Indigenous Peoples and Lake Basin Management: Lessons from Lake Atitlán, Guatemala
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Definitions and Dimensions around Indigenous Peoples

All indigenous peoples belong to an ethnic group as long as they are “people that self identify and differentiate themselves on the basis of descent.” (Adams, R.N. 2002).

There are over 5,000 ethnic groups, speaking 6,000 languages in 200 countries of the world. (UNDP, 2004).
What makes indigenous peoples a special group of lake stakeholders is their different relations with nature. “Indigenous people are distinct populations in that the land on which they live, and the natural resources on which they depend, are inextricably linked to their identities and cultures” (World Bank, 2004).
Indigenous People and Policy

“One of the greater challenges that generate more division in contemporary policy debates are indigenous issues, extractive industries in their territories, and the intellectual rights to their traditional knowledge”

International Policy and Law on Indigenous Issues

The most significant comprise:

1. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. 2007, and

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Multicultural Policies</strong> – the way to manage diversity</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Two approaches to managing diversity:</td>
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<td><strong>1. Assimilation</strong> – a conventional approach to try to build a single dominant identity</td>
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<td>➔ Violates cultural freedoms</td>
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<td>➔ Leads to tensions</td>
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<td><strong>2. Multicultural policies</strong> of respect and recognition</td>
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<td>➔ Socially just (cultural rights)</td>
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<td>➔ Practically effective and feasible (Multiple, complementary identities)</td>
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<td>➔ Fosters sustainable development</td>
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UNDP, 2004
Principles of multicultural policies

- Political participation (asymmetric federalism, proportional representation)
- Religious freedom (secularism with principled distance)
- Legal pluralism (recognition of customary law at the local level)
- Language policies (official language, bi-lingual education where possible)
- Socio-economic policies (equity measures including affirmative action)

UNDP, 2004
## Participation, a key to planning and action with indigenous peoples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools for inclusion in lake basin management:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participatory Rural Appraisals and Planning (PRA)</td>
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<td>2. Participatory Mapping</td>
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<td>Typology</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Token Participation or Manipulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passive Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation by Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation for Material Incentives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional Participation</td>
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<td>Interactive Participation</td>
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<td>Self Mobilization</td>
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1 This was initially designed to assess participation in development projects, but has been adapted and revised for different purposes. See Biggs (1989), Hart (1992), Pretty (1995), and Cornwall (1995).
Being a member of indigenous groups often means being excluded from social and economic opportunities.
Lessons from Lake Atitlán
In multiethnic societies, social communication reflects very different views and opinions on the lake problems.
LAKE ATITLÁN IN BRIEF

• Depth (medium)  \( Z = 220 \text{ m} \quad Z_{\text{max}} = 342 \text{ m} \)
• Lake surface area = 130 km\(^2\)
• Drainage basin area = 580 km\(^2\)
• Drainage basin population = 220,000
• Average water transparency = 11 m
Oligotrophic
30,000 years old
Low dissolved nutrients
Low productivity of fisheries
LAKE ATITLAN
VALUES AND BENEFITS
Black bass and traditional fisheries
Reeds, mats, and ducks
Forest and Indigenous people in Guatemala

Forest cover according to percentage of indigenous population

- 75 -100% Indigenous
- 50 - 75% Indigenous
- 25 - 50% Indigenous
- 0 -25% Indigenous

Source: INE 2003, INAB 2002
Increasing forest vegetation in Atitlán

McBryde, Felix, Smithsonian Institute of Social Anthropology, 1945
Council of Protected Areas
CONAP

Lake Atitlán Basin declared A Protected Area In 1997.
Biodiversity at Atitlan
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL
Lessons in solving the problems of the human environment:

wastewater management

Rising population with growing water and sanitation needs
Participation in wastewater management
Litter pollution and solid waste management
Agricultural chemical pollution
Traditional Agriculture
The specific goal is to sustain the benefits of lake Atitlán for all members of society.

Photo: Go Kimura
Urban Planning and improvement is a must!
It is necessary to promote healthy human relations with the lake water, mainly with the youth.
Thank you