

Capturing the value of ecosystem services in urban areas – the development of recommendations for TEEB-DE with stakeholders in Germany

Summary

The workshop “Capturing the value of ecosystem services in urban areas – the development of recommendations for TEEB-DE with stakeholders in Germany” was held from 21-24 November 2016 at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the island of Vilm, which is run by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation.

Event organisation und participants

The workshop was organised and implemented by Faktor Natur Consulting, Deutsche Umwelthilfe (Environmental Action Germany), StadtLand and Professor Bernd Hansjürgens from the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ).

Participants included representatives of local authorities and associations, nature conservation associations and initiatives, federal authorities directly or indirectly involved with nature conservation. Moreover, representatives from environmental planning and environmental science took part.

Context and objectives

The **utilisation of the ecosystem service concept**, including economic valuation approaches, is an important issue. This is highlighted by the TEEB study “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity”, initiated by the EU as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in order to assess the value of nature and its services, and to analyse ways of capturing such values in decision-making.

The **Natural Capital Germany - TEEB-DE** project is the German contribution to the international TEEB process. The aim of the project (2012 - 2017) is to demonstrate the relevance of ecosystem services for society and to promote the integration of nature into private and public decision-making on all levels.

In the course of the “Natural Capital Germany” project, three comprehensive reports were released: “Natural Capital and Climate Policy - Synergies and Conflicts”, “Ecosystem services in rural areas – basis for human wellbeing and sustainable economic development”, and “Ecosystem Services in cities – protecting health and enhancing quality of life”. Finally, a “synthesis report” will summarise the main results.

Intensive and direct **communication with and between all relevant actors** is necessary for the implementation and further distribution of the TEEB approach. For this, not only representatives from nature conservation are to be addressed but also representatives from those sectors which have significant impacts on land-use and the utilisation of nature such as, for example, urban development, housing and infrastructure development. The workshop on the island of Vilm was intended to contribute to this exchange.

The **objectives of the workshop** were thus to convey the findings of Natural Capital Germany and to develop and discuss recommendations to capture ecosystem service values associated with urban green in the context of urban development. Both the “Natural Capital and Climate Policy - Synergies and Conflicts” (2015) and the “Ecosystem services in urban areas” (2016) report served as main inputs to the workshop.

An **economic perspective** on the multi-functionality of urban green helps to illustrate the value of ecosystem services for society, especially in times of demographic and environmental change. In the course of the project, the aim was to specify trade-offs and synergies between land-use and ecosystem services, and to specify and develop recommendations for action in politics and administration. Next to aspects of urban adaptation to climate change, health issues as well as environmental justice in relation to access to urban green were discussed. Using a range of examples it was discussed which regulatory and planning instruments to strengthen the role of urban green exist and how synergies with financial support schemes for urban climate protection and adaptation can be utilised.

Methods and procedure

The workshop consisted of a set of keynote speeches followed by plenary sessions, parallel world cafés, as well as group sessions on various topics.

The **keynote speeches** primarily helped to provide a common knowledge base among participants. In some cases, they also contained recommendations for action from the point of view of the respective experts. A total of seven presentations were held on the following topics: the TEEB approach of Natural Capital Germany with respect to cities, the positive impact of urban green on city climate and health as well as issues of environmental justice.

The parallel **world cafés** served to elaborate on the ecosystem service approach and to reflect on its opportunities and limitations, as well as to develop a common understanding.

The focus of the **working group sessions** was on developing and implementing policy recommendations from Natural Capital Germany. To this end, recommendations for action in the form of instruments were developed for two focus areas: 1) Communication and awareness raising, and 2) Planning, regulating and financing. The workshops particularly benefited from the fact that many participants had wide-ranging expert knowledge because of their professional background in administrative bodies or state agencies.

Workshop results

Working groups “Communication and awareness raising”

The participants regard the ecosystem services concept to be useful in terms of supporting their work as it serves to find new arguments for environmental protection, to form new alliances and to increase acceptance among the general public and the actors concerned. They see a particular need for further developing the concept in terms of communication. In addition, there is still a lack of practical implementations of the concept: well-funded pilot projects in different natural and institutional settings are needed.

Working group „Planning, regulating and financing“

Existing instruments of the planning and building law were discussed and evaluated with respect to their potential to improve biodiversity in urban areas. Recommendations were made as to how environmental impact assessments and offsetting could be improved by including the ecosystem service approach. Particularly for the protection of soils, the ecosystem service approach would help to overcome the shortcomings of current soil valuation approaches. Furthermore, regional and inter-municipal concepts for the development of green infrastructure in cities can be enhanced by the utilisation of the ecosystem service approach. Participants hoped that the design of the new financial support programme “Future Urban Green”, which aims at improving biodiversity in urban areas, will help to protect and support urban green. Finally, there was consensus that new instruments that aim to amend existing planning instruments through species- and habitat protection concepts and green space development can be combined with the ecosystem service approach and would thus be highly beneficial to the protection of urban green.

The various debates during the workshop were documented and will soon be published as BfN script.