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Stream D: Indigenous Futures and Cultural Response

Title: Mainstreaming nature related cultural values into policy development

Abstract: Despite wide acknowledgement of Indigenous and local communities' nature-related values, they are largely excluded in policy-decision making. We highlight the key attributes of Indigenous and local communities connections with nature and suggest mechanisms for how to mainstream them into policy development. For this, we apply the ecosystem services concept, common in ecological sciences, to the Indigenous and local perspectives of natural systems. Five socio-cultural and economic attributes (i.e. livelihoods, social, cultural, spiritual, and capabilities) are identified based on literature review, as the key constituents for developing policy tools to influence decision-making. The role of peoples' capabilities (knowledges and skills) is particularly emphasized for enabling people to manage and care for their traditional lands. For policy tools, the main ecosystem services frameworks, evaluation techniques including monetary and non-monetary valuation methods, and the community participatory approaches are analysed and discussed from Indigenous and local context. A mixed set of measures—pillars of diverse knowledge systems—are proposed to collectively inform the policy platform for underlining the economic importance of peoples' connections with nature. We suggest a three-step approach: identifying key values of natural systems that are vital for people; developing locally-specific integrated framework; and assessing the net worth of peoples' values both monetary and non-monetary. Understanding Indigenous and local peoples' values of natural systems can inform the global community of their role in managing and sustaining our limited natural resources, that can influence decision-making to develop appropriate welfare policies and incentivising schemes to support such communities and nature's services.

Bio: Dr Kamaljit K. Sangha works as an ecological economist at the Darwin Centre for Bushfire Research at Charles Darwin University. Currently she is involved in developing mechanisms for Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), highlighting the role of natural systems for human well-being especially in Indigenous and local communities, and valuing ecosystems for their services (ES) to inform policy decision making.