Stakeholders’ perspectives on the practical relevance of the ecosystem services concept in Austrian river landscape management

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Overview

- Background
- Research questions
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion & Recommendations
BACKGROUND
The Ecosystem Services Concept

- academic/scientific construct
- in literature already addressed as mainstream
- limited engagement in its practical application

Böck et al. in review, based on Haines-Young and Potschin 2010 and Van Oudenhoven et al. 2012
RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Research questions

- Do different actors in river landscape management know the ES concept and are they aware of its various possible applications?

- Do they apply the concept in their working environment?

- Do they see it as practicable?

- Which concerns are there regarding the concept’s implementation?
METHODS
Case selection
Methods

- 110 qualitative interviews to determine...
  
  (1) …stakeholders’ knowledge regarding the ES concept
  (2) …its role in practice
  (3) …stakeholders’ awareness of its possible practical applications
  (4) …its perceived practicability

- Content analysis in Atlas.ti

- For visualization purposes certain aspects of the interviews were analyzed quantitatively
RESULTS
Knowledge and awareness regarding the ES concept

- Not familiar: 54%
- Familiar: 43%
- Undecided: 3%

n=74
Knowledge and awareness regarding the ES concept

Böck et al. (in review)
Relevance of the ES concept in the interviewees‘ working environments

Böck et al. (in review)

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Education/research: relevant 85%, not relevant 15%, undecided 0%
Forestry: relevant 100%, not relevant 0%, undecided 0%
Fishery/hunting: relevant 85%, not relevant 15%, undecided 0%
Energy industry: relevant 50%, not relevant 50%, undecided 0%
Nature protection: relevant 40%, not relevant 60%, undecided 0%
Water management: relevant 40%, not relevant 60%, undecided 0%
Tourism & water sports: relevant 70%, not relevant 30%, undecided 0%
Politics: relevant 100%, not relevant 0%, undecided 0%
Agriculture: relevant 100%, not relevant 0%, undecided 0%
Infrastructure: relevant 100%, not relevant 0%, undecided 0%

n=55
Perceived possible practical applications

The ES concept as support for planning and decision making
- For approaching politicians or the economy
- For raising acceptance in society

The ES concept as communication & education tool
- Fostering understanding for the connectedness of society with nature
- Increasing societal interest for protecting nature
Concerns regarding the implementation of the ES concept

- Questioned comprehensibility
- Questioned objectivity
- Assessment bias
- Redundancies with other concepts
- Lack of time and resources in administration
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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Conclusions

- study aimed at identifying the practical relevance of the ES concept

- revealed that the concept has not yet arrived in the working environment of the practice actors in Austrian river landscape management

  - limited awareness of the ES concept
  - concerns with regard to a practical application
Recommendations (1)

- **awareness raising** among the relevant stakeholder groups
- expansion of **inter- and transdisciplinary approaches**

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Böck et al. (in review)
Recommendations (2)

- **providing guidance** for the practical application of the ES concept
  - Clear steps to be followed in integrating the ES concept into policies and decision making processes
  - Building on experiences gained in the implementation of other concepts

- Developing *alternative* valuation **methods**
  - Including non-monetary values
  - Mixture of different approaches

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Thank you for your attention!
References

- Böck, K., S. Muhar, A. Muhar, R. Polt. in review. The Ecosystem Services Concept: Gaps between science and practice in river landscape management
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