



Beyond benefit sharing: Place attachment and the importance of access to protected areas for surrounding communities



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ABSTRACT

The concept of place attachment can assist to integrate relational values into ecosystem service research, and assist us to rethink the notion of benefits in contemporary protected area thinking. We present a case study from South Africa, where the concept of two-dimensional place attachment was used to understand the relationship between a protected area and a land claimant community that now owns part of this protected area but does not have physical access to the land. A place attachment lens helps refocus access to protected areas as cornerstone to long term sustainability of such areas. Such access must be considered in the context of spatially and economically differentiated users, including a focus on trade-offs between such users. Our findings highlight that when communities previously displaced from protected areas respond to offers of 'benefit sharing' with demands for access and recognition as land owners, they are asking for a recognition of relational values, and identity, based on close interaction with nature. A place attachment and relational values perspective raises questions about the extent to which traditional conservation practice can accommodate such values, and therefore meet local people's expectations and remain viable in the long term.

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1. Introduction

Policy makers and managers are increasingly seeking ways to better sustain the earth's ecological function whilst improving human well-being (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015). In the last twenty years, the ecosystem services (ES) framework has emerged as a key tool in the quest to link ecological sustainability goals and human development needs (Guerry et al., 2015; Bull et al., 2016) and has received significant scientific and political support (Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2010; Schröter et al., 2014; Ruckelshaus et al., 2015). At the heart of this framing lies the idea that we can better argue for ecological sustainability by focusing on nature's value to people through the services and benefits it provides (Daily and Ehrlich, 1999; Daily et al., 2000; Tallis et al., 2008).

Despite the promise of this approach, it has become increasingly clear that the flow of benefits and services from ecosystems to people are not straightforward (Mace et al., 2012; Reyers et al., 2013; Bagstad et al., 2014). Moreover, the significance of these benefits depends, in large part, on the multi-dimensional

ways in which people value nature (Brauman et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2012; Daily et al., 2000; Schröter et al., 2014) (Fig. 1). Since these perceptions and values are what drive policy decisions and ecosystem governance (e.g. Haines-Young and Potschin, 2011, 2013; Díaz et al., 2015; Preston and Raudsepp-Hearne, 2016), investigators have been eager to better understand these multiple dimensions, and their links to human well-being. Historically, ecosystem service research has focused predominantly on the instrumental (*what we can 'do' with what we have*) values that people attach to particular aspects of ecosystem processes (Justus et al., 2009; Schröter et al., 2014; Tallis and Lubchenco, 2014). This focus on instrumental values in ecosystem services research has come under increasing scrutiny. An early area of criticism revolved around the inherent danger of the economic valuation trend that followed close on the heels of ecosystem services research, and argued for an increased focus on the intrinsic value (*what we consider important*) of nature as the basis of ecological sustainability (e.g. McCauley, 2006). More recently, conceptual development in this area has pointed to the need to expand our understanding of values (and the significance of benefits to people) beyond simple dichotomies between instrumental and intrinsic values. People do not tend to make choices based solely on the inherent value or utility of nature (Chan et al., 2016). Rather, people also consider the relationship that they value having with nature (or the

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