

Globalizing biodiversity: representation, order, and the politics of knowledge

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Centralized states and science have something important in common: they both require order to function. This is one reason why, in spite of the many complaints about the supposed gap between science and policy, they actually get along very well in many areas. One of these areas is biodiversity conservation. Here, various elaborate classification systems function as technologies of order, making possible the political treatment of specific, scientifically sanctioned, conservation priorities and preferences. In this talk, I will draw on examples in Ecosystem Services literature and on the Global Assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services, which is currently being developed under the auspices of IPBES (the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services) to illustrate how biodiversity knowledge and global biodiversity governance are made to align in practice. Specifically, I will demonstrate what orderings are at work to enable the global representation of biodiversity and how, at the same time, these orderings are continuously tweaked and resisted. I will conclude by discussing these simultaneous practices of ordering, tweaking, and resisting as sites where the politics of biodiversity knowledge plays out and, consequently, also as the sites where the democratization of biodiversity knowledge may take shape.