

Relational values about nature in protected area research

Alta De Vos¹, Joana Carlos Bezerra² and Dirk Roux^{3,4}



Protected areas are increasingly expected to justify their existence in terms of their importance to society. However, this importance, and the complex ways in which people relate to protected areas, cannot be captured by instrumental and intrinsic value framings alone. Rather, our understanding of the role of protected areas in society needs to take account of people's relational values about nature. Here we review the literature on values associated with human-nature connection and related concepts to highlight which approaches are currently being used to understand expressions of relational values in empirical protected area research. Our results highlights seven 'application domains' for relational values research, highlighting expressions of relational values, and the stakeholder focus of each. Place-focused and psychological theories were most common across these domains. This work represents a first step in developing the foundations of a relational value research agenda in protected areas.

Addresses

¹ Department of Environmental Science, Rhodes University, P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown 6140, South Africa

² Community Engagement, Rhodes University, P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown 6140, South Africa

³ Rondevlei Scientific Services, South African National Parks, South Africa

⁴ Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, George, South Africa

Corresponding author: De Vos, Alta (a.devos@ru.ac.za)

Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 2018, **35**:89–99

This review comes from a themed issue on **Sustainability challenges: Relational Values**

Edited by **Unai Pascual**, **Kai M. Chan** and **Rachelle Gould**

For a complete overview see the [Issue](#) and the [Editorial](#)

Available online 22nd November 2018

Received: 01 April 2018; Accepted: 26 October 2018

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2018.10.018>

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Introduction

Protected areas (PAs) represent a core strategy for achieving global biodiversity conservation goals [1]. For PAs to achieve these goals, it is important to recognise that they exist as social-ecological systems whose resilience (a capacity to maintain essential elements of identity [2]), is as much determined by the value they have to people,

as by the ecosystems that they protect [3,4,5**]. On a resource-scarce planet, PAs are increasingly expected to justify their existence in terms of this worth, which has traditionally been framed in terms of services and benefits that they can provide, most notably using the language of ecosystem services [6].

The application of the ecosystem service framework to PAs hasn't been straightforward [6]. Ecosystem services are co-produced by nature and people, and are strongly mediated by access to nature [7–10], which is restricted in most PAs [9,11,12]. Additionally, a focus on 'services and benefits from nature' does not fully capture the complex ways in which people value, relate to, and interact with nature in reality [13**,14**,15,16**,17]. Rather than just assigning value to nature based on its utility, or for its own sake, people also value nature through, and because of, their relations and interactions with it [14**,18,19**,20**]. Relationships that derive from nature interact with and shape people's held values, from which value assigned to nature, may arise [21**]. Relational values, which are determined by relationships with nature and the responsibility towards people and nature that derive from these relationships [14**], are expressed through elements like individual identity, stewardship, social responsibility, social cohesion, social relations, cultural identity and social identity [9,13**,14**].

Accounting for relational values matters a great deal in PAs. PA establishment and support are deeply intertwined with the cultural role these areas play in people's lives, and their ethical motivations to protect nature [5**,22,23]. Since relational values are embedded in cultural values [13**], and cultural values are often not substitutable [13**,24**], a relational value lens takes explicit account of ethics [24**], the study of morality that refers to the norms and values that are accepted by individuals and groups and guide their behaviour [25**]. Díaz *et al.* [26] distinguish between the use of 'value' to refer to the importance and worth and the use of value(s) as principles and moral duties, thus values that are held [21**]. A relational values lens thus highlights the role that held values, as moral duties, play in shaping how individuals relate to, and interact with, nature and other human beings [21**].

This change in framing fundamentally alters the way in which we interpret the feedback between how people value nature, and people's interactions with, and perceptions of, PAs. In the traditional conceptualisation (e.g. [27]), (nature in) PAs provide services, which provide