

Taking {Soil} {Care} {Seriously}: {A} {Proposition}

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

This chapter argues that care theories can usefully inform research and governance which aims to create better relations between soils and societies. Firstly, care theories are relevant to the framing of soil-related situations, such as soil research. Applying care theories brings into high relief the political nature of deciding what constitutes a soil or what constitutes soils' needs. Secondly, care theories are relevant to the question of what it means to be responsible for soils, and to the societal distribution of this responsibility. By stressing inter-dependence, the care perspective encourages a shift in soil governance from a focus on individual agents towards broader socio-material relations. Thirdly, care is both sparked into being and propelled by attentiveness, which is both an individual and collective practice. Cultivating soil attentiveness requires the creation of new collective framings which would link attention to soils with societally valued ways of living off and with the land. Overall, the chapter argues for a relational approach to soil research. Further, it shows that applying care to soil research shifts the question from what the soils need to do to support human societies, to what human societies need to do to support soils. Care theories can thus contribute to understanding soils as independent of but entangled with human activities, and understanding human well-being as intrinsically bound with the well-being of soils. © The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023.