Biocultural Landscapes in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Global Workshop on the Satoyama Initiative

UNESCO, Paris

January 29-30 2010

Overview

- State of biocultural diversity and landscapes in LAC and their conservation
- o Key message:
 - Indigenous and other traditional/local models of biocultural landscape management abound in LAC. These territorial approaches to landscape management continue to nurture biocultural diversity through sustainable land-based productive strategies that have always been their raison d'etre. In the current context of global change they continue to drive responses in spite of not being formally recognised.

Biocultural diversity in LAC

- High biocultural diversity based on global indicators (Harmon, 1996 & 2005,)
- Neotropic ecozone most diverse in world – 6 megadiversity countries with 60 – 70% world's biodiversity (Myers, 1988, 1991)
- Highest indigenous cultural diversity (UNESCO)
- Major threats: land use changes, urbanisation, extractive industries, consumption and production patterns

Conservation approaches in LAC

Conservation-driven formal denominations and approaches

- Protected Areas (reserves & national parks) –
 dominant conservation paradigm state driven
- Biosphere Reserves 104 biosphere reserves in 19 countries in LAC
- UNESCO WHC: 104 Cultural Landscapes: 4
- IUCN & CBD Community Conserved Areas growing in strength
- FAO Globally Important Indigenous Agricultural Heritage Systems

Beyond Denominations

Traditional – most indigenous territories continue to use customary laws and traditional management practices

- Ayllu Quechua
- Ejidos and milpa of Mexico
- Comarcas of Panama
- Miskitos of Nicaragua
- Afro-Colombians in Choco region

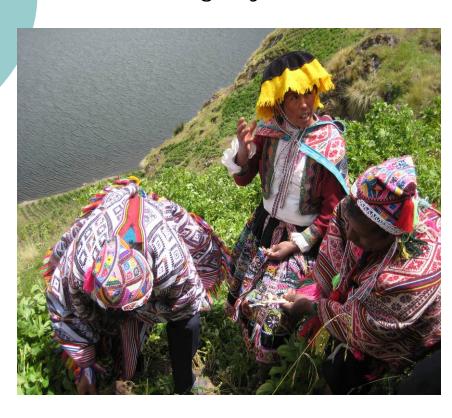


Benefits of biocultural territories

- Conservation of critical ecosystems
- Ecosystem functions
- Integration of large spaces
- Resilience and adaptive capacity
- Cultural services
- Support well-being as understood through local frameworks

Features of biocultural territories

Holistic system which include diverse elements such as land tenure, land use patterns, production and exchange systems, cultural identity etc.



- Traditional knowledge and methods assess ecosystem and cultural services – examples?
- Well being understood through spiritual relationship – Sumac Qausay
- Land use adapted to topography produces resilient landscape –
 Andean terracing
- Integration of TK and science intercultural dialogue and epistemological bridge building
- Deliberative democratic governance leads to participation of wide range of stakeholders -Congreso General Kuna

Rethinking Landscapes

- Much biodiversity found within indigenous territories
- Indigenous territorial management produces biocultural landscapes
- Recognise complexity and interconnection and nurture resilience
- They offer an approach that enables protection for conservation purposes through strengthening endogenous processes
- Simultaneously can support the indigenous rights



Challenges & Opportunities

- Opportunities
- In LAC local, traditional and endogenous processes continue to manage biocultural landscapes
- Efforts to support resilience and adaptation locally IPCCA
- IPCCA resilience & adaptation
- Challenges
- Ongoing conflicts state vs. indigenous, global vs. regional vs. local, conservation vs. livelihoods, Sumaq-Causay vs. economic development
- Vulnerability to global change
- Link between endogenous approaches and top down models

Conclusions

- There is a strong precedence for conservation work in LAC – vast areas of protected land and marine ecosystems
- Multiple agencies with multiple models UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, FAO Agricultural Heritage etc.
- Behind these denominations and other recognized efforts are ongoing endogenous processes for nurturing biocultural diversity
- Biocultural territories support land-based sustainable management practices and can help to reframe landscape approaches within a sustainable development agenda