

Anthropocentric Concepts of Some Philippine-Based Environmental Organizations

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Abstract

The growth of the number of environmental organizations indicates that people consider the importance of the preservation and conservation of the environment. However, in the ethical point of view, it is important to know the ultimate intention of the people behind these organizations. Were these organizations really created for the sake of the environment or for anthropocentric reasons? This study tries to evaluate through textual analysis three non-government organizations, their vision, and programs. It is found out that although the intentions of the organizations are for the protection of the environment, but ultimately the reasons for the creation of such organizations are always anthropocentric.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism; Ecocentrism, Ecotourism, Sustainable Development.

1.0 Introduction

Environmental movements are commonly understood as organizations that address the concerns of environmental protection and preservation. However, this study proves that there are environmental organizations that intend to conserve the environment but actually anthropocentric in principle. The preservation of humanity is the ultimate goal rather than the environment.

Proponents of Ecocentrism such as Aldo Leopold (1966) in his *Land Ethics* and Holmes Rolston III (Pojman, 2005), assert that there is a moral relationship between the environment and human beings which entails co-equal existence. The ecosystem should be preserved for the purpose of preserving the ecosystem itself. However, Antonio Oposa Jr. (2003), Tom Regan and Peter Singer (Pojman, 2005) respectively, focused on the environmental concepts of anthropocentrism,

biocentrism and sentiocentrism.

Considering the different environmental concepts, this study looks into the attitude of humanity towards the environment through some environmental organizations' vision and their consistency in the implementation of their programs and projects as bases of evaluation whether these organizations are anthropocentric or ecocentric.

In this research, the visions of environmental organizations are assessed and subjected to an outcome-based evaluation to determine the actual leaning of their vision. Information that is readily accessible online about these organizations is the basis for the evaluation.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Human beings have moral obligation towards nature. This obligation binds them to consider the environment as part of their moral responsibility.

This moral responsibility towards nature may be anthropocentric, sentiocentric, biocentric, or ecocentric (Pojman, 2005). Regardless of the differences on the center of the environmental philosophers' concerns, all agree that the environment has the right to flourish because it has either an intrinsic or instrumental value. Though environmental philosophers vary in their reasons for saving the environment, some want to act immediately in saving the world rather than dwell on the discussions of intrinsic value of the environment (Jamieson, 2008).

In particular, environmental ecocentrism considers human as just a plain citizen of the ecosystem and a member of a community composed of biotic and abiotic beings. For Aldo Leopold (1966), people should see and understand this system so that they would not become too absorbed in their own survival but also consider the other members of the community. They should see themselves in a community context so that they see the interrelationships that make the ecosystem healthy and preserved. There is, however, a problem because people hardly consider soil, water, plants, and animals as members of the community.

On the other hand, environmental anthropocentrism views that the environment is to be managed by people who think that they are the ones who morally count. This means that the environment is seen by humans as resources which they instinctively feel they are inherently entitled to steward. Humanity carries the innate responsibility to determine what is environmentally right or wrong and when to use these resources according to their needs.

Hall and Brown (2006) claimed that any conservation program needs to educate or disseminate to the people the necessary information of their program. This is because a lot of adverse impacts are products of ignorance

of the consequences of actions which greatly affect the wildlife. These impacts happened due to humanity's anthropocentric views and ways of seeing the environment.

The following principles are common anthropocentric practices:

First is the intergenerational responsibility which focuses on humanity taking care of the environment for the sake of the future generation. This is a form of altruism which adheres to the cause that if today's generation feels secure with the presence of ample supply of resources then, there is no reason that the future generation will be deprived of a good supply of resources (Oposa Jr., 2003)

This principle is at times termed as sustainable development of nature. This has been defined many times, one such definition of sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (worldbank.org).

Second is Ecotourism which sells to tourists the beauty of the land. The popular idea of ecotourism is well articulated in the words of the past environment Undersecretary Manuel Gerochi when he said, "in the mainstream conservation paradigm, it is said that we could benefit much in appreciation rather than the exploitation of our natural resources through ecotourism" (Burgonio, 2008). As a form of tourism, this entails calculative planning to sustain the desire of the tourists to enjoy the aesthetic capacity of the land, the uniqueness of the local culture and the non-intrusive facilities to preserve the integrity of the land. The good objectives of it are conservation and income for the maintenance of the place. Although it is actually hard to see the thin delineating line that separates the emphasis whether an ecotourism project in a place is really for environmental preservation or for income.

Ecotourism ideally offers attractions in the form of natural environment, learning, and sustainability. These are the three components that ecotourism planner should consider (Weaver, 2001). However, there is an imminent danger of the focus of beauty alone in tourism. This is because of the constant “changing perceptions of landscape” (Holden, 2008). What might be considered beautiful and exotic now may be considered as bland by the next generation. Therefore, the value of the environment is reduced to the preference of the people who want to behold according to what they see as beautiful and not according to the intrinsic value of the environment.

Aldo Leopold (1966) pinpoints the substitute which centers in economics in valuing the environment. This is seeing green money, prevalent among the people today even among conservationists or those who push for sustainable development. This mentality even invades among some who are pushing ecotourism. This way of thinking tends to preserve only those that are economically valuable and forgets those part of

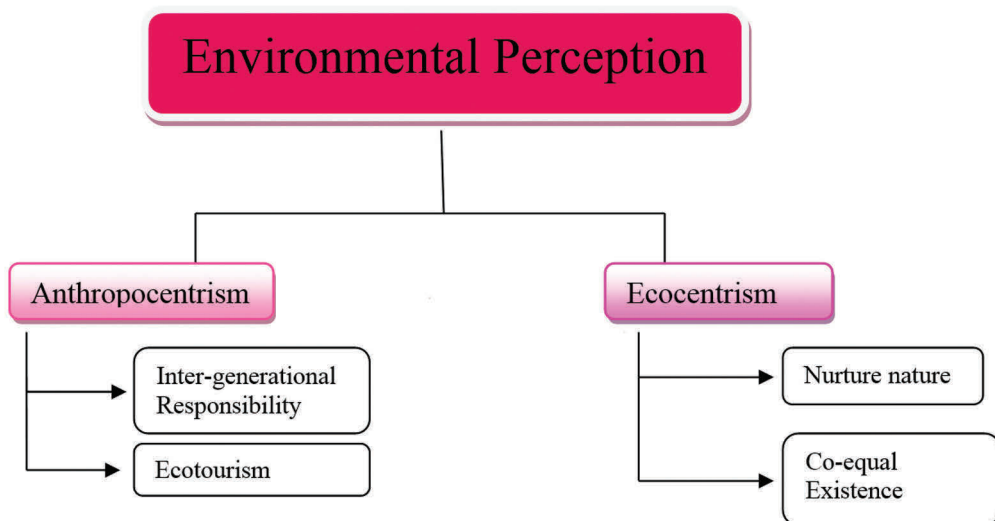
the ecosystem that do not bring in money and tourists.

Tourism may not immediately change the culture and the land. But it surely changes the face of the destinations. Tourism is too complex to be captured so that even sustainable tourism can actually be an oxymoron in different destinations (Wheeler, 2006).

Methodology

This study utilizes the Grounded Theory through Descriptive Textual or Discourse Analysis. The basis of evaluating the goals and objectives of the identified environmental organizations are either anthropocentrism or ecocentrism, which is done through the analysis of texts.

Identified and selected active environmental organizations with readily available and accessible online information are utilized. After which the organizational goals and objectives are checked whether these are reflective of either anthropocentrism or ecocentrism.



The researchers look into the use of words, texts or phrases incorporated in the environmental organizations' respective goals and objectives whether or not they manifest the ultimate consideration of either human-centered (anthropocentric) or the environment itself (ecocentric).

Presentation and Analysis of the Results

Table 1 evaluation of the organizational vision reveals the following: First is on the statement, **'for our children,'** established in the vision of Bantay Kalikasan denotes inter-generational responsibility which again is a concept of anthropocentrism since, it prioritizes sustainability for the next generation of humanity. Next, Haribon Foundation expressed, in its vision, **'for the people.'** This emphasizes the

claim that the preservation of nature is for man. Finally, part of the vision of the Foundation for the Philippine Environment **enabling civil society and other stakeholders** is people empowerment. It follows that the purpose of nature conservation boils down to self-preservation. It is of major consideration as displayed by the result of the tabular presentation that all relevant environmental thrusts of the three organizations are geared toward the ultimate promotion of the welfare of the human being, therefore, anthropocentric. The phrases "for our children," "for the people," and "enabling civil society and other stakeholders," are clear manifestation of the human-centeredness of the vision of the respective environmental organizations.

Table 1. Evaluation of Vision

Organization	Vision	Anthropocentrism (An)	Ecocentrism (Ec)
BANTAY KALIKASAN	A sustainable natural environment for our children	✓	
Haribon Foundation	Takes the lead in caring for nature with people – for the people.	✓	
Foundation for the Philippine Environment	FPE envisions itself as a dynamic, relevant, proactive and growing organization enabling civil society and other stakeholders towards effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. FPE envisions communities caring responsibly and living fully in harmony with their environment.	✓	

Table 2. Activities to Create Environmental Change (Activities)

Organization	Program	An	Ec
BANTAY KALIKASAN	Grassroots Economic Environmental Initiative (GREEN Initiative) Ecotourism	✓ ✓	
Haribon Foundation	Rainforest Organizations and Advocates to 2020 (ROAD to 2020) Environmental Conservation Training	✓ ✓	
Foundation for the Philippine Environment	<u>Mainstreaming Indigenous People's Participation in Environmental Governance (MIPPEG)</u> <u>Post-Yolanda Environmental Rehabilitation Project</u>	✓ ✓	

The word **grassroots** refers to the simplest unit of any system. It is a word that implies the origin of things. In the aspect of human existence, the individual is the originator of circumstantial realities. It is in him where things start. Grassroots, therefore, refers to the individual, hence, anthropocentric. **Ecotourism** too is anthropocentric since the primary reason for ecotourism projects is not solely to preserve the environment but to preserve the environment for tourists to appreciate it and the community in the sites to economically benefit from tourism. The use of the words **advocates, trainings,**

people's participation and rehabilitation projects, these all connote anthropocentrism since they are human activities.

As reflected in Table 3, for the materials and resources, words/phrases like, **National Government, members of the community, signature campaign, trainings, European Union** and **partners** which are all cognizant of the primary involvement of the human being are used. **Affects humanity,** as also one of the phrases used in Table 3 is directly invoking the role of man. All of which manifest anthropocentrism

Table 4. The Most Immediate Results of the Activities (Outputs)

Organization	Program	Result of the Activities	An	Ec
BANTAY KALIKASAN	GRassroots Economic Environmental Initiative (GREEN Initiative)	- Collaboration with national government, media, and the academe	✓	
	Ecotourism	- Eighteen (18) Bantay Kalikasan Projects were identified	✓	
Haribon Foundation	Rainforest Organizations and Advocates to 2020 (ROAD to 2020)	- Renewed campaign towards restoration of at least one million hectares of rainforest by 2020 for the benefit of the people	✓	
	Environmental Conservation Training	- people empowerment through environmental awareness	✓	
Foundation for the Philippine Environment	<u>Mainstreaming Indigenous People's Participation in Environmental Governance (MIPPEG)</u>	- Infused awareness in Indigenous Peoples' (IP) assertion of rights, self-governance and management of natural resources	✓	
	<u>Post-Yolanda Environmental Rehabilitation Project</u>	- Mobilization of rehabilitation and restoration efforts that affect the ecosystems and resource-based livelihood	✓	

Table 4 contains the words **collaboration** and **projects**. **Collaboration** referred to different institutions composed of people and designed for the people in the formulation and execution of **projects**. The phrases, **benefit of the people**, **people empowerment**, **indigenous peoples** are clearly human-centered. The phrase, **resource-based livelihoods** which is intended to benefit humanity is also anthropocentric.

Table 5, which is about the outcomes of the programs, shows the use of phrases, **commits to**, **will handle the**, **planting the idea in the hearts and minds of the Filipinos**, **empowering people and skills enhancement**. The context for which these phrases are used directly requires man as the primary mover and the reason for the programs' implementation. This indicates anthropocentrism.

Table 5. The Actual Benefits/ Impacts/ Changes for Participants (Outcomes)

Organization	Program	Impact to Participants	An
BANTAY KALIKASAN	<p>GRassroots Economic Environmental Initiative (GREEN Initiative)</p> <p>Ecotourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) commits to the necessary infrastructure needed to protect the project sites - Department of Tourism (DOT) commits to facilitate the investment of tourism infrastructure and complimentary facilities through the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) - Department of Agriculture (DA) commits to provide the agricultural infrastructure needed - Ateneo de Manila University will handle the academic community to get baseline data, monitor and evaluate the projects - Planting the idea in the hearts and minds of Filipinos that taking care of the environment is the path to quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Haribon Foundation	<p>Rainforest Organizations and Advocates to 2020 (ROAD to 2020)</p> <p>Environmental Conservation Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently working with different clusters throughout the country in restoring rainforests - Empowering people through different trainings on environmental protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓
Foundation for the Philippine Environment	<p><u>Mainstreaming Indigenous People's Participation in Environmental Governance (MIPPEG)</u></p> <p><u>Post-Yolanda Environmental Rehabilitation Project</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IP representation in policy making bodies in the management of resources - Skills enhancement on ecosystem restoration and for alternative means of livelihood — with the inclusion of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓

Table 6. The Long-Term Change Hoped that the Project Will Help Create (Impacts)

Organization	Program	Long-Term Change Hoped	An	Ec
BANTAY KALIKASAN	Grassroots Economic Environmental Initiative (GREEN Initiative) Ecotourism	-protecting Philippine biodiversity and eradicating poverty - Projects are meant to plant ideas in the hearts and minds of the Filipinos for improved quality of life	✓ ✓	
Haribon Foundation	Rainforest Organizations and Advocates to 2020 (ROAD to 2020) Environmental Conservation Training	- Reforestation instead of merely reforestation - Sustainability on environmental conservation by empowering the people	 ✓	✓
Foundation for the Philippine Environment	<u>Mainstreaming Indigenous People's Participation in Environmental Governance (MIPPEG)</u> <u>Post-Yolanda Environmental Rehabilitation Project</u>	- Legitimate acknowledgment and exercise of IP representation and self-determination - Establishment of systems and networks of partnerships intended for building the sites' capacity and resilience against future extreme weather hazards resulting from climate change.	✓ ✓	

Table 6 reveals the use of the phrase **eradicating poverty** which means an **improved quality of life** that is another phrase in the table that can be addressed by another phrase **people empowerment**. To be empowered is to make personal choices or independent decisions

which is the exercise of the human's right to **self-determination**, another phrase found in the table. But sometimes, the person needs to create **networks** and **establish partnerships** with other people to optimize participation and the success of program implementation. The foregoing analysis

goes back to the people as the main instrument and goal of these activities, therefore, anthropocentric.

Interpretation

In the words of Protagoras, a sophist of Abdera, 'man is the measure of all things' (www.ancient.eu.com) that even environmental movements in which the environment is supposedly the main concern would still go back to man as the top consideration. This is understood as environmental anthropocentrism. On the other hand, ecocentrism considers man as just a plain citizen of the ecosystem just as like all the biotic and abiotic members of the ecosystem working together. Humans as plain members of the land are not the only beings to be solely considered. The tables above show that the very good intention of the environmental organizations always put importance on the role of the people and their welfare. Leopold (1966) who criticized environmental anthropocentrism has shown hope when he commented that the presence of green movements, though anthropocentric in their characteristics, is already a beginning of the evolving consciousness of people towards ecocentrism. The acknowledgement of anthropocentrism in the result of this study is not a total subjection of the prevalence of the theory itself. Environmental anthropocentrism may serve as springboard toward ecocentrism which tries to understand and consider the environment and all beings in it in their inherent value. The researchers' objective is simply to prove that environmental anthropocentrism exists and is prevalent today even among green movements.

Findings

1. Bantay Kalikasan as demonstrated in the tabular presentation is human-centered in the formulation and execution of its vision. The utilization of the evaluation model used by

the Sierra Club: Outcomes-Based Evaluative Measure further reveals human ended results.

2. Majority of the programs of Haribon are demonstrations of its human-centered activities. Human ended results are also further revealed in the utilization of the same aforementioned evaluation model.
3. Foundation for the Philippine Environment showed the same result as indicated in the assessment of the different programs still with the use of similar evaluative model.

Conclusion

The selected environmental organizations apply anthropocentric theory not only in the guidelines of their operations stipulated in their corresponding organizational vision but also in their actual practices as demonstrated in the result of evaluating their programs and projects. The presence of human-designed, human-participated and human-ended activities and initiatives of the identified environmental organizations affirmed and confirmed the prevalence of anthropocentrism.

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