

Shared and cultural values of ecosystem services

The collective values that people hold for natural environments are important if ecosystems are to be managed for the benefit of all. These shared social and cultural values are not always accounted for in conventional assessments and in decision-making. This research, conducted as part of the National Ecosystem Assessment Follow-On, provides an overview of the methods which can be used to incorporate shared values into decision making and help decision-makers to take account of the views of those they are likely to affect.



'Shared values are those which bind people together, for example as citizens and as members of communities. New approaches are needed for identifying and taking account of these often hidden, yet strongly held, shared values.'

Background

People hold collective as well as individual values. These 'shared values' are those which people hold together as members of communities, groups or as a citizen from local to global scales. For natural environments, shared values might relate to, for example, the provision of benefits such as emotional wellbeing, climatic stability or crop pollination. Shared values are not always accounted for in decision-making because conventional approaches to valuing the environment focus on assessing individual values. There is a need to understand how shared values for the natural environment are comprised and how they have been and can be incorporated into decision-making.

Objectives

This part of the National Ecosystem Assessment Follow-On research sought to characterise the shared values people hold for the natural environment and use and develop methods by which they can be better understood and made use of in decision making.

Methods

The research used: 1) a Rapid Evidence Assessment literature review to identify the main types of shared and social values, 2) expert led reviews to explore specific topics related to shared values in more detail including the use of the term in economic valuation, in deliberation and in aesthetic and spiritual valuation, 3) development of a theoretical framework to identify the types and dimensions of shared values 4) case studies (two local and two national) to show how a range of methods can be used for assessing different types of shared

values, how they differ from individual values and how deliberative approaches might affect shared values.

Findings

The research identified seven different types of shared values:

- 1 Transcendental values: Are the principles and overarching goals which guide us and which are held beyond specific situations;
- 2 Cultural or social values: Are culturally shared principles, virtues and goals, and a shared sense of what is worthwhile and meaningful;
- 3 Communal values: Are held in common by members of a community. Examples include geographic or belief based values;
- 4 Group values: Are expressed by a group of people through, for example, consensus or majority vote;
- 5 Deliberated values: Are expressed as a result of people deliberating and typically involve discussion and learning;
- 6 Other-regarding values: Relate to the sense of importance attached to the well-being or the moral standing of others;
- 7 Value to society: Is the benefit of something to society as a whole.

Shared values are especially important when dealing with situations where there is a large degree of uncertainty and complexity, where values are likely to be subtle or implicit, where values are likely to be contested or with issues with large numbers of different stakeholders. A comprehensive assessment of values requires a mixed-method approach to reveal different types of value. Often it is necessary to undertake some kind of deliberative process to reveal shared values. These deliberative processes can help people to understand the values held by others and can lead to greater acceptance of the decisions emerging from such processes.

Recommendations

Further research is needed to develop methods for assessing the wide range of shared values for nature, to understand the process of deliberation and the role of social learning in the elicitation of shared values. This should closely involve decision-makers to ensure that approaches, methods and results are considered legitimate, relevant and useable.

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Reports and Publications: Kenter, J. et al (2014) Shared, plural and cultural values: a handbook for decision-makers. UK National Ecosystem Assessment Follow-On.

www.lwec.org.uk/sharedvalues. Kenter, J., O'Brien, K. et al (2015) What are shared and social value of ecosystems? *Ecological Economics*, 111: 86-99.