

Studying discourses and practices on environment and development

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Studying discourses and practices ...

- Political ecology as a broad approach to frame studies of discourses and practices on environment and development
- A recipe with 7 ingredients for political ecology studies of issues on environment and development
- Protected areas as main example

Studying discourses and practices ...

Relevant literature in the curriculum:

- Adger, W. N., T. A. Benjaminsen, K. Brown and H. Svarstad (2001): Advancing a political ecology of global environmental discourses. *Development and Change*. 32 (4): 681-715.
- Adams and Hulme (2001): Conservation & Community: Changing Narratives, Policies & Practices in African Conservation. In: Hulme, D. and M. Murphree (eds.). *African Wildlife & Livelihoods: The Promise and Performance of Community Conservation*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Svarstad, H., K. Daugstad & O.I. Vistad (2003): Hvem vil være enige og tro på Dovrefjell? En case om framveksten av lokal forvaltning av verneområder [Dovrefjell in Norway - A case study of the emergence of local management of protected areas]. *Tidsskriftet Utmark* 4(2).

Studying discourses and practices ...

Recommended supplements to the curriculum:

Supplement to Adger et al. (an easier read with topical focus on bioprospecting):
Svarstad, H. (2004): A global political ecology of bioprospecting. In: Paulson, S. & L. Gezon eds.: *Political Ecology Across Spaces, Scales and Social Groups*. Rutgers University Press.

Supplement on the topic of protected areas:
Hutton, J., W. Adams and J. Murombedzi. 2005. Back to the barriers? Changing narratives in biodiversity conservation. *Forum for Development Studies* 32 (2).

Political ecology

Definition by Watts (2000:257):

"to understand the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what one might call the forms of access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods"

Watts, MJ (2000): Political Ecology. In E. Sheppard and T. Barnes (eds): *A Companion to Economic Geography*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Political ecology

- Focus on questions regarding the **management of areas and natural resources**.

- The focus is often on environmental conflicts;

- The "**ecology**" part of political ecology implies broad focuses on bio-physical environments;

- The "**political**" part of the term has origins linked to "political economy", implies also a focus on power aspects. Political ecology does not provide one specific political view, and it is not about the expression of strong political opinions without analyses.

-It is an **inter-disciplinary perspective**, integrating social and natural science elements. Social science and qualitatively oriented social science is more central to this perspective than in most other inter-disciplinary approaches to natural resources.

Political ecology

Pol. Ecol. incorporates the following elements:

- **Actor perspectives**

- Analyses of what groups of actors, what perceived interests and further perceptions on a conflict;

- Lately much focus upon the production and roles of **narratives and discourses** – social constructivist influences;

- Aspects of the **natural resources/environment** are often investigated, and with natural science methods. Such element of natural science are discursively contextualised;

- Focus on **power** (in truth constructions and in influence and opportunities of various groups to achieve their aims)

- Often a focus on the **political economy** of the resource uses;

- Often a focus on the role of **institutions**;

-**Historical knowledge** is important

-In order to understand a conflict as well as to understand the situation and changes in natural conditions;

- Focus on how a phenomenon or conflict is displayed across **various scales** from the local to the global.

Political ecology

Some aspects of approaches clearly contrary to political ecology:

- Studies of natural resources/environment without clarification of social preconditions that discipline and frame the studies.

- Approaches without analyses (or deep consideration) of social aspects (such as actors, their perceived interests, power, the significance of discourses and narratives)

- Ahistorical approaches.

- One-scale approaches without scale contextualisation.

Political ecology

Recommended recent text books on political ecology:

Robbins, Paul (2004): *Political ecology*. Malden, MA, Oxford, UK, Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing.

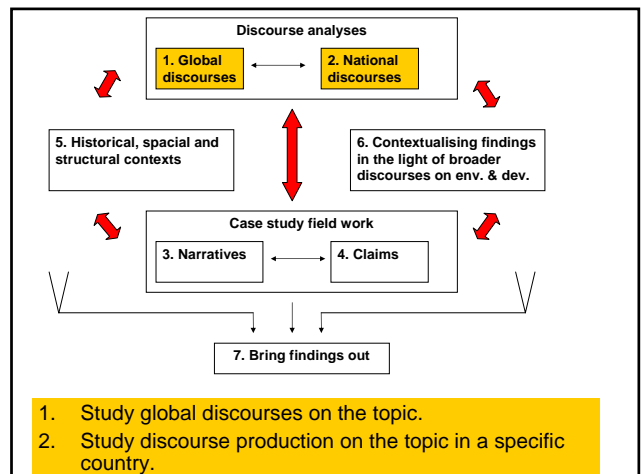
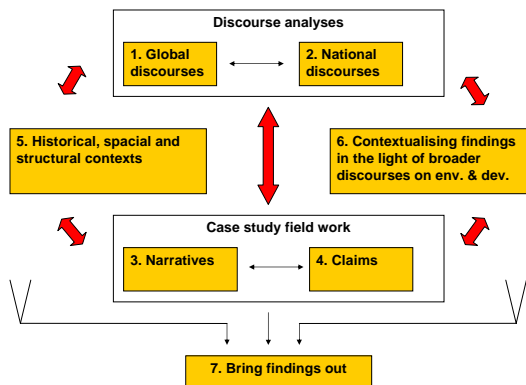
Stott, Ph. and Sian Sullivan (eds). 2000. *Political ecology. Science, myth and power*. London: Arnold.

Paulson, S. & L. Gezon eds. 2004: *Political Ecology Across Spaces, Scales and Social Groups*. Rutgers University Press.

A recipe with 7 ingredients for pol. ecol. studies of issues on environment and development

0. In small studies (such as MA thesis) the main emphasis must be delimited to perhaps a couple of ingredients.
1. Study global discourses on the topic.
2. Study discourse production on the topic in a specific country.
3. Study narrative production regarding a case.
4. Critically examine claims from discourses and narratives by own investigations of the case.
5. Address the historical, spacial and structural context of the focused practice or phenomenon.
6. Contextualise findings on discourses and their claims in the light of broader discourses on environment and development.
7. Bring your findings out – provide relevant inputs to the battles of the construction of truth.

A recipe with 7 ingredients for pol. ecol. studies of issues on environment and development



1. Study global discourses on the topic.
2. Study discourse production on the topic in a specific country.

What is "discourse"?

What is "discourse"?

3 different applications of the term

- 1) Linguistic approaches - discourse as text, discourse analysis as analysis of how sentences form text.
- 2) Everyday language - discourse as "conversation" or "discussion".

What is "discourse"?

3 different applications of the term

3) As applied here:

Social science approaches in which discourses are seen as:

- A shared meaning of a phenomenon
- Shared by a small or large group of people
- Main features:
 - Content (message)
 - Expressive means (e.g. narratives, metaphores)

Discourses simplify!

• For good

Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgements, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, arguments, and disagreements, in the environmental area no less than elsewhere. Indeed, if such shared terms did not exist, it would be hard to imagine problem-solving in this area at all ... (Dryzek 1997:8).

• And for bad

Why studying global discourses on environment and development?

Because leading global discourses are powerful, understudied and often contain strong claims on weak empirical bases. Thus: academic studies may provide relevant inputs to important debates

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

The Fortress Conservation Discourse

- Wild species must be preserved by reserving areas - keep people away from living there and using the natural resources.
- Long history
 - Forest reserves by the English colonial power
 - National parks first in the USA
- Also called the "fences and fines approach"

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

The Fortress Conservation Discourse

- Needs and interests of local people ignored
- Local people seen as problems (threats and causes of problems regarding nature degradation, poachers, cause population growth)
- Protected areas established in Africa to satisfy:
 - European men's perceptions of "the wild" and "wilderness"
 - Trofé hunting as demonstration of manhood
- Africa seen as the Garden of Eden, human species as its destroyer, preservation as the salvation

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

The community-based conservation discourse

- Taken over as hegemonic discourse (privileged solution)
- Common today among most conservationists
- Roots back to the 1950s
- Contents:
 - Conservation of species, ecosystems and biodiversity main objective.
 - Local people in and around protected areas should be allowed to **participate** in the management of the natural resources.
 - They should **benefit** economically related to the conservation.
 - Various rationals for the concern for the people:
 - Biocentric (due to conservation)
 - Antroposentric (due to the people)

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

The community-based conservation discourse

- Important actors in the production of this discourse:
 - * Conservation biologists
 - * Environmental NGOs
 - * Development partners (donors)
 - * Governmental and inter-governmental bodies
 - * Sometimes: Speak with "two tongues"

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

Reasons for the success of the community-based conservation discourse:

1. It equates conservation with sustainable development - notifying human needs. As in the Brundtland Commission's report and beyond.
2. Its emphasis on "community" been trendy since the late 1980s. A vague, idealistic, romantic and powerful concept. A neo-populist idea supporting the traditional against the modern
3. In line with a shift in dominating discourse of development: Against "top down", "technocratic", "blueprint".

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

Reasons for the success of the community-based conservation discourse:

4. Renewed interest in the 1980s in the market and economic incentives for development
 - Conservation based on economic arguments
 - Less state, more local decision-making
5. Biological reason
 - Species cannot be sustained on small preservation "islands", therefore pivotal to make local people partners in conservation.

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

Reasons for the success of the community-based conservation discourse:

6. Rapid transfer and acceptance of the discourse especially in parts of the world in which exogenous ideas about "what to do" hold the greatest influence): Aid dependent countries.
See points from Hoben 1995 (Adams & Hulme:19).
- [7. Increased weight on "local" and "traditional" knowledge.]

Two leading discourses globally on area conservation (see Adams & Hulme, etc.)

See Hutton et al. (2005):

The fortress conservation discourse is on its way back again!

National discourses on a topic can deviate from global discourses on the same.

Methodology for studying discourses

Some advices:

Discourses are linked "vertically" and "horizontally"
Thus: Select a focus on the most delimited type of issue to study the discourse production;

Apply a "grounded theory" approach with an open attitude to search for the main message in each discourse.

Coding, indexing, building higher categories.

Dryzek's advices for identification of discourses regarding environmental questions

Search for:

- 1) The most important units
- 2) Presumptions on natural conditions
- 3) Aktors and their motives
- 4) Important metaphores and other retorical advices

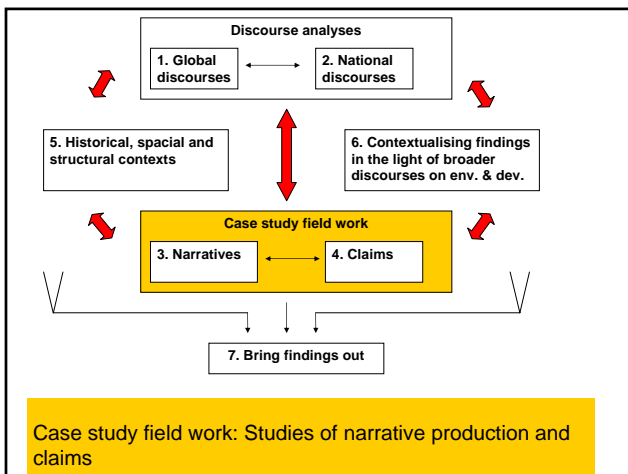
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"Discourse" must be situated in relation to other concepts such as:

- Individual opinions
- Culture
- Ideologi
- Paradigme
- Narrative
- Theory



Udzungwa Mountains National Park



- Allmost 40% of Tanzania's land areas are protected
- Udzungwa Mountains National Park:
 - Established 1992
 - Main actor: Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA)
 - WWF

Udzungwa Mountains National Park



Udzungwa Mountains National Park



Dovrefjell/Sundalsfjella conservation area: Another example – similar practices and discourse



Established in 2002

