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Ce sujet propose les 3 documents suivants :

- un article intitulé **Should We Put A Dollar Value on Nature** publié dans *Time* le 6 mars 2010 ;
- un article intitulé **Putting a price on the rivers and rain diminishes us all** publié dans *The Guardian* le 6 août 2012 ;
- un extrait de *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* de John Muir, publié en 1916.

*L'ordre dans lequel se présentent les documents est aléatoire.*

**TIME**

## Should We Put A Dollar Value On Nature?

By Judith D. Schwartz | Saturday, Mar. 06, 2010

Nature lovers might cringe at the term “ecosystem services” to describe, say, the view of a pristine beach or a stream teeming with trout. But a growing number of experts within the scientific and economic communities say that putting real economic value on components of nature will help protect the environment and promote biodiversity.

Far from cheapening nature, thinking in terms of “natural capital” can offer a way to assess the crucial but unmeasured benefit that humans derive from nature. Ascertaining that value can then help decision makers bring environmental factors more explicitly into their planning.

Can biodiversity loss, then, be seen as a failure of the market? “Biodiversity is the living capital of the planet,” says Pavan Sukhdev, a senior banker with Deutsche Bank and Special Adviser to the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Green Economy Initiative. Like any capital, he says, it has to be measured to be managed. “If you don’t count half of your balance sheet, you’re going to get your profit and loss ratio incorrect — and we have.”

Sukhdev, who’s also Study Leader for a UNEP initiative called The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), says that currently “the economic value attached to nature is zero. Our metrics are geared toward consumption and production of man-made goods and services, and we tend to gloss over nature.” This, he says, has led to “bad accounting” which, in turn, has contributed to rapid biodiversity loss.

There is clearly an irony in the notion that attaching a “price” to ecosystems can help people reconnect with nature and what it offers us. Yet appreciating nature from an economic perspective may put environmental concerns on the table in a way that governments and institutions can work with. “In speaking the language of economics, you can play a role in the policy process,” says Edward B. Barbier, Professor of Economics at the University of Wyoming, who does research on the economics of natural resources. “Twenty-five years ago, people said, ‘That’s horrendous — you can’t discuss nature that way!’ Now they say, ‘You’re right. We’ve got to put a value on nature.’”

What kind of value are we talking about? According to research cited in the TEEB report, an annual investment of \$45 billion to biodiversity conservation worldwide could safeguard about \$5 trillion in ecosystem services — a benefit to cost ratio of 100 to 1.

[...]



Marcelo Sayao / EPA / Corbis  
Deforestation in the Amazon, Brazil

“The reason we’re losing natural capital is because it’s free,” says Ed Barbier, noting that we often think of conservation in terms of its costs rather than its value, and regard manufactured goods in terms of value rather than their environmental costs. Says Barbier: “When we incorporate the services of ecosystems we may start to think: maybe the costs of maintaining [the integrity of] ecosystems aren’t that high compared with the benefits. Maybe the gains we get out of converting nature into commodities are not so large in comparison. The point is that we don’t see that tradeoff until we go out and measure that value.”

## Opinion

George Monbiot<sup>1</sup>

theguardian

# Putting a price on the rivers and rain diminishes us all

Monday 6 August 2012, last modified on Wednesday 4 June 2014

Payments for ‘ecosystem services’ look like the prelude to the greatest privatisation since enclosure



Our rivers and natural resources are to be valued and commodified, a move that will benefit only the rich, argues George Monbiot. Photograph: Alamy

“The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying ‘This is mine’, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, ‘Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody’.”

Jean Jacques Rousseau would recognise this moment. Now it is not the land his impostors are enclosing, but the rest of the natural world. In many countries, especially the United Kingdom, nature is being valued and commodified so that it can be exchanged for cash.

The effort began in earnest under the last government. At a cost of £100,000, it commissioned a research company to produce a total annual price for England’s ecosystems. After taking the money, the company reported — with a certain understatement — that this

<sup>1</sup> George Joshua Richard Monbiot is a British writer, known for his environmental and political activism. He writes a weekly column for *The Guardian*, and is the author of a number of books, including *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain* (2000) and *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding* (2013).

exercise was “theoretically challenging to complete, and considered by some not to be a theoretically sound endeavour”. Some of the services provided by England’s ecosystems, it pointed out, “may in fact be infinite in value”.

This rare flash of common sense did nothing to discourage the current government from seeking first to put a price on nature, then to create a market in its disposal. The UK now has a natural capital committee, an Ecosystem Markets Task Force and an inspiring new lexicon. We don’t call it nature any more: now the proper term is “natural capital”. Natural processes have become “ecosystem services”, as they exist only to serve us. Hills, forests and river catchments are now “green infrastructure”, while biodiversity and habitats are “asset classes” within an “ecosystem market”. All of them will be assigned a price, all of them will become exchangeable.

The argument in favour of this approach is coherent and plausible. Business currently treats the natural world as if it is worth nothing. Pricing nature and incorporating that price into the cost of goods and services creates an economic incentive for its protection. It certainly appeals to both business and the self-hating state. The Ecosystem Markets Task Force speaks of “substantial potential growth in nature-related markets — in the order of billions of pounds globally”.

Commodification, economic growth, financial abstractions, corporate power: aren’t these the processes driving the world’s environmental crisis? Now we are told that to save the biosphere we need more of them.

Payments for ecosystem services look to me like the prelude to the greatest privatisation since Rousseau’s encloser first made an exclusive claim to the land. The government has already begun describing land owners as the “providers” of ecosystem services, as if they had created the rain and the hills and the rivers and the wildlife that inhabits them. They are to be paid for these services, either by the government or by “users”. It sounds like the plan for the NHS.

[...]

Already the government is developing the market for trading wildlife, by experimenting with what it calls biodiversity offsets. If a quarry company wants to destroy a rare meadow, for example, it can buy absolution by paying someone to create another somewhere else. The government warns that these offsets should be used only to compensate for “genuinely unavoidable damage” and “must not become a licence to destroy”. But once the principle is established and the market is functioning, for how long do you reckon that line will hold? Nature, under this system, will become as fungible as everything else.

Like other aspects of neoliberalism, the commodification of nature forestalls democratic choice. No longer will we be able to argue that an ecosystem or a landscape should be protected because it affords us wonder and delight; we’ll be told that its intrinsic value has already been calculated and, doubtless, that it turns out to be worth less than the other uses to which the land could be put. The market has spoken: end of debate.

All those messy, subjective matters, the motivating forces of democracy, will be resolved in a column of figures. Governments won’t need to regulate; the market will make the decisions that politicians have ducked. But trade is a fickle master, and unresponsive to anyone except those with the money. The costing and sale of nature represents another transfer of power to corporations and the very rich.

It diminishes us, it diminishes nature. By turning the natural world into a subsidiary of the corporate economy, it reasserts the biblical doctrine of dominion. It slices the biosphere into component commodities: already the government’s task force is talking of “unbundling” ecosystem services, a term borrowed from previous privatisations. This might make financial sense; it makes no ecological sense. The more we learn about the natural world, the more we discover that its functions cannot be safely disaggregated.

# Man's Place in the Universe

by John Muir

From *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (1916)

The world, we are told, was made especially for man — a presumption not supported by all the facts. A numerous class of men are painfully astonished whenever they find anything, living or dead, in all God's universe, which they cannot eat or render in some way what they call useful to themselves. They have precise dogmatic insight into the intentions of the Creator, and it is hardly possible to be guilty of irreverence in speaking of their God any more than of heathen idols. He is regarded as a civilized, law-abiding gentleman in favor either of a republican form of government or of a limited monarchy; believes in the literature and language of England; is a warm supporter of the English constitution and Sunday schools and missionary societies; and is as purely a manufactured article as any puppet at a half-penny theater.

With such views of the Creator it is, of course, not surprising that erroneous views should be entertained of the creation. To such properly trimmed people, the sheep, for example, is an easy problem — food and clothing “for us,” eating grass and daisies white by divine appointment for this predestined purpose, on perceiving the demand for wool that would be occasioned by the eating of the apple in the Garden of Eden.

In the same pleasant plan, whales are storehouses of oil for us, to help out the stars in lighting our dark ways until the discovery of the Pennsylvania oil wells. Among plants, hemp, to say nothing of the cereals, is a case of evident destination for ships' rigging, wrapping packages, and hanging the wicked. Cotton is another plain case of clothing. Iron was made for hammers and ploughs, and lead for bullets; all intended for us. And so of other small handfuls of insignificant things.

But if we should ask these profound expositors of God's intentions, How about those man-eating animals — lions, tigers, alligators — which smack their lips over raw man? Or about those myriads of noxious insects that destroy labor and drink his blood? Doubtless man was intended for food and drink for all these? Oh no! Not at all! These are unresolvable difficulties connected with Eden's apple and the Devil. Why does water drown its lord? Why do so many minerals poison him? Why are so many plants and fishes deadly enemies? Why is the lord of creation subjected to the same laws of life as his subjects? Oh, all these things are satanic, or in some way connected with the first garden.

Now, it never seems to occur to these far-seeing teachers that Nature's object in making animals and plants might possibly be first of all the happiness of each one of them, not the creation of all for the happiness of one. Why should man value himself as more than a small part of the one great unit of creation? And what creature of all that the Lord has taken the pains to make is not essential to the completeness of that unit — the cosmos? The universe would be incomplete without man; but it would also be incomplete without the smallest transmicroscopic creature that dwells beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge.