



Lectures' Outlines – Prof. Paulo A.L.D. NUNES

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LECTURE 1:

ECONOMICS OF VALUATION OF BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS

In this lecture we propose to evaluate critically the notion and application of economic, monetary valuation of biological diversity, or biodiversity. For this purpose four levels of diversity are considered: genes, species, ecosystems and functions. A large number of perspectives on biodiversity value are identified: intrinsic vs. functional, local vs. global, life diversity vs. resources, etc. A classification of biodiversity values is offered, based on a system of logical relationships among biodiversity, ecosystems, species and human welfare. Suggestions are made on which economic valuation methods can address which type of biodiversity value. The resulting framework is the starting point for a survey and evaluation of empirical studies at each of the four levels of diversity. Stated preferences valuation methods are by far the most used method. An important reason is that the other valuation methods are unable to identify and measure passive or nonuse values. At first sight, the resulting monetary value estimates seem to give unequivocal support to the contention that biodiversity has a significant, positive social value. Nevertheless, most studies lack a uniform, clear perspective on biodiversity as a distinct, univocal concept. In fact, the empirical literature fails to apply economic valuation to the entire range of biodiversity benefits. Therefore, available economic valuation estimates should generally be regarded as providing lower bounds to the unknown value of biodiversity benefits.