

Chapter 8

The Importance of Acknowledging Indigenous Knowledge Systems Among Landscape Actors in Managing Changing Environments

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter to explores the importance of acknowledging indigenous knowledge among landscape actors in managing changing environments. Global South is currently experiencing dramatic changes, due to climate change. Over the years, Western knowledge has been prioritised by landscape actors in their efforts to manage changing environments, while ignoring indigenous knowledge. Currently, indigenous knowledge is gaining recognition it the efforts to address changes in the environment. This study is grounded on the knowledge coevolution framework. The results of this study influence the need for landscape actors to adopt indigenous knowledge and manage changing environments. The study concludes that there is a need to ensure a working relationship between landscape actors. It is important to determine the management of power and its dynamics at different levels particularly between the government, local communities, and NGOs, to ensure interests are advocated for.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Knowledge is an important part of culture, carrying what is understood to be true. According to Gupta (2015), different cultures have their perspectives about what is known and how one acquires knowledge. This knowledge is maintained by Indigenous people, and such is referred to as Indigenous Knowledge (Gupta, 2015). Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is the actual knowledge of a given society demonstrating experiences based on traditions and without neglecting recent experiences with modern technologies (Anand et al., 2025). This knowledge is specific to a society or culture as well as the environment peo-

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ple live in (Ncube, 2018). Indigenous knowledge is not developed through formal education but based on the day-to-day experiences of people and their cultural beliefs. This indigenous knowledge works systematically, thus known as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Indigenous Knowledge Systems is the structured organisation of the Indigenous knowledge acquired by local people through intellectual reasoning in their daily lives (Gupta, 2015). IKS is also associated with experiments on people (trial and error) (Gupta, 2015).

Indigenous knowledge is consumed through observation and repetition of activities (Barnhardt & Kawagley 2005). This is because of its roots in the oral tradition's spiritual and holistic understanding of nature. However, this contrasts with the dominant reductionist approach of Western knowledge that is on cynicism and phenomena isolation (Chapman & Schott, 2020). This has led to arguments and perceptions that indigenous knowledge should be separated from other knowledge systems. As a result, indigenous knowledge has been ignored in efforts to conserve and manage landscapes while Western scientific knowledge is prioritized (Edgar et al., 2022). This creates an impression that indigenous knowledge is not an important aspect of landscape management. Therefore, it is important to ensure there are concerted efforts to promote landscape management knowledge that recognises indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledge reflects the relationship between humans, their environment, and all that lives or is found in that environment (Wilder et al., 2016). Indigenous knowledge (Adade et al., 2020). This knowledge is intertwined with social norms, sociocultural governance, spiritual beliefs, management of natural resources, and historical and contemporary practices (Cajete, 2020). The importance of indigenous knowledge lies in its creation of approaches to the contemporary and prospects of indigenous communities (Sheenah, 2004). This is because the development of indigenous knowledge is context-specific, with sustainability as an objective (Wolfgramm, 2007). A study conducted by Adade et al. (2020) highlights the interest of several scholars in the integration of indigenous knowledge and local perspectives into sustainable landscape management from the past 10 years. This is due to the realisation that indigenous knowledge is significant in landscape and biodiversity conservation. As a result, indigenous knowledge has been in many discussions around both rural and urban ecosystems conservation and sustainable agriculture.

The need to give attention to IKS for landscape management has been stressed in the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). According to Adade et al. (2020), the ignorance of IK would lead to the loss of skills, practices, and understanding required for the sustainable development of ecosystems. The 1993 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was positioned toward achieving sustainable development through exploring the contribution of IKS (Adade et al., 2020). The World Summit on Sustainable Development that took place in South Africa in 2002 provided highlight on the intrinsic relationship between indigenous people and their land (McGregor, 2014).

The risk of climate change is severe throughout the world, including indigenous communities. This is happening despite the least greenhouse emissions indigenous people contribute (Cajete, 2020). Indigenous people are asymmetrically exposed to higher risks of dramatic consequences of climate change due to global warming (IPCC, 2018). The risk of indigenous peoples is exacerbated by their dependence on natural resources for various purposes (Salick & Byg, 2007). Scholars believe that addressing the changes in the environment is largely dependent on the collaboration of knowledge systems (Reid et al. 2006; Armitage 2008; Berkes 2012). Therefore, it is vital to identify ways for different systems of knowing to co-exist to address environmental changes. Scholars such as Smith (1999), Wilson (2008),

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