

Place as an integrative concept for sustainable forest management

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Integrated and sustainable forestry involves balancing a long-standing tension in Western scientific thought between universalist and particularist views of knowledge. Underlying most conceptions of integrated science is the assumption that the world can be understood as a collection of puzzle-pieces and that science just needs to focus on how to fit them together. But instead of seeking this elusive trans-disciplinary science, this paper argues that integrated forest management requires finding ways of acting in the face of inevitable pluralism and non-commensurability of knowledge and values. The rich and varied concept of place developed in the social sciences provides one route to such action by helping to focus and synthesize disparate knowledge around actual, real places rather than hypothetical/abstract social-ecological realities. The management focus of sustainable forestry should highlight the pluralism of knowledge and values (against value monism), the pluralism of epistemology (perspective) and seek a pragmatic (adaptive and discursive) approach to policy and decision-making. Specifically this paper proposes that integration of knowledge for sustainable forest management requires a *re-placing* of forest knowledge and practice in three ways: seeking a more inclusive and explicitly spatial consideration of place meanings; embracing critical pluralism in the conduct of science; and pursuing a placed and pragmatic approach to the ordering of values in natural resource decision making. That is to say sense of place is as much about the plural "perspectives" taken on the world (how we see, know and organize the world) and not just a thing or value in the world or a property or value associated with some point or polygon in a GIS information system as it is often conceived (even among those who talk about sense of place).