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Getting a measure of nature: cultures and values in an ecosystem services approach

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Abstract:

We explore the concept of 'ecosystem services' as a way of understanding how particular relations between nature and society can be established and studied and as a potential integrating approach for interdisciplinary research. Given that something only becomes a 'service' within a particular, economically minded framework, the shift from thinking about 'ecosystems' to understanding 'ecosystem services' requires shifts in the form and content of scientific knowledge about perceived services. For those interested in the process of knowledge production, the rise in prominence of an ecosystem services approach affords the opportunity to ask questions about who will generate this knowledge and how it might relate to wider issues of sustainability decision-making. Thus, the concept is used here as an example of how we might move towards research that aims to understand the world from an integrated perspective and at the same time situates that research process in a sociopolitical context.

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