

Contribution to discussion (5 Feb) – potential research themes

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There are two areas which, in my humble opinion, would bring to light some interesting insights to the nexus of local peoples and biodiversity conservation.

1. Novel organisational innovation which allows people the ability to bring their knowledge to bear on the landscape at a local level. The one that comes to mind is the coffee cooperatives in Mexico, for example, which brings together scientists and local peoples in an effort to solve place and time specific problems. A focus on multi-functional, biologically diverse and resilient social-ecological systems. If we are serious about local people benefiting from their knowledge it is in these type of practical endeavours where this might start to occur. Many methods discussed in this forum may be useful to that goal but the methods in and of themselves are not a goal that would be shared by many indigenous organisations and/or peoples. They might become involved in short term projects for immediate benefit but as power relations become more equitable I doubt that that type of research will have much currency if Canada is any example.

2. Related to above but with more of a research and management focus. It would be interesting to look at how institutions of pluralistic science might look in different contexts. The Royal Society of Canada has suggested that in terms of research and decision-making pluralistic science extends the range of scientific inquiry beyond the conventional positivist, expert-knows-best science and create space for potential contributions of other kinds of locally generated knowledge. It seems to me that there have been a few calls for this type of move away from the collection and incorporation of local knowledge into external research programs and/or decision-making structures. If that is the case then we need to find institutional mechanisms which allow different knowledge traditions to share knowledge and negotiate meanings. Again many of the methods discussed in this forum would contribute to the on-ground operation of such pluralistic science but requires that it be embedded in research and decision-making which is place and time specific and within which research goals, objectives and programs can be mutually negotiated.

Thanks for a very interesting and informative forum.