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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Forum Theatre as a mechanism to explore representation of local people's values in environmental governance: A case of study from Chiapas, Mexico

Silvia Olvera-Hernández¹  | M. Azahara Mesa-Jurado² | Paula Novo^{1,3} | Julia Martin-Ortega¹ | Aylwyn Walsh⁴ | George Holmes¹ | Alice Borchi⁴

¹Sustainability Research Institute, School of Earth and Environment, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

²Dep. Ciencias de la Sustentabilidad, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Villahermosa, Mexico

³Rural Economy, Environment and Society Department, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Edinburgh, UK

⁴School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

Correspondence

Silvia Olvera-Hernández
Email: eseoh@leeds.ac.uk

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Abstract

1. Nature degradation, poverty and social discrimination are some of the consequences of unfair decision-making over environmental resources within rural communities in the Global South. Barriers to achieving fair environmental decisions are entrenched power differences and the lack of representation of the diversity of local values in environmental decision-making.
2. Using intersectionality and value pluralism as a conceptual base, this is the first paper to examine the potential of Forum Theatre, a performance arts-based method, to discuss 'solutions' regarding power differences and values towards nature in environmental decision-making.
3. We implemented Forum Theatre in two rural villages in Chiapas, Mexico, framed around conflicts and power differences in eco-tourism development.
4. Participants felt empathy with the Forum Theatre characters and dissatisfaction over the conflicts, and this motivated them to engage and participate in collective reflections on their own personal experiences with power differences in environmental decision-making.
5. From these reflections, participants performed diverse 'solutions' to the conflicts, bringing to the fore plural interconnected and dynamic values towards nature in these narratives. Despite this, Forum Theatre does not look to 'solve' conflicts; it is a safe space to explore how power differences and values towards nature play out in environmental decision-making.
6. Results offer a promising picture of the potential of Forum Theatre as an opening where participants could discuss power differences and values towards nature. However, establishing its potential as a tool in environmental decision-making would require engaging those involved in implementing environmental decisions that affect the communities but who operate from other levels of the governance structure, such as policy-makers and large NGOs.

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KEYWORDS

environmental decision-making, intersectionality, participatory methods, performance arts-based methods, power differences, value pluralism

1 | INTRODUCTION

Degradation of nature, poverty and social discrimination are some consequences of unfair environmental decisions often present in rural communities in the Global South. Difficulties in achieving fair decisions are largely a consequence of the lack of representation of local people's values in decision-making processes (Agarwal, 2009; Edwards et al., 2016). This lack of representation has been a constant challenge in environmental governance in such communities, reflecting power differences that exclude people based on social axes such as gender, economic status, religion, education and ethnicity (Rocheleau et al., 1996).

The complex relationship people have with nature shapes how they perceive, relate to, inhabit, interact and give meaning to nature, and values are a key part of this (Chan et al., 2016; IPBES, 2022). Values towards nature have been interpreted differently by diverse disciplines (Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017; Tschakert et al., 2017), but the predominant interpretation in environmental management comes from neoclassical economics (Kenter et al., 2015). In that approach, values towards nature are framed in terms of welfare changes that can be measured in monetary units (Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017). Ecological economics challenges this by introducing a pluralistic notion of values (Martínez-Alier, 2002; Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017). In this research, value pluralism is used to frame values towards nature (see Section 3.2). Value pluralism acknowledges the multiplicity of perspectives and means by which humans value nature (Himes & Muraca, 2018). It thus supports collective and reflexive processes of value formation without attempting to 'translate' values towards nature into one single dimension or unit (Martínez-Alier, 2002; Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017). Depending on how plural values are considered, human-nature relationships will be evaluated in one way or another to make environmental decisions (Tadaki et al., 2017). This, in turn, will determine the effect of such decisions in people's lives and in nature (Muradian & Pascual, 2018). Yet inclusion of plural values in environmental decision-making is also mediated by power differences (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 1994; Lockwood et al., 2010), leading to environmental outcomes that may not reflect key aspects of local people's interactions with nature.

Power differences affect environmental decision-making in different ways (Ahlborg & Nightingale, 1994; Lloro-Bidart & Finewood, 2018; Rocheleau et al., 1996). For example, through the development of institutions (i.e. informal social conventions and norms and formal legal rules) that establish legitimate ways of relating to nature (i.e., who decides, whose values count, who can benefit from nature's contributions and who bears the cost of ecosystem degradation) (IPBES, 2022; Ratner et al., 2013). Power

differences are then likely to result in socio-environmental conflicts and, ultimately, in negative impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems (IPBES, 2022). This can be seen when people in positions of power impose decisions that impact nature, such as prioritizing extractive activities over traditional uses, leading to actions that degrade ecosystems and affect people's well-being (Elmhirst et al., 2017; IPBES, 2022). In this research, we approached power differences in environmental decision-making using the notion of intersectionality from feminist political ecology, described as the operation of power in everyday practices of natural management based on people social axes such as gender, land tenure, education, age and race/ethnicity (see Section 3.1).

Participatory methods have been advocated as mechanisms to overcome some of those power differences in environmental decision-making (Ranger et al., 2016). These approaches may enable people to play active and influential roles, building trust to share perspectives and understandings of their relationships with nature (Heras & Tàbara, 2014; Ranger et al., 2016). For instance, participatory development has been increasingly adopted by government agencies and international institutes as an approach to foster local people's participation in nature conservation and sustainable development (Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Williams, 2004). However, their performance has been criticized, as their engagement with power dynamics falls often short (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Some critiques are based on the way that international agencies, such as the World Bank, frequently consider communities as homogeneous or as an entity, rather than places of shifting alliances and power dynamics (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Williams, 2004). In terms of values towards nature, there are critiques of how such agencies might influence agendas on value formation, determining values instead of just eliciting people's pre-existing values of nature (Himes & Muraca, 2018).

Against this backdrop, arts-based approaches, defined as approaches in which arts play a primary role (Leavy, 2020), may offer opportunities for addressing some of these challenges, by combining a more social-constructivist and interpretative understanding of knowledges (Heras & Tàbara, 2014; Walsh & Burnett, 2021). By using arts-based methods, it is argued, participants can take control of their own participation by using different skills including verbal and non-verbal communication (Leavy, 2020), allowing them to communicate beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourses (Kester, 2005). They also provide further space for emotions and beliefs (Heras & Tàbara, 2014; Morales & Harris, 2014), which are critical for understanding values towards nature (González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2019; Kenter et al., 2015). Therefore, arts-based methods open up new ways of thinking about, discussing and understanding the complexity of social interactions with nature for environmental governance (Edwards

et al., 2016; Heras & Tàbara, 2014). However, these methods do not come without risk; they might reinforce power relations between scientific and other knowledge holders (such as community members) or local power differences between community members (Turnhout et al., 2020), for example, when powerful people control participation during the implementation of the methods, silencing other voices (Lee, 2015).

Within arts-based methods, performance arts-based methods (Boal, 2013; O'Connor & Anderson, 2020) have emerged as promising tools to dialogue about different human–nature relationships (Guhrs et al., 2006; Heras et al., 2016; Morales & Harris, 2014; Novo et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2008). These are theatrical forms that deliberately blur the boundaries between actor and spectator to tell the stories of people who have been routinely excluded (Boal, 2013; O'Connor & Anderson, 2020).

Despite this increasing interest, performance arts-based approaches to environmental governance/decision-making remain largely unexplored. This research aims to contribute to this emerging literature by focusing on the potential of a performance arts-based method to understand local representation of values towards nature in environmental governance. It uses Forum Theatre (Boal, 2013) as a mechanism for local people to discuss 'solutions' regarding power differences that exclude their values towards nature from environmental decision-making. In this sense, we do not aim to propose a solution for better representation of local people in environmental decision-making, but rather to examine the potential of this method to encourage dialogues among local people regarding values and power differences.

We explore the potential of Forum Theatre through a case study in Chiapas (Mexico), analysing the creation and implementation of a performance arts-based method within two rural communities, located in a tropical agroforest frontier, using the notions of intersectionality and value pluralism to explore power differences and values.

2 | FORUM THEATRE

Forum Theatre, a performance arts-based method, was developed in the 1970s by Augusto Boal as part of the *Theatre of the oppressed* (2013), which built on Paolo Freire's work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1976). Forum Theatre uses theatrical forms to facilitate and encourage engagement from the audience on a variety of social issues (Morales & Harris, 2014).

In practice, Forum Theatre uses artist/facilitators to perform a scene representing common social interactions in which one character might feel oppressed or side-lined. During the performance, members of the audience can stop the scene, take the protagonist role (oppressed character) and change the scene. The transition from spectators to *spect-actors*, aims to empower participant to perform some 'solution' to the conflicts, drawing on their own experiences (Heras & Tàbara, 2014). Augusto Boal (2013) named it a 'rehearsal for revolution' because the 'solutions' are not 'given' by experts from outside.

As such, it engages the audience in personifying experiences from their every-day lives, creating opportunities to reflect on delicate issues and unveiling power dynamics which can be otherwise difficult to question (Boal, 2013; Heras & Tàbara, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2008). To encourage participants to perform these experiences, implement different activities,¹ trained performers and a 'joker' (facilitator) are needed. Trained jokers are the bridge between actors and audience members (participants). They facilitate and encourage participants to reflect on conflicts and to rehearse different solutions in the relative safety of the artistic process (Boal, 2013; Campbell, 2019). In Forum Theatre, the joker is an artist who challenges the illusions of natural authority between practitioners and participants and allows reflections about power differences (Boal, 2013; Campbell, 2019).

Due to these qualities, Forum Theatre has been used in different realms (Heras & Tàbara, 2014; Leung et al., 2020; Taylor & Taylor, 2017). For example, on intersectionality, Forum Theatre has been used to recognize the multiple (actual and future) student and teacher identities within classrooms and move towards including them in their future classroom communities (Powers & Duffy, 2016). In nature management, Forum Theatre has been used to help young people in rural communities identify plausible futures and potential barriers (Heras et al., 2016). However, it has not yet been used to opening dialogues about values regarding nature, except for the experimental work carried out in the ROC-Usumacinta Project.² In that preliminary work, precursor of that presented here, participants from academia, government agencies and NGOs performed roles of the local people to establish dialogues about ecosystem services in México. While limited in scope, it indicated the potential of improvisation theatre techniques, since they allowed discussion of the findings of the original research project, and opening new ways of thinking about how communities interact with nature (Novo et al., 2019). The ROC-Usumacinta Project did not, however, engage directly with the communities themselves, as we do here.

There are critiques of Forum Theatre as a research method, such as the risk of oversimplifying the daily reality of community members (Guhrs et al., 2006), and the use of a binary oppressor-oppressed idea of power (Armstrong, 2006). Despite these, we argue that Forum Theatre can integrate different knowledge systems, offering a better understanding of how local people value nature (the multiplicity of perspectives and means by which humans value nature) and how their power position (subtle differences between oppressor or oppressed based on the intersection of their social axes) hamper the inclusion of their plurality of values towards nature in environmental decision-making. The next section describes how concepts of power differences and values were approached in this research.

3 | CONCEPTUAL BASIS: INTERSECTIONALITY AND VALUE PLURALISM

This research draws on ideas of intersectionality from feminist political ecology and of value pluralism from ecological economics as

the conceptual base underpinning representation of value for nature and power differences.

3.1 | Intersectionality

In this research, intersectionality is used to frame power relations in the development, implementation and analysis of Forum Theatre (see [Table 2](#) and [3](#)). Intersectional theory began with Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw work to address the whiteness of mainstream feminism and the sexism of antiracism (Carastathis, 2014; Crenshaw, 1989). It aims to explain the complexity of lived experiences of exclusion among multiple social groups (Carastathis, 2014) understanding the simultaneous, intercategorical and overlapping forms of oppression (Carastathis, 2014).

Intersectionality is used as an analytical tool in feminist political ecology to understand people as inhabiting multiple and fragmented identities, which are constituted through social relations that not only include gender but also class, religion, sexuality and race/ethnicity. These influence their relationship with nature (Mollett & Faria, 2013; Rocheleau et al., 1996), shaping the operation of power in the everyday practices of access and control of nature resources (Cole, 2017; Lloro-Bidart & Finewood, 2018). For example, Elmhirst et al. (2017), show that, when women in Indonesia were excluded from decision-making, environmental decisions focused more on the market (oil plantations) than on traditional uses, generating negative impacts for nature such as deforestation.

In this regard, using intersectionality from feminist political ecology in dynamic performance arts-based methods might allow us to display and analyse the simultaneous and intercategorical ways in how power differences work and overlap regarding nature use and management and environmental decisions.

3.2 | Value pluralism

In this research, we used the notion of value pluralism in the development and analysis of Forum Theatre as a method for framing values towards nature (see [Tables 2](#) and [3](#)). Epistemic pluralism, from ecological economics, suggests there are multiple ways of conceptualizing values within human–nature relationships (Horcea-Milcu et al., 2019; Kenter et al., 2019). As a result, new approaches have emerged from

the idea that values are connected to worldviews, based on history, culture, geography, experience and embodied experiences (Kenter et al., 2019). These can be differentiated along multiple dimensions, such as the scale of values or the process by which they are elicited (Kenter et al., 2019; Tadaki et al., 2017). They intend to better reflect the complex relationships between humans and nature, such as transcendental values and contextual values (Kenter et al., 2015, 2019), held and assigned values (Chan et al., 2018), shared values (Kenter et al., 2015) or relational values (Chan et al., 2018).

In this regard, value pluralism allows us to go beyond the dichotomies of values approaches and how any social group can simultaneously use different standards of values to support their relationship with nature (Edwards et al., 2016; Himes & Muraca, 2018). While no single disciplinary framework can fully integrate the many understandings of social values of nature (Kenter et al., 2019), for this case study, we use the Value Landscape Approach proposed by Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al. (2017) and Schulz, Martin-Ortega, loris, et al. (2017), which is particularly suitable to this research because of its explicit focus on the interrelationships between values of nature and environmental governance (Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017). The Value Landscape Approach is relatively broad, encompassing three categories of value: fundamental values, governance-related values and assigned values. In [Table 1](#), these categories are described, and some examples are shown.

We used the Value Landscape approach to frame plural values towards nature, but alternative plural value frameworks, such as relational values or shared and social values could have also been applied (Chan et al., 2018; Kenter et al., 2015).

4 | METHODOLOGY

This research was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (reference AREA 19-030) at the University of Leeds. We obtained recorded verbal informed consent from participants prior to commencing research as it is customary in those communities.

4.1 | Case study

This research was implemented in the Lacandon rainforest in Chiapas, the largest remnant of high perennifolia forest in Mexico,

TABLE 1 The value landscape approach

Type	Description	Examples
Fundamental values (broad values)	Goals or desires that can guide people's behaviour	Social status and prestige, pleasure, excitement, traditions, safety and harmony (Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017; Schwartz, 2002)
Governance-related values	Ideal characteristics or principles of 'good' environmental governance	Inclusion, capacity, effectiveness and fairness (Lockwood et al., 2010)
Assigned values	Use of the nature aligned with the notion of ecosystem services	Provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural (Chan et al., 2016; Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017)

TABLE 2 Description of the scenes and characters in the script

Scene 1. Introduction			
Description	The government agent brings a new project to the community to support PSE. He finishes the scene inviting the people to share their position to decide in the next assembly		
Characters	Social axes ^a	Position towards the project ^a	Values held
Narrator and 'joker'		Double role. The joker facilitates the Forum Theatre	This role is outside the fiction and not expressing values
Government agent/ oppressor	Young man, engineer degree, living in the city	He is trying to encourage the community, so he is positive about the PES	Looking for achieve the government objectives agreed in the last meeting with international agencies
Scene 2. <i>Comisario</i> and Doña Ofelia			
Description	Doña Ofelia approaches the <i>comisario</i> on the street. She explains to him that she wants a project to make mango jam, she already has the fruit, she only needs his support to propose it during the assembly but he, the <i>comisario</i> , is not convinced about her project, he just is focusing on the ecotourism project		
Characters	Social axes	Attitude towards the project	Values held
<i>Comisario</i> (village head)/oppressor	A married man, 35-year-old, with land-rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Firmly on the side of ecotourism He finds the women's projects are not profitable enough and is quite conservative in his attitudes 	<p>He adopts the idea that for conservation to really work, it must be aligned with economic activities carried out by men.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamental values such as power Governance-related such as capacity Assigned values such as provisioning
Doña Ofelia/ oppressed	50-year-old widow. She is semi-literate	She wants a project to help her to make mango jams, but she needs the support of the <i>comisario</i>	<p>She has attachment to traditional views about the forest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamental such as universalism Governance-related value such as capabilities Assigned values such as cultural
Scene 3. Pablo and his wife			
Description	Pablo explains to his wife that he is nervous about the next assembly when he will present the idea that ecotourism projects can improve the local economy and promote protection of the environment. He is nervous because he is not <i>ejidatario</i> and as young men are not usually considered in the assemblies		
Characters	Social axes	Attitude towards the project	Values held
Pablo/oppressed	Man, 30-year-old, high education, recently married, he does not have land rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He wants to make his village understand the importance of conservation He has an interest in finding alternative livelihoods through ecotourism 	<p>He is driven by the 'belief' that humans have a responsibility towards the environment and that the community should be stewards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamental values as universalism Governance-related values such as solidarity and capability Assigned values such as regulating
Pablo's wife/ oppressed	Young woman, married	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She is a quiet supporter of eco-tourism developments. She did not have any line, but her body language affirms her husband's ideas 	When she appears at the scene, the main value conflict is between Pablo and the community assembly. However, we included her as a character with no explicit values to provide the opportunity for the audience to use her character to incorporate new ideas
Scene 4. Marcela			
Description	She is talking with her husband trying to explain her frustration. She explains to him that his family does not let her participate in the ecotourism project even when she could be a guide as she knows the area very well		
Characters	Social axes	Attitude towards the project	Values held

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Marcela/oppressed	Young woman, married, living with her in-laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She knows the forest so she can guide tours for the ecotourism project, but her in-laws disagree with that idea 	She associates the forest with knowledge and autonomy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental values such as tradition • Governance-related values such as inclusion • Assigned values such as provisioning
Scene 5. Don Israel and Doña Patricia			
Description	Don Israel is trying to convince Doña Patricia to vote against the ecotourism project and support his livestock project so he can increase his money and keep lending to the people. However even when she does not understand the project very well, she knows that people in the community need to take better care of the rainforest		
Characters	Social axes	Attitude towards the project	Values held
Israel/oppressor	Cattle man, 45-year-old, relatively wealthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He receives money through Payment for Ecosystem Services for some hectares with forest that he has; however, he is planning to cut down the trees for his livestock 	His values are focused on increasing production and wealth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental values such as power and achievement • Governance related-values such as legitimization • Assigned values such as provisioning
Patricia/oppressed	An elder woman. She is pioneer, 'sent' to the community after they were allocated by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She is proud of that farming background/ their titanic effort to 'conquer' the forest, but at the same time thinks that some sort of balance between conservation and farming needs to be achieved 	Grateful to the forest that gives her a way to survive and worried about its conservation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental values such as tradition • Governance-related values such as fairness • Assigned values such as regulating

^aThe intersectionality of the characters was covered through social axes and attitude towards the project.

and feeder of the Usumacinta–Grijalva basins containing 34% of Mexico's freshwater (Yedra et al., 2016). Due to its ecological importance, this area has been the focus of various government conservation strategies (Cano-Castellanos, 2018).

This research took place in the communities of El Pirú and Galacia, in the buffer area of Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve. El Pirú, founded in 1982 currently has 207 inhabitants, 27 of whom identify as indigenous Tzeltal (INEGI, 2020). The main productive activities are agriculture and livestock. Galacia, founded in 1975 has a population of 232, with two people identifying as Tzeltal (INEGI, 2020). The main productive activities are agriculture, livestock and palm oil plantations. Both communities were established under Mexico's Land Reform Policy³ (Trench et al., 2018), and currently they have developed so-called ecotourism projects and are part of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes supported by government programs and civil society organizations.

Land tenure is central to understand how most environmental decisions are made in this area. Both communities have *ejido* land tenure, a system derived from the Mexican Revolution's claims in which communal land is worked individually by community members on designated farm-sites, who collectively maintain communal rules or law (Bee, 2016). Most rural areas in Mexico use this *ejido* system, by which people with farm-sites/fields (mainly men), called *ejidatarios*, constitute the General Assembly, which is the maximum

authority and is where most decisions are made (Pérez-Cirera & Lovett, 2006). The *comisario ejidal*, the executive arm of the *ejido*, is responsible for implementing agreements made by the Assembly (Trench et al., 2018).

4.2 | Forum Theatre design and implementation

4.2.1 | Script writing

Forum Theatre draws on stories that reflect everyday situations familiar to the audience (Boal, 2013). Our script material was based on previous qualitative fieldwork conducted in the same communities (Martin-Ortega et al., 2019). The main storyline concerned the potential development of an ecotourism project to protect nature as part of a PES scheme proposed by a government agent, in a fictional community named *Las Delicias*. The conflict was based on the local cultural context and the difficulties faced by women, landless people and young people for their values towards nature being represented in *ejidal assemblies* (see Section 4.1).

Dialogues between oppressor and oppressed characters displayed specific value conflicts and different experiences of exclusion (see Table 2), using the concepts of intersectionality and value pluralism. Each scene had specific characters with intercategory and

TABLE 3 Overview of the results and crosses with the conceptual basis (intersectionality and value pluralism).

Themes	Intersectionality	Value pluralism	
Power differences: Forum Theatre and intersectionality to engage participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants engaging with characters empathetically • Participants' narratives drawn from their own experiences became collective reflections as in real decision-making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operation of power in environmental decision-making portrayed in the script triggered people engagement • Imagined 'changes' were 'rehearsed' based on their own experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersed in the people's narratives, participants brought their values towards nature to the fore
Power differences: Forum theatre and intersectionality to discuss local power differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing scenes based on similar social groups allowed discussions of power differences • Dynamic discussions regarding power differences were developed respectfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was not possible to analyse experiences of exclusion as discrete categories • Forum Theatre was an opening to consider how intersecting power differences are experienced in environmental decision-making • Forum Theatre offers possibilities to engage local people in topics of conflict (safe spaces) regarding nature management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locals negotiated their plural values towards nature in the space between the self and the fictitious other
Local values: Fundamental values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental values were expressed through desires • Nature associated with well-being of future generations • Nature conservation awareness associated to achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum demonstrated the assumptions about nature, gender roles and related obligations (family, care, inheritance and future generations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum Theatre showed fundamental values such as universalism and achievement not as necessarily antagonistic categories • Forum format might enable complex values-based contexts to be staged and challenged
Local values: Governance-related values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of challenges for women in governance structures • Authorities must be aware of diversity of human–nature relationships in a community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of representation of different values towards nature was questioned through governance-related values • This related to terms of legitimacy of the environmental decision-making process and the capability of authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance-related were associated with some of the principles of good environmental governance such as legitimacy and capability
Local values: Assigned values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on 'use' of nature • Cattle management specifically seen as generating tensions and trade-offs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned values were attributed to the importance of significant relations and responsibilities between humans and nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned values were mentioned in terms of provisioning and regulating services • These were connected to other types of values such as universalism or inclusion
Leverage points for transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder collaboration: the research team (scientists and artists) and local state artists (trained in the techniques of Forum Theatre) • Forum Theatre could enable participants to prepare themselves for future environmental negotiations with outside actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific researchers' knowledge was not privileged over the performers • The Joker (artist facilitator) avoids reinforcing power differences between academics and local people during Forum Theatre • Equally important is having long-term strategies to ensure that decision-makers, who represent another position of power, are exposed to these voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum Theatre allowed to challenge analytic views and to embrace more emotive and dynamics views on values • Forum Theatre as a valuation method should be carefully integrated alongside other methods to broaden our understanding of human–nature relationships

simultaneous identities, based on the intersection of social axes such as age, education and land tenure. The oppressor and oppressed characters were created to have subtle binary power differences. The dialogues among characters outlined plural values, using the Value Landscape Approach framework. A draft script was translated into Spanish and revised by the four native speaking co-authors and the team of artists. The final story was divided into six scenes and nine characters.⁴

4.2.2 | Training and rehearsal

Prior to the performance, we trained local artists (performers) in the techniques of Forum Theatre (Walsh et al., 2022). This aimed to train skilled artist-facilitators who were aware of the communities' social context and who would not oversimplify or misrepresent their message (Guhrs et al., 2006). The participants were recruited locally using a snowball method, for a total of 16 participants aged between

23 and 56. Seven participants joined the final team of performers in implementing the Forum Theatre with the communities.

4.2.3 | Forum Theatre: The activity with the communities

In line with local customs, a month before the event, the project was officially presented to the community heads (*comisarios ejidales*), who agreed to invite the entire community to participate. In Galacia, the activity took place in a classroom in the primary school and, in El Pirú, in the eco-tourism facilities. The activity lasted 3 h. A total of 21 people attended in El Pirú (11 women, 10 men) and 20 in Galacia (17 women, 3 men). In both, attendees included the *comisario(a) ejidal*, other people with *ejidal commission* (secretary and treasurer), and people working in ecotourism, livestock and/or agriculture. Attendees at Galacia's event explained that many more women than men participated because the activity took place at the school, and the activities carried out there are usually attended by women.

The Forum Theatre took place as follows: (1) the performance of the script by the trained performers; (2) games to warm up voice and body (mimicry of favourite animals) and (3) sharing ideas in small groups and (2) the Forum Theatre itself, where participants changed the script by proposing 'solutions' to the conflicts. The activity was recorded and then edited in a short video.⁵

4.2.4 | Post activity interviews

A month later, we conducted semi-structured interviews with over half of the participants, to capture their reflections on the activity. In Galacia, we undertook 14 interviews (12 women, 2 men) and in 14 in El Pirú (8 women, 4 men, 2 couples). All were video or audio recorded. The interview guide covered four main topics: (1) their perceptions about the Forum Theatre activity; (2) the procedures for participation in local environmental decision-making; (3) their perception of Forum Theatre for expressing why nature is important to them and (4) the potential of Forum Theatre as part of local environmental decision-making processes. The interviews were approximately 1 h long and were carried out in person in the communities.

4.3 | Data analysis

We imported notes and transcriptions from the Forum Theatre and interviews into qualitative data analysis software (Nvivo12). We analysed these qualitatively, looking into:

1. Whether Forum Theatre can be a space in which power differences in environmental decision-making can emerge and be discussed, using a grounded approach (Srdjevic et al., 2017). In a descriptive interpretation of data of Forum Theatre

participation and interviews, the more notable comments were selected to illustrate (a) if using intersectionality to portray power differences within in the script allowed participants to discuss power differences in environmental decision-making, and why; and (b) if local power differences were emerging in the 'solution' (narratives) to the imaginary conflicts on *Las Delicias*, and how.

2. How participants' values towards nature were brought to the fore during the Forum Theatre. We used a structural code system (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011) using Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al. (2017) and Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Ioris, et al. (2017) Value Landscape categories; fundamental, governance-related and assigned values (see Section 2.2). Fundamental values were identified as guiding principles of the narratives, which structured the formulation of governance-related values and assigned values, which were more openly discussed.
3. Reflections on Forum Theatre following Horcea-Milcu et al. (2019) and Muhr (2020) approach to the role of values and arts-based methods in sustainable transformation. We focus on leverage points, places within complex systems where interventions can lead to transformational rather than incremental changes (Horcea-Milcu et al., 2019).

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

People interact and experience nature in different ways, leading to a wide diversity of values of nature. However, policymaking often prioritizes a narrow set of nature's values in decision-making, often excluding local people's values of nature (Tadaki et al., 2017). This affects nature in different ways, for example, when conservation policies focus on biodiversity for its own sake which may exclude values associated with people's livelihoods, leading to unsustainable conservation actions over time (IPBES, 2022). Table 3 shows the most significant results and how these maps onto the conceptual bases of the study (intersectionality and value pluralism), including aspects where they overlap. The results are organized by theme as per the following discussion.

5.1 | Exploring local power differences in environmental decision-making using Forum Theatre

5.1.1 | Forum Theatre and intersectionality to engage participation

Participants considered that the use of intersectionality to frame the operation of power in everyday practices of nature management and environmental decision-making within the script generated a very realistic story that triggered their participation. However, this was not straightforward. For example, during the Forum Theatre, once the joker invited the spectators to become *spect-actors*, they were shy and had insecurities on how to perform, as this was their first

time attending a performance activity or a play and that they did not know how to react (Interviews 9 in Galicia and 14 in El Pirú).

This shyness is not uncommon in performance arts-based approaches (Fletcher-Watson, 2015; Heras et al., 2016; Lee, 2015). Paradoxically, Fletcher-Watson (2015) argues that participants might also feel empowered by their choice not to participate. This reflects the nature of the participation process in Forum Theatre and the need for trained jokers to facilitate audience members 'coming into' the activity (Campbell, 2019).

Despite the initial hesitancy shown by the participants, they empathized with the characters and expressed dissatisfaction over the conflicts. They identified their realities with the characters' relationship with nature (e.g. in terms of their agricultural activities or land tenure) and with the experiences of exclusion from environmental decision-making characters were facing (norms or rules that limit people's participation in decision-making). This emotional connection encouraged participants to overcome their insecurities and eventually go on stage to 'help' the character to 'solve' their conflicts. One participant stated:

And the lady (Patricia), she made me remember, in 1985 when I arrived here, with my children, all small. So, just as she said there was no food... I remembered that difficult time I had here, but thanks to God and thanks to the projects, little by little the community has been developing... I thank all the performers because they reminded me of everything we have been through.

Forum Theatre (elderly mother- *ejidataria* in El Pirú).

This emotional connection is similar in other studies of Forum Theatre (Baer et al., 2019; Campbell, 2019; Heras et al., 2016) and in line with Boal's (2013) suggestion that empathy alone is not enough to motivate change; dissatisfaction is required to move spectators into action, producing unexpected, surprising and contradictory findings (Baer et al., 2019; Kester, 2005). In this study, Forum Theatre provided a space for enabling specific features of empathy and dissatisfaction to engage local people to participate. In the following subsections, how/why local people engaged in dialogues regarding power differences in environmental decision-making and values towards nature will be presented.

5.1.2 | Forum theatre and intersectionality to discuss local power differences

People and nature are interdependent, and understandings of how nature contributes to people's life vary across their worldviews and knowledge systems, when only a narrow set of worldviews are included, as it often happens when there are power differences, this will have implications for what values and ways of relating to nature are included (Agarwal, 2009; IPBES, 2022). We found that the experiences of exclusion from environmental decision-making portrayed in the script acted as 'callings' for different social groups to express

their worldviews on nature. In this sense, each scene (Table 2) represented interactions among specific social groups, specific identities constituted through simultaneous social axes, which influenced their relationship with nature (Elmhirst et al., 2017; Mollett & Faria, 2013). For each scene, we found that some social groups like the ones portrayed in the scenes were engaged in participating. For example, the second scene showed an elderly, semi-literate female character being oppressed by the *Comisario* character, a young, literate male head of the community (see Table 2). This scene represented exclusion of women from environmental decision-making based on the intersection of their land tenure, education and age. This scene particularly moved elderly women in the audience who performed different ideas to help the character face her conflict. One of these was creating a network of women including the wife of the *comisario*, who confronted the difficulties of being heard as users of nature in *ejidal* assemblies. The following comment is part of the dialogue between this participant and the character *Comisario*:

That is true, and it couldn't just be me, it could be other women, maybe your wife too. We could make our jams and do what we want, a business for women and sell the jams here, or sell them in other places, pack them and send them.

Forum Theatre (elderly mother in Galicia)

Similarly, in the third scene, a male character without land rights named Pablo was concerned about presenting his ecotourism project to the community (see Table 2). This scene prompted some male audience members who were part of the communities' ecotourism projects to share some advice, such as encouraging Pablo to recruit more people interested in the project, and then, as an organized group, to look for economic support from the government (Forum Theatre in El Pirú).

In the fourth scene, Marcela, a young and landless female character was facing difficulties becoming included in an economic project (see Table 2). This scene was planned as an opening to discuss the participation of families without land within environmental decision-making. It generated some comments about the importance of caring for the rainforest together with women and children's well-being. For example, in the next comment a participant during the Forum Theatre intervened to say:

Well, she should express her point of view with the authorities in private ... and the authorities also have to be flexible, take care of the rainforest, the rain, the animals but also of her children and grandchildren, the future'. So, if she wants to work, well, then the ecotourism centre is for creating jobs...

Forum Theatre (female, young mother in Galicia).

Yet participants did not specifically mention the difficulties of landless people in participation. In the interview, a young, landless female participant commented briefly about how she wanted to participate

in decision-making, but she did not say anything in the Forum Theatre because she knows that *ejidal* communities require people to hold land rights to participate (Interviewee 8, El Pirú). Forum Theatre was, therefore, an opportunity to break norms and confront power differences, but it requires longer-term engagement to encourage people to 'rehearse' imagined 'solutions' that may challenge deeply rooted power relationships.

Different social groups face diverse conflicts that limits their participation in decision-making; visualizing power differences among these groups is key for the incorporation of a wider set of values into environmental decisions (Kenter et al., 2019). For example, incorporating women's values in decision-making could lead to better actions to protect nature (IPBES, 2022); in this case, they are looking to diversify productive activities in which all women can participate (and obtain benefits) and to participate in actions that support nature conservation.

In addition, participants were facing but were also confronted by performers playing the 'oppressor' role, as in real life. It is worth noting that no participants confronted the oppressor character with aggression or hostility. Instead, they tried different ways to respectfully solve the conflicts. This portrays Forum Theatre as a safe space to discuss local power differences, due to the distance that performance and characters create between the participant and the conflict being explored (O'Grady, 2022; Sullivan et al., 2008). Besides, we want to emphasize that Forum Theatre does not look for solutions; rather it looks to explore 'solutions', fostering emancipation processes because the solutions are not 'given' by experts from outside but are explored within the community (Boal, 2013; O'Connor & Anderson, 2020).

Despite the difficulties, the intersectionality approach in the design of Forum Theatre allowed discussion of some power differences as experiences of exclusion/inclusion of local people from decision-making within those communities, based on the intersection of social axes such as gender, age and land tenure, for example, the calls for women's inclusion in decision-making to advocate for more diverse livelihoods that would promote nature conservation and benefit women and future generations (in scenes 2 and 4). This shows the potential of performance arts-based methods over conventional participatory methods, for embracing the challenges of exploring local power differences in environmental decision-making.

5.2 | Local values brought to the fore during the Forum Theatre

Plural values towards nature mentioned during the Forum Theatre are presented according to the three categories of the Value Landscape Approach: fundamental, governance-related values and assigned values. Although presented as three categories, it is important to note that values do not emerge in isolation but are interrelated. Further, they are dynamic and, therefore, may change over time (Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Ioris, et al., 2017), with our analysis just providing a 'snapshot' in a given context at a given moment.

5.2.1 | Fundamental values

Participants did not openly discuss fundamental values during the Forum Theatre. This may be because they are located at a deeper level and people would not typically refer to them explicitly in conversation (this is also in line with Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Ioris, et al. (2017)'s empirical application). Nevertheless, fundamental values were identified through the emotions and desires that guided the reflection and creation of diverse imagined 'solutions'.

The main dimensions in which participants developed their fundamental values were self-transcendence (universalism) and self-enhancement (achievement). Universalism is associated with the consideration and protection of the well-being of all people and nature, while achievement is associated with feelings of success through demonstrating capabilities according to social standards (Schwartz, 2002). For example, regarding universalism, participants mentioned protecting nature because it is a key element for future generations' well-being. In addition, their desire to protect nature was further complemented by knowledge gained through participating in environmental training. These were carried out by government agencies and non-profit organizations as part of the implementation of ecotourism activities. They saw their participation in training as an important achievement in their lives:

Many people say that training (part of the ecotourism project) is wasted time, but it is not wasted time for me, it is 'learned' time, it teaches us of conservation and that brings sustainability to our ejido, and the ejido now sustains itself (economically) thanks to that.

Forum Theatre (middle aged mother-*ejidataria* in El Pirú).

Usually, achievement and universalism are portrayed as antagonistic, with achievement representing personal success and universalism representing acceptance of others as equal (Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Glenk, et al., 2017; Schwartz, 2002). However, in our Forum Theatre, these values towards nature seem to coexist in non-antagonistic ways, highlighting how the Forum format enables the staging and challenging of complex values-based contexts.

Bringing fundamental values towards nature to the fore is important as they guide human-nature relationships because concrete behavioural options are embedded in fundamental values (Sauer & Fischer, 2010). For example, in a study by Sauer and Fischer (2010), fundamental values such as universalism and conformity played a significant role in guiding German citizens' attitudes towards payment schemes to support buffer strips. In our case, we found that fundamental values could play a significant role in guiding local people towards sustainable nature managements to protect nature.

5.2.2 | Environmental governance-related values

These were associated with some of the principles of good environmental governance such as legitimacy and capability (Lockwood

et al., 2010). From a normative perspective, legitimacy refers to rules and norms that underpin democratic processes (Lockwood et al., 2010). Capability refers to resources, skills, leadership and knowledge that enable people to work effectively towards their environmental goals (Lockwood et al., 2010). These environmental governance-related values could ensure ways for fair decision-making procedures and equitable distribution of nature's contributions to people or to strengthen environmental legislation (IPBES, 2022; Schulz, 2018).

Regarding legitimacy, some participants (mostly women) expressed how rules and procedures were barriers to their participation in environmental governance. It is well known that the lack of representation of some groups in *ejidal* assemblies challenges the legitimacy of decision-making, since in most of the rural areas in Mexico only 'ejidatarios' (mostly men) are allowed to participate (Bee, 2016; Trench et al., 2018). During the Forum Theatre, women proposed valuing their inclusion in decision-making process for making fair environmental decisions that can represent their relationship with nature (see also Subsection 5.1.2). Participants also mentioned values that can be associated with legitimacy and capability as principles of 'good' environmental governance. The legitimacy of authorities lies in the integrity with which authority is exercised, for example not manipulating outcomes for personal advantage. Having knowledge about different needs (as a capability component) is key to developing solutions to environmental issues (Lockwood et al., 2010).

All needs are very important, as a Comisario, I think it is necessary for people who work in livestock to not prohibit it to them... but also to promote the ecotourism project because it works now for us and... our next generations are going to continue... and the ladies can get involved too.

Forum Theatre (male, young father in El Pirú)

Ignoring environmental governance-related values of those most affected by environmental decisions can lead to negative interplay between ecosystems and social outcomes (Akhmouch & Correia, 2016; Schulz, 2018). For example, in some communities in Indonesia, the absence of equity as an environmental governance-related value excludes women's values from water distribution policies, resulting in women living with water scarcity (Cole, 2017). In our case, the lack of representation of different values towards nature was questioned through environmental governance-related values in terms of the legitimacy of the environmental decision-making process and the capability of authorities. It can be argued that, for these communities, having authorities who are empathetic towards community members' needs is important for better environmental and social outcomes.

5.2.3 | Assigned values to nature

Most of the participants expressed assigned values to nature related to provisioning and regulating services. Following Martínez-Alier (2002), this could be explained by the material dependence of rural people on ecosystems. However, we found a clear connection between assigned values with other types of values, such as universalism and inclusion. For example, participants mentioned cattle management as a very lucrative activity, but which sometimes needs extensive clearance of rainforest, that is, signalling some of the trade-offs across ecosystem services. Some participants opposed extensive ranching on these grounds. A comment from a participant as *spect-actor* illustrates this:

With the little experience I have, I could say that ... If we receive a forest with flora and fauna and if we used it for livestock, that project is cash, we spend it now and we will end the rainforest... we must talk a lot about this (conservation) and value what the living rainforest can give us.

Forum Theatre (male, elderly father in El Pirú).

However, they also shared technical knowledge gained through training and exchanges of experiences with other communities, about how to improve ranching to protect nature and create jobs for community members, for example:

The rainforest is running out and it is our habitat... what you must do is ask for a better project, ask the authority to help you, to give you a project, let's say technically do not clear more area, build a stable, technically manage the cattle and then sell the milk and the meat... so we invite you (cattleman) to do a good project that even creates other jobs for us, such as taking care of the calves.

Forum Theatre (middle aged mother in Galacia).

The interconnection of values towards nature in terms of assigned values, governance-related values and fundamental values is also clear in the previous quote, where assigned values relating to cattle were related to governance-related values (inclusion of women in economic activities based on other forms to use nature) and fundamental values (caring for people and nature). We recognize that the values elicited during Forum Theatre were complex to categorize because the emotive narratives in which they emerged were also important in understanding those values. This is consistent with the idea that people living in rural areas are more likely to attribute their values to the importance of significant relations and responsibilities between humans and nature, as explained by the relational values

approach (Chan et al., 2016; Martínez-Alier, 2002), rather than just focusing on anthropocentric instrumental values. Instrumental values are the values most used to implement public policy (Gómez-Baggethun & Ruiz-Pérez, 2011; Schulz, Martin-Ortega, Ioris, et al., 2017; Winter, 2007) and often criticized as a promoter of nature commodification (Gómez-Baggethun & Ruiz-Pérez, 2011; Martin-Ortega et al., 2019).

The use of the plural values concept to analyse Forum Theatre allowed us to understand how values towards nature are interconnected, shared and constructed in the people's experiences regarding environmental decisions. Improving information about the diverse local people's values towards nature is key to improving the outcomes of negotiations and reaching more just and sustainable results (Kenter et al., 2019). For example, relational and instrumental values held by local people from rural communities, if they are well represented in protected area decisions (often driven by intrinsic values), could result in a more effective conservation outcomes (IPBES, 2022).

5.3 | Some reflections on values and Forum Theatre in transformational processes

Without transformative change, humanity is at risk of degrading nature, with consequences for nature's crucial contributions to people (Chan et al., 2020; Tschakert et al., 2017). Values can serve as intervention points for facilitating transformational changes (Horcea-Milcu et al., 2019), as transcendental values underpin individual behaviours and, at a collective level, the societal paradigms from which institutions, rules and norms emerge (Horcea-Milcu et al., 2019, p. 1431). Changing values can be a strategy for sustainability transformation (Kenter et al., 2019). However, we agree with Chan et al. (2020), who argue that transformation in sustainability is not primarily a process of changing values but of identifying and incorporating values that people already hold. In this regard, Forum Theatre is a potential method in transformational processes as it brings plural values placed in nature to the fore, in a more emotive and dynamic form that goes beyond pre-established analytical views on values, looking for their further incorporation in decision-making.

In addition, trans-disciplinary approaches, such as this one, can be leverage points for transformation in sustainability (Fischer & Riechers, 2019; Horcea-Milcu et al., 2019) allowing understanding of emotional and philosophical connections to nature, challenging pre-established analytical views on values by actively involving actors outside academia (Muhr, 2020). Forum Theatre allows us to create reflexive interaction among the research team and local artists. In this regard, the perspectives and knowledge from the scientific researchers was not privileged over the performers in terms of the final script and performances (Walsh et al., 2022). For example, the scripted materials were drafted by the core team and further revised by local performers. Also, during the Forum Theatre activity, the academics were observers with minimum intervention, with the local performers leading the activity. As artists are usually perceived as 'context providers' rather than

a 'content provider' (Kester, 2005, p. 153), their participation in this project created a sense of confidence for the local people to engage in discussion about diverse human-nature relationships (values towards nature) and their experiences of environmental decision-making (local power differences).

Moreover, values negotiation, another important lever in transformations in sustainability (Horcea-Milcu et al., 2019), was identified during Forum Theatre. In our activity, locals negotiated their values towards nature in the space between the self and the fictitious other (Edwards et al., 2016). For example, when local women decided to go onstage and make the Doña Ofelia character perform their 'solutions', these were confronted by the *Comisario*, allowing improvisations about value conflicts as happens in reality. Therefore, Forum Theatre could also be identified as a space where participants can prepare themselves for future environmental negotiations with outside actors, 'rehearsing' including their values in environmental decision-making.⁶

Forum Theatre does not intend to be 'the best' method to categorize and assess the various values assigned to nature following rational and scientific arguments, as some of the most conventional environmental valuation methods do (Kenter et al., 2016; Raymond et al., 2014). In fact, Forum Theatre as valuation method should be carefully integrated alongside other methods to broaden our understanding of human-nature relationships but also to assure a better quality of analyses and interpretations (Muhr, 2020). For example, in this study and others (Edwards et al., 2016; Hensler et al., 2021; Heras et al., 2016) arts-based methods were implemented along with interviews to complement data on values towards nature with data on broader human-nature relationships. In addition, opening spaces for diverse voices to emerge is insufficient; it is equally important to have long-term strategies to ensure that decision-makers are exposed to these voices (Guhrs et al., 2006; Sullivan et al., 2008; Turnhout et al., 2020). This was discussed by the participants at the end of the Forum Theatre:

if what was said during the forum does not get to government agencies, Forum Theatre might be useless.

Forum Theatre (middle-age man in El Pirú).

Forum Theatre can be part of the diverse methods in valuations and transformation processes towards better representation of local people in environmental decision-making. However, is important to engage environmental professionals such as government agents or NGO actors to better understand the possibilities of these methods in environmental decision-making processes in practice.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

Representing and including local people's views and values has been a constant challenge in environmental governance, reflecting power differences that exclude them based on their multiple social axes,

such as gender, age or ethnicity. Participatory methods have been advocated as mechanisms to include marginalized voices into environmental decision-making. However, they have not yet been able to fully engage with power differences. This paper examined Forum Theatre, a performance arts-based method, in its potential to serve as a mechanism for local people to dialogue on values towards nature and power differences in environmental decision-making.

Participants of the Forum Theatre connected empathetically with the characters and felt dissatisfaction over conflicts. The emotional connections were key triggers of participation, motivating the audience to dialogue about their experiences of exclusion while they explored their 'solutions'. Forum Theatre does not look to 'resolve' conflicts, rather to explore possible solutions in the safe space of the fictitiousness. In this Forum Theatre people 'rehearsed' imagined values negotiations, unfolding conflicts based on power differences, putting their values towards nature on the table of the 'fictitious' environmental decision-making.

The use of the plural values concept to analyse Forum Theatre allowed us to understand how values towards nature are interconnected, shared and constructed in the people's experiences regarding nature management and environmental decisions. Fairer representation of local people's values of nature can lead to fairer and more sustainable decisions. For example, the representation of local people's values such as the importance of protection of nature for the well-being of future generations can lead to sustainable actions (over time) in reforestation or wildlife protection.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on performance arts-based methods in environmental decision-making. We do not claim that these methods are universally superior as participatory tools, or that they have no limitations and risks. Further research should complement this approach in comparison with more traditional methods. However, to fully establish the ability of performance-based approaches to positively increase inclusivity and mitigate the exclusion of people's values in environmental governance would require engaging in long-term processes of local transformation. It also requires engagement with those involved implementing environmental decisions affecting the communities and that operate at other levels of the governance structure, for example, policy makers, environmental NGOs and other environmental professionals. Understanding their perception of Forum Theatre could help gauge its potential as a mechanism for fairer environmental decision-making.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Silvia Olvera-Hernandez had the conception of the study within the guidelines of her PhD work at the University of Leeds. Julia Martin-Ortega, George Holmes, Paula Novo and M. Azahara Mesa-Jurado supervised the work. Julia Martin-Ortega led and administrated the funding. Aylwyn Walsh, Alice Borchì and Silvia Olvera-Hernandez developed the Forum Theatre script with input from other co-authors. Aylwyn Walsh led the training with performers with the support of Alice Borchì, M. Azahara Mesa-Jurado and Silvia Olvera-Hernandez. Paula Novo, M. Azahara Mesa-Jurado and Silvia Olvera-Hernandez

conducted the fieldwork. Silvia Olvera-Hernandez carried out the analysis with inputs from co-authors on the interpretation of the results. Silvia Olvera-Hernandez led the writing of the manuscript and the reviews with inputs from all co-authors. All co-authors approved its publication.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Due to ethical restrictions, the data from the interviews and Forum Theatre are archived on secure servers at the authors' institutions and cannot be made openly available to preserve the confidentiality of the participants. However, there is recording data openly available from <https://water.leeds.ac.uk/our-missions/mission-2/performing-change/about/>.

ORCID

Silvia Olvera-Hernández  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2874-5621>

ENDNOTES

¹ Activities such as when spectators become *spect-actors* freezing an on-stage action, so they can go on stage to take the role of the protagonist, and change the scene. Another is 'Hot seating', which the oppressed character can be interviewed by participants to explore details about their life, and create links of empathy. Also, the 'missing character', the audience can create new characters that might bring solutions to the problem (Boal, 1992, 2013; Campbell, 2019).

² The Usumacinta ROC (risk of commodification) Project experimentally explored behavioural changes associated with the use of the notion of ecosystem services in local communities in Mexico. Results uncover political dilemmas that go beyond practical operational challenges of ecosystem services-based approaches and which might be rooted at a deeper level (Martin-Ortega et al., 2019). Further information on the project and a showcase of the Forum Theatre application can be found here: <https://water.leeds.ac.uk/news/trying-new-and-fun-participatory-research-approaches-the-theatre-forum/>.

³ From 1940 to the 1970, the distribution of land was based on the expansion of the agricultural frontier and the promotion of the colonization of the extensive national lands to distribute between landless

peasants from other regions of the country and strengthen the border with Guatemala to avoid invasion, either through *ejido*, or by strengthening private property.

- ⁴ See Walsh et al. (2022) for more information about the methodological approach for writing the script.
- ⁵ A summary video showcasing the process is available online: <https://bit.ly/3dX0aHX>. We invite the reader to watch the video as part of the reading of this article, since the performance nature of the research is more fully appreciated through the actual performing-action.
- ⁶ We again recommended seeing the video referred to in Section 4.2.3 for full appreciation of this point.

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