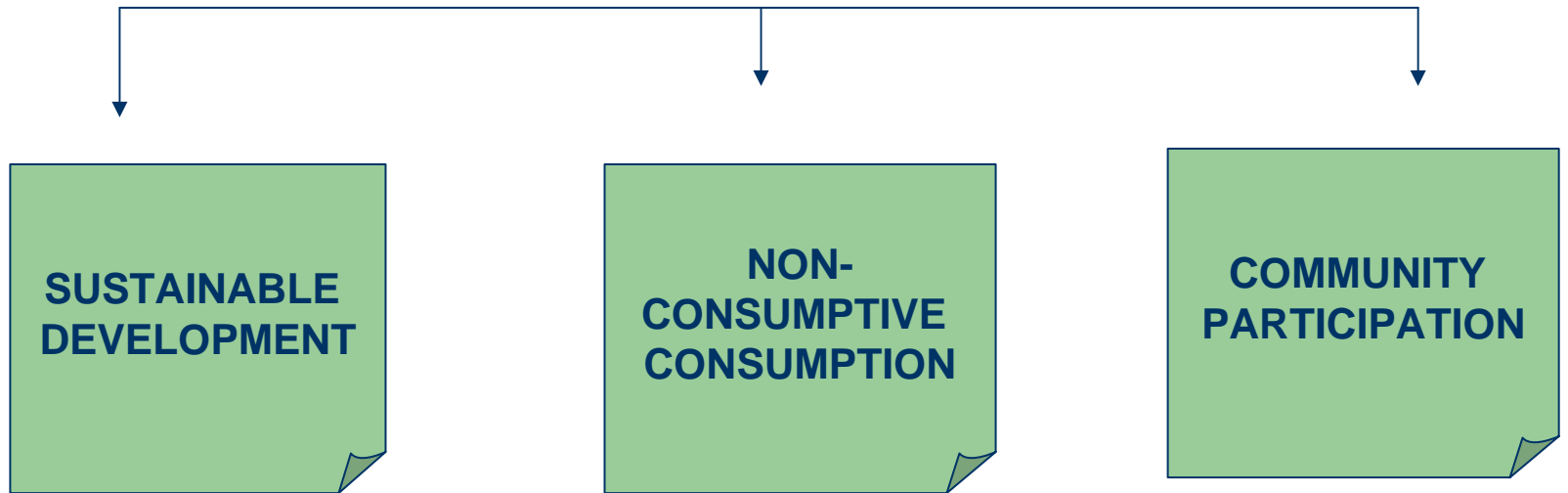
THE WIN-WIN SCENARIO OF ECOTOURISM

- Ecological sustainability
- Community participation and welfare
- Increasing income and growth-potentials of lesser-developed areas
- Ensuring responsible limits to consumption
- Visitor satisfaction
- Maintaining private profit

GLOBAL DISCOURSE COALITION



LEGITIMIZING CONCEPTS

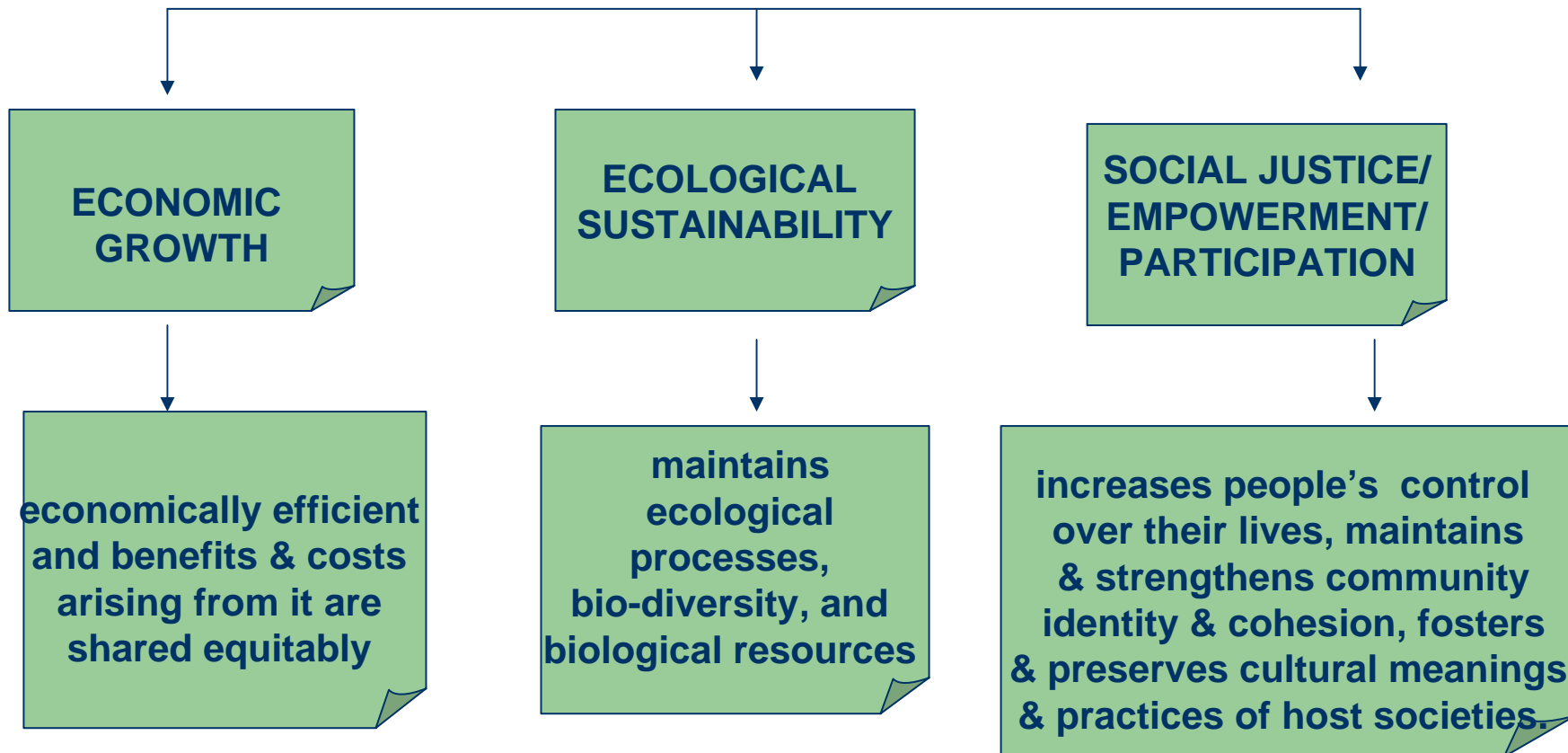


SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- WCED DEFINITION:

‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’

3 TROPES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



ECOTOURISM & SD

- Current phase of tourism as one standing on sustainability
- UNCED's CSD incorporated sustainable nature-based tourism' as a sub-category) with reference to the development of SIDS i.e. Small Island Developing States .
- The Rio +5 session formally incorporated sustainable tourism as an environment and development issue. The 7th session of CSD addressed its conceptual, environmental, procedural, socio-cultural, economic and institutional dimensions.
- The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Travel and Tourism Council and the Earth Council came out with an Agenda 21 for 'The Travel and Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development', in 1996
- In its 1999 meeting UNEP's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) incorporated 'Sustainable use including tourism' as a theme. A workshop, held in 2001 resulted in 'International Guidelines on Sustainable Tourism in Vulnerable Ecosystems' and later a 'Users Manual on the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development' was evolved

KEY ASSUMPTIONS & PROBLEMS

- Environmental crisis is a poverty & population problem – ‘the poor are too poor to be green’.
- Environmentally sound/sustainable practices = greater efficiency = greater profits
clarion call of ‘production of more with less’
- Calculability of real value of nature and hence possibility of fair trading
- Consensus over what constitutes ecologically sustainable practice
- Role of participation in SD

LANGUAGE OF TRADE-OFFS

- ‘exploit intelligently in a *sustainable manner*’ the tourism resources in the country such that they can ‘prove to be the proverbial engine of growth for the economy’ (Working Group Report 2006: 5)
sustainability of growth and resources are needed to be sustained in as much as it helps sustain growth indefinitely. E.g. Coastal tourism
- Whenever destruction or serious alteration of areas of high primary productivity like wetlands, sea grass beds, or rainforest is contemplated, *benefits and costs should be carefully assessed* before planning tourism development activities’ (ET policy 1998).
e.g. EIA in ET
- while ‘conflict between use of resource for tourism v/s its use for local livelihood’ is to be minimized, the means and end to which such conflict resolution should strive for is not formalized.

NON-CONSUMPTIVE CONSUMPTION

- Discourse of private tourism entrepreneurs such as the hotel industry, tour operators, as well as by certain INGOs such as Conservation International, Earth Watch, Friends of the Earth, World Wide Fund for Nature etc.
- Green developmentalism : a version of environmental economics, applied on a world-scale which 'recasts the popular environmentalist account of the spoiling of Eden by industrialism, into a parable of policy failures, correctable by market solutions'. (McAfee 1999: 133-134)
- Reflects key ideas of neo-liberalism: economic rationality of man or woman, failure of the state, liberalization of entry & exit barriers

HYBRIDIZATION OF MARKET ORTHODOXY

- Aesthesization of consumption: social signifiers attached to so that commodity images expressed beauty, individuality, status, pleasure and fulfilled desire.
- attaching images of romance, fulfillment, exotica, desire, beauty, communality, scientific progress and the good life, to mundane consumer good
- attachment of secondary meaning other than strictly technological or functional ones, to objects, aids or rather props up the process of rapid circulation of goods in late capitalism. This circulation is achieved by the ability to circumvent physical barriers and locate consumption in the realm of ideas.

- ET reflects trend of vastly increased scope of commodification and rise of non-mass forms of consumption and production, resulting from decreased functionality and greater aesthetisization ...part of a new venture in the tourist circuits where explorers in the late twentieth century are willing to buy not only the products but also the experience of life in its entire exotic splendor' (Nash 2000: 129).
- consumer feedback : 'There's so much in terms of both variety and number of experiences...Dolphins, stampeding water buffalo, elephants, oh and the wonderful stars at night, and the warm, smiling people. It was all unforgettable. '
- Conservation International : 'as a part of the service industry, ecotourism promotes a change from material to non-material focus'

CONFLICTS AVOIDED

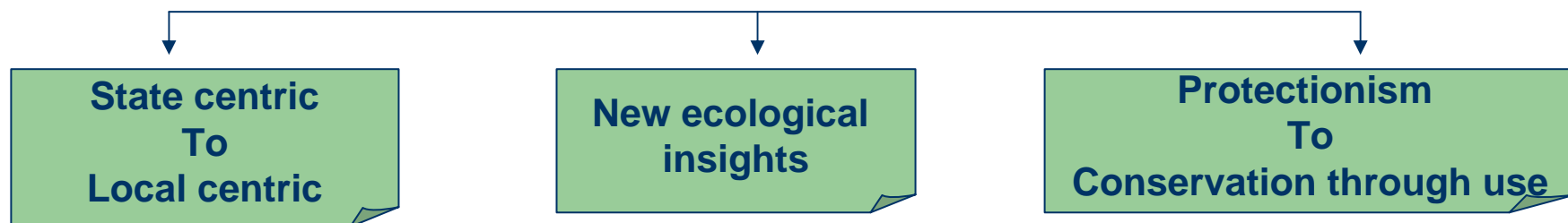
- Stereotyping of rural communities and in invoking a certain image of destinations, privileged tourists are able to control and manipulate their subject.
- touristic gaze: alienation of locals as commodities lose context of production, objects their sacredness and rituals their cultural and symbolic significance within the local social setting.
- Essentialization ~ a politics over authenticity ~ continuation of colonial power structures.
- ET being a product of the rapid idea cycle characteristic of marketing, destinations have to fight against becoming obsolete.
- Dimension of class: for those with the necessary economic and cultural capital, it is increasingly easy to enjoy 'a little taste of something more exotic'
- Paradox of anti-modernism in ET - tourists may consider development as a source of cultural and environmental ruin rather than as a harbinger of progress, that is promised to local communities participating in ET.
- Negative impact of 500 million travelers per year, visiting remote corners of the world, in terms of pollution, intensified land-use, depletion of natural resources, alteration of ecosystems, increased resource-use conflicts, cultural deterioration considered lower than positive impact of market involvement, in terms of an 'estimated charitable giving by Americans alone, in tourism related concerns of more than \$300 billion annually by 2020'

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

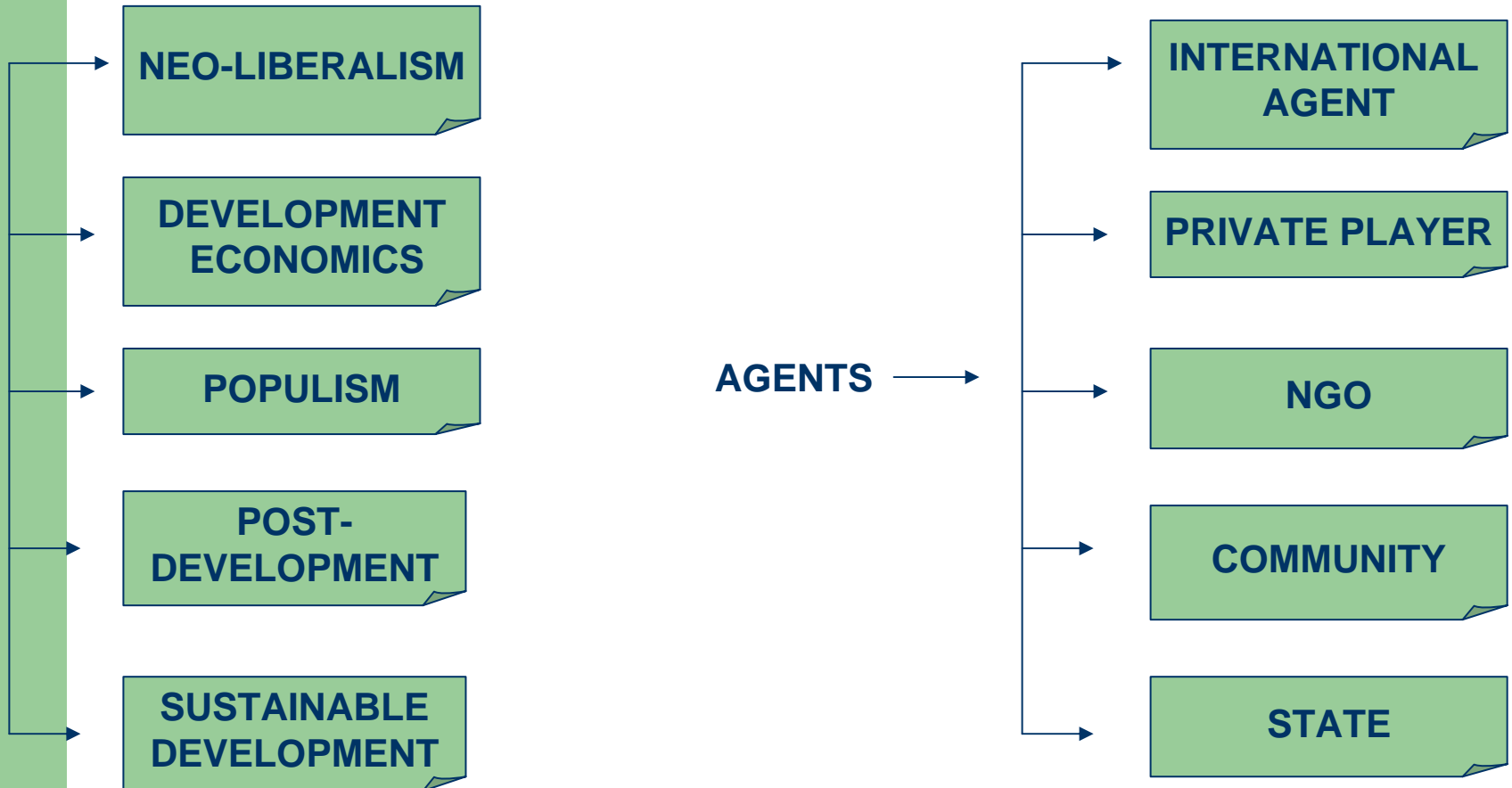
- ET as a discourse and tool of development *about* and *directed towards* the community rather than as one deployed by the community.
- Private capitalist interests, state and inter-state organizations and national and international NGOs all engage in the promotion of ET projects to benefit the community while meeting conservation goals.
- However, equally important is an acknowledgment that the successful deployment of the discourse i.e. its hegemonic status has resulted in various communities subscribing to, co-operating in and undertaking ET as means of their own development. An acceptance of and internalization of the community participation discourse.

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT ORTHODOXY

- Attempt to enable those individual and groups previously excluded by top-down planning processes and thus marginalized by their separation and isolation from the production of knowledge and formulation of policies and practices, to be included in decisions that affect their lives.
- 'new conservation' paradigm : an approach focusing on developing alternative sources of income or livelihood to substitute for use of biodiversity resources or developing dependent relationships between biodiversity and surrounding people.



ESPOUSED BY



COMMUNITY BASED ET

- The argument forwarded for soliciting participation in ET is that if local people secure a sustained, tangible economic benefit from tourism to protected areas, they will be less likely to exploit them in other less sustainable ways
- Benefits for the community include – economic, maintenance of culture, increased environmental awareness

CONTRADICTIONS

- When CBET is touted as means for greater decentralization of natural resources whereby locals make their own resource-use decisions, such decisions may not necessarily be oriented towards conservation.
- The problem for outside facilitators, of launching a development and conservation programme, solely hinging of the promised revenues from ET is that not all protected areas have the revenue-generating potential required.
- If participation is instrumental in earning greater income alone, then the profit maximization logic may lead communities to maintain sustainably only those resources accessed by ecotourists
- Lack of acknowledgement of inequalities of power within communities
- Strategizing perception of community – as predators or as harmoniously living with nature.

Thus resultant 'containment' or top-down participation