



Biocultural Landscapes in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Overview

- State of biocultural diversity and landscapes in LAC and their conservation
- 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'être*. 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 - IPCCCA

IPCCCA – 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