

Overcoming academic boundaries: Are interdisciplinary approaches between natural and social sciences more effective conservation?



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1. Introduction

Conservation has been introduced all over the world primarily for the purpose of biodiversity. However, some conservation cases end up expropriating local people's access to natural resources and cause hostility toward "conservation." Recent studies call for involvement of local people as conservation actors to develop more suitable conservation for each society, while preventing worse environmental crises. In order to achieve biodiversity along with socially sensitive and culturally appropriate conservation strategies (Kottak 1999), we need an interdisciplinary approach between natural and social sciences. Several studies show that an interdisciplinary approach that joins natural and social sciences can enhance conservation and resource management outcomes (Drew&Henne 2006). Yet, there is a profound gap between natural and social scientists.

2. Academic Boundaries

The interdisciplinary approach between natural and social sciences has been discussed as challenging.

Due to...

1. Methodological differences
2. Theoretical differences
3. Language barrier (Shackeroff & Campbell 2007)

3. People versus Conservation?

Local people's distrust of researchers
A Case of Mo'orea, French Polynesia



Photo taken by Risako Sakai

"I know your research is important because marine conservation could be more effective **by managing people rather than managing resources.**"

-- Marine biology master's student

"I worked with some people from (a science research center). I caught fish for them and I explained about fish that I caught for them. **They always asked me 'Are you sure? Are you sure?'** when I explained about the fish. That means that they (natural scientists) do not trust me. I do not like working with (natural) scientists. **They (natural scientists) believe they are always right.**" – Local fisherman



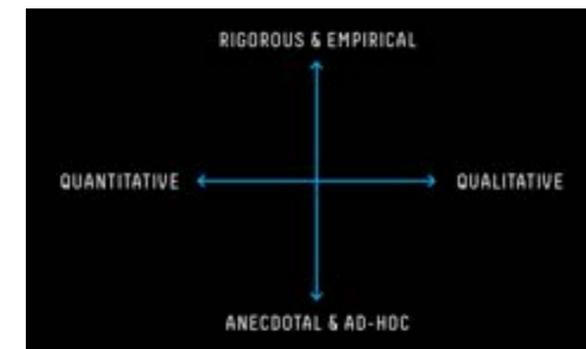
Photo taken by Risako Sakai

4. "Hard" science versus "Soft" science?

Conventional Stereotypes

Hard	Soft
Quantitative	Qualitative
Natural phenomena	Human behavior
Empirical	Anecdotal

In fact..



Anthropology as a soft science

"Your work sounds easy"
→ "Softer" science
(Campbell 2003)

One social scientist should not be the only one "representing broad social science concerns" (Campbell 2005: 576)

5. How can we bridge the gap?



Photo taken by Risako Sakai

- Methodological & Theoretical differences
 - Long-term communication
 - Luke Lassiter (2008)
 - The collaborative research is perhaps most time consuming
 - Peter Brosius (2006)
 - Understand different situations of one another
- Language barrier
 - Development of understanding (e.g. Application of Ethnography)
- Seek out opinions and opportunities outside of your comfort zone!

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