

Stakeholder's perspective regarding the process of biodiversity valuation – a case study on the position of youth

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1 Introduction

In order to improve the decision-making process regarding biodiversity issues, it is necessary not only to further develop the valuation methodologies but also to sensitize society regarding the importance of understanding the different components and functions of biodiversity and how they are valued by society. However, due to the complexity of natural systems, most methodologies still present many limitations and are still not widely accepted by society. The purpose of this study is to further develop the debate on the process of biodiversity valuation through an analysis of the position of young people actively engaged in biodiversity-related issues. The ongoing debate refers to the need of attributing economic values to biodiversity in order to integrate conservation goals into our economy versus the risks of commodification of biodiversity that might arise from the valuation process.

2 Methods

I targeted young people from all over the world, preferentially between the ages of 18 and 35 years old that are engaged in any biodiversity-related activities. In order to reach the targeted group, the questionnaire was uploaded in the web through an online survey platform (Google Spreadsheet). The questionnaire was also circulated among the students from the Kyoto University Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies and from the University of São Paulo. The data was collected from September, 2012 to December, 2012, and I was able to secure 64 responses. The questionnaire was divided in two parts; the first part refers to the respondent's profile, their background, interests and activities. The second part refers to responses from the biodiversity valorization statements that indicate respondents' inclinations and positions regarding key issues within the topic. In order to analyze positions and opinions, a questionnaire containing open questions and statements utilizing a Likert-type scale was used as the research instrument.

3 Result and Discussion

Results showed that although most respondents are in favor of economic valuation of biodiversity as a tool to improve conservation efforts, they showed concern with the common practice of disregarding non-use and non-anthropocentric values of biodiversity. Respondents mentioned the lack of awareness regarding biodiversity itself, especially its values, importance and the role it plays in our planet, highlighting that there are more values apart from the economic ones.

The interdependency between biodiversity, society and culture was also highlighted. For most respondents culture and society are dimensions that are intrinsically connected and in an interdependent relationship with biodiversity, therefore decision making process regarding any of these dimensions should take into account the other dimensions as well. They also urge for an increase in awareness regarding biodiversity values.