

Book Review

Kettunen, M. and P. ten Brink, eds. 2013. *Social and Economic Benefits of Protected Areas: an Assessment Guide*. Adbingdon: Routledge.

Reviewed by Moira Moeliono, CIFOR, Indonesia.

This book comes at a time when management of protected areas, especially in developing countries, is faced with challenges of local land claims. As a result, protected area management is becoming more inclusive, and local people are expected to (re)consider these areas as commons. Still a question often raised is “what’s in it for us?” This edited volume can help provide some answers.

The chapters do not specifically discuss different management practices. Rather, they constitute a practical guide to assess the different benefits provided by protected areas to consider in decisions on management strategies. This said, the book also makes the point that different socio-economic benefits are generated through particular management strategies.

The book encompasses two main parts: one focused on contextual guidance and the other on practical guidance. The first part presents a basic framework of ecosystem services, different ways to estimate their values, and general principles for assessment. It also addresses risks, including the necessity to apply caution in the proper use of assessments.

The second part explains steps and approaches to assess the value of different benefits. The use of examples and case studies, as well as explanatory tables makes the book easy to use. For every class of ecosystem service benefit, an overview is provided followed by discussions on their socio-economic importance and different approaches to assessment of different types of values, including the assessment of costs. It is, however, no cookbook and requires discretion by users in deciding which approach is the most useful in each specific case. To this end, the authors include discussions of possible risks and explain how to interpret, use and communicate the estimates, which makes the book extremely valuable in making decisions on the management of protected areas.

Especially useful is the discussion on stakeholders and the wider impact of protected areas. Different ecological services benefit different stakeholders, and

for local people in developing countries carbon sequestration is obviously less important than the direct provisioning of goods. The authors have done a good job in explaining the different approaches for marketable goods vs. household/subsistence use and cultural non-monetary values. Still, the end of the chapter on interpreting, using and communicating estimates contains several warnings on the risk of misusing the assessment results.

While the socio-economic importance of each benefit is discussed, the authors repeatedly make the point that not everything can be valued in terms of money. Decision makers at the local level in developing countries might prefer quick and simple answers, preferably in terms of monetary value, to translate into policy. This book can only help to decide on the most appropriate methodology to estimate different values. The hope is that a better understanding of the value of protected areas will lead to a greater acknowledgment of their importance. Protected areas, however, are primarily intended for biodiversity conservation and the authors warn “that valuation, whether based on monetary, quantitative or qualitative information, should never be considered a precondition for acting to conserve biodiversity”. Not all commons are protected areas, but the management of commons also benefit from a better understanding of their socio-economic values. This book will help decision makers in selecting the most appropriate policies and practices of land use.