


**People -in- Environment  
Environment -in- People**

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## Introduction

In the distant past, the actions of our ancestors were insignificant when set against the overwhelming natural processes. Now, however, it is widely recognized that these fundamental ecological processes are being influenced by the human species, or better yet, that the causes of environmental problems lie in the interactions among social and ecological processes.

As Caldwell puts it,

*The ways in which people relate to their environments and other living species, appear to be influenced by their entire cultural matrix...the tendencies of modern cultures have caused the continuing attrition and destruction of the biosphere (such that) fundamental cultural change will be required if the many efforts now focused in various aspects of environmental and biospheric protection are to succeed...The human dimension of environmental protection is the complex range of attitudes and behaviors, embedded in culture, that account for the ways in which humanity impacts the environment.*

As a result of the realization that environmental degradation and natural resource depletion are intimately related to human choice and action, and have clear implications for human society, the perspectives of the social sciences are gaining a lot of weight and cannot simply be ignored. Research agenda of various social science disciplines now contain environmental concerns vis-a-vis people and their institutions, from the community to the international arena.

This issue of the PSSR looks at the people-environment nexus.

The first two articles explore the issue of biological diversity and traces its erosion to the socio-cultural changes that have been happening around the globe. The lead article by Sto. Domingo juxtaposed the cultural crisis, more specifically the commodification of the land, the extinction of traditional knowledge system and the unregulated use of technology, with the erosion of biodiversity. It is argued that the latter exacerbates social instability and may eventually result in the loss of human culture that have evolved as unique adaptation to the environment. Protective responses to these twin crises such as the rise of indigenous peoples' movement are also shown.

The second paper by Barrameda looks more closely at the philosophical issues surrounding the indigenous people and their place in biodiversity conservation. The author criticizes the market-driven selective-species type of conservation which, in more ways than one, encourages the exploitation of IP's and their ancestral homeland.

The next set of articles present case studies of specific environmental projects and policies in particular areas, reflecting the growing trend nowadays of the localization of environmental planning and management, and the broad participation of various sectors in such endeavor. In her paper, Bennagen examines the nature of Non-Government Organization and community involvement in 5 selected Community Forestry Program sites revealing various lessons for a more constructive engagement among civil society actors and the ever-present government bureaucracy.

Lusterio's article, on the other hand, focuses on the evolution of local policies for the sustainable development of Makiling Forest Reserve in Laguna, describes and explains the dynamics involved in policy-making, and teases out the factors

affecting the nature of the policy. The author highlights the role of UPLB as the primary stakeholder as it is granted by law to administer, manage and supervise the reserve.

The last two papers seek to suggest directions for environmental planning and policy-making in the country. Using the existing Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) project as a concrete case in point, Sena & Palis argue for the integration of local environmental conditions in planning for enhanced accessibility of services and facilities for rural population.

A more outward-looking paper by de Villa caps this volume. This final article suggests the development of environment-related foreign policy strategy of the Philippine government. The author uses the national context by utilizing our country's Environmental Impact Assessment System as a take-off point for such direction.

The articles included in this volume, however limited, give us a chance to look at how social scientists are participating in the discourse on environment. In fact, the latter is now richer and more stimulating as more insights about human impact on the environment and vice-versa are coming out from social science researches. This volume is also a call for more social scientists to engage in environmental research considering that the articles herewith raises a lot of concerns for further study©

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