Speaking for and about Nature

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Preamble

Whose knowledge counts?

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

- address issues of declining biodiversity
- lack of consensus and division of opinion regarding monetary valuing of ecosystem services versus non-monetary valuing of species [or 'Western' vs 'non-Western' views of nature]
- inclusive approach of IPBES associated with internal conflict
  - Researchers and scholars from sciences
  - Humanities
  - Citizen scientists
  - Representatives from Indigenous peoples
  - Developing and developed world (so called)
  - Farmers

Speaking For

Advocates:

Nature's voice is important – understanding environmental change and harm.

Standing and Legitimacy

Legal Standing

- General – general environmental interest, direct interest
- Specific – Indigenous, e.g., NPWA(NSW)
- Specific – appointment of river 'stewards'

Tradition

- Indigenous peoples – e.g., connections to 'country'
- Traditional users – e.g., 'folk crime' and informal rules of use

Identification

- One-to-one identification – e.g., Indigenous unity with river or country
- Affective connections – radical environmentalists 'talking to their tree'

Interests and Discourses

Moral Position

- Conservationists – e.g., riparian rights in relation to river water
- Preservationists – e.g., intrinsic value of river and its capacity to flow
- Environmental activists on specific issues – e.g., whales, old growth forests

User Perspective

- Aesthetics
- Park rangers
- Hunter, Fisher
- Bushwalker
- Corporations and employers – e.g., eco-tourism

Eco-Justice Considerations

Eco-Justice

- Environmental justice – humans
- Ecological justice – ecosystems, biosphere
- Species justice – non-human animals and plants

Intrinsic rights

- Separation from the human – e.g., Wild Rivers
- Personifications of nature – e.g., legal personality of rivers
- Humans as part of nature – e.g., Indigenous identity; ecology-relationships
- Nature as part of humanity – e.g., pristine-separate form; presumptions-ontology of river personhood

Speaking About

Authorities:

Experts need to be heard – testifying about environmental change and harm.

Knowledge & Expertise

Types of Knowledge

- Scientific – e.g., specialist expert methods and paradigms
- Common sense – e.g., mediated by experience, socialisation, communications
- Experiential – e.g., been there, done that, seen things
- Technical – e.g., instruments to measure
- Traditional – e.g., Indigenous techniques and knowledge
- Historical – e.g., elder knowledge

Topics of Different Knowledge

- Geomorphologist
- Ecologist
- Indigenous
- Fisher

Views of a 'River'

Material Disconnections

- From country – e.g., stolen generations
- From original community – e.g., Hindmarsh Island and spirituality
- From rural settings – e.g., urbanisation

Differentiated Knowledge

Hierarchies of Knowledge

- Legal – e.g., patent over traditional
- Legislatively provided – e.g., heritage and Indigenous people
- Court definitions of expertise – e.g., Daubert test
- SLAPPs and ECSs – contestations of legitimacy

Classifications of Nature

- Epistemology – e.g., what and how we know what we know is always constructed
- Ontology – systems of classification, i.e., how to differentiate things
- Knowledge intersects with purpose – medical with health risk; farmers with livelihood
- Adversarial bias – partisanship, selection bias in expertise and experts

Privileging of Knowledge

- Elder knowledge discounted
- Indigenous knowledge privileged (via legislation) and discounted (via patents)

Complexities of Knowing

Ontological anthropocentrism

- We are who we are - humans
- We are not that which we are not – cannot 'act like' a river, cat or flower

Spatial and Temporal Dimensions

- Individual, species, ecosystems – scale of analytical lens in regards the biotic
- Local to landscape and regional levels – e.g., ecological integrity, river systems
- Essence and change – dynamics of Nature
- Baselines – e.g., natural levels of arsenic
- Accumulations – e.g. tipping points and thresholds

Necessary and Sufficient Knowledge

- Partial knowledge – e.g., domains of expertise and kinds of testing (soils, medical records)
- Skewed knowledge – e.g., sampling techniques and method of data collection (time of day)
- Distorted knowledge – e.g., ideological and political interests ('fake news' climate change)

Approximating Truth

- Different sorts of expertise and different methods of investigation
- Different understandings of Nature's ontology – e.g., rivers beginning and end
- Court experts – admissibility, procedures (e.g., hot tubbing), basis test (for reliability)
- Multiple sources of information and knowledge – e.g., task forces