

Geoconservation's Dilemma: How to Value Diversity Itself for Conservation Benefits

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This paper critically analyzes two fundamental questions: why is geoconservation important and how to ground this concept in practice. Geoconservation differs from other conservation frameworks because it focuses on the diversity of the abiotic environment. Most conservation discourses focus on the biotic environment and on specific flagship species. Geoconservation in this sense is more holistic as a conservation framework, it holds that the abiotic diversity in itself is important for the well-being of the planet. However this concept is weakly integrated in praxis. Furthermore as the case studies reveal; geoconservation in practice tends to focus disproportionately on specific landforms (volcanic or natural hazard related) that are considered uniquely valuable, and less commonly values diversity itself. This is a natural result of stakeholder dynamics and institutionalism in nature governance, but it also poses a fundamental problem for geoconservation. This paper discusses case studies of the Izu Peninsula, Minami Alps, Hakusan Reserve, and Kamikochi National Park, and argues through these case studies how an alternative framework of diversity evaluation can provide better conservation benefits.

Keywords: Geoconservation, holistic conservation, diversity, case study