



Biocultural diversity conservation for island and islanders: Necessity, goal and activity

Sun-Kee Hong

Institution for Marine & Island Cultures (MIC), Mokpo National University, Republic of Korea

Received 23 October 2013; accepted 12 November 2013

KEYWORDS

Asia-Pacific islands;
Cultural diversity;
Island Biocultural Diversity Initiative;
Islanders;
Traditional ecological knowledge

Abstract Cultural diversity is highly dependent on the regional environment and natural resources. From an environmental historical perspective, the course of destruction of human civilization resulting from the depletion of ecosystems and resources, we confirm how the sustainable use of resources and appropriate conservation strategies are contributing to regional development. Due to the recent rapid changes in climate, the environments of oceanic and island regions are changing and the ecosystems and biological diversity are also undergoing significant changes. Island residents are very vulnerable to the changing natural environment, and diverse cultural characteristics and ecosystem knowledge that has been maintained up until now are under a threat of gradual extinction. Traditional culture and knowledge are related to the survival of islanders. This situation is understood throughout the world; in response to which, international organizations such as the IUCN and UNESCO, etc. have also put forth continuing efforts in preserving the life, cultures, ecology and knowledge of the island regions. This paper purports to provide a brief description of the international trends and backgrounds based on the 'Island Biocultural Diversity Initiative' and the latest activities.

© 2013 Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of Institution for Marine and Island Cultures, Mokpo National University.

Where culture can link with biological diversity

What is culture? And how does culture link to biodiversity conservation? The concept of culture marshals multiple meanings, and has come to be defined differently depending on the historical era, ideology or social group. Nonetheless, UNESCO's World Declaration on Cultural Diversity, has defined culture

broadly as representing "psychological, physical, intellectual and emotional characteristics that a certain society or a societal group possesses.¹ In addition, included in this are not only arts and literature, but also lifestyle, ways of harmony, values, traditions and religions as well." The Korea National Culture Encyclopedia similarly emphasizes the relationship of humans with their environment, defining culture as a "product of physical-psychological processes through which the individuals or human populations of a society have changed nature."

E-mail address: landskhong@gmail.com

Peer review under responsibility of Mokpo National University.



Production and hosting by Elsevier

¹ UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Adopted by the 31st Session of UNESCO's General Conference, Records of the General Conference, 31st Session Paris (15 Oct.–3 Nov. 2001). Vol. 1, Resolutions, Paris: UNESCO, 2002. pp. 62–63. <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001246/124687e.pdf>>.

Cultural diversity (that is, the diverse methods through which a group or a societal culture expresses culture ([International Conference on Biological and Cultural Diversity, 2010](#)) can therefore be expressed through a variety of methods, including artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and transmission, etc., in addition to the various methods of expression, proliferation and delivery of human cultural heritage through diverse cultural expressions. Here, I focus on the diverse and many links between culture and the environment that allow culture to exist, and that are transmitted through the generations.

Biocultural diversity – a practical encounter between biological and cultural diversity

Although the key aspects of biological diversity are separated mainly into species, habitats and ecosystems (reference), the influence of humans on bio-organisms occurs on a landscape scale and global scale. Need another sentence here to link the previous sentence with the next one. We therefore need to emphasize awareness of biological diversity that goes beyond biological concepts alone. In particular, biological diversity and cultural diversity are linked in landscapes where traditional livelihoods, and ultimately human survival, are based on natural resources ([Wu, 2011](#)). Within these landscapes, biological culture forms, advances and also changes ([Maffi and Woodley, 2010](#); [Hong, 2011a,b](#)). Protected and sanctuary areas are now appearing throughout the world as the wisdom of utilizing bio-organisms is projected onto the entity of culture during the long history of the humankind. Residents protect these places and recognize them as places that represent their identity.

If biological diversity indicates ecological health and qualitative characteristics within the natural ecosystems, then cultural diversity has a critical capacity of improving the resilience of socio-ecological systems ([Maffi, 1998](#)). In order to ensure the survival of cultural diversity, the capacity of human systems that adapt to changes must be improved.

[Table 1](#) presents a study that serves as a bridge that can connect nature with systems of culture, which are separated academically. Currently, many disciplines explore aspects of biodiversity and culture in isolation. Nonetheless, the disciplines and foci listed in [Table 1](#) can serve as a bridge to connect biological and cultural diversity. For example, at the center of these fields, scientific knowledge (landscape ecology, biological diversity, etc.) can also be associated with development processes and international politics; international politics can be associated with the preservation of biological resources (Commons studies, political ecology, etc.); along with humanities research (anthropology, environmental sociology, environmental history, etc.) that is associated with significant changes in humans and societies ([Rapport, 2006](#)). Nature and culture come in contact in many areas, including values, religion, lifestyle, knowledge and language ([Berkes, 2004](#); [Berkes et al., 2000](#)). The natural environment supports culture in that the process of culture, behavior, beliefs and diverse cultural results are manifested and settled in the landscape. The link between cultural diversity and biological diversity is practical, as well as spiritual. Throughout the world, because the key regions with high biological diversity tend to be inhabited by ethnic minorities and have high density in linguistic diversity, they are places of high importance in terms of cultural diversity. Since

the 1990s, discussions about the link between biological diversity and cultural diversity have been actively conducted; the concepts of “bioculture” and “biocultural diversity,” where the boundaries of the two areas meet, are now established; and the related academic disciplines have been advancing rapidly ([Pretty et al., 2009](#)).

International recognition and proliferation of concept of biocultural diversity

Increasingly, business people and politicians in developed nations have been challenged to consider the severity of climate change and the effects of indiscriminant development. By using various cases, the level of dependence of humans on bio-organisms and ecosystems, and how culture is linked to biological diversity, and how culture has come to being have been explained. International organizations such as the UNEP, UNESCO, CBD and the IUCN, have demonstrated a high level of recognition for the mutual relationship between biological diversity and cultural diversity. For example, the UNEP GEO-4 (2007) recommended that human cultural diversity, which affects ecosystems and biological diversity, be included in the concept of biological diversity; the UNESCO has convened meetings of experts in Aichi, Japan (April 2004) and Paris, France (September 2007) to discuss action on biological diversity and cultural diversity. Furthermore, Article 8j of the CBD emphasizes the importance of sustainable use and preservation of biological diversity. Increasingly, scientific conferences are also focused on biological diversity and indigenous peoples; at the 4th IUCN World Conservation Congress (The Fourth WCC, Barcelona), included a symposium and events related to biological diversity and indigenous people. During 2009–2012, IUCN programs were approved to recognize the importance of cultural diversity and cultural values related to the nature and indigenous people. At the IUCN’s Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), a variety of projects are being pursued under the vision that the world is intertwined with biological diversity and cultural diversity.

2010 was the UN’s International Year of Biological Diversity and also the International Year of Rapprochement of Cultures. These designations were particularly significant, given the destruction of Earth’s ecosystems due to climate change, indiscriminant development, resource use-motivated destruction of original forms of ecosystems, pollution, etc. and deterioration of value of biocultural diversity. Amidst the variety of commemorative programs conducted worldwide, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) international conference was held from 8 to 10 June 2010. The Convention on Biological Diversity is an inter-national agreement of the UNEP enacted in 1993 and purposed with the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of diverse biological species, commercial use of genetic resources, and joint sharing of generated profits from these and other uses. As required indicators for discussions on the sustainability of the global environment and communities, interests in biological diversity and cultural diversity already carry an international importance ([CBD, 2013](#)).

The launch of ‘Island Biocultural Diversity Initiative’

Improving the quality of life of islanders by preserving and utilizing the unique biological resources and cultural resources of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1107084>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1107084>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)