Governance of urban ecosystem services in the global south: A synthesis

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Abstract

ABSTRACT
Urban ecosystem services is steadily growing and becoming a topical issue of research in the resilience community. Coupled with the current rapid rate of urbanisation, a conundrum has emerged of how best to govern ecosystem services and to develop sustainably in the global South? This synthesis seeks to identify and analyse how governance of urban ecosystem services is currently understood in urban contexts facing pressing poverty and inequality issues. The review examined key search terms ‘urban’ ‘ecosystem services’ and ‘governance’ from across Africa, Asia and Latin America. The review identified 30 key papers that contain combinations of these key words. We established a set of guiding criteria from adaptive governance and common pool resources literature. The ten principles in the evaluation criteria provided a critical framework for reviewing the urban ecosystem governance literature, and allowed us to create a matrix to identify commonalities or lack of deeper understandings regarding accountability of resource misuse, improper conflict resolution mechanisms, effective monitoring regimes, power sharing issues and weak cross-level interactions among user groups, government agencies and non-governmental organisations. These concerns are at the forefront of urban ecosystem governance literature. Moreover, the review also identified enabling factors such as building governance through adaptive management, diversity of stakeholders and social networks that encourage participative and collective action as important features of successful urban ecosystem governance. We reflect critically on the implications of these findings and the challenges of governing ecosystem services in the global south.

Keywords: Ecosystem services, Urban areas, Governance, Africa, Latin America, Asia.