Private Land Conservation: Motivations and Drivers

Conservation Optimism Summit
London, 20-21 April 2017
Literature on Landowners’ Motivations

**INDIVIDUAL**
- Personal enjoyment and recreation, place attachment, legacy
- Self-concept that includes the natural world, significant life experiences

**SOCIAL**
- Community-mindedness, family objectives, legitimacy (esp. ecotourism)

**CULTURAL/ECONOMIC**
- Financial incentives, property rights, affordable land, government conservation failure, increased interest in biodiversity and ecotourism

**DEMOGRAPHIC**
- North/south international purchases
Literature on Farmers’ Motivations

**INDIVIDUAL**
- ‘Goodness of fit’, understanding of program, ‘good farmer’ identity
- Dislike of rules and regulations

**SOCIAL**
- Peer group esteem

**CULTURAL/ECONOMIC**
- Subsidies important but insufficient to explain, technical assistance

**DEMOGRAPHIC**
- Higher farm income, high land productivity, part-time occupation
- Not generalizable
Landowner Motivations

- **Conservation initiator** who launches a new project on his/her land or purchases land with conservation as an objective.
- **Conservation buyer** who participates in a shareblock, collective, or revolving land program.
- **Sympathetic landowner** who is focused on another land use (agriculture, forestry, hunting) but has interest in conservation.
- **Disinterested landowner** who is focused on another land use and is not interested in conservation.
Methods

This study uses grounded theory to analyze and interpret the experiences of conservation landowners.

Interviews

• 29 landowners to date
• Property in 13 countries on 6 continents
• Size of property: 3 ha to 110,000 ha
• Interviews conducted in person, by Skype, by phone, and by email
• Loosely structured interviews focused on landowner stories
- Property in 13 countries
- Size of property: 3 ha to 110,000 ha
Results

Research in progress
Values → Perceived Need → Co-Benefits

Catalyst

Autonomy

Social Context

Efficacy

Nature Connection

Owner-Land Dynamic

Sense of Purpose

Research in progress
Results

Results correspond with predictors of wellbeing identified in personal projects psychology (Little et al 1999)

**Autonomy**
Experimentation, speed and efficiency, figuring it out

**Social Context**
Combined forces, formal networks

**Efficacy**
Metaphors of living canvas and composing music, application of skills and perspective

**Nature Connection**
Place attachment, experiences with wildlife, complexity of relationship

Research in progress
Implications for Conservation

• Private land conservation is serving multiple purposes
• Autonomy
  • Programs can take advantage of intrinsic motivation
• Efficacy
  • Currently measured by visible change in landscape
  • There are few models against which landowners can measure themselves
• Social Context
  • Lacking in many parts of the world
  • Improves landowner experience
Opportunities for VCA

• Autonomy
  • Difficult balance for programs with conservation objectives
  • VCA may be well received because it does not prescribe or impose actions

• Efficacy
  • Opportunity for VCA to provide a standard to benchmark against
  • VCA can enhance legitimacy, particularly for fundraising

• Social Context
  • Can add value by providing a grassroots forum in which landowners can share challenges and successes
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