
Issue#1: Putting a Value on Nature's "Free" Services

Unlike other issues we have read so far, this issue was trying to weigh and value the externalities the environment was facing. Overall, the both arguments were suggesting the same point: environmental services should be valued. However, the arguments differed in a sense that one of them was suggesting it was possible these services, on the other hand, the other was suggesting it was hard to measure this value. First argument was for measuring the value, whereas the second one was against this.

First argument was using examples from animals like bees and forests of India, Amazons, South America and areas nearby, over and over. Presenting issue from both perspectives—consumer and producer—this argument made a better job drawing a clear in image in my head. “For the timber and plantation barons of Indonesia...homes and livelihoods”(pg4, 2nd paragraph). As in this phrase from the issue, the producers—the barons in this case—value how much crop can they make out of a forest but they don't consider the cost of the nature's services. “Many of these services(nature's free services) are indispensable to the people who exploit them, yet are not counted as real benefits, or as a part of GNP.”(pg5, 3rd paragraph). Nature's services cannot be replaced by manpower therefore, once destroyed there is no way of being able to use it again. The examples given in the argument are helpful enough to understand that humans are destroying the environment and day-by-day the natural resources are depleting. Nobody disagrees this *fact*. What is more important and hard to determine, however, is to measure the cost/value of using these resources. Here are some ways presented by the book to measure this cost:

- Measuring the economic value of a service that manpower can build to replace a service that nature provides. (Ex: Mangrove Forests; pg8, 4th paragraph)

- Measure the economic value to a society if they did not have this natural service.

(Ex: New York City; pg9, 3rd paragraph)

Even though these ways of measuring value seem logical and efficient, most of the time they are too hard to measure. Because some natural sources provide so many services, it is hard to measure them. Also, “for so long, we have viewed the natural world as an inexhaustible resource and sink” (pg13, 4th paragraph). Lastly, depleting some services have unforeseen and unpredictable costs and values. Loss of individual species is an example of this. All in all, after reading the first argument, I was convinced that we are depleting nature’s services fast and it is most of the times hard but possible to measure the value lost.

Second arguments seems to be more logical since it accepts the fact that a value should be put on nature’s services but it is often hard to do so. “For most of values that humans attach to biodiversity and ecosystem services...single scale of values.” (pg17, 2nd paragraph). Dividing these costs into four major categories, this side of the argument seems to do its homework better than the first side. Overall, the second argument repeated their thesis several times and backed it up with examples.

Hence, we came to conclusion that nature’s services should be weighed and put a price tag, however it is hard to do so because of the complexity. If we cannot measure these costs effectively, what we can do is stop or slow down finishing these services up. “It is not too late to provide essential...pest control agents.”(pg12, 5th paragraph).