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Dixon et al. (2009) Article Wrap-Up: Local Responses to marginalisation: human-wildlife conflict in Ethiopia's wetlands

So here are the main ideas of the paper:

Population pressure + upland degradation → recurrent food shortages → forces agriculture into marginal wetland areas → wild animal/human agriculture conflict due to habitat encroachment and crop security, leads to social and political conflict over local knowledge for adaptive management vs. centralized government institutional policy that generally protects the animals.

Key Points

1. Purpose (p. 39)

Last paragraph of page, "Within the context of human-wildlife conflicts in agriculturally marginal environments, this article discusses the relationship between wild vertebrates and farmers engaging in wetland agriculture in the highlands of western Ethiopia. Drawing upon recent research carried out in the area, it examines how a perceived increase in wild vertebrate 'pests' in recent years is contributing to food security problems and raising issues about sustainability of wetland agriculture."

We discussed that this purpose was fairly concise but was somewhat vague in indicating methodology, which is qualitative as it will examine perceptions.

2. Justification (p. 39)

We identified two sections that give justification and identify the gap. Both are in the first column:

"Over the last 30 years a wealth of environmental literature has drawn attention to the negative impacts of agricultural encroachment... However, little research has been directed at the negative consequences of this trend on the human inhabitants, particularly the dynamics of conflict between humans and wildlife, the relative marginalisation of both groups within these areas, and the subsequent implications for human livelihood strategies."

And, "What appears to be under-reported, however, is the chronic loss of subsistence or economic opportunities to local people in developing countries caused by wildlife predation on crops and livestock."

3. Data sources (p. 41-42)

The data is primary; the researchers were interested in information from wetland farmers and other "key informants" including government officials and NGO staff.

This information was vague and could have given more specifics of numbers and geographic area.

4. Data collection methods (p. 41-42)

The researchers held seven participatory rural appraisal (PRA) sessions with an average of 9 wetland farmers in each, and follow up interviews were used with key informants. Awe discussed that all methods were indelible and vague.

5. Analysis methods (p. 42)

"Transcripts of each session, field sketches, photographs, diagrams and maps, in addition to participants' responses, were subsequently analysed for key themes and differences."

This information is a bit confusing as the article does not mention the use of other data sources besides people. They did not indicate that they would be evaluating secondary sources like photos, field sketches, diagrams and maps.

6. Results (p. 42-44)

Some results offered no citations, and many students recognized this. For example, on p.42 the article states that the area has over 600 species of birds?? There was no citation for this information. Did the researchers count them?! We don't know because they didn't say.

Results were in the form of quotations that stated the farmers' concerns. The main points were as follows:

I. The perception of farmers:

- a. "There is a perception that the population of wild animals has increased significantly" (43).
- b. "...farmers suggested that the behaviour of the wild animals has changed" (43).
- c. "...farmers also report that wild animals are becoming more familiar with humans, and increasingly difficult to scare away" (43).

II. Many interrelated factors are involved in the predation:

- a. Government legislation from 1990's prohibiting ownership of firearms and killing wild animals (43)
- b. Encroachment of wetland farms on habitat leading to displaced animals (43)
- c. Weakening of local wetland management (44)

We agreed in our discussion that these results followed in a logical order.

7. Farmer quotations (p. 43-45)

We discussed that these quotations may have been too detailed, but also addressed the need for richness and being thorough while using qualitative data. The consensus was to use the longer quotations to provide context and represent the respondent accurately. Also, make sure quotations are helpful to make a point. We also discussed that they could have been better coded. Long responses are also helpful for generating a more effective survey.

Discussion Topics

1. Structure – Made sense for a qualitative article, followed a logical order, easy to read, but lacked intuitive sections titled "Results" etc.
2. Use of quotations – see above.
3. Spectrum of environmental geography—this article is an environmental geography piece, and it focuses more on the social aspects of the nature-society relationship rather than focusing on physical details. Dr. Rodrigue advised us not to make naive statements about either the physical or social aspects if taking on a research project like this that incorporates "both sides".
4. Good things about the article
We discussed that the article was easy to read, integrated a lot of ideas in an effective way, was not overly wordy.
5. Things to remember about this article
We learned that spelling and punctuation varies country to country, i.e., using " versus ' marks, and (sic) if you are quoting an article that obviously misspells something like water as "watter" (sic). Words like analyze are sometimes spelled analyse, etc.
Also, plan on using images that are only in black and white, unless you NEED color for things like RS imagery, etc.