

# **E-Conservation: A Novel System for Purposeful Environment**

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**The Internet and globalization have a considerable potential for changing the world environment for the better. SPECIES (System for Purposeful Environment by Conservation of Indigenous and Endangered Species) is a hyper-conservation-org based on “e-conservation”. It utilizes the potential of “abstract working” for the conservation of bio-diversity and to address the issues of indigenous peoples and sustainable development. In this approach, Internet-based applications are effectively used as tools for the operation and functioning of a global organization whose members are drafted from around the world. Specific conservation, and developmental projects are identified, logistics discussed, decisions reached, and resources allocated quickly and efficiently--all within the ambit of a technologically-empowered and networked group, and in direct association with the local community, unlike the conventional conservation organizations.**

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## **Introduction**

“The global community is confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between developed and under-developed nations and the continuing deterioration of ecosystems”<sup>1</sup>. Rapid technological developments in the recent past have increased the gap between developed and developing nations and lead to unprecedented digital divide. However, if used efficiently Internet technology has the potential to bridge this gap and thereby ensure sustainable development at grass-root levels with a major thrust on conservation.

It is important to note that our own survival and well-being are dependent on bio-diversity. Loss of traditional knowledge especially in the economic growth based societies all over the world, lead to the departure from sustainable development based on the balance of ecology. Integration of environment and village development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more healthy future. Communicating conservation these concepts to grass-root level audiences is a complex task. The design of a conservation awareness strategy requires strict attention to local reality and demands participation of local community.

Conventional methods of bio-diversity conservation are usually area-specific and do not directly involve the participation of the global community. Major conventional organizations like *World Wide Fund for Nature* and *Greenpeace*, however, have used internet technology for creating a web-portal for the dissemination of information but the

functioning of these organizations is not substantially internet based. Capitalizing on internet technology for the development of a conservation organization has not been done before. In this paper we describe the functioning of SPECIES and an efficient method for conservation of bio-diversity and sustainable development, using “abstract working” as a tool that enables direct and active interface of greater global community with local communities.

## **Concept: Developing Internet based Conservation Organization**

The conventional conservation organizations have limitations when it comes to interaction with the local indigenous community. The little interaction they have is only in the implementation of the programs but the local community is not part of decision making. The figure in the following page describes the concept of SPECIES, a hyper-conservation-org. SPECIES takes advantage of the internet technology and its method is of “abstract working” without human element in it. Despite the fact that there is no face-to-face interaction, different members of the local community, SPECIES members and experts conduct regular internet meetings and collaborate with one another. Whether it is the functioning of the organization whether it is a voting on major issues or identification of a need, logistics of operations, decision making, environmental education, supervision of conservation and developmental projects, all activities are conducted and decisions are reached during internet meetings. The complete dynamics of “abstract working” and feedback mechanisms are

described in the figure. Human interface (HI) comes in to picture only in the final implementation of the projects.

**Abstract working: Drawbacks and Advantages**

Evolution requires that human beings interact on regular basis. If a man has no companion to speak with he speaks to himself. Fundamentally, it is this vocal expression that has brought out creativity and later lead to the development of modern man. “Abstract working” with a complete stranger in the Internet-based organization demands methods that are unusual and beyond the conventional way of working with considerable human face-to-face interaction. Such working in association with strangers for long periods of time requires firstly, learning how to use new

The advantages of “abstract working” are substantial. It allows the local community at the grass-root level to make decisions in association with the global community, for sustainable management of their resources, and for maintaining, using, and strengthening their traditional ecological knowledge. In the absence of such collaboration with global community, this is a difficult and complex challenge in times of rapidly developing technology, expanding economic and market forces. The organization is able to directly connect to grass-root people and global community simultaneously, and channel the global resources for the conservation of bio-diversity and development of bio-village. Yet another important advantage is the speed with which the information is relayed thereby avoiding delays. “Abstract working” is also the first step towards realizing a paperless world. Information dissemination,

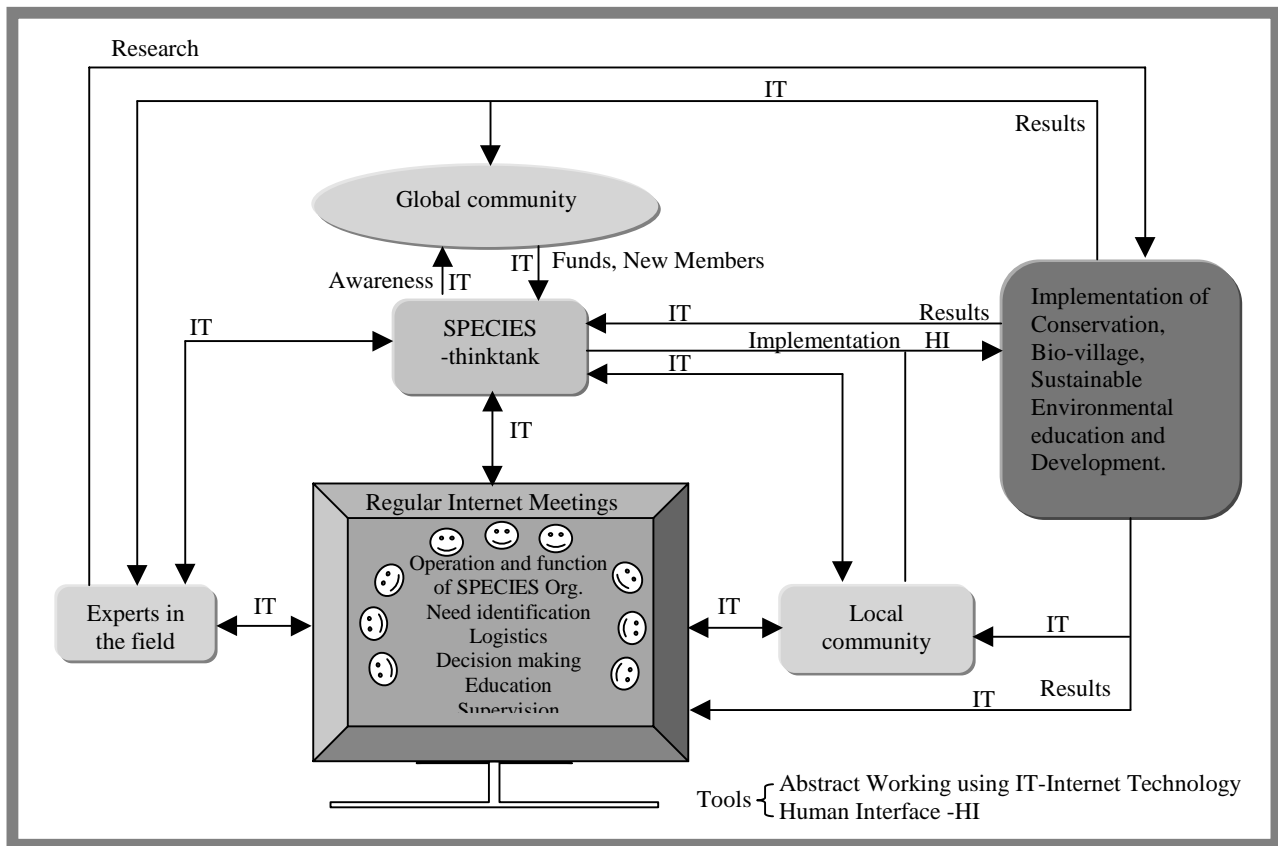


Fig. Concept: “abstract working” for “e-conservation”

technology and an adoption to the “internet expression”. It is also beset with mechanical difficulties of typing and composing mail (in the absence of MS Netmeeting), which makes it more difficult than vocal expression. However these difficulties are overcome with experience and realizing newer threshold of human expression and by following a strict code of conduct or “internet discipline”.

web-publication of the newsletters, bringing visibility, fund-raising, environmental education and functioning of the organization are all carried using IT thereby avoiding the usage of paper.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

How nature works and how we benefit from it in ways that most of us never consider will continue to play an important role in stimulating our desire to conserving bio-diversity and to achieving sustainability. While nature conservation is in grave need due to rampant destruction of the habitat globally, it does not have to harm legitimate aspirations of the people for development. SPECIES believes in the kinds of grassroots activities that promote sustainability on a local basis. They are fundamentally only a re-emphasis of what has been traditionally approached in native cultures. Whether establishing local sustainable industries, people-based ecotourism centers, or rebuilding a destroyed habitat, the people who pursue sustainability in a direct and personal way will hugely affect the shape of the world to come. However, loss of traditional knowledge and the lack of environmental education is a major setback to achieving this goal.

We are taught a lot about human society and its developments but not about the bio-diversity on which we are completely dependent. The lack of trained teachers and the need for educational materials have hampered efforts to include bio-diversity conservation as a subject of study in more schools around the world, especially in the under developed nations. Teachers and the heads of villages need tools and information they can use to introduce students and the larger village community to the ideas of conservation and sustainable development. The goal of SPECIES is to enable local teachers and community leaders to have direct interactions with specialists in the field and also with the global community using Internet tools. Such an interaction including provision for decision making for their own development, in association with the specialists will ensure rapid and successful implementation of environmental education programs and dissemination of information about changes to the environment and effective conservation practices.

In conclusion, it has been shown that “abstract working” is a powerful tool for realizing the true global world and can be effectively utilized for the development at grass-root level with conservation as a major thrust. SPECIES is based on this new method of “e-conservation” and has initiated the conservation of bio-diversity and sustainable development at grass-root level. The internet-based applications are effectively implemented for operation and functioning of the organization, need identification, logistics, decision making, education and supervision, in direct association with the local community. The functioning of the organization is found to be efficient and the preliminary results of this approach are very encouraging. In essence, E-Conservation is thus a model for purposeful environment eminently suited for the digital age and unlike any other conventional conservation organization.

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**Reference:**

- 1) Peter H. Raven “Frontiers of the Mind in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” Gifford, Prosser (ed.). 2001.