



Agricultural Sciences and  
Resource Management in the  
Tropics and  
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**Envisioning the future of ancestral domains  
in Caraga Region, Philippines**

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## Summary

Indigenous people have been deeply connected with their ancestral domains since time immemorial. Their cultural customs, core beliefs, and spiritual ties are profoundly ingrained in this stewardship. They play a vital role in shaping the future of these ancestral areas, which is highlighted by the complex and enduring interaction they maintain with their ancestral domains. In essence, the deep and intertwined relationships that indigenous groups have to their ancestral lands have significant ramifications for their long-term sustainability and protection. However, these lands are threatened by external pressures like urbanization, industrial development, climate change, natural disasters, biodiversity loss, economic factors (inflation), resource scarcity, and technology. In this research, I explore the notion of how the ancestral domains may change over time by looking at the commonalities and differences of perceptions and visions of different indigenous groups in the Philippines. This involves considering the diversity among tribes, including variations in gender, age, wealth, and education levels. By exposing a variety of perspectives regarding the future of ancestral domains, this investigation challenges the presumption of homogeneity among them and promotes a more nuanced understanding. Taking Nature Futures Framework (NFF) as a framework, I examine the current perception of the ecosystem and future as desirable and probable, which includes their capacity to make decisions, express their cultural values, and active participation in the management and preservation of their ancestral territories.

Employ a stepwise collection procedure combining interviews, structured questionnaires and workshops to elicit data from a total of eighty (80) indigenous respondents representing four (4) major ethnic tribes in the Philippines. The NFF is a tool to develop desirable scenarios of human-nature relationships based on different sets values corresponding to nature for nature, nature for society, and nature as culture. We analyse our data using descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Our results show that the Manobo and Higaonon tribes give significant higher value to preserving and safeguarding the natural environment in their ancestral territories. In contrast, the Mandaya and Mamanwa tribes envision a world in which people primarily sustain their lives through the use of natural resources, particularly emphasizing agriculture and other economic activities as pivotal for the future of their ancestral domains. Furthermore, we found an insignificant influence of gender, wealth and age on differences in valuation by the respondents. Respondents older than 41, by tendency valued nature less than younger ones and are more likely to value ancestral lands for agricultural purposes. Additionally, we found that a higher level of formal education was correlated with higher valuation of nature for nature or nature for society aspects but a lower valuation of the nature for culture domain.

In conclusion, our research shows that indigenous tribes place distinct values on ancestral domains. Manobo and Higaonon tribes prioritize preservation for its intrinsic worth, contributing to the conservation of diverse ecosystem whereas Mandaya and Mamanwa tribes place an emphasis on commercial use, potentially boosting local food production and economic opportunities. In addition, an overarching trend reveals that, on average, the ethnic tribes in the Caraga region express a strong sense of influence over their attitudes towards nature, particularly in the "Nature for Nature and "Nature for Society" dimensions where significant gaps exist between probable and desired values. Moreover, by implementing the level of perceived agency, men are viewed as having more agency than women, and older people routinely demonstrate greater agency than younger people. In addition, a stronger sense of perceived agency is shown by a high degree of alignment between envisioned and probable futures when income and education levels are higher.

Overall, indigenous people place a higher priority on economic activities and the inherent value of nature over cultural aspects. This means that future systems may become more ecologically conscious and sustainable, placing less emphasis on traditional or symbolic elements.