Ecosystem Services revisited: From scientific concept to policy practice

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Abstract

Introduction
A huge gap exists between the ‘stormy’ development of the concept “ecosystem services” (ES) in science and its potential use in policy practice. The scientists involved in development of the concept have their own ideas of how the concept should be used, based on their own experiences but fundamentally recognizing the need for a systemic perspective. The further evolution of the Ecosystem Approach, establishing geographical and socio-economic contexts in which ES are applied, emphasizes the importance of systemic thinking and practice. However, this systemic intent is poorly, if at all, reflected in generally ‘silod’ implementation in policy and practice; use of systems-based language is quite a different thing to systemic practice. There is a need for a change of culture from narrowly focused disciplinary issues, prevalent in policy-making institutions, which currently means that relative few policy-makers understand the concept of ES, and those that do struggle so implement it fully in local and regional development policies, soil and water policy, etc. Policy makers and scientists in different countries are generating, nevertheless, experiences with the application of the ES-concept in practice. What lessons can we draw from these experiences and what do they learn us about bridging the gap?

Key words: Ecosystem services, Decision making, Planning, Land management, Water management, Community engagement, Dialog, Participation, Multiple perspectives, Stakeholder engagement

Objective

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In this double (2 x 1 hour) session we aim to first to explore the gap between ES science and policy practices. This is done in brief presentations on experiences in applying of the ES concept. Thereafter the session continues to explore possible ways to bridge this gap by working together with/active involvement of all the session participants. Finally it is aimed to conclude the session with the formulation of a declaration on how to bridge the gap.

Outline

Timing in minutes from start of session:

00.00 Welcome and introduction to session and its objectives
Jos Brils Deltares, the Netherlands, jos.brils@deltares.nl
Adriaan Slob, TNO, The Netherlands, adriaan.slob@tno.nl

00.10 Experiences in applying of the ES concept in policy practice (10 minutes talks, 2 minutes questions after each talk):

Some experiences from the USA
Tijs van Maasakkers, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, USA
Tijs_van_Maasakkers@hks.harvard.edu Disentangling synergies and trade-offs between marine ES in Southern Chile
Luis Outeiro, University of Los Lagos, Chile,
louteiro@gmail.com Participatory assessment of ecosystem services and their resilience in the design of sustainable landscapes
Sylvestre Delmotte, McGill University, Canada
sylvestre.delmotte@mcgill.ca No Root, No Fruit – Sustainability and Ecosystem Services
Nicolas Dendoncker, University of Namur, Belgium
nicolas.dendoncker@unamur.be Using the ES concept for catalyzing of the transition from grey to green infrastructure
Jos Brils, Deltares, the Netherlands

01.10 Joint exploration – via an interactive and step-wise working session with all the session participants – of the gap and possible ways to bridge the gap:

- Listing the main bottlenecks in applying the ES concept from the cases presented and addition of important additional bottlenecks based on the own experiences from the session participants;
- Prioritization of the main bottlenecks, i.e. of the challenges to overcome;
- Selection of the (3 or 4) main challenges;
- Suggestions for how to overcome these main challenges.

Moderators: Adriaan Slob and Jos Brils

01.50 Joint formulation of a declaration on how to bridge the gap between ES theory and policy practices

Moderator: Adriaan Slob
Reporter: Jos Brils

02.00 End of session

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