

Incorporating recognition in biodiversity conservation

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**CONSERVATION
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Our argument

- Justice in biodiversity conservation ethically desirable and instrumental for long-term success (e.g. Pascual et al. 2014)
- Operationalizing ‘justice’ focused on **procedure & distribution**, but need to pay attention to recognition
- **Recognition** and conservation are inextricably linked
 - Respect to identities & cultural difference, and the extent to which different actors, ideas and cultures are respected and valued in social encounters and public discourse & practice
 - PAs overlap with culturally diverse regions; peoples whose knowledge & institutions at risk
 - Conservation has been dominated by ‘exclusionary’ models and representations of ‘harmful to nature’ people
- Understanding philosophical approaches to recognition can help us being more sensitive to this issue and to identify steps for more just conservation

Context & evidence

- Language of ‘equity & rights’ permeates conservation discourse since 1970s

CBD Art. 1 - ‘..fair & equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources’;

CBD Art.8 & 10 - parties should protect indigenous/local knowledge, practices & lifestyles relevant to conservation/sustainable use

Nagoya Protocol - emphasis on the important role of traditional knowledge

- Critiques: fair procedure equated to western forms of representative democracy; advocacy of “marketisation” of nature (e.g. De Jonge, 2011; Suiseeya, 2014)

How to think about recognition

- 4 schools of thoughts differing in understanding of:

Subjects - actors or users who are entitled to moral consideration in conservation: individuals/communities; present/future; humans/non-humans; material/spiritual

Harms - injustices suffered by the subjects above, on material (distributive) or well-being conditions (procedural /recognition)

Mechanisms - institutional and structural explanations for injustice: ideological, cultural, economic, all at once?

Responses - solutions offered to address harms & mechanisms at practical, legal, ideological levels

Hegelianism (Hegel, 1800s)

Dimensions		Conservation implications
Subjects	Individual humans embedded in social relations	Focus on individuals at present
Harms	Psychological, eg loss of self-esteem	Own's value of life and sense of worth based on respect by others
Mechanisms	Non-recognition caused by cultural relations of power	Need to be aware of dominance of western/colonial conservation thought/models
Responses	Affirmative recognition for multi-culturalism	Sensitivity to individuals' own cultures, (world)views

Critical theory (Fraser, 1985; Honneth, 2004)

Dimensions		Conservation implications
Subjects	Individual humans and social groups	Focus on communities & individuals
Harms	Psychological, social, political & material	Cultural/institutional hierarchies (e.g. patriarchy, caste, property regimes) deny equality of social interaction
Mechanisms	Inequalities caused by cultural and economic forces	Need to deal with economic inequalities that fuel biod. loss - impoverishment of some groups that undermine sustainable practices
Responses	Affirmative recognition of difference & economic/political redistribution	Avoid subjugation of traditional knowledge over scientific knowledge - Sensitivity to economic, political & socially marginal groups & individuals

Decolonial theory

(Escobar, 2007; de Santos, 2010)

Dimensions		Conservation implications
Subjects	Humans (ancestors, present, future), non-humans, spirits, mother nature	Emphasis on community over individuals
Harms	Psychological, material, cultural	Conservation as form of domination
Mechanisms	Colonisation by Eurocentric, modernist knowledge	Need to be aware that conservation discourse suggests a problematic & unitary view of 'citizenship'
Responses	Prioritise indigenous knowledge; political & economic change	Value traditional & local knowledge; awareness of local forms of authority & territory

Capabilities (Sen, 1993; Nussbaum, 2007)

Dimensions		Conservation implications
Subjects	Individual humans; potentially human & non-human communities	Predominantly individuals, but also communities & non-humans
Harms	Constrained opportunities; loss of freedom/dignity	Economic, political & cultural institutions can constrain basic needs & freedom of choice
Mechanisms	Value universalism, lack of participation	Be aware that conservation can either be entwined but also conflict with 'valued' ways of life
Responses	Liberal pluralism & multiculturalism; deliberative public debate	Develop strategies that allow for multiple forms of resource use & 'ways of life'

Discussion

- Similarities & differences between theories of recognition - point to the need for broader/equitable spaces of engagement in planning & practice
- Responsibility on those with a position of power & who have the privilege of not bearing the costs of conservation
- Four actions with promise in conservation planning & practice:
 1. Focus on distribution, but allow for the identification of key marginalised human subjects (gender, caste, non-rightholders)
 2. Explore relational/structural aspects of conservation & act upon them
 3. Acknowledge that conservation can produce uneven harms & set strategies for their alleviation, including respect for local practices & tenure regimes
 4. Consider upfront alternative (non-western, non-scientific) ways of knowing, valuing & managing the environment