

## **Natural, Ecological, and Cultural Diversity for Nepal's Prosperity<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is about Natural-Ecological-Cultural Diversity and its role for the prosperity of Nepal. The phrase “Natural-Ecological-Cultural Diversity” refers to the interconnectedness of three key aspects of diversity; natural, ecological and cultural. The natural diversity includes a variety of landscapes, ecosystems, and physical environments, such as mountains, rivers, forests, and oceans; ecological diversity includes a range of species, habitats, and ecological systems that exist within a given region, including biodiversity and the relationships between living organisms, and cultural diversity includes the richness of human traditions, languages, beliefs, practices, and ways of life that are shaped by and adapted to natural and ecological surroundings.*

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*Nepal's rich cultural heritage, diverse ecosystems, and abundant natural resources form the foundation for sustainable national development. This paper explores the interconnected relationship between natural, ecological, and cultural diversity, emphasizing how these elements serve as invaluable resources for Nepal's prosperity. The country's unique geographical landscape, ranging from the Himalayas to the Tarai, fosters biodiversity that supports both traditional livelihoods and modern economic opportunities. Likewise, Nepal's cultural diversity, shaped by indigenous knowledge systems, festivals, and heritage sites, contributes to national identity and global recognition. By integrating sustainable policies that protect the environment and promote cultural heritage, Nepal can utilize these resources to drive economic growth, tourism, and social well-being. This paper highlights the need for a balanced approach that values both conservation and development, ensuring that Nepal's natural and cultural wealth continues to benefit future generations.*

**Keywords:** Natural, ecological, cultural, diversity, prosperity

## 1. Introduction

The integration of scientific disciplines, and of science and society at large, is a widely accepted goal of sustainability science (Jerneck et al. 2011). The reason is simple: Sustainability problems are often regarded as wicked, crosscutting problems that require those who address them to understand the limitations of, and to some extent overcome, the boundaries of individual disciplines (Fischhoff, 2016 as cited in Persson, Hornborg, Olsson, & Thorén, 2018). This indicates that integration of disciplines is now necessary to understand any aspect of society and culture at present.

The notion of integration is not particularly clear (e.g., O'Rourke et al. 2016). We believe it is helpful to distinguish between two approaches to interdisciplinary integration, approaches we label “unificationism” and “pluralism.” The unity of science, the role of unification, and the role of plurality and pluralism are longstanding and complex issues in the philosophy of science (see, e.g., Cat 2017 as cited in Persson, Hornborg, Olsson, & Thorén, 2018).

All countries and people of the world are fundamentally composed of three major elements: nature, ecology, and culture. These elements are interconnected, shaping identities and playing a vital role in sustaining human civilization. Based on the idea of Pretty et al. (2009) these three concepts are defined as follows:

1. **Nature** – The world first emerged as a natural creation, consisting of land, environment, and physical landscapes.
2. **Ecology** – Through biological evolution, life developed, leading to the emergence of human beings. People began to inhabit the land, interacting with ecosystems.
3. **Culture** – As humans adapted to their ecological surroundings, they developed diverse cultural practices, behaviors, and social structures.

The coexistence of these three fundamental elements is essential for the existence of human society. Together, they illustrate the deep interconnection between nature, ecosystems, and human cultures, demonstrating how they influence and sustain one another. For example, indigenous communities often develop unique cultural traditions shaped by the specific ecological

environments they inhabit. Similarly, protecting biodiversity also plays a role in preserving cultural heritage.

## **2. Cultural Diversity and Identity**

Human societies are characterized by cultural diversity, which manifests in various forms, including language, traditions, customs, and historical influences. This diversity fosters unity and identity while reflecting deep-rooted traditions such as those originating from their own specific nature; geography, ecology-environment, and culture-human behavior. For Hindus, for example Indus Valley Civilization and the development of Hindu religious practices, Buddha's enlightenment and Buddhist religious practice, Islam from Muhammad in Arab Peninsula and Islamic religious practice, Jesus in Judea and Christian religious practices, and so on practiced all over the world including in the context of Nepal. Local knowledge bases give rise to socially embedded norms and institutions (Feit 1988; Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Rudd et al. 2003; Smith et al. 2007 as cited in Pretty et al., 2009) and the cultural expressions are shaped by geography and history, including:

- Languages and cultural identities that vary across regions.
- Traditional styles, religious beliefs, and food habits influenced by geography and local resources.
- Festivals, music, dance, and artistic expressions reflecting historical and spiritual heritage.
- Sacred and historical sites such as Pashupatinath Temple, Lumbini (the birthplace of Gautam Buddha), and Janakpur (linked to Janak and Sita) that serve as cultural landmarks.

From the mountains to the hills and the Tarai plains, rural and urban communities, and so on continue to adapt to their environments, creating a rich cultural mosaic that defines human civilization.

Many authors talk about the relationship between nature and culture on the one hand and culture and biology on the other. This paper likes to combine them connecting all these three concepts; nature, biology, and culture, termed as nature-biological-cultural integration. As highlighted by Persson, Hornborg, Olsson, & Thorén (2018, p. 14) interdisciplinary research within the field of sustainability studies often faces incompatible ontological assumptions deriving from natural and social sciences. The importance of this fact is often underrated and sometimes leads to the wrong strategies. We distinguish between two broad approaches in interdisciplinarity: unificationism and pluralism. Unificationism seeks unification and perceives disciplinary boundaries as conventional, representing no long-term obstacle to progress, whereas pluralism emphasizes more ephemeral and transient interdisciplinary connections and underscores the autonomy of the disciplines with respect to one another.

### **3. Synthesis of the Concepts: Nature-Culture and Biology-Culture**

There are different writings on how culture is originated and developed in human societies. Alan H. Goodman's (2007) in an article entitled *Bringing Culture into Human Biology and Biology Back into Anthropology* challenges the traditional separation of biology and culture in anthropology. He argues for a more integrated, dialectical approach that recognizes the dynamic and site-specific nature of human biology. Goodman (2007) introduces the concept of “cultural–biologicals” to explain how biological processes are shaped by

social, political, and ecological factors. Goodman (2007) identifies two key mechanisms linking culture and biology:

1. Cultural interpretations of biological variables – how societies perceive and interpret biological traits can, in turn, influence biological outcomes.
2. Social stratification's biological effects – systems of inequality (such as racism, sexism, and class divisions) can directly affect human biology by shaping health, nutrition, and stress responses.

By emphasizing that biology is not static but constantly shaped by its environment, Goodman (2007) calls for anthropology to adopt a more nuanced, site-specific, and political-economic perspective on human biology. This approach has implications not only for anthropology but also for broader understandings of health, biology, and social justice. There are also some scholars who talk about the relationship between nature and culture.

Georges Chapouthier (2018), in an article entitled *The Mosaic Theory of Natural Complexity: A Scientific and Philosophical Approach*, explores the unique nature of human culture as a non-genetic, cumulative system of knowledge transfer. He defines culture as a set of behavioral traits passed on through imitation and teaching rather than genetic inheritance. A key distinguishing feature of human culture is its cumulative nature, allowing each generation to build upon the knowledge of previous ones, leading to exponential intellectual and technological progress.

While some animals exhibit cultural transmission, it is vastly limited compared to humans. Chapouthier (2018) emphasizes that history plays a crucial role in human knowledge expansion, as seen in advancements like computers and

modern medicine, which were impossible for early *Homo sapiens sapiens* despite their similar cognitive capacities. Additionally, the case of feral children—who fail to develop language or complex cultural traits when raised outside human society—demonstrates the essential role of cultural and social environments in shaping human intelligence and behavior.

#### **4. Nature, Ecology and Culture**

The essence of Chapouthier's (2018) argument is that human culture has historically been perceived as opposed to nature. From prehistoric times, humans have used cultural tools to manipulate and control their environment, reinforcing the idea that survival required a struggle against nature. This opposition extended to the perception of human identity, where cultural aspects were seen as uniquely human, while natural traits (such as biological needs) were associated with animalistic or bestial qualities. Thus, humans were viewed as conquerors of nature—both external (plants, animals, and landscapes) and internal (their own biological instincts).

In sociology, culture is defined as the shared beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and material objects that characterize a group or society. It includes both tangible elements (such as art, tools, and buildings) and intangible elements (such as language, traditions, and social practices). Culture is learned, transmitted across generations, and shapes individuals' worldviews and interactions. As mentioned in Narain (1976), Lian and Oneal (1997), Markus (n.d.). And Mm (2019) key aspects of culture from sociological and other perspective include:

1. **Material Culture:** Physical objects created by a society (e.g., architecture, clothing, technology).

2. Non-Material Culture: Ideas, beliefs, norms, values, and symbols that shape social life.
3. Norms: Social rules that govern behavior (folkways, mores, and laws).
4. Values: Shared beliefs about what is desirable or important.
5. Symbols and Language: Systems of meaning that enable communication and social cohesion.

Sociologists see culture as dynamic and evolving, influenced by historical, economic, and social contexts. It plays a key role in shaping individual identities and societal structures.

Since social context and social structure differs across the society's culture has to be discussed in a particular socio-historical context. In this regard, Go (2013, p. 30) writes, "Postcolonial theory's emphasis upon culture, knowledge, and representation partially explains postcolonial theory's growth within the humanities. If imperialism is also about culture, then cultural expertise is necessary for critiquing it". It also puts postcolonial theory in dialogue with the poststructuralist and postmodern turns. Said's Orientalism famously owes its origins to Foucault's theory of discourse and power/knowledge. Other sectors of postcolonial studies share the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment and its grand narratives, totalizing schémas, and identitarian thinking (Go, 2013, p. 30).

As mentioned by Slattery (2003) in *Key Ideas in Sociology*, many sociologists (Taylor, 1871; Durkheim, 1858; Weber, 1864, Geertz, 1926) have defined culture in different ways, depending on their theoretical perspectives. Here are some key sociologists and their definitions of culture:



1. Edward B. Tylor (1871): An English (British) anthropologist rather than a sociologist, but his definition is foundational: "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."
2. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917): French sociologist, saw culture as a set of shared beliefs and values that create social cohesion. He emphasized the role of collective consciousness in maintaining societal order.
3. Max Weber (1864-1920): German sociologist, defined culture as a system of meanings that shape human behavior. He linked culture to values, beliefs, and ideas, particularly in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.
4. Clifford Geertz (1926-2006): An American anthropologist who influenced sociology, he defined culture as:  
  
"A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."
5. Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002): French sociologist and public intellectual, introduced the concept of *cultural capital*, arguing that culture is a resource that helps maintain social inequality by being unequally distributed among social classes.
6. Raymond Williams (1921-1988): Socialist writer, defined culture broadly as "a whole way of life," including both material and symbolic elements.

These scholars emphasize on the social construction of culture. Culture gradually evolves as human society evolves. All human society therefore develop their culture themselves. When different societies come together to make a nation and the shared culture of all nations would make national culture. In the context of modern world, the concept of national culture has become an important issue. All the countries in the world are claiming about their own distinct culture as national culture. It would therefore be good to discuss about the concept of national culture.

## **5. National Culture**

National culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, traditions, behaviors, and social norms that characterize the people of a specific nation. It shapes their collective identity and influences their way of life, decision-making, and interactions within society. On the basis of Slattery (2003) and other scholars key elements of national culture are:

1. **Values and Beliefs:** The core principles that guide behavior (e.g., individualism in the U.S., collectivism in Japan).
2. **Language and Communication:** The primary language(s) spoken and cultural communication styles.
3. **Traditions and Customs:** Celebrations, rituals, and practices unique to a nation (e.g., Thanksgiving in the U.S., Diwali in India).
4. **Religion and Spirituality:** The dominant religious beliefs or secular ideologies shaping society.
5. **Social Norms and Ethics:** Accepted behaviors, etiquette (customary code of polite behavior), and moral standards.

6. Art and Literature: Cultural expressions through music, dance, literature, cinema, and fashion.
7. Food and Cuisine: Traditional dishes and eating habits that reflect national identity.
8. History and Heritage: The historical events, heroes, and symbols that define national pride.

Key elements of national culture, thus, ranges from values and beliefs to food and cuisine which differ from one society to another and one country to another. On the basis of national culture any country claims its national identity. There are different dimensions of national culture which is discussed by various scholars including Hofstede. It would be useful to discuss Geert Hofstede's description of national culture dimensions. Geert Hofstede (1928-2020) was a Dutch social psychologist, who did a pioneering study of cultures across modern nations. Gert Jan Hofstede (1956), Dutch population biologist and professor of Artificial Sociality, was doing agent-based social simulation. The author was interested in the interplay of the contrasting forces of cultural evolution, societal change and cultural stability.

Geert Hofstede (2015), a Dutch social psychologist, identified six cultural dimensions to compare national cultures: He mentions

**1. Power Distance:** Acceptance of hierarchical structures; extent to which less power experience; relationship between members; children-parents; large power distance and small power distance; superior-inferior; power first and good/evil comes at the last; Power Distance Index: PDI (0-100),

**2. Uncertainty Avoidance:** Comfort with ambiguity and risk-taking,

**3. Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Focus on personal vs. group interests,

**4. Masculinity vs. Femininity:** Emphasis on competition vs. cooperation,

**5. Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation:** Focus on future planning vs. traditions, and

**6. Indulgence vs. Restraint:** Attitudes toward leisure and gratification as the six key dimensions of national culture. National culture, as it has different dimension, has important role in society and country. It would be therefore important to discuss why national culture matters.

National culture matters because it has multiple roles in society and nation. The key role of national culture begins from Social Cohesion that strengthens unity and a sense of belonging followed by Economic Impact that influences business practices, work ethics, and innovation. As the power of the state, it plays role as political influence that shapes governance, policies, and international relations. One of the important roles of national culture is Cultural Diplomacy that enhances a country's global influence through arts, language, and traditions. Thus, national culture has multifaceted importance in enhancing state capability.

In this broader context of the importance of national culture this paper is developed focusing on diversity in natural, ecological and cultural dimensions of the human society and the world.

## **6. Objectives**

The primary objective of this paper is to explore how Nepal's natural, ecological, and cultural diversity can be utilized as a resource for sustainable national prosperity. Specifically, this paper aims to:

- a. Analyze the interconnections between natural, ecological, and cultural diversity – examine how Nepal’s geographical and ecological diversity shapes its cultural heritage and traditions.
- b. Assess the socioeconomic value of cultural and ecological resources – investigate how cultural heritage, biodiversity, and natural landscapes contribute to Nepal’s economy through sectors like tourism, agriculture, and local industries.
- c. Evaluate best practices and case studies – study successful examples from Nepal and other countries where natural and cultural resources have been effectively managed for economic growth and sustainability.
- d. Discuss sustainable strategies for prosperity – propose policies and development models that balance conservation with economic benefits, ensuring long-term prosperity for Nepal.

## **7. Methodology**

For the purpose of this paper on "National Culture as a Resource: Natural, Ecological, and Cultural Diversity for Nepal’s Prosperity," a mixed-methods approach was found to be most appropriate. It is because it allows for a comprehensive analysis of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of nature, ecology and culture. Here are some of the key methodological justifications.

### **Research Design**

The research design developed for this paper was qualitative approach which gathered qualitative data-qualitative content (e.g., texts, case studies) to provides a holistic understanding of the integrated issue natural, ecological and cultural diversity. Some relevant numeric data on natural diversity, ecological diversity and cultural diversity are also included in the analysis.

### **Data Collection Methods**

- Literature review: studied academic articles, government reports, and historical records related to Nepal's natural, ecological, and cultural diversity based on relevant literature (secondary texts).
- Case studies: analyzed successful models where Nepal's cultural and ecological diversity has contributed to prosperity (e.g., eco-tourism, heritage conservation projects) based on data available from secondary sources (from online).

### **Data Analysis:**

- Thematic analysis (for qualitative data): identified patterns in cultural narratives, ecological knowledge, and stakeholder perspectives as reflected in secondary texts.
- Descriptive (for quantitative data): measured economic contributions, trends in tourism, and environmental sustainability indices based on available data.
- Comparative analysis: compared Nepal's approach with similar countries that have successfully leveraged cultural and ecological diversity for development based on secondary data.

## **8. The Emergence of New Sub-Disciplines**

In the process of studying nature-culture and biology-culture relationship there are various explanations. The essence of Pretty et al. (2009) is that various environmental sub-disciplines have emerged to examine the links between biological and cultural diversity. These subfields—such as environmental sociology, ecological anthropology, environmental politics, and ecological

economics—bridge natural and social sciences, facilitating interdisciplinary approaches that integrate diverse theories, methods, and applications. From this discussion we can understand that there is need of inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary disciplines to explain the reality in the modern complex world. This kind of felt need contributed in the development of new discipline. Converging multiple discipline into one or making blended perspective or looking from different perspectives for one issue has thus been possible.

### **Convergence of Biological and Cultural Diversity**

Pretty, et al. (2009) have clearly explained the relationship between biology/nature and culture/nurture. Nature and culture converge on many levels that span values, beliefs, norms, livelihoods, knowledge and languages (Milton 1998; Posey 1999; Turner & Berkes 2006; Berkes 2008). The natural environment provides a setting for cultural processes, activities and belief systems to develop, and subsequently, landscapes form a diverse cultural archive of human endeavours (Adams 1996; Milton 1999; Schaaf & Lee 2006; Berkes 2008). As a result of these interconnections, a feedback system exists, whereby a shift in one system often leads to a change in the other (Berkes & Folke 2002; Maffi & Woodley 2007; Pretty 2007a). The links between cultural and biological diversity are reflected in physical convergence. Many of the world's core areas of biodiversity are also important for cultural diversity, represented by the density of ethnic groups and linguistic diversity (frequently used as proxies for cultural diversity) (Skutnabb-Kangas et al. 2003; Sutherland 2003). Early observations of this geographical association were made by a number of researchers working in the field, including Nietschmann (1992), Nabhan (1997) and Stevens (1997). Chapin (1992), in particular, pioneered this area by mapping forest cover and indigenous homelands in

Central America (1992). Groups like Terralingua and WWF took his ideas forward by conducting projects that attempted to map these physical associations on a global scale and identify diversity hotspots. Here we assess four bridges linking nature with culture; beliefs and worldviews, livelihoods and practices, knowledge bases and languages, and norms and institutions.

Pretty et al. (2009) highlight the deep interconnections between nature and culture, showing how cultural diversity often overlaps with biodiversity. Landscapes serve as cultural archives, and changes in one system influence the other through a feedback loop. This relationship is evident in geographical patterns, where high biodiversity regions often coincide with cultural diversity hotspots. Four key bridges link nature and culture: beliefs and worldviews, livelihoods and practices, knowledge bases and languages, and norms and institutions.

## **9. Theoretical explanations on natural, ecological and cultural diversity**

These theories provide a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the complex relationship between Nepal's natural, ecological, and cultural diversity and its path to prosperity. They emphasize the importance of integrating cultural, ecological, and economic considerations into a cohesive development strategy. Here are some key theorists associated with the theories; sustainable development theory, cultural landscape theory, and capital theory this paper focusing on.



## **9. 1 Sustainable Development Theory<sup>2</sup>**

Under the sustainable theories a number of scholars including Donella Meadows, Herman Daly, and Amartya Sen have given their ideas. These theorists give multidisciplinary approaches to resources and development. They emphasize as follows.

- Donella Meadows (1941-2001): Environmental scientist, known for her work on systems thinking and sustainability, particularly in the context of "Limits to Growth," which discusses the relationship between economic development and environmental sustainability.
- Herman Daly (1938-2022): American Economist, an economist who helped develop the concept of "steady-state economics", arguing for a balance between growth and ecological limits. He is a key figure in advocating for sustainable economic systems that prioritize environmental and social well-being.
- Amartya Sen (1933- ): Indian Economist- his work on development economics and the Human Development Index (HDI) emphasized human well-being and capabilities, central to sustainable development thinking.

These theorists explore how development can occur while maintaining ecological balance and improving human well-being. This provides a framework for understanding how Nepal can balance the economic benefits derived from its cultural and ecological resources with the need for

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384037567\\_Theories\\_of\\_Sustainable\\_Development](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384037567_Theories_of_Sustainable_Development)  
t. See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at:  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384037567>

environmental and cultural preservation. The theory will help demonstrate how sustainable tourism, agriculture, and eco-friendly industries can contribute to both economic growth and environmental protection.

- **Application:** We can use this theory to argue that Nepal's long-term prosperity depends on a development model that integrates its natural resources with cultural preservation efforts. It also supports the idea that development should enhance the well-being of present and future generations.

## **9. 2 Cultural Landscape Theory<sup>3</sup>**

Cultural landscape theory focuses on cultural dimension of society. It deals with culture in relation to geography. The key ideas under this theory are noted below.

- **Carl Sauer (1889-1975):** An American geographer who is considered the founder of the cultural landscape theory. Sauer argued that the landscape is shaped by human activity and that cultural elements—such as agriculture, settlements, and religious sites—are integral to understanding the landscape's meaning.
- **Pierre Bourdieu:** French sociologist, while not directly focused on landscapes, his theories of cultural capital and the relationship between cultural practices and environments can inform how cultural landscapes are understood and managed.

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<sup>3</sup> **Cultural Landscape Theory and Practice:** Moving from Observation to Experience.  
From the book [Understanding Heritage](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110308389.49) by Julian Smith;  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110308389.49>;  
[https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110308389.49/html?](https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110308389.49/html?lang=en&srsId=AfmBOorDkRK2IluQhqvGtImsvUUqwOaU0UrZ6Q28Wjr6KFnnphT)  
lang=en&srsId=AfmBOorDkRK2IluQhqvGtImsvUUqwOaU0UrZ6Q28Wjr6KFnnphT  
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These theorists argue that the environment is not merely a backdrop to human life but a co-creator of cultural identity. By focusing on the interconnection between cultural practices and natural landscapes, this theory helps to explain how Nepal's diverse cultural heritage is deeply influenced by its geographical and ecological settings.

**Application:** In our context, we can show how Nepal's cultural landscapes—such as sacred forests, agricultural terraces, and heritage sites—are not just relics of the past but active contributors to the country's identity and economy, especially in the context of tourism and local livelihoods.

### **9. 3 Capital Theory (Natural, Cultural, and Social Capital)<sup>4</sup>**

Each society in the world include capital of different form; natural, cultural, social and so on. These different forms of capital contribute in the development of society and country in different ways. Key ideas under this capital theory are discussed here.

- **Pierre Bourdieu:** A French sociologist who introduced the concept of cultural capital, which refers to the knowledge, skills, education, and other cultural assets that can give individuals or communities social mobility. His work is foundational for understanding how cultural assets contribute to social and economic outcomes.
- **Robert Putnam (1941- ):** American political scientist, known for his work on social capital, particularly in his book *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, which examines the importance of social networks, trust, and community engagement in fostering societal prosperity.

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<sup>4</sup> <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/http://gesd.free.fr/jorg63.pdf>

- Herman Daly (1938-2022): American Economist also contributed to natural capital theory, emphasizing the need to consider natural resources (such as forests, water, and biodiversity) as capital that should be preserved and managed for long-term sustainability.

These theorists have laid the groundwork for understanding how different forms of capital can be leveraged to enhance prosperity, with a focus on the role of culture, social relations, and natural resources.

This theory will help illustrate how Nepal's natural, cultural, and social assets function as forms of capital that should be managed to ensure long-term prosperity. Natural capital (forests, water, biodiversity), cultural capital (traditional knowledge, art, languages), and social capital (community networks, trust, cooperation) are all resources that can drive sustainable development.

- Application: we can argue that by properly valuing and investing in these forms of capital, Nepal can generate substantial economic returns while fostering social cohesion and environmental stewardship.

## **10. Reflections on Nepal's Diversity: Natural, Ecological and Cultural**

Interpretation of importance of any national culture is associated with the various forms of diversity. Diversity provides meaningful context for social science explanation. Kavita Navlani (2006), in *National Integration and the Dynamics of Coalition and Federalism in India*, highlights a paradigmatic shift in social science theorization regarding concepts like nation, nationalism, culture, identity, and national integration. She argues that these concepts must be understood within the context of a plural society, acknowledging multiple identity components. Integration, she asserts, should not ignore diversity but

rather embrace differences, ensuring that individuals are incorporated into the political community both as individuals and as members of cultural groups.

### **Biological-Cultural Diversity: Reflection from Census 2021**

Nepal's natural diversity begins from three different geographical regions; mountain, hill and tarai. Based on the interaction of organisms with the natural environment there are three ecological regions; mountain, hill and tarai.

#### **Natural Diversity<sup>5</sup>**

Nepal's ecological and cultural diversity is rooted into the natural diversity. Nepal Biodiversity Strategy has come up with interesting figure which all Nepali have to be familiar with. It could be our first time knowing these pieces of information on the natural diversity of Nepal. Nepal covers 0.1% of the earth's total land surface and is home to: 35 types of forest, 3,808 glaciers and 1,466 glacial lakes, 9.3% of the world's bird species, 4.5 % of the world's mammal species, 2.7% of the world's flowering plant species, 1.6 % of the world's reptile species, 1% of the world's fish species, and so on. This kind of natural-ecological diversity have direct influence on cultural diversity. Nepal's natural diversity; mountain, hill and tarai and the land, forest, water, air and climate have in fact important role in creating ecological diversity in mountain, hill and tarai region. The ecological diversity of three regions is therefore due the natural diversity in the regions.

Socio-cultural diversity is as important and talked-about as the nation's natural/geographical diversity. Many castes, ethnic groups, a number of languages, customs & traditions all the more and above all, it's people and their

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.acethehimalaya.com/nepal-naturally-diverse-country-ace-the-himalaya/>

culture is the results of ecological diversity in three ecological belts. Of course, by falling divided into diverse forms Nepal and Nepali culture is standing united as ever. In this context, it would therefore be important to highlight some of the figures of population features of Nepal.

The national census of 2021 provides diverse features of population of Nepal. There are 142 castes/ethnicities according to the National Population and Housing Census 2021 in Nepal, out of which 125 are the ones which were also reported in the earlier census 2011 and 17 are newly found in the census 2021. The caste/ethnicity published in the 2011 census and reported again in the 2021 census remains unchanged. The newly added castes/ethnicities are Ranatharu, Bhumihaar, Bankariya, Sural, Chumba/Nubri, Phree, Mugal/Mugum, Pun, Rauniyar, Baniyan, Gondh/Gond, Karmarong, Khatik, Beldar, Chai/Khulaut, Done and Kewarat (CBS, 2021). The reported caste/ethnicity information on has undergone a thorough review process by involving stakeholders and subject experts. The published data is derived from respondents' responses and conclusive findings obtained from expert reviews.

In the line of caste/ethnic based diversity there is also linguistic and cultural diversity. There are 124 mother tongues according to the National Population and Housing Census 2021 in Nepal, out of which 111 are the ones which were also reported in the earlier census 2011 and 13 are newly found in the census 2021 (The newly added mother tongues are Bhote, Lowa, Chum/Nubri, Baragunwa, Nar-Phu, Ranatharu, Karmarong, Mugal, Tichhurong Poike, Sadri, Done, Munda/Mudiyari and Kewarat. Of the 123 mother tongues that were reported in census 2011, 12 foreign languages have been grouped into "Other languages" in census 2021 due to having few numbers of reported speakers).

The number of languages that were reported as ancestors' language by more than 1 (One) hundred thousand populations each in the National Population and Housing Census 2021 is 27 in Nepal, whereas no information about ancestor's language was asked in the earlier census 2011.

Ancestor's language: the number of languages that were reported as ancestors' language by more than 1 hundred thousand populations each in the National Population and Housing Census 2021 is 27 in Nepal, whereas no information about ancestor's language was asked in the earlier census 2011.

Second language: There are 25 languages that are being used as second language by more than 10 thousand population each in the National Population and Housing Census 2021 in Nepal, whereas there were only 18 such languages reported as second language in the earlier census 2011.

The number of languages that were reported as ancestors' language by more than one hundred thousand populations each in the National Population and Housing Census 2021 is 27 in Nepal, whereas no information about ancestor's language was asked in the earlier census 2011.

The number of religions adopted by the individuals in census 2021 and 2011 are listed as Hindu (81.2%), Bouddha (8.21%), Islam (5.09%), Kirat (3.17%), Christian (1.76%), Prakriti (0.35%), Bon (0.23%), Jain (0.01%), Bahai (0.01%), and Sikha (0.01%). This composition reflects the religious diversity in the context of Nepal. This kind of diversity is another form of diversity under cultural diversity. Thus, there are various kind of cultural diversities under the broader cultural diversity of Nepal.

## **11. Learning from Case Studies and Discussion:**

Here are a few case studies and examples from the countries mentioned, highlighting how they have integrated natural, ecological, and cultural diversity into their development strategies:

### **11.1. Bhutan<sup>6</sup>: Gross National Happiness and Sustainable Development**

- Context: Bhutan, Buddhist Kingdom in South Asia, is known for its unique development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which prioritizes environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and the well-being of its people over GDP growth. The country has committed to maintaining carbon neutrality and preserving its forests (which cover over 70% of the country).
- Case Study: Bhutan's eco-tourism model leverages its pristine natural environment (e.g., the Himalayas, national parks, and religious sites) while ensuring that tourism contributes to local communities and doesn't degrade the environment. Bhutan also promotes traditional culture (e.g., Buddhist festivals, architecture) as a key part of its tourism, ensuring that visitors engage with its cultural heritage in an authentic and respectful way.
- Relevance to Nepal: Like Nepal, Bhutan's natural and cultural assets are central to its identity and prosperity. Bhutan's integrated approach to development offers valuable lessons for Nepal on balancing environmental sustainability and cultural preservation with economic growth.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://bt.chm-cbd.net/biodiversity-bhutan>



## **11.2. Costa Rica<sup>7</sup>: Eco-Tourism and Conservation**

- Context: Costa Rica, country in Central American region of North America, is famous for its biodiversity, with approximately 5% of the world's species living within its borders. The country has made significant strides in conservation, with around 25% of its land protected in national parks and reserves. Costa Rica has used its natural assets to develop a thriving eco-tourism industry.
- Case Study: Costa Rica has combined its ecological wealth with cultural heritage by promoting ecotourism in a way that supports local communities. For example, Indigenous tourism is increasingly popular, where tourists can learn about indigenous cultures and traditional knowledge, while supporting local economies. The country has also capitalized on its sustainable agriculture (e.g., coffee, bananas, pineapples) while protecting rainforests and ensuring environmental stewardship.
- Relevance to Nepal: Costa Rica's eco-tourism approach can serve as a model for Nepal, where sustainable tourism can boost economic prosperity while conserving natural and cultural resources. Costa Rica's focus on integrating indigenous knowledge with sustainable practices can be a valuable lesson for Nepal, especially in leveraging local traditions for development.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/costa-rica-biodiversity>

### **11.3. Peru<sup>8</sup>: Cultural Heritage and Biodiversity**

- Context: Peru, known as republic of Peru, in western South America, is home to one of the most culturally and biologically diverse regions in the world, with the Andes and Amazon rainforest offering rich ecosystems and diverse indigenous cultures.
- Case Study: Machu Picchu, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a key example of how Peru leverages its cultural and ecological resources for economic gain. The site attracts millions of tourists annually, contributing significantly to Peru's economy. At the same time, the country emphasizes the preservation of both the Inca heritage and the surrounding natural landscapes.
- Challenge: Peru also faces challenges, such as balancing tourism with conservation and managing the impact of resource extraction (e.g., logging, mining) on indigenous communities and biodiversity.
- Relevance to Nepal: Like Nepal's Himalayan heritage sites (e.g., Lumbini, Sagarmatha), Peru's approach to managing its natural and cultural resources for tourism can provide valuable lessons for Nepal in balancing tourism with ecological sustainability and cultural heritage preservation.

### **11.4. Kenya<sup>9</sup>: Wildlife Conservation and Cultural Tourism**

- Context: Kenya, officially republic of Kenya, in east Africa, is well known for its wildlife reserves and national parks, which include iconic species such as elephants, lions, and rhinos. The country has

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.lima2019.pe/en/biodiversity-in-peru>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.eac.int/culture/jamafest-2022-articles/2581-republic-of-kenya>

incorporated wildlife conservation into its national development strategy and has promoted cultural tourism alongside eco-tourism.

- Case Study: The Maasai Mara National Reserve is a major source of eco-tourism revenue, where visitors engage with both wildlife and Maasai culture. The Maasai people, an indigenous group, play an integral role in tourism by offering cultural experiences such as traditional dances, village tours, and handicrafts, benefiting economically from the tourism industry while maintaining cultural practices.
- Relevance to Nepal: Kenya's approach to integrating wildlife conservation with local community participation can be adapted in Nepal, where national parks and protected areas like Chitwan National Park and Sagarmatha National Park play a similar role in attracting tourism. Nepal could explore ways to integrate local cultural experiences into eco-tourism, ensuring that local communities benefit economically while preserving their traditional ways of life.

### **11.5. Indonesia (Bali)<sup>10</sup>: Balancing Development with Cultural Preservation**

- Context: Bali, a province of Indonesia, republic of Indonesia, in Southeast Asia, is an example of how natural beauty, combined with deep-rooted cultural traditions, can drive tourism and economic growth. The island is known for its beaches, volcanic landscapes, and rich Hindu culture.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://bali.com/places/bali-diversity/>

- Case Study: Bali has developed a strong tourism economy, but there are growing concerns about over-tourism and the impact of mass tourism on the environment and local culture. In response, Bali has adopted policies such as cultural preservation programs and sustainable tourism practices to limit negative impacts. The island's unique temples, traditional ceremonies, and local art are integral to the tourism experience, and Balinese culture is seen as both a product and a resource.
- Relevance to Nepal: Bali's approach to managing cultural heritage and natural resources can inform Nepal's tourism strategies. In Nepal, the Tihar Festival, Buddhist rituals, and Himalayan trekking offer cultural and ecological experiences that could be better managed to ensure sustainability.

#### **11.6. India (Himalayan Region)<sup>11</sup>: Heritage and Biodiversity**

- Context: The Himalayan region in India of South Asia, including Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, is rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage, with many sacred sites and traditional practices closely tied to the environment.
- Case Study: The Kumbh Mela is one of the largest religious and cultural festivals in India, drawing millions of visitors. The event is deeply connected to the spiritual and natural world, with ritualistic bathing in sacred rivers, which has led to concerns about water conservation and pollution. The region has also integrated eco-tourism

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989423003335>

through activities like trekking and visits to Buddhist monasteries, aiming to balance religious heritage, nature, and tourism.

- **Relevance to Nepal:** Nepal's religious and cultural festivals could be managed similarly, creating sustainable tourism models that preserve both the environment and local cultures. The use of sacred landscapes in tourism (e.g., temples, pilgrimage sites) in both Nepal and India can be an important aspect of preserving cultural heritage and benefiting economically from it.

Each of these case studies provides valuable lessons for Nepal in balancing the exploitation of its natural, ecological, and cultural resources with the need for sustainable development. By analyzing these examples, Nepal can draw strategies on how to harness its diverse assets for economic growth while ensuring cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

## **12. Conclusion:**

Natural, ecological and cultural resources are closely interconnected each other and their value can only be created through integration of nature, ecology and culture. There is diversity in all these three; nature, ecology and culture, essential components of human world including Nepal. Nepal's prosperity is possible through creating interconnected value of natural, ecological and cultural diversity as national resources; biodiversity, cultural heritage, eco-tourism, cultural-tourism and so on, for the sustainable development.

## **Interconnected Value of Natural, Ecological, and Cultural Resources:**

Nepal's natural landscapes, rich biodiversity, and diverse cultural heritage are inseparable components that collectively contribute to the country's identity and economic potential. The sustainable management of these resources holds

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the key to Nepal's prosperity, creating a holistic model where ecological conservation and cultural preservation go hand-in-hand with development.

### **Cultural and Ecological Resources as Economic Catalysts:**

Nepal's diverse cultural practices and ecological wealth serve as major economic drivers, particularly through eco-tourism, agriculture, and sustainable trade. The country's unique heritage attracts global attention, fostering opportunities in both domestic and international markets. Likewise, healthy ecosystems support industries such as agriculture, herbal medicine, and renewable energy, further emphasizing the economic importance of natural diversity.

### **Importance of Community and Indigenous Knowledge:**

Local and indigenous communities play a critical role in preserving Nepal's cultural and ecological heritage. Their traditional knowledge systems offer valuable insights into sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation, and cultural practices. Empowering these communities through education, policy support, and resource ownership is essential for ensuring that Nepal's diverse resources are utilized effectively and equitably.

### **Challenges in Resource Management and Policy Gaps:**

Despite the rich potential, Nepal faces significant challenges in integrating cultural and ecological resources into sustainable development. These include threats such as environmental degradation, deforestation, climate change, and the loss of traditional knowledge. Additionally, there is a lack of cohesive policy frameworks that effectively address the synergy between natural conservation and cultural protection.

### **Recommendations for Sustainable Prosperity:**

To achieve long-term prosperity, Nepal must adopt an integrated approach that recognizes the interdependence of its natural, ecological, and cultural resources. Key recommendations include:

- **Policy Integration:** Develop policies that simultaneously promote environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and economic growth.
- **Community Empowerment:** Involve local communities in decision-making processes related to resource management and development.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Tourism:** Leverage Nepal's natural and cultural assets to foster eco-tourism, ensuring it benefits local communities while minimizing environmental impacts.
- **Education and Awareness:** Increase awareness of the value of cultural and ecological diversity at all levels of society, encouraging sustainable practices among businesses and individuals.

### **Future Directions for Research and Development:**

Further research is needed to explore innovative ways of combining modern development strategies with traditional practices to enhance sustainability. Additionally, cross-country comparisons could yield insights into how Nepal can learn from similar regions facing the challenge of balancing cultural and ecological preservation with economic development. While talking about the future plan and work of Nepali scholars/academicians, politicians and policy makers it is important to think about decolonizing development practices. To understand the decolonizing development, it is important to begin with

decolonizing sociology. In this regard, Connell (2018, p. 405) writes, “Decolonizing sociology therefore requires rethinking the composition of sociology’s workforce and changing the conditions in which it produces and circulates knowledge”. Emphasizing on the process of decolonizing, Connell (2018, p. 405) further writes “I don’t think we currently have a clear picture of sociology’s workforce on a world scale. We do have some valuable snapshots, for instance in the short accounts from different countries in the ISA’s excellent Global Dialogue (<http://isa-global-dialogue.net/>), or in the discussion of underfunding and political pressure on social scientists in Thandika Mkandawire’s *African Intellectuals* (2005)”.

Discussing on various issues of decolonizing sociology, Connell (2018, p. 404) writes, “What does the project of decolonizing sociology mean for our everyday work as sociologists? First and foremost, decolonizing the curriculum. There’s now a lot of discussion about this, and some sharp controversies, more focused on the humanities than the social sciences”. The essence of this quote is that “The idea is relevant not only to disciplinary sociology but also to applied sociology teaching in areas like health, education, and counseling. It involves rewriting course plans, textbooks, and online resources to give weight to the social experience of the colonized and postcolonial world” (Connell, 2018, p. 404). On the basis of this decolonizing ideas, I would like to put forward some proposals on how Nepal can capitalize the three different forms of diversities; natural, ecological and cultural. The proposals are based on the assumptions that all the diversities reflected through nation/country/state of Nepal are its national culture.



## **National Culture as a Resource**

National culture can be an important resource for economic, social, and political development. It shapes identity, strengthens social cohesion, and enhances a nation's competitive advantage. Here's the way how Nepal can capitalize the diversities in the form of economic, socio-cultural, political as well as diplomatic resources.

### **1. Economic Resource**

- Cultural Tourism: Heritage sites, festivals, and traditions attract global tourists (e.g., Japan's cherry blossom festivals, France's Louvre Museum) could be the basis of cultural tourism of Nepal.
- Creative Industries: Arts, film, music, and fashion contribute to GDP (e.g., Hollywood, K-pop, and Bollywood) which is potential area created through Nepal's diversity.
- Business and Trade: Cultural values influence entrepreneurship, innovation, and work ethics (e.g., Japan's Kaizen philosophy boosts productivity) is in the priority of Nepal's government, university and entrepreneurs. Nepal's diversity can be used for business and trade purpose.

### **2. Social and Cultural Resource**

- National Identity and Unity: Shared traditions and values foster social cohesion and patriotism (e.g., national holidays, language, and symbols) of Nepal can be used as national identity and unity forever.

- Education and Knowledge: Cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge enrich education and problem-solving approaches which can be done in the diverse contexts of Nepal.
- Diversity and Inclusivity: Multicultural societies can leverage diversity for creativity, tolerance, and social stability. All the countries of the world can learn such things from Nepal.

### **3. Political & Diplomatic Resource**

- Soft Power: Cultural diplomacy strengthens international influence (e.g., American pop culture, Chinese Confucius Institutes) which is possible through Nepal's resource.
- Nation Branding: A strong cultural identity enhances global reputation (e.g., "Made in Italy" luxury branding) which is popular in the context of Nepal from the past as unity in diversity as the basis of national integration of Nepal.
- Policy & Governance: Cultural values shape laws, governance, and human rights frameworks. Diverse cultural communities of Nepal can govern themselves in their own way to fulfill their needs as well as manifestation of identity.

### **National Culture as Nepal's Resource**

Cultural heritage is a vital resource in a culturally diverse country because it fosters unity, identity, and economic growth while promoting social cohesion. Nepal must therefore recognize national culture as Nepal's resource and formulate its plans and initiatives accordingly.

### **1. Strengthening National Identity and Unity**

- Cultural heritage reflects the history, traditions, and values of different communities, creating a shared sense of belonging.
- It helps bridge differences by showcasing the contributions of various groups to the nation's development.

### **2. Encouraging Social Cohesion and Mutual Respect**

- Cultural diversity in heritage promotes understanding and appreciation of different backgrounds, reducing discrimination and fostering inclusivity.
- Heritage sites, festivals, and traditions create spaces where communities can interact and learn from one another.

### **3. Boosting Tourism and Economic Development**

- Historical sites, museums, and cultural festivals attract tourists, generating revenue and creating job opportunities.
- Handicrafts, traditional music, and cuisine contribute to local economies and promote sustainable cultural industries.

### **4. Preserving Languages, Traditions, and Indigenous Knowledge**

- Cultural heritage safeguards languages, customs, and practices that might otherwise be lost in globalization.
- Indigenous knowledge systems, such as traditional medicine or environmental conservation practices, offer valuable insights for modern challenges.

## 5. Enhancing Global Recognition and Diplomatic Relations

- A culturally diverse country with a rich heritage gains international prestige and can use cultural diplomacy to strengthen foreign relations.
- Participation in UNESCO heritage listings and cultural exchanges fosters global cultural appreciation and cooperation.

## 6. Educational and Inspirational Value

- Cultural heritage serves as a learning tool for future generations, helping them understand their roots and the importance of diversity.
- It inspires creativity in arts, literature, and innovation by drawing from a mix of cultural influences.

By valuing and preserving its cultural heritage, a diverse country like Nepal can transform its differences into strengths, fostering a more inclusive, prosperous, and harmonious society.

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