

Abstract

In this paper, modernism and indigenous ideas are subjected to competitive assessment. The paper uses Kakamega forest, a conserved equatorial forest in Kenya, to study the views of traditional healers and patients on how the simultaneous representation of modernity and indigeneity impacts choice, use, benefit and sustainability of traditional healing. In the process, the realities that confront healers in a fluid quasi-modern environment are analyzed and presented. Data is drawn from four traditional healers that describe their trade within the confines of indigenous and post-modern environments. Additional information is collected from forest conservators in Kakamega. We employ the metaphor of "the tragedy of modernity" to categorize and discuss the data along with both its positive and negative aspects. The results show that the colonial epistemologies that classify indigenous knowledge as superstition have adverse impacts on the use of traditional resources and may be of little benefit to communities that depend on them. Policy implications of these findings are discussed.