

Exchanging Researcher Seats: Weaving Research with Indigenous Knowledges Systems for Forest- Fauna-Human management in the Colombian Amazon.

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ABSTRACT OR INTRO

A growing number of researchers and scientific institutions realize the importance to connect and complement western scientific knowledge with other forms of knowing. This turn towards epistemic pluralism requires researchers to engage in a collaborative and inclusive dialogue with the diversity of knowledge held by local and indigenous peoples and learn from it. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is of particular interest for our study on sustainable wildlife management in the Colombian Amazon region, which is based on a biocultural and social-ecological systems perspective. We aim to contribute to this process by describing and analysing the collective learning experiences and methodologies we use to integrate institutions, people, knowledges, and actions at various scales. Over a period of 4 years, we developed participatory research with two teams of local indigenous researchers and carried out monthly workshops with local researchers inspired by Participatory Action Research (PAR). These workshops focused on TEK and local wildlife uses in two indigenous communities where two groups of local researchers cocreated participatory workshops with us. Combined with an ethnographic approach for data collection, we present the categories, variables, and information of TEK about their territories describing local cartography and knowledge about 56 species of wildlife, including their use. We first discuss our transdisciplinary research method and its significance for documenting and strengthening local TEK. In addition, our findings also show major threats to TEK, such as institutional and legal challenges, the role of traditional knowledge holders who act as guardians of TEK, and the socio-cultural transformations across the Amazon region. We conclude with insights how research can support TEK and be leveraged for more inclusive conservation and a more respectful interaction and sustainable use of wildlife.

Keywords: Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Indigenous researchers, inductive, participatory, wildlife