An assessment of social impacts of national parks on communities in Quebec, Canada

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Summary
Numerous national parks have been established worldwide to protect nature, but this has not been without social consequences for neighbouring communities. Since the social and economic vitality of adjacent communities is being recognized more and more as indispensable for the success of conservation objectives, the quality of park-community relations has become a critical issue. A four-year investigation into the social impacts engendered by two national parks situated in the Saguenay region of Quebec (Canada) was conducted, according to a social impact assessment method. Several impacts and changes were identified on resource management, on the local economy, on the tourist industry, on involvement and participation of local actors and on the social organization of the neighbouring communities. The significance of these impacts varied according to the community and the actors involved.

The results of the present research point to the determining role of the government in general, and of the park management in particular, in the process of local community development. In this regard, recommendations are addressed to local communities to improve their partnership with national parks.

Keywords: national parks, social impact assessment, local communities, viable development, local development.

Introduction
While the protection of nature, which is the primary objective of national parks, is of nationwide concern, the taking into account of the local social and cultural contexts of neighbouring communities in park planning and management is increasingly considered essential for the success of park conservation objectives (Rao & Geisler 1990; Lusigi 1994; Wells 1996). Relations between parks and local communities are of strategic concern for national parks (Hough 1988; Schonewald-Cox et al. 1992), as is knowledge and understanding of the social and economic impacts of parks on the development of these communities.

So far, little research on park-created impacts has been done in the industrialized nations. There is, however, a great need for such research, since numerous communities in these countries have expressed opposition to park management practices and/or to the establishment of national parks in their local areas (Solecki 1994; Finger-Stich & Ghimire 1997).

With this need in mind, the present study was undertaken to understand better the optimal interface between national conservation strategies and viable community development. This investigation into park-community relations was based on the concept of local viable development and was carried out according to the principles of social impact assessment (SIA) (Rickson 1990; Burdge 1994). The Saguenay region in Quebec (Canada) provided an exceptional study site, since the creation of two conservation parks, one land-based and the other a marine park, in close proximity to 16 rural communities, has engendered far-reaching changes in the area. In this paper, the term ‘national park’ is used to designate both of these parks, since both are managed as such, according to the definition of the World Conservation Union.

To argue the necessity of taking social impacts into account, this paper will begin with an overview of case studies from developing as well as industrialized countries. A description of the Saguenay study area (Quebec, Canada) and of the types of impacts observed in it will follow, and the case of one particular community, that of Rivière-Éternité, in its relationship to the land-based Saguenay Park will be detailed.

National conservation areas revisited in the light of social impacts
Since the 1970s, particularly in the industrialized nations, nature conservation has become an issue of major importance. Scientists and environmentalists alike have pressured governments to adopt strategies and laws in line with conservation objectives. Amongst the strategies put forward, the setting aside of areas devoted exclusively to the protection of natural ecosystems has been the one most favoured by decision-makers. According to the classification proposed by the World Conservation Union, national parks are the most restrictive of these protected areas (West & Brechin 1991, pp. 7–10). Historically, human populations have not been tolerated within park boundaries. Such has been the American model of park management, and numerous national parks around the world have been created in accordance with this model (Hough 1988).

The creation of such parks, solely for the purpose of biodiversity conservation, has not, however, been without important consequences for adjacent local communities.
These consequences have been particularly dramatic for populations in developing nations (see West & Brechin 1991); in order to meet the criteria of environmental protection, such communities have often been relocated without compensation. Thus deprived of their subsistence territory and access to resources, they have been destabilized and impoverished. This has been the situation, for example, in the case of the Gir National Park in India (Raval 1991) and the Kidepo Valley Park in Uganda (West & Brechin 1991). This uprooting of indigenous populations in the name of conservation and of tourism has had negative impacts on the health, way of life, culture and economies of the local communities involved, and has accentuated the social and spatial inequalities between communities, social groups within these communities, families, men and women, and, in general, has contributed to an impoverishment of living conditions (Rao & Geisler 1990; Bidol & Crowfoot 1991; Hough 1991; Kutay 1991; Woo 1991; Wells et al. 1992; Peters 1994–95). These are significant social impacts (International Committee on Guidelines and Principles 1994, p. 107), which were not taken into account at the time these national parks were established, and which have not been taken into account in subsequent management of these parks.

The changes thus produced in such populations and their environment have been amplified by the fact that the decisions to create conservation areas were typically made without consultation and approval of the local people. Such circumstances have led to serious difficulties in the relationship between park administrations and adjacent communities, to the point of creating a generalized climate of social tension in some cases (Bidol & Crowfoot 1991; Wells et al. 1992). Hough (1988) reports acts of poaching and vandalism, and, in certain cases, armed conflict, in a number of parks. Extreme poverty and the necessity of meeting basic needs has forced numerous host communities to continue their hunting and gathering practices in areas that have been set aside for conservation. Certain authors predict that the pressure on parks, particularly in the case of those in developing nations, will only increase in the coming years due to continuing demographic growth and the legal approach traditionally used to manage park lands, namely the imposition of penalties and police-type patrolling (Ghimire 1991; Lusigi 1994; Machlis & Force 1997).

In North America, the situation is not as critical. Nonetheless, the expropriation of local populations from protected areas has occurred and has not been accomplished without difficulty. The Canadian National Parks of Forillon (Quebec) and Kouchibougouac (New Brunswick), which at the time of their creation led to vigorous protests, are cases in point. Today, despite the fact that the practice of excluding local populations from protected areas has tended to decline, recent studies reveal both direct and indirect long-term consequences for communities in close proximity to parks, such has been the case for the Pinelands Reserve (Hales 1991; Solecki 1994) and the Adirondack Park (Solecki 1994) in the USA, and the Banff National Park in Canada (Page et al. 1996). In fact, land speculation, modifications to the local employment structure, a rise in the cost of living, an increase in property taxes and an influx of workers and new residents were some of the impacts commonly identified in these studies (Hales 1991; Solecki 1994; Page et al. 1996). The presence of parks also creates new demands on local resources, which in turn, affect park conservation objectives. In the industrialized nations, these demands arise mainly for new developments in the tourist industry (Murphy 1985; Solecki 1994).

As a result, a number of national parks in the USA, particularly those situated in proximity to major urban centres, are experiencing great difficulties in meeting their conservation objectives (Mitchell 1994). In these cases, increasing environmental pressures, such as those arising from increased tourist traffic and the urbanization of peripheral zones, with all the resulting air, water and noise pollution, have had a significant impact on park ecosystems as they have on those outside the protected areas (Machlis & Tichnell 1985; Solecki 1994). In Canada, the ecological integrity of the Banff National Park is considered threatened due to expanding commercial development, the growing importance of the Park in the local economy, and the increasingly difficult political relations expected between residents, government and visitors in the years to come (Page et al. 1996). Parks in the rest of the Canadian network are also experiencing stresses arising from urbanization and from their secondary roles as tourist reception centres and transportation corridors (Patrimoine canadien 1998, p. 46).

These cases, as much from the North as from the South, illustrate the degree of interdependence in the relationship between parks and local communities; they also illustrate the importance of taking local communities into account in the planning and management of parks. The social and economic vitality of neighboring communities is increasingly considered essential for the success of parks and conservation objectives (West & Brechin 1991; Lusigi 1994; Wells 1996). Parks have a "strategic reason" to be interested in their relationships with their neighbours 'as, in the long term, their survival is dependent on political support' (Hough 1988, p. 129).

The viable development of local communities: a frame of reference

It is clear that, despite their laudable objective of conservation, national parks generate major changes and impacts on local communities. Park creation is more often than not a centralized and hierarchical process, with the result that parks are often perceived by local populations as outsiders (Wells 1996), more or less indifferent to structures that are already in place, whether regional development plans or traditional land-use practices. National conservation objectives and centralized decision-making structures automatically tend to prevail over existing local or regional development strategies; it is as if the territory to be developed or set aside
were simply an unoccupied, neutral space (Finger-Stich & Ghimire 1997).

If the success of conservation strategies depends on better integration of natural ecosystems and human populations, i.e. of biodiversity and ‘sociodiversity’, it is important to increase understanding of both the optimal conditions for this and the constraints (Rao & Geisler 1990; Kutay 1991; Wells et al. 1992; Solecki 1994; Machlis & Force 1997). To achieve this, it has been proposed that protected areas be monitored and assessed in a systematic, multidisciplinary fashion, by means of field studies, while continuously taking into account the legal and cultural contexts of the particular area (West & Brechin 1991; Wells et al. 1992). The monitoring and assessment of impacts, within an integrated approach and coupled with the analysis of case studies, enable parks to take into account better the specific local and regional concerns that are related to park planning and management (Kutay 1991; West & Brechin 1991; Wells et al. 1992; Solecki 1994).

Should not the planning, operation and monitoring of national parks be therefore integrated into local and regional development strategies? If this is indeed the case, we should also ask if the resources allocated for park creation and development have in fact created conditions which favour the viable development of neighbouring communities. And finally, it should be asked what changes have been engendered by the arrival of parks.

It is to address these questions that the present study was undertaken, following earlier studies on the conditions required for viable community development (Klein & Gagnon 1989; Gagnon 1994, 1995). Within this context, development is seen as a global, integrated process in which the empowerment of communities and individuals is promoted within collective territorially-based projects, the goal of which is to improve the conditions and quality of life (Gagnon 1994). The notions of social equity, solidarity, community control of the local milieu, and the sustainability of ecosystems form the basis of our analytical framework. These notions involve four main issues which will be addressed in this paper: (1) the impacts of park creation on adjacent communities; (2) the spatial and social distribution of economic benefits and social costs engendered by park projects within the context of local and sub-regional development; (3) the nature of park-com-
munity relationships; and (4) the measures needed and the conditions required for local community participation in park management.

Sixteen communities and two parks in the Saguenay region

The area under study comprised 15 rural communities (one of which is aboriginal), of which the populations varied from 212 to 2136 inhabitants, and one small town (population, 21 057). These communities were distributed across three sub-regions of Quebec, adjacent to two parks: the land-based Saguenay Park (284 km²), under provincial jurisdiction, and the Saguenay–St Lawrence Marine Park (1138 km²) under combined federal and provincial jurisdiction. As their names indicate, one of these parks is situated along the Saguenay River corridor, while the other covers a segment of the Saguenay and St Lawrence waterways (Fig. 1). It should be noted that these parks are located downstream from the Saguenay industrial basin, where pulp and paper production and aluminium smelting have historically had a negative impact on the quality of the environment, particularly that of streams and rivers.

In terms of the political context, both parks have been the object of contention between the federal and provincial governments. At the beginning of the 1980s, the federal government wished to create a national park in the Saguenay region. Quebec, ever-embroiled in its historic dispute with Ottawa, refused to cede its territory, and created the Saguenay Park on its own in 1983. On its part, Ottawa was envisaging setting up a marine conservation park, which was the object of lengthy negotiations culminating in an agreement in principle with Quebec in 1990. The laws instituting the park were finally adopted in 1997 and 1998. Park personnel have, however, been present for some time, particularly in the municipality of Tadoussac at the confluence of the Saguenay and St Lawrence rivers. Park-related activities have been taking place and a master plan has been drawn up for the entire zone.

The coming of the Parks to the area created high positive expectations in the neighbouring communities, many of which were showing signs of social and economic distress (Statistics Canada 1998). Paradoxically, while the cause of environmental protection was the justification officially given for the creation of these Parks, it was above all the prospect of economic benefits from park activities and tourism which fuelled local support for these projects (Public hearings on the creation of the Marine Park 1990, 1993):

'The coming of a project such as the Saguenay Marine Park is economic 'manna' for the region. Nobody can be opposed to such a project. Whether on the level of socio-economics, tourism, or employment opportunities, everyone is counting on economic development.' (Gouvernement du Canada et Gouvernement du Québec 1990, translation.)

A special budget of CS10 million was allocated by Quebec and Ottawa (1986–91) to 11 communities on the periphery of the Saguenay Park for the development and construction of tourist infrastructures including accommodation facilities and an alpine ski centre. In the case of the Marine Park, discussions began in 1998 to help finance the rebuilding of certain infrastructures such as community docks and quays. The development of the Park’s main centres of attraction has been planned and is targeted for subsequent investments.

It should be emphasized that the economy of the communities under study, which are situated in rural areas of low population density, has been from the outset centred on the exploitation of natural resources and on subsistence activities linked to logging, fishing or agriculture, except in the case of Tadoussac, which, since the beginning of the century, has been oriented toward tourism. However, for most of the communities, the conversion to tertiary economic activities, in other words tourism, which has taken place since the mid 1980s, represents a major turning point in their histories, and in this context, the Parks seem to have confirmed this change in orientation. What, therefore, has been the impact of these Parks on the capacities of adjacent communities to put the strategies of viable local development into practice (Gagnon 1994)?

Methods

In order to identify and assess the repercussions created by national conservation areas and by tourism, both considered in this study as vectors of social change (see Kutay 1991; Olsen 1997; Wall 1997), it was necessary to choose a methodology that would permit the identification of these changes and their qualitative measurement.

The approach chosen drew its inspiration from two main trends, namely (1) that of the environmental assessment (EA) of projects and (2) that of community development, which goes beyond a simple localization of development projects, but also involves community control over its own lands and resources. This broader perspective required us to distinguish between environmental assessment (EA) as a formalized legal procedure which seeks to measure the social acceptability of a given project and the process of viable local development. To go beyond this distinction between EA procedure and the process of community empowerment, a methodological approach based on Social Impact Assessment (SIA) integrated into the viable development process was adopted.

Social Impact Assessment, as defined by Hough, 'is a tool that, through the systematic gathering and analysis of social data, can be used to assist in predicting the impacts of alternative courses of action on human societies' (Hough 1991, p. 274) and that 'can also be used retrospectively to identify and mitigate adverse effects in ongoing projects' (Hough 1991, p. 277) (see also Rickson 1990; Burdge 1994; International Committee on Guidelines and Principles 1994). The notion of social impact may be defined as follows:
The consequences to human populations of any public or private actions— that alter the ways in which people live, work, play—relate to one another, organize to meet their needs, and generally cope as members of society. The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes to norms, values and beliefs that guide and rationalize people’s cognition of themselves and their society. (International Committee on Guidelines and Principles 1994, p. 107). It is important to note that this definition includes real as well as anticipated impacts such as fears and perceptions, the intensity of which depends on the relationship of the actors to the agent of change.

Provided that the integrated SIA remains an open process rather than an institutional procedure such as EA, that it takes place on a community level, that it remains independent of special interest groups, and is carried out within a framework of continuous monitoring, integrated SIA (ISIA) can be a useful tool for communities in their building of viable local development (Gagnon et al. 1993). This assessment approach is one in which the changes observed are regarded as part of an ongoing social and cultural construction.

In the case of protected areas, few systematic evaluations of social impacts have been carried out up to now (Rao & Geisler 1990; Hough 1991; Solecki 1994); parks are not subject to legal impact assessment procedures and park administrators have not yet integrated the notion of social impacts into their planning and development procedures. Studies on this subject have so far referred mainly to the parks in developing countries, for example Mount Kulal Biosphere Reserve in Kenya, Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal and Ranomafana National Park in Madagascar, but not from a perspective of local or regional development. One of the few studies on this issue carried out in an industrialized nation is related to Kakadu National Park in Australia, with respect to aboriginal populations (Resource Assessment Commission 1990).

Nonetheless, with respect to the issue of park—community relations, a number of researchers consider the ISIA approach to be pertinent, particularly when integrated into the processes of planning, management and monitoring of parks (Bidol & Crowfoot 1991; Hough 1991; Solecki 1994; Lane et al. 1997). There are, however, limits to this type of approach when researchers insist on a strict analysis of causality in order to demonstrate positivist relationships. Although the term ‘impact’ is used and park—community relations are dichotomized for didactic purposes, the approach favoured for this study was above all systemic and comprehensive in nature.

Techniques and information sources

The instruments chosen for this study were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Two series of private interviews were conducted. During the first series, municipal managers (n = 16) were asked to identify local development structures and organizations, recent development initiatives, specific problems facing the community, as well as local perceptions and expectations with respect to the Parks. A second set of interviews was carried out with local leaders (n = 29), namely mayors and representatives of different development, tourism and environmental organizations. Development initiatives, tourism, community vitality, viable development and Parks were the themes discussed. Finally, approximately eight residents, including workers in the tourism and service sectors, senior citizens, youths, newcomers, and local hunters, from each of three different communities were met during three focus-group sessions.

The study also relied on secondary data such as urban development plans, press clippings, and submissions made to the two series of public hearings carried out prior to the creation of the Marine Park (Gouvernement du Canada & Gouvernement du Québec 1990, 1993). Based on these documents, an analysis of the expectations and attitudes of the local actors toward the creation of this Park and toward initiatives taken in the areas of conservation, tourism, and development was carried out. Another important source of data was the socio-economic statistics generated by the 1991 Canadian census, which produced a detailed portrait (17 indicators) of each community over a ten-year period (1981—91).

Changes and impacts identified were categorized in each of the following categories: (1) resource management, (2) local economy, (3) tourism, (4) living conditions, (5) social mobilization, i.e. involvement and participation of local actors, (6) social organization and dynamics, (7) quality of life, and (8) environmental education with respect to sustainable development. The choice of these categories was based on the types of impacts mentioned in the literature on the one hand, and on the other, on those identified in the field data itself. Impacts relative to the first six categories were chosen for discussion. For each of the communities concerned, the impacts were rated by the authors as highly significant, significant or of little significance according to criteria specific to each category, as described under ‘Results’ below.

Results

Impacts on local resource management

One of the observed impacts on adjacent communities resulted from changes to zoning regulations: certain areas zoned green or blue, had, since the creation of the Parks, been set aside for resource conservation, which meant that other types of development projects had been excluded. The fact that a portion of the local lands (particularly in the case of the land-based Park) had been zoned exclusively for conservation by the central governments meant that the management of these areas had been totally removed from local control, which, in turn, created another impact on local development.

To reach their conservation objectives, one of the means favoured by the state had been the imposition of regulations limiting or prohibiting certain practices. This had led to another series of impacts such as modifications to the
recreational use of the area (fishing, trapping, wilderness camping, boating, and hunting for moose, seal and wildfowl, and so on) as well as to economic activities such as logging, maple sugar production, development of tourist infrastructures, and whale-watching. Another type of impact had been the modification of certain practices, such as those of using village docks and quays as places for socializing, and activities such as beach bonfires and mussel gathering. Previously unrestricted access to Park lands for community recreational activities had also been limited. Control barriers at the points of entry to the Park, Park use fees, and surveillance by Park staff were all perceived by local residents as limiting or curbing their spontaneous use of the area.

For the communities of Tadoussac, Rivière-Éternité, Baie-Sainte-Catherine and Les Escoumins, these impacts were assessed as highly significant due to the fact that an activity important to the local economy had been or could potentially have been limited by regulations. An example of this was the developing sea-lion industry in Les Escoumins which may be affected by future Marine Park regulations. For the Montagnais community of Essipit, the impacts were estimated as being significant due to the limitations which could potentially have been imposed on their traditional fishing practices by forthcoming Marine Park regulations. The impact on local resource management appeared at the time to be of little importance for the communities of Sacré-Cœur, Bergeronnes and Saint-Siméon, since in their case it seemed that it was only small groups of individuals which had been affected in their hunting and fishing activities.

Impacts on the local economy

The financial allocations for Park operation as well as for the creation and improvement of Park infrastructures such as roads, trails, interpretative centres, and exhibits were some of the main economic justifications for the Parks. In the case of the Saguenay Park, this represented approximately C$15 million over a ten-year period (1983–93). Investment details for the Marine Park were not available; however, it can be estimated that about C$15 million had been invested since 1990 for the operation of the Saguenay–St Lawrence Park, for the improvement of infrastructure and the drawing up of a Master Plan (Jourdain et al. 1995; interviews with Park Director, February 1996, and Park Manager, May 1998). Within the next five years, about C$20 million is expected to be given over to make this plan operational (interview with Park Director, February 1996).

A second type of economic gain was the injection of government money into the local and regional economies to bolster the tourist industry. Ottawa and Quebec freed up C$10 million in the 1986–91 Agreement in Principle to support development of tourist infrastructure in the areas peripheral to the Saguenay Park. The fact that the projects put forward by regional and outside interests were not on the same scale as each other meant that the subsidies accorded varied appreciably from one community to another.

The evaluation of the impacts on the local economies was based on the amount of government subsidies each community was able to attract, in other words, on the spatial distribution of these subsidies. Analysis of the spatial distribution of funding revealed that, for its alpine ski centre at Mont-Édouard and other projects, the municipality of Anse-Saint-Jean benefited from over a third of the total budget; this was considered to have had a highly significant impact. For their part, Tadoussac and Ville de La Baie each received between 11 and 20% of the total subsidies, which were considered as significant. Other localities contiguous with the Saguenay Park received only 1–10% of the total package and the impact on the economy was therefore assessed as of little significance. One community, Saint-Félix d’Ottis, received no funding at all from this particular agreement.

The third type of economic spin-off was job creation, namely direct employment with the Parks themselves or with ‘designated organizations’, and indirect employment in the tourist industry. In terms of direct employment, the Marine Park hired the equivalent of 27 full-time employees in 1997, of whom 18 worked year-round at Tadoussac. The majority of these positions required specialized university training, in the biological sciences for example, and they were largely occupied by workers from outside the neighbouring communities. As for the Saguenay Park, a policy of giving priority to workers from the region had been in effect since its first years of operation. In 1997, however, the Park generated only 4 year-round and 24 seasonal employment opportunities. In general, residents from host communities were employed in subordinate positions that were mainly seasonal and less well remunerated. Direct employment was also created by organizations that were linked to the Parks’ activities, mainly non-profit organizations. These official ‘partners’ of the Parks, contracted to manage certain activities and services (accommodation & food) offered within Park boundaries, provided about 30 seasonal positions. The workforce hired by these organizations was largely local, and in certain cases, one of their aims was helping workers reintegrate into the job market (interview with representative of the Corporation touristique de Bergeronnes, November 1995).

The impact on direct employment was evaluated with respect to the active population of the communities concerned. It was considered highly significant for the community of Tadoussac (18 year-round and 21 seasonal posts created), significant for that of Rivière-Éternité (1 year-round, 22 seasonal) and Bergeronnes (19 seasonal), of little significance for the town of La Baie (4 year-round, 1 seasonal), and, finally, non-existent for the other local communities.

Regarding indirect employment, the newly-created positions were linked to tourism and had been stimulated by the presence of the Parks. In terms of what this represented for the network of accommodation facilities adjacent to the Saguenay Park, the economic benefits generated in 1994 were equivalent to approximately 100 year-round jobs, which included direct as well as indirect employment within the tourist industry itself (Fortin & Gagnon 1996).
Impacts on the tourist industry

Before the setting up of the Saguenay Park in 1983, tourism infrastructures (accommodation facilities, cruise vessels, and so on) were rare in the Lower Saguenay area. The subsidies allocated by Ottawa and Quebec between 1986 and 1991 allowed the communities in this area to develop their visitor accommodation capacity. Moreover, due to the significant increase in whale-watching over the last few years, the communities around the mouth of the Saguenay River had experienced a marked increase in tourist traffic, the number of visitors having gone from 33 000 in 1985 to 150 000 in 1991, and to over 300 000 in 1993 (Jourdain et al. 1995).

In the Saguenay area, a number of local enterprises based their marketing strategies on the Park 'product', as well as on whale-watching. Paradoxically, while the Marine Park and its partners depended largely on whale-watching to attract visitors, studies commissioned by the Park (Michaud & Giard 1998) have shown that its popularity is threatening to disrupt the very resource on which these businesses depend. Whale-watching activities have thus become a major issue for Park management, and work is presently underway to set up appropriate guidelines (Gilbert & Parc Marin du Saguenay-Saint-Laurent 1998), which are expected to have impacts on this industry within the next few years.

Had the Saguenay Parks contributed to the development of a synergy with the tourism industry, which had had certain repercussions on adjacent communities? Examination of urban plans (n = 14) and local development initiatives for all communities studied showed that planning and development were being increasingly oriented toward recreation and tourism. Approximately 40% of local development initiatives undertaken over the previous five years had been linked to tourism. Moreover, the presence of the two Parks had contributed to creating an economic and political context favourable to the development of a local tourist industry: all the residents and almost half of the local leaders interviewed considered that there were more opportunities for business and investment since the arrival of the Parks.

Impacts on living conditions

The interviews and the urban plans revealed that, for a number of the communities under study, a change in orientation toward tourism accelerated around the beginning of the 1990s. Due to the recent origin of the change, data available (Statistics Canada 1998) did not reveal a direct link between the shift toward tourism and the number of tourism-related jobs (accommodation, catering, retail sales, transport, and so on). There was, however, a movement toward the tertiary sector of the economy shown in eleven (two-thirds) of the communities in the study area for the period 1981–91 (Statistics Canada 1998), as was also observed province-wide. In seven of the communities, this shift was of greater amplitude than the average recorded for their administrative regions.

In Quebec, average household income increased in absolute terms between 1981 and 1991. However, for 11 communities studied, the average household income in 1991 was inferior to that of their administrative regions. In addition, there was a significant increase in the percentage of low-income families in over half the communities studied, indicative of a certain impoverishment in a segment of the population (Statistics Canada 1998).

Certain repercussions on the quality of life are particularly striking. For example, Tadoussac, located at the mouth of the Saguenay River, had experienced a rapid increase in tourist development since the beginning of the 1990s, and, at the same time, significant increases in the cost of living, namely the cost of accommodation, in assessed and market value of private properties (a near tripling of market value in some cases), in municipal taxes (particularly on commercial properties), and in the municipal debt load, as indicated by the focus group in Tadoussac in April 1996, informal exchanges with residents in 1996 and Statistics Canada (1998).

Impacts on the involvement and participation of local actors

The coming of the Saguenay Parks prompted a mobilization of local actors in a variety of ways. These included active participation in public hearings on the Marine Park in 1990 and 1993, where two-thirds of the 133 submissions were presented by individuals and organizations from surrounding communities, and involvement in various organizations such as consultative committees and the regional tourism association (Société Touristique du Fjord). Similarly, in an attempt to give themselves voice in the setting up of the Parks, residents had established dialogue groups such as the Coalition pour le Parc Marin. Local participation was also expressed through certain protest movements, such as the setting up of roadblocks to contest hiring policies as well as Park-related projects such as the Baie-Sainte-Catherine wharf and the demolition of the community-built fireplace in the Cape Trinity trail shelter.

At the same time, there were partnerships created between the Parks and certain local non-profit organizations which offer educational and/or recreational services in line with Park objectives. The importance of these partnerships had varied according to the organization and the community in question, and also with respect to time. These impacts were assessed on the basis of the importance of the partnership and according to the information given by representatives of these organizations during interviews in 1996. Certain partnerships had been short-lived and were considered to have been of little significance, as in the case of promotional campaigns at Saint-Fulgence and support for the design of the interpretative exhibit at the Centre for Marine Recreation in Les Escoumins. In the case of more formal, permanent relationships, such as the involvement of the Esaipit Montagnais community in various advisory committees, this impact was considered to have been significant. The types of partner-
ships considered to have had a very significant impact on the community were those established between the Parks and their designated organizations such as in Rivière-Éternité (Société de Développement de Rivière-Éternité), in Bergeronnes (Corporation Touristique de Bergeronnes) and in Tadoussac (Groupe de Recherche sur les Mammifères Marins). Based on interviews with municipal officials and managers in 1995 and 1996, public hearings in 1990 and 1993, and informal exchanges in 1996, the majority of local leaders also expressed the desire for even greater community involvement in future park developments, but an involvement with decision-making powers and based on local representation.

Impacts on social organization and dynamics

The coming of these Parks had had numerous repercussions on the social organization and dynamics of adjacent communities, but these impacts were not apparent at first sight. For example, in demographic terms, the arrival of workers from outside (particularly in the case of the Marine Park) meant the arrival of new households in the community, about seven in Tadoussac and five in Grandes-Bergeronnes, numbers which did not appear significant, but which nonetheless stood to infuse new life into small ageing populations (913 and 601 inhabitants respectively in 1996). However, relations between newcomers and long-time residents, as in the case of Tadoussac, were described by certain residents as ‘difficult’. A local hunter described the situation in the following terms:

‘As for the newcomers[...], newcomers to the park, they are all ecologists. For sure there are conflicts. All those whale-watchers and whale photographers... They are all the same: “don’t touch this, don’t touch that”...’ (Focus group, Tadoussac April 1996, translation).

This climate of tension was sometimes due to, amongst other things, a lack of communication between Park and community. To add to this context of tension, there was also an influx of temporary workers during the peak tourist season.

In their assessment of Park-community relations, the leaders of Sacré-Cœur and Bergeronnes perceived the situation as being difficult on occasion; the impact was therefore considered to be of little significance. The impact was rated as significant when giving rise to demands or negotiations, as in the case of the aboriginal (Essipit) demands for a seat on the coordinating committees, and the demand expressed by the ‘Black Robe’ (film) Corporation at Saint-Félix-d’Otis to be excluded from the Saguenay Park. For the communities of Rivière-Éternité, Baie-Sainte-Catherine and Tadoussac, where acts of vandalism or public protest (road blocks, and so on) were involved, the impact was judged highly significant.

The community of Rivière-Éternité

To deepen understanding of what the presence of a park has meant for a community in terms of viable development, a more detailed picture of one municipality in particular, that of Rivière-Éternité, was developed. This community is the main ‘gateway’ to the Saguenay Park and was the first centre of attraction to be developed by the Park. Fifteen years after the creation of the Saguenay Park (1983), and some C$8 million invested in infrastructures, what observations could be made regarding their impact on the development of this community?

There had been a decline in the local economy (Table 1). In fact, while the unemployment rate at the beginning of the 1980s was lower than the regional average and household income compared favourably, the situation deteriorated in the mid-1980s. Average household income decreased with respect to the regional average (down by C$6000 in 1991), and the unemployment rate increased (up by 40% in 1991). Under the combined effects of ageing and the exodus of young people, the proportion of the population over the age of 45 had increased. There seemed, however, to have been an improvement in the level of education (up by 4.5% between 1986 and 1991), as well as an increase per se in ‘collective wealth’ as represented by average household income, in spite of its decrease with respect to the regional average.

With respect to local control of lands and resources, the following facts were particularly revealing. At the beginning of the 1980s, the residents of Rivière-Éternité agreed to cede the jurisdiction of a large part of their territory to the provincial (Quebec) government for the creation of the Saguenay Park. In addition, during this same period, modifications were made to forestry regulations (cutting rights allocated to logging companies, for example), and controlled use areas (Zones d’exploitation contrôlée) were created. All of these factors taken together mean that only 6% of the total municipal territory (including privately-owned land) was under local jurisdiction, hemmed in by various outside management practices and interests (Désy 1995). As a result, the local population no longer had direct access to the Saguenay River, and had thus been deprived of the territory which represented its greatest potential for development (Désy 1995). Based on interviews with community leaders in December 1995, January 1996 and April 1997, and a focus group, in April 1996, the residents of Rivière-Éternité had expected to benefit a great deal from the Park, particularly in the area of employment to compensate for jobs lost from the forestry industry. In fact, it was for this reason they had initiated the development of the areas zoned as Park along the rim of the fjord. Consequently, when local residents said in a focus group in 1996 that they were ‘no longer masters in their own home’ (‘nous ne sommes plus maîtres chez-nous’), there was no doubt as to their level of dissatisfaction. Their efforts had not borne fruit; they were still waiting for benefits.

It seemed that the benefits from the Saguenay Park that were expected by the community of Rivière-Éternité had not been forthcoming. While it is true that the Park per se should not be held totally responsible for the social, cultural and economic decline of the area, it can however be affirmed that the monies invested in the Park have not helped redress the

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<tr>
<td>Population change (%)*</td>
<td>+2.8</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>-4.8</td>
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<td>Population 15-44 years (%)</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>50.4</td>
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<td>Population 45 years and over (%)</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>21.5</td>
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<td>Population with less than grade 9 (%)</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population having attended university (%)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment rate (%)</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (%)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>45.1</td>
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<td>Low income families (%)</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average family income (CS)</td>
<td>22,686</td>
<td>24,786</td>
<td>32,617</td>
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* With respect to previous census.

decline in living conditions as had been hoped for by the local people. In addition, despite the strategic location of this community as one of the Park's main centres of attraction, it had not received what residents perceived as its equitable share of economic benefits. Community-Park relations had deteriorated as a result and this trend had been reinforced by decidedly insufficient local participation in the management of the Park (interviews with community leaders and residents 1995, 1996).

Discussion

A new direction for conservation and park management

Economic investments and subsidies, and job-creation, were without doubt the main driving force behind community acceptance of national parks being established in the Saguenay area (Gouvernement du Canada & Gouvernement du Québec 1990, 1993), and without doubt, jobs were created; 28 year-round positions and 63 seasonal posts with the Parks and their designated partners were provided in 1997. There were also indirect employment opportunities created in the tourism sector, and it was in this sector that the greatest number had been created, approximately 100 positions linked to the accommodation network which developed in response to the presence of the Saguenay Park. Overall, however, there were fewer jobs created than had been hoped for by the neighbouring communities. Apart from the number of jobs, the types of positions must also be considered. In the tourism sector, the jobs were seasonal, three-quarters of them being of 10-20 weeks duration, temporary, and poorly paid. In the case of the Parks, the best posts were mainly held by workers from centres outside the host communities while local residents often found themselves relegated to subordinate positions that are mainly seasonal and less well remunerated. This corresponds to data from previous studies (Olwig 1980; Rao & Geisler 1990; West & Brechin 1991).

In addition to economic impacts, the creation of national parks has engendered other changes which have had repercussions on the involvement and participation of local actors, on resource management, on the tourist industry, on living conditions, and on the social organization and dynamics of the neighbouring communities. The significance of these impacts varied according to the community and the actors involved, and in certain cases, the impacts were perceived negatively by the local population.

Impacts on traditional practices, such as on the mussel gathering and hunting which were described earlier, have been dramatically felt by certain communities, particularly those situated where Park development has been concentrated and those located at Park access points. This has been acutely felt by certain local residents as a rupture in their relationship with their habitat; they felt cut off from the territory to which they previously had had unrestricted access. In some cases, this had led to anti-Park gestures such as circumvention of access control points, disobedience of Park regulations, and even vandalism of Park equipment. While these acts remained isolated phenomena, they point to the importance of asking to what extent these Parks have been integrated into the host milieu. It is difficult to envisage a harmonious integration, supported by environmental awareness and education, when Park rapport with the surrounding areas is governed by the imposition of rules and regulations and by the police-type surveillance of Park wardens. This does not mean, however, that all the measures taken to protect these areas should be rejected and the Parks opened up to anarchic, anti-environmental use. Could not environmental education, in combination with flexible regulations adapted to the local milieu, be reconciled with the practices and/or traditions of the adjacent communities, which, when all is said and done, have not been so detrimental, since the land in question has merit national conservation status?

The results of the present research emphasize the determining role of the government in general and of the management of parks in particular in the process of local community development, but we are confronted here with the fact that the government is both park promoter and guarantor of the national interest. Is it possible for a government, concerned with collecting park use fees to contribute to the national coffers, to ensure at the same time that host communities are equitably treated, that they receive their fair share of costs and benefits? Considering the present context of decentralization to the regions and the crisis in public financing in Quebec, would it not be possible for the Parks to...
modify their centrally organized approach to respond better to the specific needs and problems of the local social milieu in which they have been established. Lusigi (1994) saw the role of the State as a regulatory agent to manage spontaneous outside interests, such as major tourist promoters, and to assure that costs and benefits linked to parks and tourism are better distributed. For his part, Wells (1996) suggested that parks, without transforming themselves into local or regional development agencies, could nonetheless play an active role in development issues, through such means as the mobilization of local and government resources and expertise, in keeping with a territorial perspective.

The proposals advanced here imply the need for a new approach in organizational practices, one which is not exclusively centred on internal analysis and planning, but also on relations with the host region as an integrated whole. This also requires the acquisition of new skills on the part of park management and staff, in particular knowledge and skills in the social sciences and regional development (Hough 1988; Lusigi 1994). According to Machlis and Force (1997), this means nothing more and nothing less than a ‘cultural change’ in park organizations and related professions. With the possibility of the privatization of park services, which is under study for Quebec’s parks (Ministère de l’Environnement et de la Faune [MEF] 1996), the issue of the role of parks in regional development becomes even more critical.

Given the necessity of re-evaluating the role of parks and other protected areas, the question is how park management can work together with local communities as veritable partners rather than perceiving them simply as receptacles for certain economic benefits, which have, more often than not, been a long time in coming. In fact, research has shown that direct economic benefits to local communities are far less significant than previously anticipated (Woo 1991; Ite 1996; Wells 1996). While partnership can be a means of establishing bridges between park and community, the concept of designated local organizations providing services in the name of the park, however, seems clearly deficient in that it is based on management that is conducted in a piecemeal fashion, where little power is delegated to community organizations, the norms and conditions of sub-contracting being more or less imposed by the central government.

Public consultation and participation in information meetings prior to and during the establishment of parks are not sufficient. It is necessary to go on to the next step, that of assessment and systematic monitoring, as much from the point of view of the biophysical health of the parks as of the vitality of the neighbouring host communities. To reduce the possibility of conflict, local communities must be involved in conservation and protection strategies, as, for example, in the case of Australia where aboriginal populations are increasingly taking part in park management (Weaver 1991). However, prior to co-management and partnership, it is necessary to build confidence and develop the necessary tools, such as appropriate training and creation of locally-based development organizations, to enable communities adequately to exercise their role of territorial partner (Lusigi 1994; Wells 1996). This would indeed amount to a new direction for the management of national parks.

Conclusion

At first glance, management strategies to meet the needs of environmental conservation and/or of recreation and tourism seem laudable. They are not, however, without consequence for the development of rural communities, particularly when these strategies have not been put into place and controlled by and for them. In a preliminary attempt to identify such consequences in the Saguenay region, where impacts in eight categories were identified and assessed, it was found that the presence of the Quebec’s two Parks has significantly influenced the social and spatial organization of neighboring communities in all eight categories. The importance, intensity and duration of these impacts vary according to the dynamics and stage of development of the host community as well as according to the community’s physical location with respect to the development of the Park and its centres of attraction. It was found that the communities most affected are those which are host to Park infrastructures which tend to confirm the correlation between the siting of the source of change, i.e. the Park, and the intensity of the impacts experienced or anticipated. In general, the Parks cannot be described as having accompanied and helped neighboring communities in their quest for full participation in their own development within the framework of an integrated, territorially-based project.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that parks must develop new roles and instruments to assess their means of meeting conservation objectives, but, in our opinion, this cannot be done outside the context of community development. To achieve this, we believe that an approach based on ISIA would permit going beyond a strictly empirical cause-effect (positivist), sector-based and centralized approach to impact assessment. The integrated approach which is proposed here would also permit real-time monitoring of changes effected and control of their consequences in line with community empowerment and integration into the decision-making processes.

In practical terms, this approach permits both a posteriori and prior assessment of impacts, allowing better management of proposed changes and/or decision-making processes such as modifications to the project and mitigation procedures. The ISIA approach has a number of advantages when carried out under certain conditions, for example when integrated into planning and where political will is present. It permits the integration of both the points of view of different interest groups concerned by the project as well as their perceptions as to the effects of the project or change (Hough 1991). It also permits information required to help manage conflicts and resolve problems to be generated (Bidol & Crowfoot 1991). In addition, ISIA can, when implemented by communities for the purpose of local development, augment their capacity to
steer change in the direction they deem most appropriate (Gagnon et al. 1993).

To ensure that negative impacts are diminished and positive impacts enhanced, community development must be considered central to all phases of the planning and establishment of conservation areas, as must knowledge of the stage of development of the local communities concerned. While the recommendations implicit in the above discussion have been made with park management in mind, the following suggestions are addressed more specifically to local communities. For communities in areas such as the Saguenay, it is recommended that they:

1. identify the terms and objectives of the park-community partnership at all stages of the setting up, management, and monitoring of national parks;
2. create a forum for dialogue to discuss such common concerns as experience acquired in the partnership and the evolution of the tourist industry in order to maximize positive spin-offs and minimize negative impacts; and
3. update and systematize their knowledge of the social and environmental milieu to better control changes, real and anticipated, resulting from increased tourism.

These recommendations highlight both the complexity of linking national strategies of conservation, as expressed through the park system, to the enhancement of community development and well-being, as well as its importance. If we do not want to reduce national parks to nothing more than immense playgrounds for urban residents and tourists needing a change of scene, or worse yet, turn local communities into artificial villages where all visible activity has been emptied of meaning and reduced to temporary simulations for the tourist season, as has happened in numerous tourist towns around the world, major policy corrections are urgently needed. Developing a sensitivity on the part of decision-makers and managers as to the realities of small communities and an awareness of the changes brought about by parks and tourism would be without doubt a step in the direction toward viable local development.

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References


