

# Engaging and Educating Communities: lessons from Biodiversity Conservation

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# Educating and Engaging Communities

- Current discourse on climate change recalls many central concerns addressed in participatory approaches to biodiversity conservation over last few decades
- Despite the very different nature of these problems, they raise some parallel issues
- The most useful lesson we can learn: despite appearing problematic, diversity of outlook is the most valuable resource available

# Biocultural Diversity

- Distribution of biological and cultural diversity correlated on a global scale
- Distinct worldviews can be considered to encapsulating unique and locally-specific capacities for solving ecological problems

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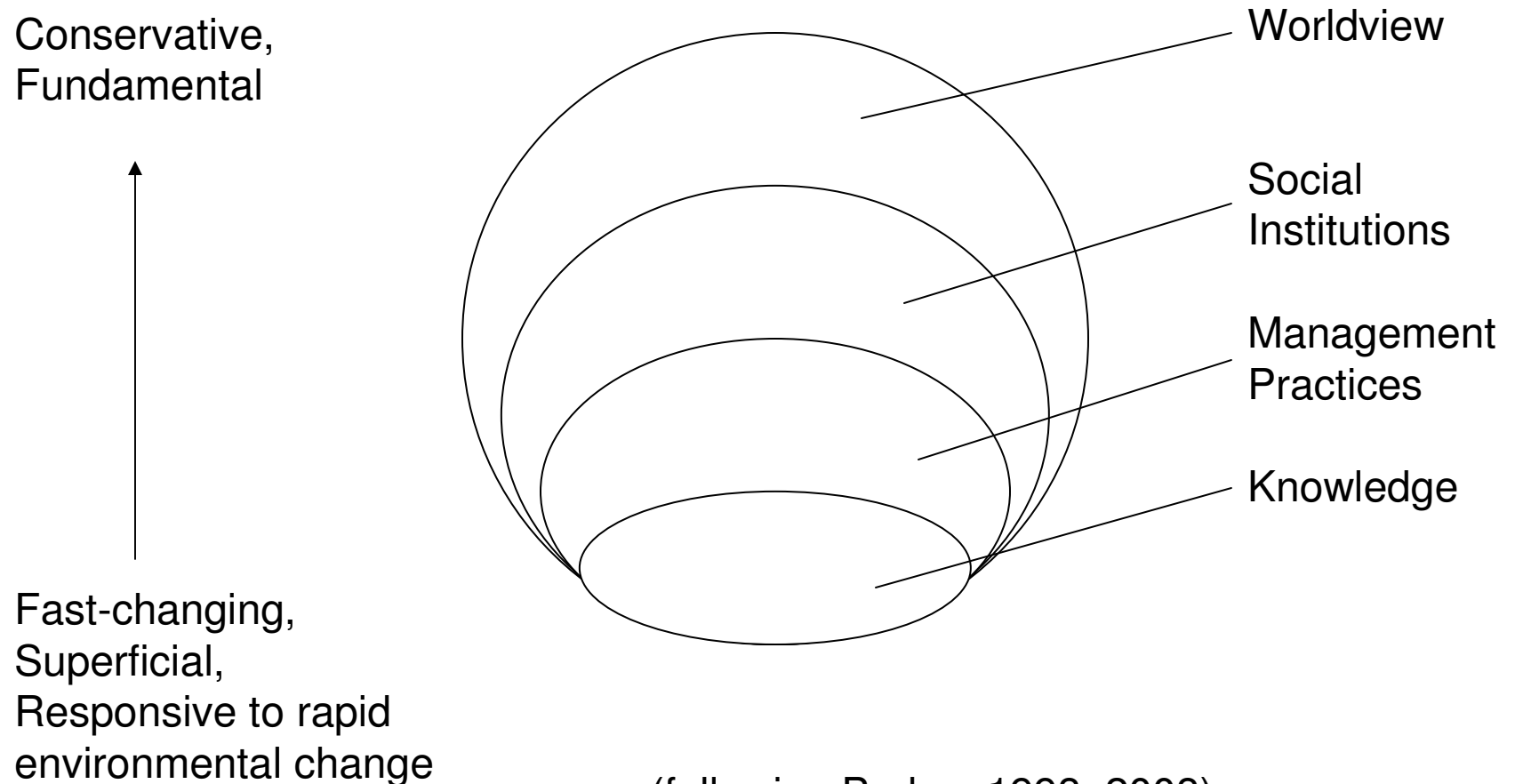
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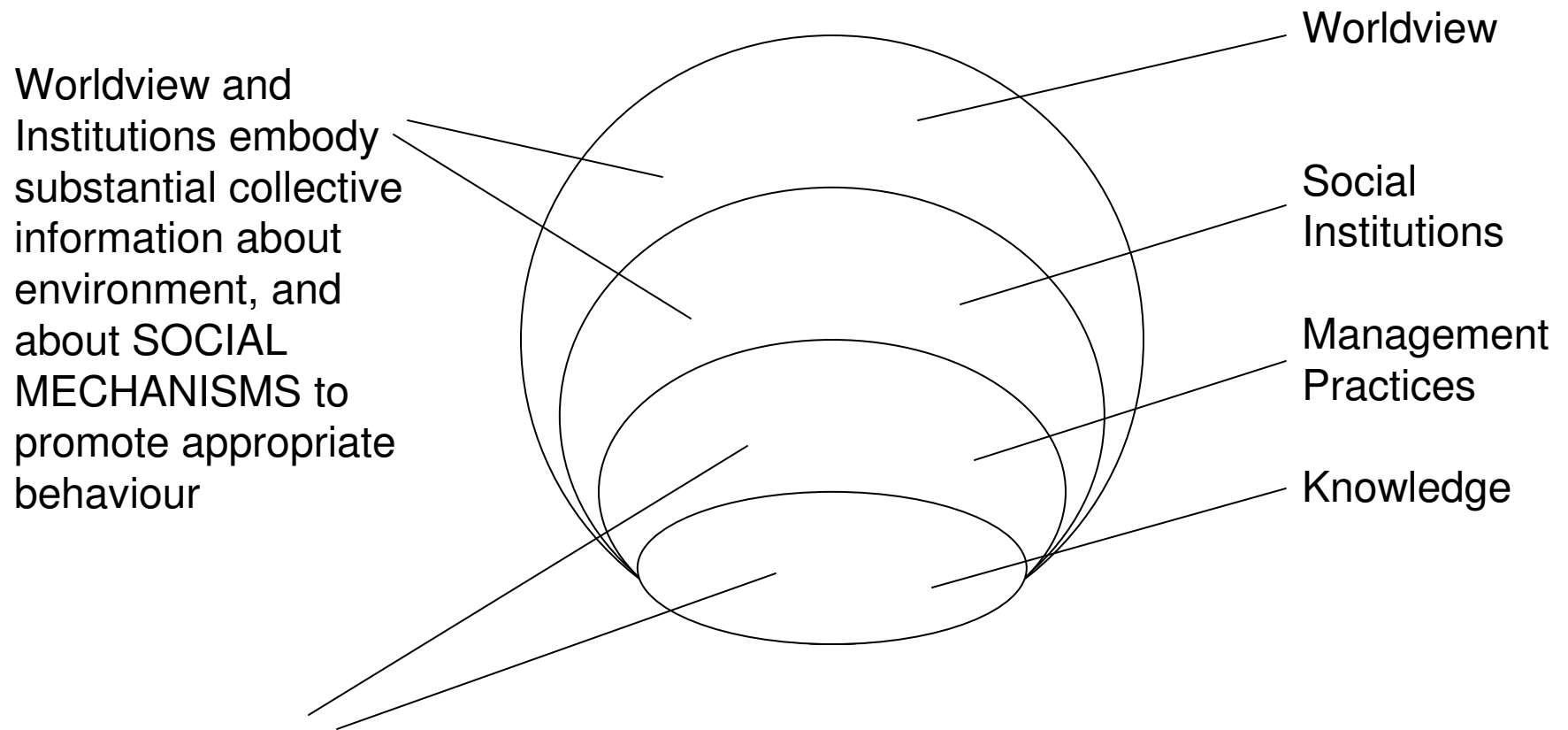
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  - Appropriation (in “participation”)
  - Synergy (community-led)
  - Plurality

# Levels of Environmental Analysis and Discourse



(following Berkes 1998, 2008)

# Levels of Environmental Analysis and Discourse



Scientific ecological knowledge engages at more superficial levels, providing new knowledge, which if useful becomes embodied in innovative practices

# The Big Difference...

- Novel technical knowledge can promote rapid shifts in behaviour when these are consistent with existing social institutions and worldviews...
- ...but worldviews and social institutions only incorporate knowledge of social mechanisms to achieve ecological prudence when this has been a historical necessity, which is not the case in modern consumerist societies

# Dominant Discourses on Climate Change...

- Provide knowledge and understanding of the global dimensions of the problem

But...

- Reproduce institutions, practices and worldview that are among its causes
- And fail to engage social knowledge of groups with which it attempts to engage

# Addressing Diversity

- Rather than problematising diversity of outlook as a barrier to communication
- We need to accept and celebrate diversity as a means to promote distinctive, locally appropriate action
- Local knowledges incorporate vernacular understandings of diverse sociocultural contexts and appropriate bases for action

# Learning from 'communities'

- Who and what are communities?
  - What are the common interests upon which the notion of community is based?
  - Are these self-identified or externally imposed?
- What are their major concerns?
- Where do these concerns overlap with external interests?
- What practically feasible courses of action exist to act upon this common ground?