

The Role of the Moral Economy in 21st Century Strategies for Community-based Resource Management

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A Mi'kmaq honour song should introduce these reflections. Please imagine one...

These reflections are about the power of moral clarity and moral outrage to mobilize support for community-based management.

Why I started thinking recently about the moral economy

- **Large BC sawmills closed 2007-2009**
- **Small owner-operated sawmills kept people working and competed on world markets for higher value products. Had c. 25% of the tenure while providing more than 50% of the jobs.**
- ***Government policy statements about “healthy communities” & “value-added opportunities” not reflected in tenure allocations or ability to access timber on the open market.***

....Why I started thinking about the moral economy

British Columbia sport fishermen claimed they should get a greater share of halibut, because the commercial halibut fishery's ITQ system is exploitative.

- If government were to respond to concerns of sport fishermen that ITQs are immoral, they would have to change the system!***

Some violated social contracts in BC

- In forestry, major corporations got access to public timber ***in exchange for building a mill and creating sustainable employment in logging and milling for forest-dependent communities.***
- In fisheries, Europeans were given fishing licences ***in exchange for moving to rural areas;*** aboriginal communities were promised permanent fishing access ***in exchange for accepting small reserves.***

Role of public morality in unholding the social contract?

- **These examples show a violation of the social contract between government and resource-dependent communities.**
- **Government lip service to these values reveals that government is aware that there are still strong public values about the well-being of communities and the welfare of small-scale enterprises.**
- **Public and government need to be reminded!**

moral economy includes:

- ***Activities which serve the public good of getting most value, employment, well-being***
- ***not necessarily efficient***

e.g. Community supported fisheries, eco-labelling, allocation of resources to produce greatest public benefit: small-scale fisheries and community forests

The challenge for communities: how to **expand the moral economy**

- Katherine Browne (2009): all capitalist economies have a moral sphere, which can **expand under certain conditions.**
- Communities could expand moral sphere by **showing how community-based management contributes to economic and social welfare**

Moral sphere expands when.....

- ***Amartya Sen (1999)***: moral principles will remain absent from neo-liberal economics unless we deliberately **shift the focus from measures of income growth to measures of human capabilities and freedoms.**
- ***Kwame Appiah (2010) The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen***: public opinion against immoral practices such as slavery, dueling, footbinding, **gain traction only when certain conditions exist.**

Conditions for changing honor code?

When code no longer provides something it had in past. Honor is successfully recruited to the side of opposition to the practice. Lose more respect by doing it than by not doing it.

What about:

Community-based economies & management systems can be more successful at adapting to climate change and world economic recession

Moral sphere varies widely by country

Wilkinson & Pickett (2009): huge differences in economic equality within different developed countries. **More equal countries have far lower rates of infant mortality, mental illness, teenage pregnancy, homicide, obesity, imprisonment, etc.**

The moral sphere is larger in more economically equal countries

Key role of social capital (trust)

More trust (social capital) in more equal societies. Trust = important marker of ways in which greater material equality can help create cohesive, cooperative community.

Trust = single biggest factor in well-being (Helliwell 2006).

Vs. absence of trust

Inequality increases evaluation anxiety. In US, rise in anxiety accompanying rise in insecure narcissism. By 2006, 2/3rd of college student scored above average in this. Cortisol levels rise when people are exposed to threats to their self-esteem or social status (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009).

Community-based NRM counteracts this, high levels of trust necessarily produced.

The high social capital community

Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* finding about Italian community in Pennsylvania: why did they have best health, lowest disease rates?

- *social inclusion, no shaming

- *a place for everyone, connection

- *shared values

- *taking care of others: what communities do!

Importance of well-being

- **Importance of and need for policies which promote well-being of communities and individuals using fish and forests. What does the literature tell us about what needs to happen to create well-being?**

Social determinants of health and well-being

- Maritime anthropology studies of fishermen's job satisfaction and well-being over 30 years:
- Fishermen report well-being far above that of occupations which are more economically lucrative. **Small-scale fishermen's well-being is historically high despite relatively low incomes.** (exception: when unfairly blamed for salmon decline in Oregon)

Aboriginal health & well-being

- Australia: *Campbell et al. (2011)*. Land management participants much less likely to have diabetes, renal disease, hypertension.
- Result: **Expected annual net savings in primary health care = \$4.08 million over 25 years just for chronic diseases.**

How NRM can achieve well-being

- *Campbell et al. (2011)* Engagement with country = source of social cohesion//group activities.

How NRM can achieve well-being

- *Allison and Ellis (2001)*: livelihoods approach. Demonstrates adaptive response of small-scale fisheries to resource fluctuation and other uncertainties.
- Allison and Ellis (2001): Ability of rural families to deal with shocks: different patterns of asset holding, e.g. small mill subsidizes mill with farm
- Central role of indigenous NRM in preserving biodiversity and economic productivity.

Summary: some moral economy arguments for greater role of community-based NRM

- Raise awareness of what is being lost by societies which increase the anxiety of citizens; show how gated communities are bad for the whole society
- ***Document how community-based NRM creates high social capital, enables many sorts of cooperation to be built which saves transaction costs and enables business and social life to flourish.***

....moral economy arguments for greater role of community-based NRM

- **Document increased health risks of societies with low social capital.**
- ***Document how community-based NRM increases the health and well-being of citizens, saves money, benefits whole society***

....moral economy arguments for greater role of community-based NRM

- Raise awareness of vulnerability to climate change and recession.
- ***Show how community based economies & management systems can be more successful at adapting to climate change and world economic recession***
- Ability of rural families to deal with shocks: different patterns of asset holding

....moral economy arguments for
greater role of community-based NRM

- Raise awareness of loss of biodiversity
- ***Central role of indigenous NRM in preserving bio-diversity and economic productivity***

Possible discussion?

- **What are examples of the moral economy at work in your community?**
- **How can it be expanded?**
- **How does it resonate with broader public values?**
- **How can it be communicated more broadly to natural allies and to the general public?**