

CALL FOR PAPERS

Caring for nature from an intercultural perspective: lessons learned about the values that traditional communities attribute to nature

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General objective

In a world facing ecological and climate crises, this thematic issue encourages reflection on human relationships with nature, highlighting the value of traditional forms of knowledge and intercultural dialogue. We seek contributions that explore how different communities value, protect, and interact with their natural environment, and how these insights can inspire new approaches to pursue sustainability.

Keywords

Values, nature, interculturality, worldview, interdisciplinarity, traditional communities.

Origin and relevance of the call for papers

Given the current global environmental crisis, it is crucial to examine the values humans assign to nature (Chan *et al.*, 2016) and to collaboratively develop criteria that allow us to fundamentally change our relationship with it (Carlson, 2018). In this context, there is agreement among scholars, activists, and educators that emphasizing these values toward nature is an essential starting point for transforming human practices, dialogues, and actions that, in various ways and levels, harm the environment. This shift is vital for ensuring a sustainable future for the planet and future generations.

The values we assign to nature strongly influence human behavior toward it and are mediated and influenced by “socially shared horizons of meaning that form shared narratives, institutions, norms, and habitualized practices” (Himes & Muraca, 2018, p. 2). Thus, worldviews and knowledge systems, along with their diverse expressions such as religion, customs, beliefs, traditions, language, and more, have shaped how human beings perceive and act toward the natural world. In this sense, transforming human relationships with nature involves exploring how people cognitively frame their relationships with it, the processes that could lead to change (Muradian & Pascual, 2018), and how different social groups understand, feel, value, and engage with the environment.

According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2022), three types of values can be assigned to nature: 1) “intrinsic values,” which are independent of human experience and refer to the inherent worth of nature and its components; 2) “instrumental values,” which relate to nature’s material and immaterial contributions to human well-being; and 3) “relational values,” which describe the interactions between human and natural entities that shape people’s identity and quality of life. Basically, the value of nature can be independent of human needs, based on its relationships with other things, living beings, etc., or because of its relationships with people, including emotions, beliefs, feelings, etc. (Himes & Muraca, 2018). On the other hand, values toward nature can be functional or anthropocentric, viewing it as a source of resources and benefits for humans. Both values result in specific practices and actions that have had consequences for the planet.

The variety of ways in which nature is valued leads to interconnected and often conflicting perspectives. In this context, there is a growing acknowledgment of the importance of establishing intercultural dialogue as a way to share knowledge, values, and cultural practices among different groups, with the goal of promoting inclusion and mutual respect. It also emphasizes the incommensurability of certain values and helps prevent the imposition of judgments on others due to power imbalances. According to Fernández-Cárdenas (2014), dialogue involves recognizing other logics and voices through multiple interpretations. Leff (2004) suggests building rationality and environmental knowledge through the dialogue of knowledges to address environmental issues, which can mobilize and reorganize society, its connections, and its appreciation of nature—aiming to transform power structures and support effective sustainable development.

Although there is no clear consensus on how to conduct intercultural dialogue and its epistemic foundations, there are theoretical and methodological challenges that must be addressed. Therefore, it is important to share experiences and reflections on how different ways of valuing nature are interconnected in dialogic and practical processes.

Thematic strands

To analyze the lessons learned about the values that traditional communities attribute to nature from an intercultural perspective, the following thematic strands are suggested for presenting contributions.

- **Disciplinary, as well as inter- and transdisciplinary reflections on interculturality and the values of nature:** Theoretical and practical analyses of how different disciplines approach the relationship between culture, knowledge, and nature.
- **Cosmologies and traditional knowledges about nature:** Studies on worldviews and Indigenous or local epistemologies related to the natural environment.
- **Ethnobiological research focused on the values of nature:** Research that investigates how traditional communities categorize, utilize, and value living beings and ecosystems.
- **Environmental ethics across various cultural contexts:** Diverse ethical perspectives on caring for nature from various cultural contexts.
- **Intercultural environmental education and nature values:** Educational experiences that combine traditional and scientific values and knowledge to promote respect for nature.
- **Intercultural views on the relationship between humans and nature:** Comparative or collaborative research that demonstrates how different cultures perceive and experience this relationship.
- **Traditional ecosystem conservation practices:** Documentation of local strategies for managing and protecting the natural environment.
- **Socio-environmental conflicts and resistance from traditional communities:** Analysis of how territorial struggles against extractivism and to defend the commons involve ideas and values about nature.
- **Ethnoconservation and territorialities:** Studies on territorial management that focus on cultural and ecological values.
- **Environmental policies and intercultural articulations:** Assessment of public policies that either promote or hinder dialogue between different forms of knowledge and environmental justice.
- **Intercultural and participatory research methods in environmental settings:** Methodological proposals that prioritize collaboration, epistemic respect, and the co-creation of knowledge.

Submission

Authors interested in participating in this call for papers should review the editorial and ethical policies of *Naturaleza y Sociedad. Desafíos Medioambientales* and submit their manuscript through the journal's website.

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