Title: *Thinking outside the Network: Broadening participation in conservation technology design, development and application*

Presentation type: Oral Presentation / Speed Talk / Poster Presentation / **Knowledge Café**

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**Abstract**

Technology offers enormous potential in securing a sustainable future for the planet. However, the conservation community faces a significant challenge in making sure these technologies are affordable and available to users around the world, and ensuring that people have the knowledge to use these tools properly. Even technologies that have already demonstrated their worth in the field must be adapted to specific social and environmental conditions, and require local buy-in and ownership.

A number of efforts to improve access to affordable, reliable technology tools have emerged over the last few years, with different conservation tech groups and initiatives attempting to engage with the technology sector, map and forecast needs, and shape the development priorities. Yet these conversations often lack a diverse, representative pool of participants. Is access to conservation technology restricted to the few and not the many? In order to magnify the impact of our work, we need to empower global networks in the conservation and tech spaces to co-develop their own solutions. How do we change this approach so that the question/focus isn’t simply about democratising access to cheap, reliable tools, but also about democratising access to the strategic, priority setting conversations - ensuring that they are open, inclusive and utilise the diverse expertise that exists in the global conservation technology network.

During this knowledge café we shall consider several key questions with the aim of understanding how we can empower a greater diversity in participation in the development of new applications of technology for conservation. Where are our efforts best focused to achieve this goal? We will consider what is already being done to empower global networks to develop their own solutions; identify key local experts or collectives that could be consulted or supported; map the barriers to participation in current conservation technology discussions and developments; and map practical next steps to address this issue.

Questions/ideas (not included in abstract to be submitted):

Is access to conservation technology restricted to the few and not the many? What can we do as a community to solve this from both a manufacturing point of view and affordability?

* Is it about local meetups or events to mobilise and engage local conservation/tech communities?
* Do we identify key local/regional champions and provide support? What does this support look like? Can we leverage existing conservation leadership (e.g. CLP or the Edge program?) initiatives to achieve this goal?
* Would small grants to support local meetups/hacks, develop prototypes or allow field testing of new tech be beneficial? Are larger grants needed?
* Is it about raising the technology literacy of the conservation sector (targeted or otherwise), or is it about attracting a greater diversity of engineers/technologists to apply their skills/knowledge to conservation?
* Would online training (and what type?) be beneficial?