

CONVERSATIONS 2: Forest Conservation

Editorial Note

Vikram Dayal*

Ullas Karanth and Asmita Kabra both agree about the importance of research based conservation. However, as is apparent from their conversation about people and conservation, different research communities or researchers may take different positions—informed by research—on issues.

Karanth and Kabra recognize the moral claims of nature and species on the one hand, and people on the other, but still disagree. Karanth stresses the specific goal of the conservation of endangered wild species.

Kabra criticizes the attempt to maintain ‘pristine’ environments, but Karanth emphasizes natural environments of sufficient size—distinct from ‘pristine’ environments—which are very different from highly managed areas with high levels of human activity. Kabra, on the other hand, emphasizes the difference between vulnerable people—who suffer when they lose access to natural landscapes—and the economically richer members of *Homo sapiens* that Karanth is talking about.

Karanth talks about the history of *Homo sapiens* on an evolutionary time scale and associated mass extinctions, whereas Kabra discusses instances where human activity of a limited extent, like managed grazing, can be useful for conservation goals. Kabra too points out that *Homo sapiens* has altered every landscape—nothing is ‘pristine’, not even areas rich in wildlife—and yet, excluding vulnerable people may have harmful side effects.

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Kabra takes issue with Robinson's 'sustainable landscape' approach, which Karanth advocates. Karanth has issues with the Forest Rights Act (FRA), but Kabra does not specifically mention it.

Perhaps readers of the journal can look forward to a conversation on the FRA.