

IC - (21103) - AFFECTIVE NATURE CONNECTION AND TRANSCENDENTAL VALUES SHAPE CONSERVATION ATTITUDES AMONG AMAZONIAN COLONIST FARMERS

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Background and objectives

The conservation of tropical forests is a key ingredient of climate policy, but these remain globally threatened by deforestation, defaunation, and forest degradation. Much of this damage occurs on private, family-run farms in places like the Amazon. One form of collective action in this setting is to support pro-conservation policies that can effectively help local farmers switch to more profitable and ecologically sustainable practices are urgently needed.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

In a field-based survey among farmers living at a major deforestation frontier in the Brazilian Amazon, we evaluate how two kinds of deep inner motivations— nature connection and transcendental values – influence pro-conservation attitudes among farmers living along a major deforestation frontier, relative to more external factors.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Our findings 1) support the importance of inner motivations for shaping conservation attitudes, 2) show that internal motivations to protect nature can be common in low-income rural areas in the Global South, and 3) demonstrate that farmers' internal motivations and attitudes generally support nature protection and could be leveraged for greater conservation on farms, if support was provided to overcome the external barriers in place.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Whilst much research has been devoted to understanding the structural barriers to forest conservation, comparatively little attention has been paid to farmers and their 'inner worlds' – the meanings, motivations, identities, psychological relationships etc – and their role in shaping conservation outcomes. The conventional wisdom holds that people in societies undergoing development and industrialisation prioritise materialistic values and rarely care about nature beyond utilitarian reasons, but empirical data on tropical farmers' motivations remains scarce.

We argue that forest conservation policy should strategically focus on providing enabling external conditions for the adoption of sustainable practices by tropical farmers and on the cultivation of 'inner world' qualities supportive of conservation goals.

Palavras-chave : Collective action, conservation, climate change, policy support, values, nature connection