

## **Values: Dollars, trees or feelings?**

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The importance of values to tourism is but one aspect of the importance of values in human interactions with the natural environment and even more broadly to the human condition. However, attempts to understand the impact of values on behaviour requires a priori an understanding of what values are. This paper offers some insight into the language-in-use phenomenon pertaining to values within the context of a World Heritage Area that is a tourist draw card. Values are variously considered by economists as quantifiable monetary exchange rates (e.g. dollars) or as natural capital (Azqueta & Sotelsek, 2007), by some environmental scientists and forest managers as physically quantifiable environmental attributes and processes (e.g. trees, ecosystems) (Bengston, Webb, & Fan, 2004; Steinhoff, 1980), and by many social scientists as humans' affective response to their environment (e.g. feelings). In this sense, values are considered as qualitatively foundational to human attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Kellert, 1993; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Schwartz, 1994). However, values are also quantifiably foundational to the importance and ultimate World Heritage listing of areas that are internationally important for their unique flora and fauna among other attributes. World Heritage Areas – as outstanding and universally valuable examples of natural and cultural heritage – attract scientific, community and tourism interest. In addition, they are important as natural and aesthetic resources that are also of cultural and spiritual significance, specifically for people indigenous to the regions adjacent to or within a World Heritage Area and more generally to tourists and other visitors.

In discussions about protecting these 'outstanding universal values' it is not always clear whether the values exist within the environment or within human appreciation of the environment, and neither is this clarified in the original 'Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage' (UNESCO, 1972). In the Convention document, all references are to cultural and natural heritage *of outstanding universal value*. This notion of *value* leads to what is perhaps an erroneous assumption that for something to *have* value it must *be* valued. Such a notion directly implicates human valuation, which can range from market price to human affection to a Kantian (1947) perspective of 'dignity' – beyond market price or affective price. Such value does not have worth that is relative to any other, and is not measured by human want, need or preference, but is worthy unto itself.

In the decades subsequent to the UNESCO decision concerning world heritage, the notion of *value* has metamorphosed into *values*, as noun plural. What appears on a surface level as a subtle difference has implications at deeper levels of understanding and behaviour. Reference to the protection of *outstanding universal values* no longer directly implicates valuation, but instead transfers reference away from internalised human valuations to the external environment in features of cultural and natural heritage. These include monuments, buildings, man-made sites, natural features, geological and physiological formations, and sites of natural beauty. In this sense, values are not present as human feelings or beliefs, but as rocks, trees and unobstructed scenic vistas. The role of humans thus changes from evaluators to protectors and guardians of a shared heritage. Nevertheless, discussions of values very frequently imply human affective response to an environment, and a difference in focus between human and environment can lead to behavioural differences in attitudes to the environment and the performance of pro-environmental behaviours (Schultz, 2001; Schultz & Zelezny, 2003; Stern & Dietz, 1994).

Any understanding of the role of values in determining specific practices must encompass the range of potential interpretations available to stakeholders, together with the potential for misunderstandings. Language has a profound effect on the way individuals view the world and on how they construct reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Carolan, 2006). Language not only reflects the perceived nature of reality but also influences and directs further interpretation and understanding (Campagna & Fernandez, 2007). For instance, Campagna and Fernandez found that organisational mission statements can rhetorically legitimise political and social agendas serving human interests rather than truthfully reflect aesthetic, cultural or spiritual orientations towards conservation. Meanings of many important and foundational concepts and constructs, such as 'values', can be broadly agreed upon but still contested according to competing theoretical underpinnings. Moreover, constructs such as 'values' that reach across two or more disciplines can become overused and there is potential for such words to lose their impact and ultimate meaningfulness within and between each of the disciplines (Callicott, Crowder, & Mumford, 1999), and in public use and understanding (Watson, 2003).

The management of environmental resources including World Heritage Areas that are important to tourism involves intellectual and organisational interchanges among social scientists, environmental scientists, managers and economists, along with interested members of the public and environmental activists (among many other communication interchanges). Meanings, interpretations, and policy implementations are constantly influenced by the language in use in the construction of the various social representations of these interest groups (Carolan, 2006). To understand the various meanings and

interpretations, a first step is to descriptively explore this language-in-use phenomenon. An effective way to study language in use is to explore existing discourse in the form of publicly available documents, to mine the distributional information for patterns of use and co-occurrences of words and phrases (Lebart, Salem, & Berry, 1998).