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## Community conservation in Namibia

Ecocentrism is a notion that values nature and works to preserve it. Human beings are not at the heart of this conceptual approach like in anthropocentrism; rather they are a component of it. In particular, while benefiting from nature's protection and promotion they are regarded as equally vital as non-human beings and ecosystems and should adapt to cause no harm to them (Gray et al., 2018).

Namibia is one of the few countries to have incorporated environmental protection into its national constitution, adopted in 1990 (Ruppel and Ruppel-Schlichting, 2016). Such constitution translated into the creation of communal natural reserves, sometimes known as communal conservancies. Such reserves integrate environmental protection, economic growth through tourism, and decentralized and community-based participatory practices through a community-based natural resource management strategy known as Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). Communities can apply to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to have their land recognized as a conservancy, allowing them to manage and use wildlife in accordance with a management plan produced by a democratically elected management committee. Profits from wildlife exploitation are distributed equitably among community members.

These conservancies have had positive results in terms of wildlife conservation and economic benefits. Ecocentrism is at work in this scenario since biodiversity and human subsistence are equally focused on, as both are equally important components of the ecosystem. The number of communities involved in these projects is growing, from all over Namibia, contributing to the program's positive image. Furthermore, the Forest Act recommends that the CBNRM model be also applied to forests, granting communities the authority to manage and use natural resources in community forests (Leroy, 2006).

Community conservation in Namibia however “provides an example of the difficulties in achieving a successful combination of conservation and agriculture” (Gargallo 2020: 129). On the one hand, it enables to avoid exclusionary conservation, a conservation policy practiced in many other African countries that excludes local communities. On the other hand, its implementation differs from those of promoting large-scale farming and land use as well as food security issues can emerge.

### References

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