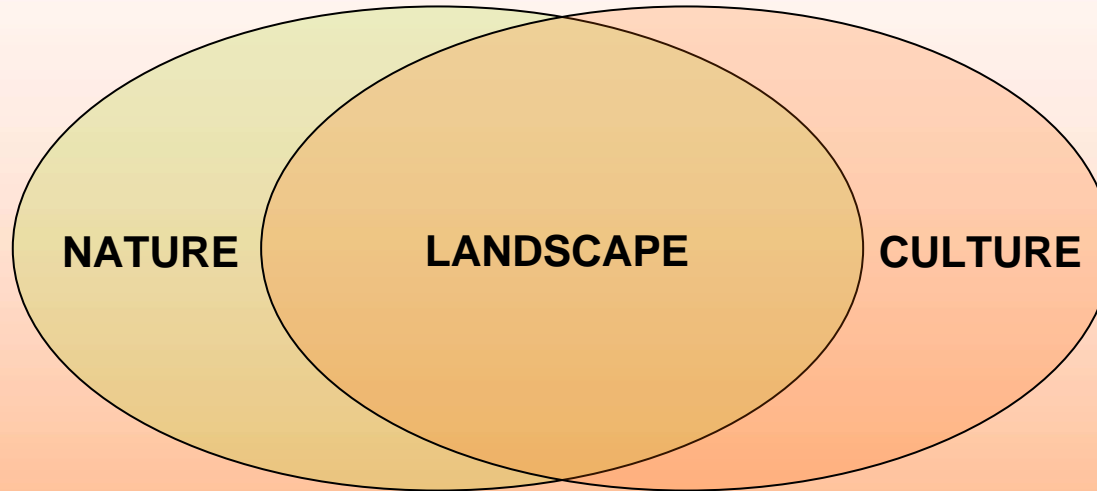


# Understanding, Perception and Interpretation in Empirical Trans-cultural Research

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# Paradigm of Transcultural Perception



Nature and culture amalgamate into locally and timely unique blends

Landscape is nature that is shaped by one or more cultures over a period of time

→ Nature and culture makes up an inseparable and encompassing life-world  
(based on an ontological theory)

# Ecological Hermeneutics

## Forest Culture

Forests are a testimony of

- the evolution of societies
- their respective perceptions and appropriations of nature

The significance of a forest in any society is reflected in the way in which it is perceived by this very culture

The transformation of forest vegetation indicates:

- Specific social needs
- Cultural values
- Changing economics
- Perceptions and appropriations of nature

Changes in the forest could:

- be immediate and occur in the short term
- be indirect and can only be understood in historical dimensions

# Ecological Hermeneutics

The border between intensively used forests and those showing little or no trace of human interference reflects:

- Social rules
- Economic options
- Political decisions

→ In this respect, all forests, including those which we still consider to be natural, are cultural phenomena

# Ecological Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics means:

- the interpretation of structured observations
- narrative interviewing about people's life experience
- knowledge of plant-man-animal relationships and their symbolic interconnectedness

Hermeneutics are based on the self-disclosure of what phenomena are essentials of culture and appear again and again in different shape and contexts

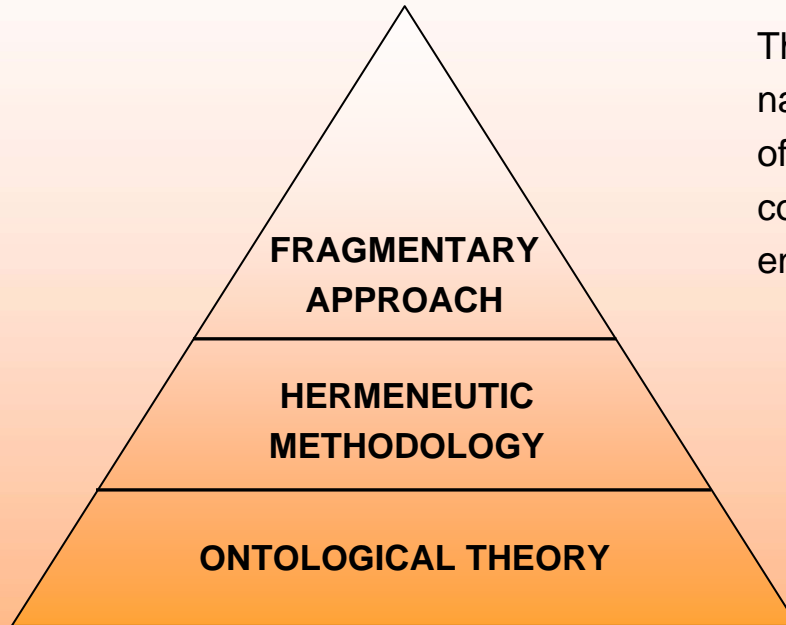
# Nature is Culture

Attempt to establish a theoretical foundation by linking nature and culture in a common reference model: **the ecosystem**

Ecosystems as a virtual concept may be devoid of social meaning, but the social world in which they are embedded attributes a meaning to them, i.e. integrates them into larger socio-cultural units.

The idea of an ecosystem supposes that there is interaction according to the inherent logic of all elements known to date which are part of a commonly functioning configuration of biotic and abiotic factors.

# The Fragmentary Approach - A Holistic Methodology?



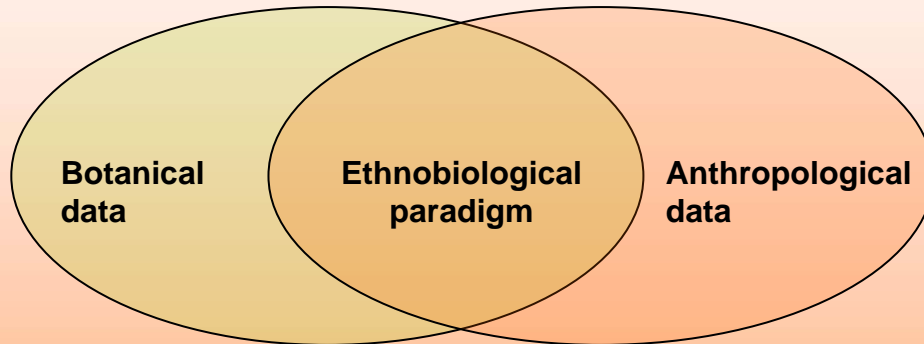
The attempt to understand social and natural configurations as a representation of a characteristic and indivisible contemporary socio-cultural universe is an enquiry into a social world.

- Fragments within the framework of a hermeneutic methodology are representations of culturally meaningful aspects in any part of life
- Fragments have aspects of more than just one socio-cultural configuration
- Fragments are interconnected by ubiquitous elements (e.g. symbols)

# Natural and Social Resources

- It is the social process that determines the use of natural phenomena within the economy of a society
  
- Different dimensions of resources (products and services):
  - Economic asset
  - Symbolic dimension
  - Style of production and consumption

# Polysemy in Context



- Ethnobiological phenomena are configurations of contexts which may have manifold meanings -> polysemy !
- Ethnobiological configurations are neither authentic accounts from the emic point of view of the concerned culture, nor simply one-dimensional and analytic scientific data

**Thank you  
for your attention !**

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