

Ten Principles to Protect the Planet

Following the IPCC's Code Red, a new article proposes ten political ecology and social justice based strategies for the IUCN

Merced, California, September 2, 2021 – On the eve of crucial International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) negotiations, an international, interdisciplinary team of forest and climate experts has released a radical new article, [*The political ecology playbook for ecosystem restoration: Principles for effective, equitable, and transformative landscapes*](#) to address the interlinked climate change and biodiversity crises. The article presents ten principles which could be game changers at the IUCN conference.

The authors (coincidentally all women) argue that despite widespread international agreement for the urgent need to tackle deforestation, forest degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change, the failure to address the role and importance of political economic drivers threatens any chance of progress.

“To achieve the necessary ecologically-sustainable and socially-just ecosystem restoration, the international community must address the underlying political and economic causes of deforestation and forest degradation,” said Tracey Osborne, the report’s lead author. “In doing so, we simultaneously tackle a host of other social and environmental crises such as climate change, biodiversity loss and political marginalization.”

“By consistently failing to address long-standing, unequal political and economic relations, even the best-intentioned restoration efforts can fail or end up causing harm to people and planet,” added co-author Victoria Gutierrez.

The Playbook takes a political ecology approach - a framework that recognizes environmental issues are not simply biophysical issues alone but are deeply social, political and economic. “Restoration is often seen as a quick fix to repair ecosystems after making mistakes. But it is even more important to recognize these mistakes and avoid repeating them, as they also perpetuate social inequities,” said Robin Chazdon, another of the article’s nine authors.

“There are winners and losers in environmental change, and political ecology is committed to goals that have social justice outcomes. The Playbook proposes ten actionable strategies for sustainable ecosystem restoration which, when incorporated into existing frameworks at international, national, and local levels, reinforce best practices and improve responses to global crises,” Gutierrez added.

“We invite IUCN members to consider adopting the Playbook to guide biodiversity conservation,” Osborne concluded. “The IUCN’s goals will ultimately not be achieved without deeper structural changes at local, national and international scales. This is not just the ethical thing to do, it’s our best hope for ensuring a habitable planet for current and future generations.”

Ten Principles for effective, equitable, and transformative landscapes:

Local

1. Privilege local knowledge and practices: Enhance and secure local and Indigenous knowledge and values, decision making, governance, management and land use practices.

2. Ensure participation of the most impacted groups: Recognize heterogeneity of local groups and existing power differentials, and be inclusive of different stakeholders across the landscape.
3. Ensure social/environmental equity and justice: Ensure that the most marginalized actors receive a fair share of benefits, and that restoration contributes to social justice.

National

4. Align restoration practices with local needs and aspirations: Implement a variety of restoration practices driven by traditional ecological knowledge, and local needs and aspirations rather than political and economic agendas.
5. Align state policies to support restoration: Align state policies and subsidies to support equitable ecosystem restoration.
6. Empower representative local decision-making authority: Work toward democratic decentralization of some government policies so local needs can be addressed in transparent and equitable ways.

International

7. Promote regenerative interventions: Shift incentives to regenerative development that supports restoration and sustainable livelihoods.
8. Prioritize social and ecological benefits over financial returns: Prioritize social and ecological investment models as opposed to models that prioritize financial returns on investments.
9. Ensure fair funding: Finance must be based on responsibility, accountability, and social equity.
10. Collaborate across country borders: Recognize that opportunities for restoration might not be equally distributed across all countries, requiring transnational cooperation.

Notes to the Editor:

- [The International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organisations and the input of more than 18,000 experts.
- [The IUCN Congress](#), 3-11 September 2021 in Marseille, France, will be the first hybrid in-person and virtual environmental event since the Covid-19 pandemic began. It is expected to drive action on nature-based recovery, climate change and biodiversity for decades to come.
- [The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) (2021 - 2030) is a global call to action to support the restoration of degraded ecosystems worldwide.
- Many aspects of the [Political Ecology Playbook](#) are already embedded in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, including support for decentralized movements, promoting values-based restoration, realigning policies and financial incentives towards conservation and restoration of ecosystems, and integrating indigenous knowledge and traditional practices into ecosystem restoration initiatives. However, these goals cannot be achieved without deeper structural changes at local, state or national, and international scales, which in turn requires a clear view of the root causes of and barriers to broader systemic change.
- [The political ecology playbook for ecosystem restoration: Principles for effective, equitable, and transformative landscapes](#) was published in the journal of Global Environmental Change, August 2021

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