

The need to systematically understand the enablers and barriers to local environmental stewardship



Nathan J. Bennett, PhD

Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia
ECOMERS, University of Nice Sophia Antipolis

Twitter: @NathanJBennett

Main Messages


- We need to better understand the enablers and barriers to local environmental stewardship
- This will enable identification of more effective local stewardship actions and external supports for local initiatives
- A clear definition and analytical framework for understanding local environmental stewardship can help to guide such an inquiry and decision-making process.

Prefer to read...?

Environmental Management
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-017-0993-2>



Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework

Nathan J. Bennett ^{1,2,3} · Tara S. Whitty⁴ · Elena Finkbeiner^{3,5} · Jeremy Pittman⁶ · Hannah Bassett² · Stefan Gelcich⁷ · Edward H. Allison²

Received: 10 July 2017 / Accepted: 29 December 2017
© The Author(s) 2018. This article is an open access publication

Abstract

There has been increasing attention to and investment in local environmental stewardship in conservation and environmental management policies and programs globally. Yet environmental stewardship has not received adequate conceptual attention. Establishing a clear definition and comprehensive analytical framework could strengthen our ability to understand the factors that lead to the success or failure of environmental stewardship in different contexts and how to most effectively support and enable local efforts. Here we propose such a definition and framework. First, we define local environmental stewardship as the actions taken by individuals, groups or networks of actors, with various motivations and levels of capacity, to protect, manage and improve the environment in a specific location. This definition is based on a synthesis of existing literature and a conceptual framework that is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable. The framework is designed to be used by researchers, practitioners and policymakers to understand the factors that influence the success or failure of environmental stewardship in different contexts and to develop strategies to support and enable local efforts.

Why an analytical framework for environmental stewardship?

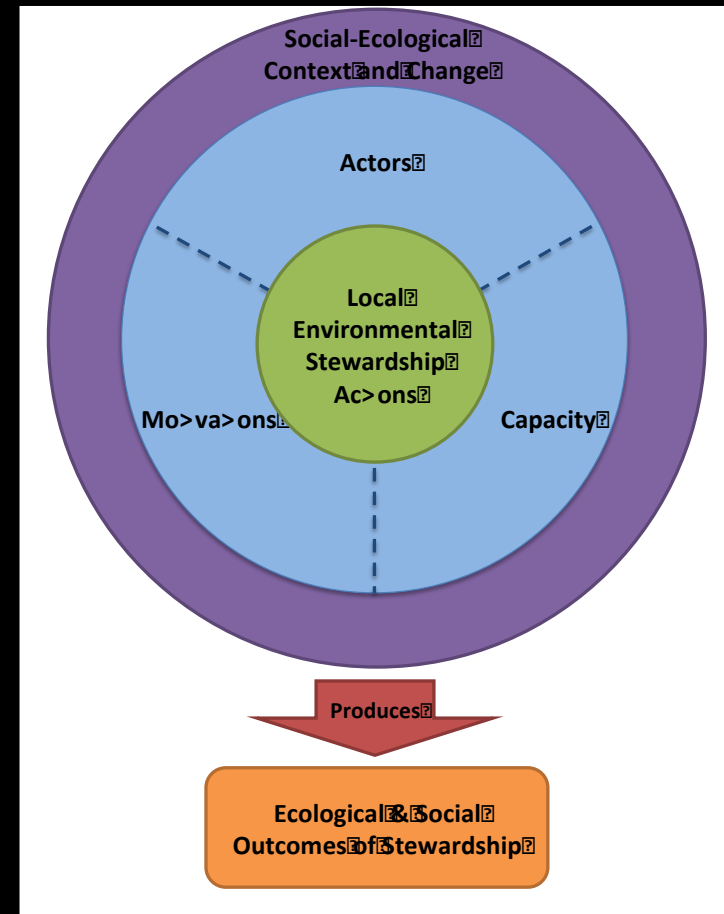
- Local environmental stewardship is a global phenomenon.
- From global policy to foundation investments, significant focus on supporting local stewardship.
- Many external investments and interventions, all with different theories of change. Are they effective?
- Assertion that need to understand the local social-ecological context of stewardship.
- In sustainability science, frameworks facilitate interdisciplinary inquiry.
- Lots of other frameworks. But, not for environmental stewardship.

Definitions of Environmental Stewardship in Previous Research

- Lots of literature on stewardship, from many different social, ecological and geographical contexts.
- Stewardship rarely defined in empirical research.
- When defined, tends towards the theoretical.
- Primary focus on:
 - Stewardship as actions (empirical)
 - Stewardship as ethics (theoretical)
- Stewardship research touches on themes related to: 1) actions, 2) people, 3) capacity, 4) reasons, 5) governance, and 6) outcomes.

Environmental Stewardship: A conceptual review and analytical framework

Local environmental stewardship is the actions taken by individuals, groups or networks of actors, with various motivations and levels of capacity, to protect, care for or responsibly use the environment in pursuit of environmental and/or social outcomes in diverse social-ecological contexts.



Bennett, N. J., Whitty, T. S., Finkbeiner, E., Pittman, J., Bassett, H., Gelcich, S., & Allison, E. H. (2018). Environmental Stewardship: A Conceptual Review and Analytical Framework. *Environmental Management*. Link: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-017-0993-2>

Stewardship Actions: Preservation, Restoration or Sustainable Use



Stewardship Supporting Activities

- Capacity building
- Environmental education
- Scientific research
- Network building
- Decision-making processes

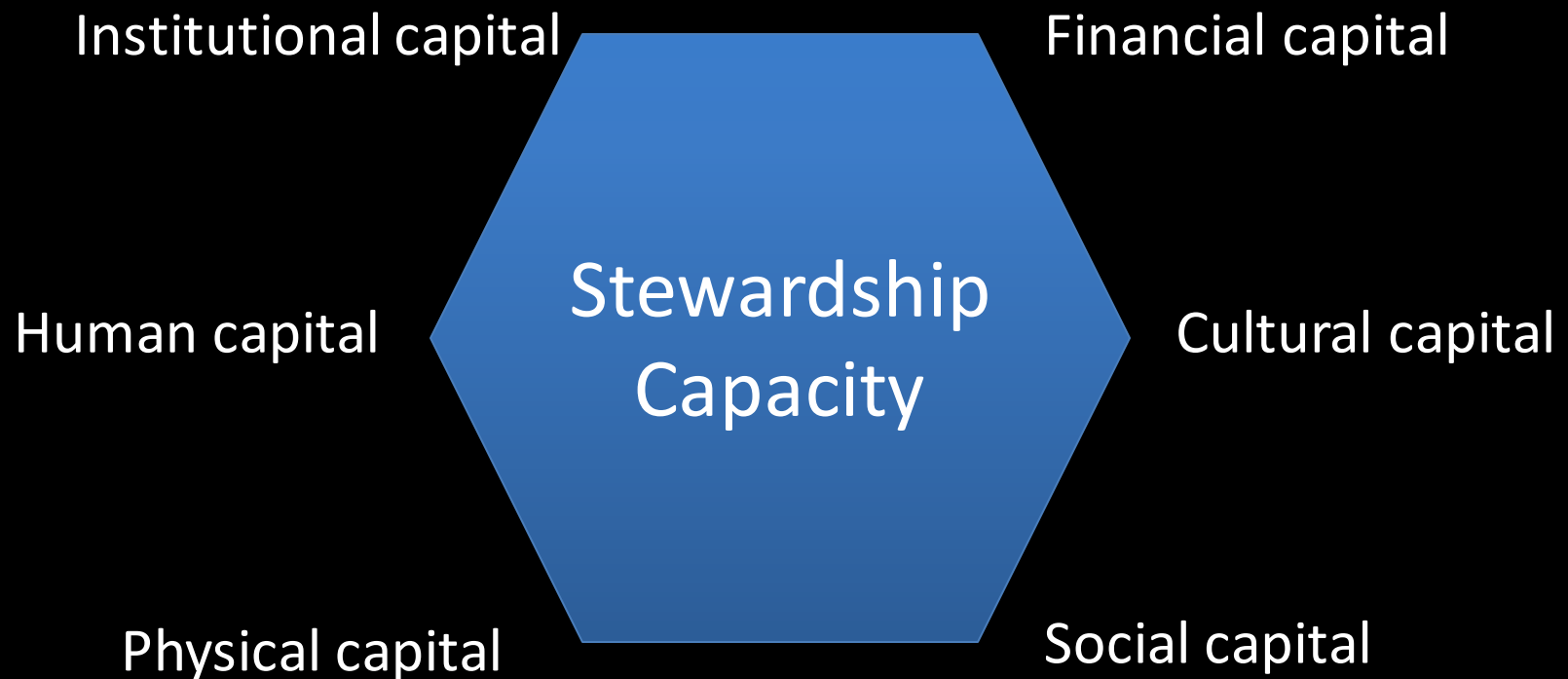


Actors (Stewards)



- Individuals, Groups or Networks of Stewards
- Allocations of rights, roles and responsibilities
- Social and demographic characteristics

Capacity to Steward: Local Assets and Institutions



Motivations: The rationale and will to steward

Types of motivations	Definition	Sub-categories of motivations for environmental stewardship
Intrinsic motivations	Intrinsic motivations are associated with actions that are expected to bring personal pleasure or satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alignment with underlying ethics, morals, values and beliefs• Psychological needs for self-determination or self-actualization
Extrinsic motivations	Extrinsic motivations are associated with the expected achievement of separable outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perceived balance of direct costs and benefits of stewarding natural resources• External rewards or sanctions, including economic, social, physical or legal

The role of context?

Context - Broader set of social, cultural, economic, political and biophysical factors occurring beyond the local system of study

Influences stewardship in two ways...

1. First, stewardship capacity is influenced by the speed, scale, severity, complexity and predictability of the social and ecological changes that are occurring and how these impact social and ecological aspects of local systems.
2. Second, the broader social-ecological context determines which stewardship actions will be socially, culturally or politically feasible, appropriate or effective

Intervention Points

- External organizations often seek to intervene to promote stewardship
- NGOs, governments, private sector and individuals
- How?:
 - introduce new actors
 - Provide incentives
 - Augment local capacity or institutions
 - Promote or support specific actions
 - Monitor and evaluate and support adaptation

Application of Framework

1. Descriptively assess the elements of stewardship in case studies in different contexts
2. Guide decision-making and the design of environmental stewardship initiatives or interventions
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of local initiatives or external interventions that seek to promote stewardship
4. Delve more deeply into questions related to specific aspects of stewardship to provide crucial theoretical and practical insights.

Enablers and Barriers

What?

- Context – Type, Complexity, Speed & Severity of Change
- Capacity – Assets and Governance
- Actors and Networks
- Motivations – Intrinsic and Extrinsic

Why?

- Help increase local resilience to changes occurring.
- Identify and address capacity shortfalls and governance gaps.
- Fit intervention to social context and alignment with motivations.
- Help diagnose correct and most effective intervention points.

Next Steps...

Questions or Thoughts?

<http://nathanbennett.ca>

nathan.bennett@ubc.ca



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada 



OCEAN
CANADA



Institute for Resources,
Environment & Sustainability
University of British Columbia

CENTER FOR
OCEAN
SOLUTIONS