Ten years after the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: A Global Perspective on Water Ecosystem Services

Water World Congress - Special Session convened by Julia Martin-Ortega, Robert C. Ferrier & Iain J. Gordon
Edinburgh, 27th May 2015
Millennium Ecosystem Assessment launched in 2001 to ‘assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the scientific basis for action needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems’

Main findings (2005)

- Over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time
The raise of a new ‘language’

- Concerns about the effects and dependencies of human life in the natural environment are very long standing (e.g. Malthus 1888’s *Principles of Population*, 1972 Club de Rome’s *Limits to Growth*, 1992 Rio de Janeiro’s *Earth Submit*....)

- The term ecosystem services pre-dates the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (60s-70s ecological conservation)

- The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment raised a new ‘language’
  - Popularization and mainstreaming of the notion of...
and of expectations.
& ten years have passed

- How much have we moved from theory to practice?
- How far ecosystem services assessments have progressed?
- What are still the main limitations?
- What lessons have been learnt from the different experiences?
- How can we improve application?
- Has this represented a paradigmatic swift?

.........
Trying to start answering some of these questions...

- This Special Session aims to contribute to a better understanding of what are ‘ecosystem services-based approaches’, how have they been applied in different contexts, what has been achieved, what are the main limitations...

- The water cycle reflects very well the idea of natural capital and services flows impacting on human well-being

- Great amount of research and impact on practice (e.g. vast majority of PES schemes involve water services)
UNESCO’s International Hydrology Series publication by Cambridge University Press
Structure

- **Part I:** how ecosystem services-based approaches can help address *major global challenges* (climate change, food and energy supply and biodiversity loss)

- **Part II:** is the notion of ecosystem services useful in the context of
## Today’s talks

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Participating in the discussion

Make your contribution

- Ask questions
- Challenge the speakers
- Raise concerns
- Share your experiences!

Two methods:

- #water_ESWWC