



THE OCEAN CONNECTS US

Working together to communicate its value



**CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION**

UK BRANCH

OUR OCEAN HAS VALUE

Sue Ranger

Education and Engagement Manager, Conservation
at Marine Conservation Society





Crab hunting in Anstruther, Fife



Abandoned lido at Beaumaris, Anglesey



Enjoying fish'n'chips at Bexhill-on-Sea

It happened again, the rolling eyes and wry smile when I mentioned Ecosystem Services and conservation in the same sentence. Admittedly, my tea companion gave a little ground when I told him that my interest is in Cultural Ecosystem Services and trying to better understand, communicate and take account of people's love of the coast and sea and the benefits they get from time spent in natural places. "The only part that isn't evil," he replied.

I often find myself confronted with this sort of response when I use the language of Ecosystem Services to talk about non-monetary value – the ways in which people use and benefit from the environment that have no real basis in the traded economy.

We have one planet. One Ocean. The evidence of its value, across disciplines, is clear, convincing and growing. We know that unless we ensure that our ocean is clean, healthy and productive, our future health and wellbeing will be compromised.

Our wellbeing is underpinned by our health, by having clean air and clean water, by being able to provide for ourselves and our families – and in our society that means having a job or a way to earn money. But our wellbeing is also affected by a great deal that is less tangible and harder to measure.

It turns out that spending time in natural settings enhances our sense of wellbeing and that people who spend time at the coast or by the sea are not only healthier, but happier too.

Over the past three or four years, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has been supporting MCS work around value and particularly exploring ways of measuring a sense of wellbeing. One outcome of this is a developing tool to measure subjective wellbeing. It draws on existing literature and could

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enable us to measure the relative value of environments in terms of a number of parameters including people's sense of connectedness with nature, their aesthetic appreciation, sense of place/belonging, spirituality and social bonding.

We have been using this measure as part of a Gulbenkian funded 'experiment' in taking a **values based approach** to participatory decision-making in East Anglia, alongside detailed qualitative interviews.

Two weeks ago I had the pleasure of spending a couple of hours with the last licensed fisherman working off the beach at Sizewell in Suffolk, in the shadow of the nuclear power station. He is a gentleman named Noel Cattermole and he fishes single handed in an under 7m wooden boat.

Unsurprisingly Noel's responses to the wellbeing questions were all strongly positive.

He said to me: "Whoever put this together knows what it means to love the sea!"

In fact responses were strongly positive across all participants, from shrimp trawlers to marine educators.



Kayaking on the Norfolk Broads

Community based shellfish farming, Somerset



Noel Cattermole, fisherman at Sizewell, Suffolk

What excites me about this experiment is that taking a **values based approach** is testing what happens when, instead of starting from our points of difference, we start from our point of convergence – our shared, deeply held value of the ocean.

There is no denying that we live in a system which is economically driven – life and money are inextricably linked – but looking beyond how we secure the financial resources to keep body and soul together brings us into perhaps more interesting and fertile territory.

I have worked in conservation, almost exclusively marine conservation, for over 20 years. Without fail, the most productive and impactful moments have been where people – practitioners, resource users, academics, whoever they may be – identify and mutually recognise shared value. Seeing the common ground not only makes it possible to build respect, trust and positive dialogue, but it allows people to focus more swiftly on finding solutions instead of becoming

bogged down in mistrust, uncertainty, fear and conflict. The shared values that bind people to the environment and to each other are often more deeply held, less frequently expressed things that form the guiding principles in people's lives.

Why does a fisherman feel there is no other job in the world he could do? Why do I feel an immediate sense of peace and wellbeing when I let my eyes go to the ocean horizon?

Increasingly people are recognising the need to understand and take account of the values people attach to the natural settings they live and work in or visit when they can. Places that inspire a desire for future generations to know, enjoy and be connected with the environment. Settings that instill a sense of place and of belonging, of beauty and learning. This stuff is hard to quantify – so while the valuation studies proliferate, work to value what really matters lags behind, resulting in imbalance and inequality in the types of values that come into play when important decisions are made about the stewardship of natural resources.

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Pillbox in Hemsby, Norfolk



Skegness, Lincolnshire

In the eyes of many the language of Ecosystem Services has been hijacked by economics; for many people it tells a story only of trying to put a price on the environment and monetize its functions. This sets off all sorts of alarm bells. If you put a price on the environment, it suggests that it can be bought or sold or even worse that having a fistful of notes in your hand is somehow equivalent to having an ancient woodland, a reef, a kelp forest or a saltmarsh teeming with birdlife.

My reading of Ecosystem Services is that it includes all services, benefits and value that our environment delivers. These are defined as **the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living**. It is in understanding what makes our lives worth living that we need to answer questions about feelings and experiences that are priceless, that cannot be bought or sold, that are deeply held and extremely valuable – the things wrapped up in Cultural Ecosystem Services.

In policy and decision-making the language of ES seems to be taking a firm hold. We can either stand by and let the narrative be dominated by monetization and economics or grasp the opportunity to develop a framework for a credible language which could be used to better understand, capture, communicate and take account of value in the most holistic sense.

In the Marine CoLABoration we have come together around common ground – a shared recognition of the multifaceted value of the ocean and the potential for driving change through a **values based approach**. The potential in that excites me.

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