

Advancing Conservation in a Social Context:
An Integrative Framework for Understanding Trade-offs

There is an urgent need to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems. Advancing conservation within its social context, however, calls for careful consideration of the complexities of trade-offs. To say that a problem involves trade-offs means that gaining something valuable results in something else of value being lost. Given that successful conservation in many cases depends on cooperative action over long periods of time, early and explicit recognition of trade-offs may lead to more robust and resilient initiatives.

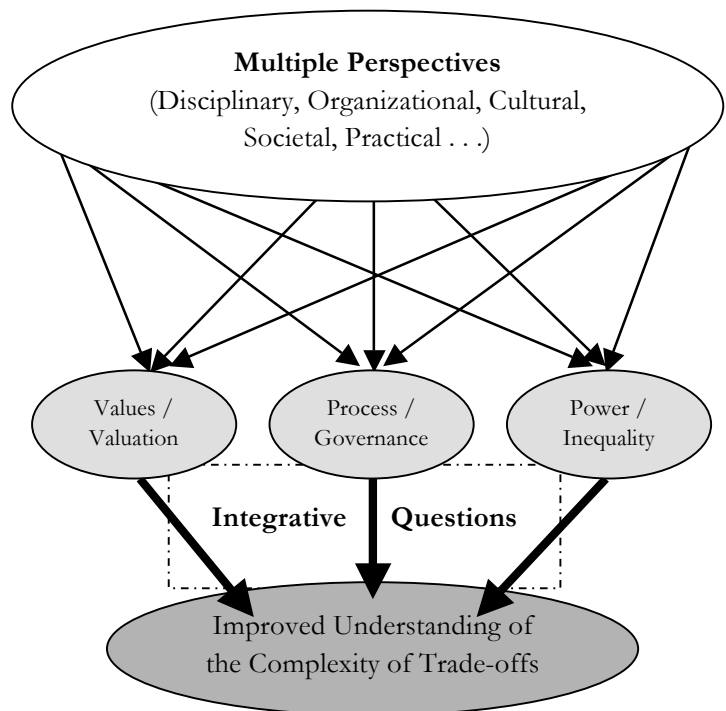
The Integrative Framework is premised on the recognition that trade-offs – and their complexities – are experienced and understood from multiple perspectives, and that each perspective highlights certain problem dimensions with great clarity while obscuring others. The Framework is designed to bring into one space the insights that emerge from a multiplicity of disparate perspectives by focusing them on a set of problem-based questions articulated in ordinary language. The Framework has been shaped by input from researchers and practitioners across 6 continents, from multiple conservation and development organizations, and from academics representing a broad spectrum of disciplinary specialties¹.

The Integrative Framework is likely to resonate with many different audiences and for a variety of purposes. The main areas where it may hold special promise is as:

- a thinking tool for examining specific cases in conservation,
- an analytical or evaluative framework for those involved in conservation processes and practice,
- a way of structuring research in the conservation arena; and
- a means to design new and integrative academic curricula and/or other forms of knowledge and capacity-building
- a structure for facilitating inter-disciplinary teams and workshops with practitioners and policy-makers

Whatever the application, the Integrative Framework is intended to be a usable and useful approach to better understanding the complexities of conservation trade-offs and their social context.

*Diagrammatic Representation of the
Integrative Framework*



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The following **background information** helps to put an issue, case study, project or other conservation scenario involving trade-offs in context:

- *Timeline of major events and decisions at multiple scales
- * Environmental characteristics and status of ecosystems/biological diversity at relevant scale(s)
- * List of actors directly or indirectly involved, along with the scale(s) at which they operate.

Integrative Lenses and Questions should be approached from multiple perspectives:

Values: What are the key values that orient the decisions and actions of the different actors involved?

Values /
Valuation

Valuation: How are these values measured and aggregated, and how are different kinds of values (and values at different scales) prioritized and compared?

Values/Valuation: In what ways do current means of measuring, comparing, aggregating, and prioritizing values highlight or obscure differences in the way values are understood, experienced or measured?

Process: What processes may be available for improved identification and negotiation of trade-offs, and how do they include (or exclude) different perspectives and values?

Process /
Governance

Governance: What existing institutions and structures of governance are important in shaping the way trade-offs are currently identified and negotiated?

Process/Governance: Are processes for identifying and negotiating trade-offs supported by existing governments and institutions? (Do existing governments and institutions have the capacity and willingness to enforce decisions that are made?)

Power: What are the explicit and implicit forms of power (including the power to frame the issue) that influence decisions and outcomes?

Power /
Inequality

Inequality: What forms of inequality (wealth, knowledge, capacity, etc.) are relevant for understanding and negotiating trade-offs?

Power/Inequality: Who pays the costs of trade-offs, and who benefits? Are there hidden agendas at work? Are there ways in which complex problems are being simplified that benefit some actors at the expense of others?

Cross-Cutting Integrative Questions should then be explored after sharing responses to above questions:

Values/Valuation + Process/Governance: What important values, value differences, or value trade-offs may not be accounted for in current decision processes? What processes are available for including those values?

Values/Valuation + Power/Inequality: How might current or proposed means of identifying and comparing values shape power relationships and/or ignore (or bring to light) important inequalities?

Process/Governance + Power/Inequality: What forms of inequality can be addressed by existing or proposed processes for understanding/ negotiating trade-offs, and which cannot? When trade-offs are negotiated, is there a real negotiation or an imposed decision?

Concluding and Combining: What stands out as important in understanding the complexities of trade-offs and the social context of conservation?