



How does Governance contribute to Conservation of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: A Conceptual Model of Knowledge use and the Effects of Arguments and Policies

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ABSTRACT

Biodiversity and ecosystem services are dominantly viewed as spatially defined units whose functions are vital and beneficial to humans either directly or indirectly. The recognition, and even monetary valuation, of the benefits is often taken to be a precondition for designing sustainable governance of biodiversity and ecosystem services. In other words, decisions are assumed to be based on a calculation of benefits and costs, and once there is accurate information, the decisions should generate the planned effects. However, instead of waiting for the accurate information about ecosystem service interdependencies, authorities, businesses, land-owners and managers are developing strategies and practices to enhance conservation and sustainable governance already in their current practice.

The conservation and sustainable management decisions of our time rely on diverse knowledge sources and combine them in deliberations and negotiations, drawing on multiple value domains. These decisions generate intended (and unintended) effects on the status of biodiversity and ecosystems. Whilst developing ever more elaborate ways of analyzing ecosystem services and their values, the research community should ambitiously advance also the understanding of governance and how it generates effects in the social-ecological system. This endeavor should make use of the abundant literature on policy analysis, evaluation and implementation as well as adaptive governance and multi-level governance.

To feed into the analysis and development of ecosystem service governance, the chains of impacts; from knowledge to practice through arguments and policies, need to be conceptualized. This paper develops the conceptual model of ecosystem service governance by drawing on research on knowledge use and the effects of arguments and policies.