Spiritual Values in Forest Management a Conceptual Framework for Empirical Research

NGG Spring Meeting 'Religion and the Environment'

12 March 2021

Cathrien de Pater, MSc, MA

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

How are spiritual values articulated in forest management?

1. Setting the scene: Forests and spirituality
2. The Building of the Conceptual Framework
3. The Content of the Framework
4. Application of the Framework
5. Usefulness and limits

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Spiritual values:

- “hard-to define nature-based values that help maintain and renew the human and non-human spirit’, characterized as ‘hard to measure’, ‘intangible’, ‘ethereal’, or ‘psychologically deep’ values associated with land.

After Driver et al. 1999; List and Brown 1999: 5

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Growing recognition of spiritual values of forests / nature/ biodiversity

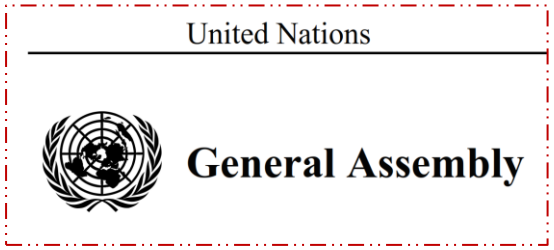
- Globalisation → growing interaction between perspectives on forests
- Diversifying demands on forests:
  - Forests for People → Community Forestry
  - Biodiversity
  - Climate
- Citizens' concern about forests:
  - Deforestation - zero consumption
  - Involvement in sylvicultural work
  - Activist opposition to tree cutting → conflicts
- Underlying: diverging worldviews & spiritual values
- In academia: 'Ontological Turn'

Sustainability PPP(P)

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Global Policies:

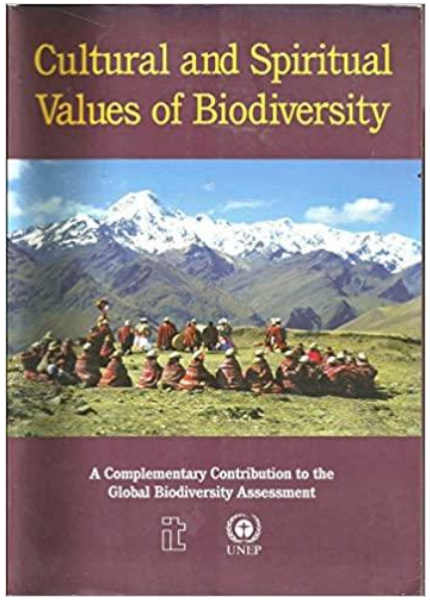
Indigenous Peoples → Cultural & Spiritual values in governing documents

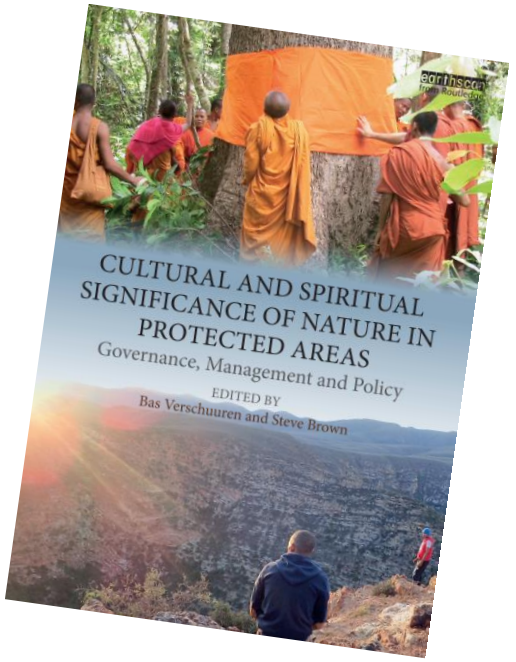


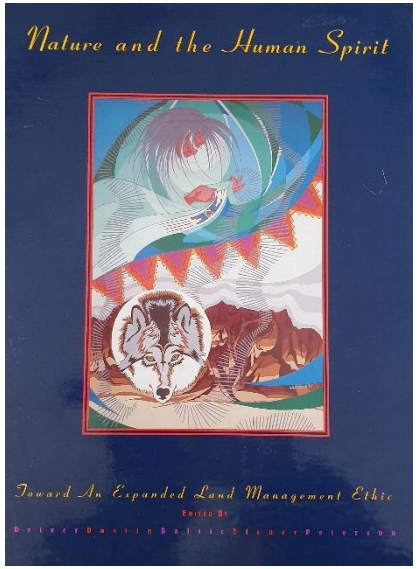
But in practice…?

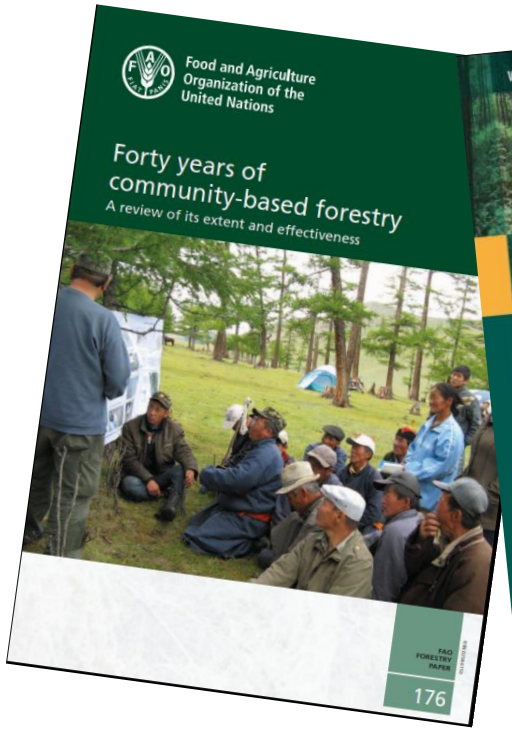
What we know:

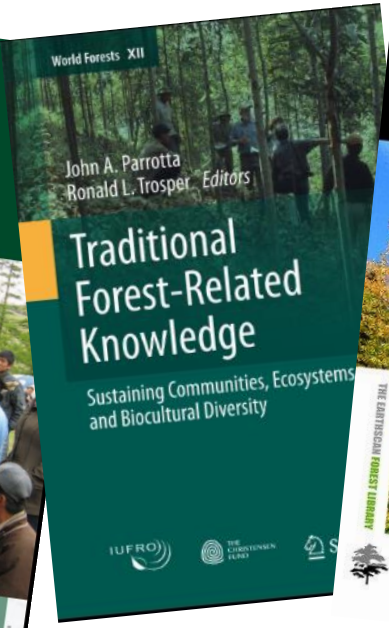
- Cult. & Spir. Values in Nature Conservation
- Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge
- Community-based forestry
  with local & Indigenous People

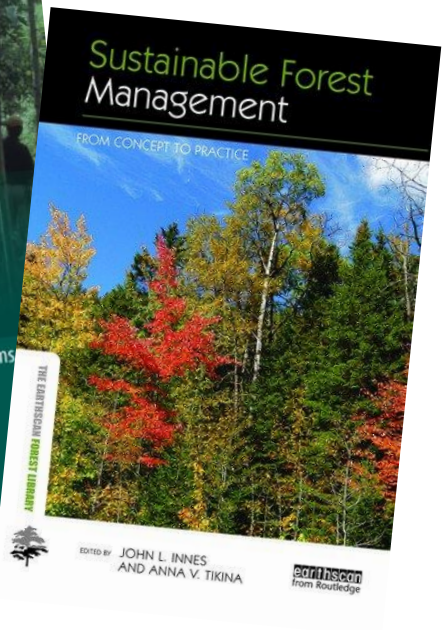












WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Knowledge gaps in current research

- Forest *managers* less studied than forest *users*
- Human-Nature Connections → pro-conservation behaviour, but:
  - Spiritual experiences in nature: complex relationship
  - Most in the Western world
  - Only part focused on forests
  - Nature restoration – role of spirituality?
  - Connection to land - Place attachment/identity – spirituality?
- Diversifying demands to forest managers

  → need for spiritual inclusive forest management

→ *How to study?*

→ *Conceptual framework*

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

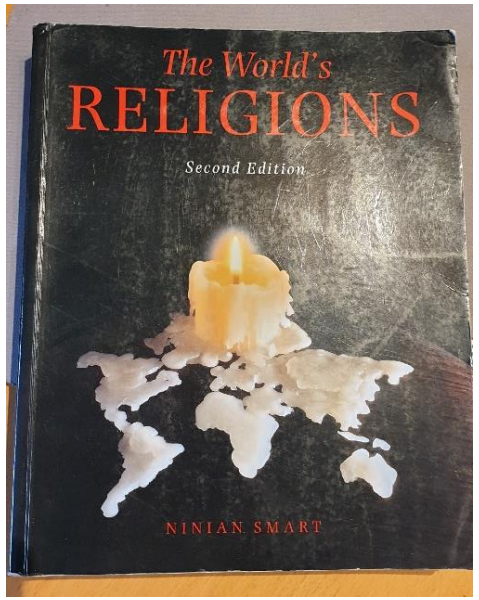
Building the framework

- **Approach**: 'Family resemblance approach' (Taylor 2016):

  "the multifarious dimensions of religious experience and religion-resembling phenomena that some observers will not consider religious, without establishing definitively where the boundary lies between 'religion' and whatever is *not religion (Saler 1993)".*

  - No sharp distinction between 'spiritual' and 'religous'
  - No preference of one spiritual tradition above another
  - Focuses on explanatory power

Content: Dimensions of spirituality (Ninian Smart 2002)



Ninian Smart's 7 Dimensions of Religion

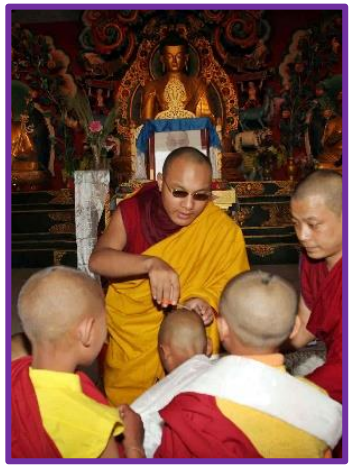
1. Emotional and experiential

2. Practical or ritual

3. Narrative or mythical

4. Doctrinal and philosophical

5. Ethical and legal



6. Social and institutional

7. Material

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Dimensions of Spirituality and Forests/Nature

1. Experiential - aesthetical

2. Experiential – relational

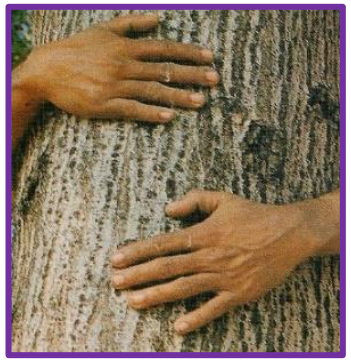
3. Experiential – restorative

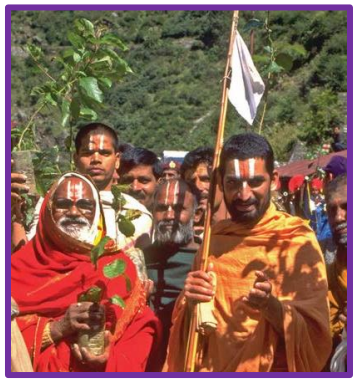
4. Experiential – 'life force' (energy)

5. Practical or ritual

6. Narrative or mythical

7. Philosophi-cal & ethical





8. Social and institutional

9. Material-Spiritual

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

1. Experiential - aesthetical

- Beauty
- Sublimity
- Grandeur
- Self-transcending awe
- Menace!

- Induced by Wilderness, forests etc.

2. Experiential - restorative

- Refreshing
- Tranquility
- Renewed energy & activity
- Meditative forest walks
- *Shinrin yoku* (forest bathing)
- Vision quests
- 'Leisure-spiritual coping' (Heintzman 2009)

3. Experiential-relational

- Deep connectedness with trees, forests, land, nature, landscape
- Sense of place
- Place attachment
- Individual or collective
    - → Identity
    - → Well-being

→ Green behaviour

4. Experiential- 'life force'

- Intuitive sensing of subtle, life/vital energies in forests, trees, or landscapes
- 'Earth mysteries' (Ivakhiv 2005).
- Lifeforces: *qi*, *ki*, *prana*, *mana*, etc.
- *Fengshui,* Geomancy, Animism
- Examples: Kooistra (trees), Andeweg (energetic balancing), Pogačnik (earth healing), etc.

5. Practical and ritual

- Actions aimed at spiritual or ethical insight (Smart 2002)
- Shamanic rituals in forests

  ~ healing
- Tree worship / planting
- Natural burials

~ Experiential, mythical-narrative, ethical dimensions

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

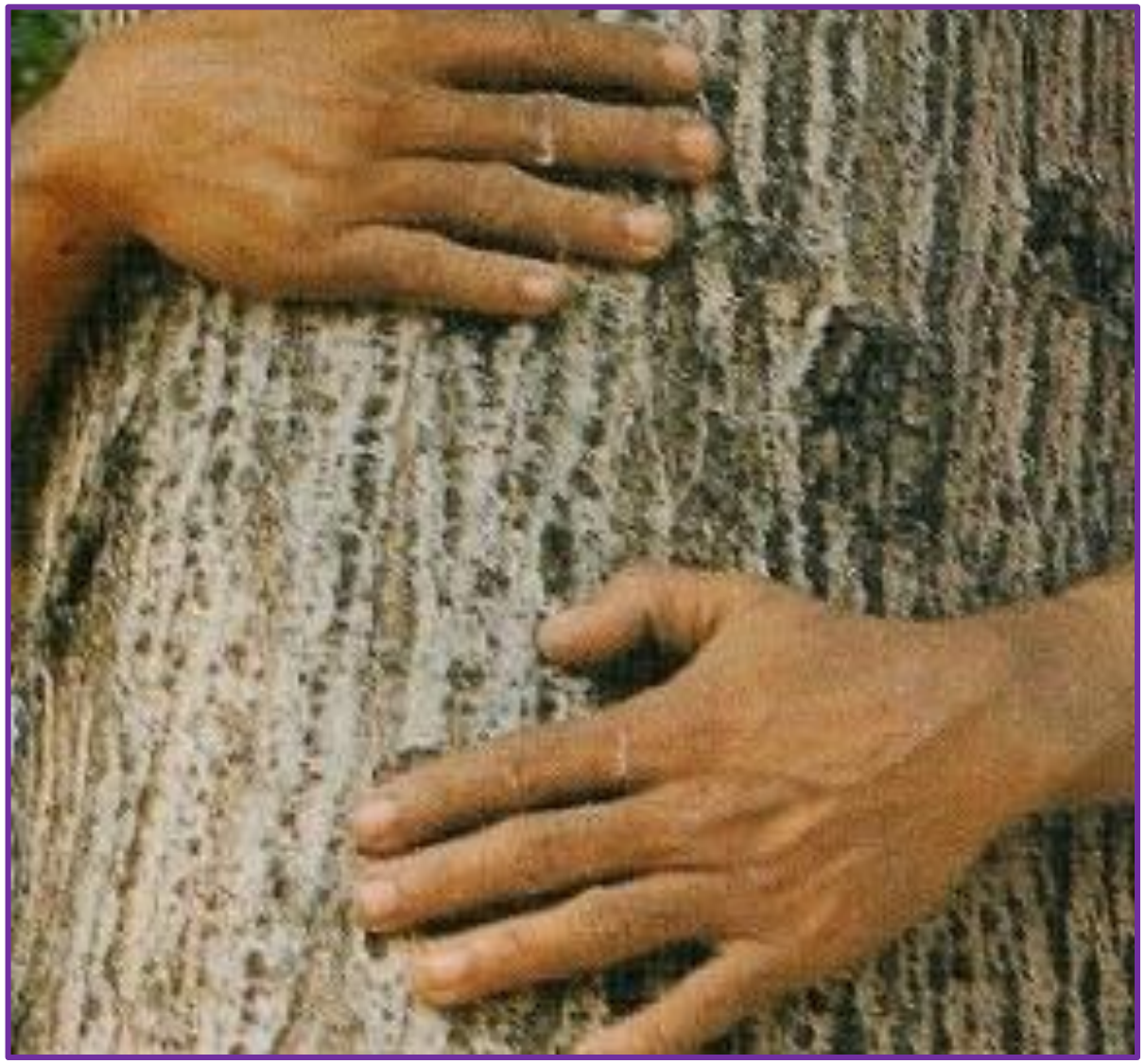
6. Narrative-mythical

- Vital stories, myths, etc.
- Process of transfer also spiritual
- Creation stories
- Sacred sites
- Comfort & inspiration (Chipko)
- Symbols, life-marking events
- Memorial forest

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

7. Philisophical and ethical

- Intellectual underpinning of other dimensions & behavioural consequenses
- Biophilia hypothesis (Kellert & Wilson 1993)
- 'Green' injunctions
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Eco-spiritual lifestyles & movements
- Examples:
    - *Gvi'ilas* (Heiltsuk Nation, BC)
    - *Laudato si'*



8. Social and institutional

- Interfaith Rainforest Initiative
- Faith-based eco-movements
- Sacred Forests
- Taboos
- Pilgrimages
- Trees for Life (Scotland)
- Spiritual leaders
  - Patriarch Bartholomew I
- Forest Management Plans

9. Material and spiritual

- Sacred plants / trees /
- Sacred sites (IUCN; UNESCO)
- Sacred objects:
    - totem poles
    - vedic sacrifice pole
    - Incense forests, Ethiopia
- Sacred buildings, art

~ Practical-ritual a.o. dimensions

Example: Operationalisation of Spiritual Dimensions in FMPs

Abstract

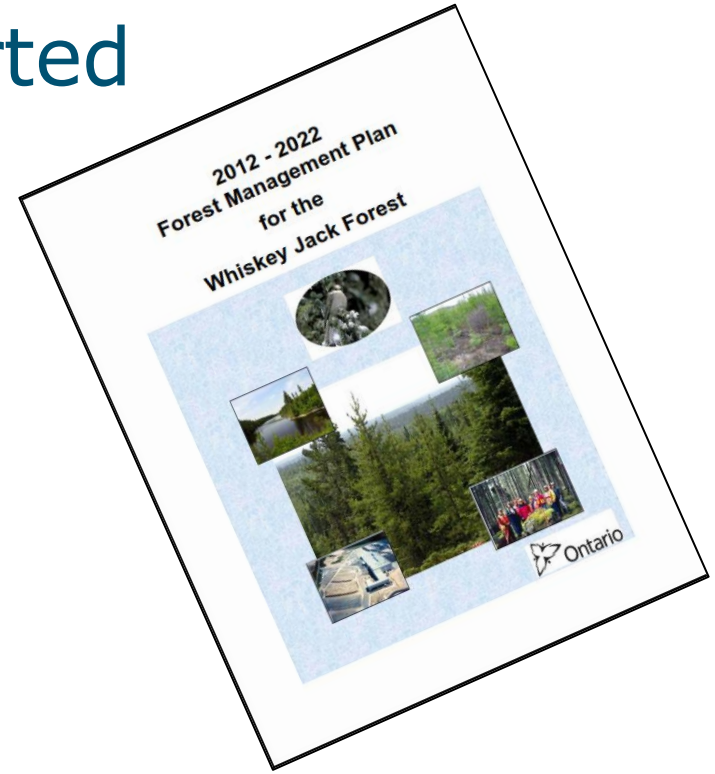
Concrete

	D0. Exp-unspec-ified	D1. Exp-Aesth	D2. Exp-Rel	D3. Exp-Resto-rative	D4. Exp-life force	D5. Pract-Ritual	D6. Myth-Narr	D7. Phil-Eth	D8. Mat'l-spirit'l	Total	%
Op.1.1. Descriptive – what is	17	34	28	4	4	12	29	16	24	**168**	12,6
Op.1.2. Descr.iptive – Use	11	14	7	7	4	20	15	8	24	**110**	8,3
Op.1.3. Governance Context	8	14	13	2	1	16	11	23	8	**96**	7,2
Op.2.1. Problems / Threats	12	11	10	1	2	8	7	11	6	**68**	5,1
Op.2.2. Objectives, Principles, Guidelines	25	44	19	9	1	23	19	25	14	**179**	13,4
Op.2.3. Priorities	11	15	5	1	0	7	4	5	2	**50**	3,8
Op.2.4. Zoning, Inventories	32	37	14	7	0	35	13	8	15	**161**	12,1
Op.2.5. Interv. Protection	18	22	3	0	2	25	6	15	15	**106**	8,0
Op.2.6. Interv. Integr'd Use & Restoration	14	34	8	5	1	22	8	17	12	**121**	9,1
Op.2.7. Interv. Communciation, Education & Research	25	28	36	8	1	20	25	16	13	**172**	12,9
Op.2.8. Interv. Nature tourism	37	36	4	5	3	3	8	4	0	**100**	7,5
Total	**210**	**289**	**147**	**49**	**19**	**191**	**145**	**148**	**133**	**1331**	100,0
%	15,8	21,7	11,0	3,7	1,4	14,4	10,9	11,1	10,0	**100,0**	

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Application to empirical studies: just started

1. Articulation of spiritual values in Forest management *plans*
2. Articulation of spiritual values in forest management *practices*?
3. Cycling tourists' spiritual experiences in the Harz
4. Articulation of spiritual values in the management of 'spiritually inspired' forest estates
5. Etc.



Usefulness of the framework

- for study spirituality-forest management:
    - across cultural, religious, and geographic regions without prior biases about the cultures concerned
    - from policy documents to field implementation (in combi with theories on policy & governance).

- Systematize evidence on role of spiritual values in the management of sacred groves, community forests and traditional forest-related knowledge, and contribute to theorizing these fields.

- Accommodate various stakeholders - even non-human actors - to elicit the role of spirituality in their perspectives and interactions with the forests.

Usefulness (2)

- Under-researched aspects can be added as part of this systematic approach and consequently evaluated on their suitability for further research. E.g. role of spiritual experiences in:
    - people's connection with nature,
    - nature-induced health restoration,
    - people's connection with land and 'sense of place',
    - the role of rituals and narratives in sustainable forest management, and
    - worldviews (ontologies and epistemologies) relevant to forest management.
- Spiritualities and religions beneficial or detrimental to nature conservation (Lynn White)
  → perspective of those engaged with forest management.

Sensitivities and limits

- Not cast in stone, adapt to scope of research
- Scope focused on forest (& nature) management – for broader domains other frameworks may be better (e.g. MEA, IPBES)
- Boundary between spiritual and not spiritual = grey area
- 'Packaging' of terms:

In policy literature:
Cultural, socio-cultural, cultural-historical, cultural heritage, aesthetic/spiritual, social;

In relation to natural world:
Cultural landscapes, cultural benefits, shared values of ecosystems;

Inclusive concepts:
Biocultural diversity
Relational values

- Measurability (cf. Oneness belief scale (Garfield et al. 2014)

Thank You!

Catharina.depater@wur.nl

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH