



Transcendental values and the valuation and management of ecosystem services



Christopher M. Raymond^{a,*}, Jasper O. Kenter^b

^a Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

^b Laurence Mee Centre for Society and the Sea, Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Shared values
Deliberative valuation
Pro-environmental behaviour
Conservation planning
Participatory psychometrics
Value-belief-norm theory

ABSTRACT

Despite the wealth of studies assessing values in relation to the management of ecosystem services, few studies have assessed transcendental values (TVs). TVs include ethical principles and desirable end states, such as ‘a world at peace’ or ‘unity with nature’ that transcend specific situations. We argue that TVs are important to consider in relation to ecosystem services because they: are implicit within ecosystem service valuations; directly and indirectly affect behaviour; influence the way we view knowledge and evidence; may be shared when more superficial values conflict; and underpin social representations. We demonstrate through case examples from the United Kingdom, Solomon Islands and Australia how they can be applied to the assessment of pro-environmental behaviour, how they might influence monetary valuations, and be affected by deliberative processes. TVs had direct effects on behavioural intention and significantly influenced willingness to pay. In contrast to conceptions of TVs as stable, in some cases deliberation led to significant change in TVs. We also observed indirect effects between TVs and constructs that mediate between TVs and behaviour, including beliefs and norms about conservation actions. We discuss the implications of the results for ecosystem valuation and management, including directions for future research.

1. Introduction

Recent critiques have highlighted challenges associated with the use of the ecosystem services (ES) framework to understand human-environment relationships. Key challenges include: (1) accounting for unsubstitutable and intangible values (Setten et al., 2012) and the social and intersubjective nature of many environmental values (Cooper et al., 2016; Kenter et al., 2015); (2) integrating market-based valuation of ES with social and cultural valuation techniques which take into account moral and ethical concerns (Chan et al., 2012; Raymond et al., 2013; Kenter, 2016b), and (3) explaining why socio-cultural processes are important to environmental attitudes and the management of a range of ES (Plieninger et al., 2015; Setten et al., 2012; Irvine et al., 2016; Everard et al., 2016). To address a number of these challenges, researchers have proposed a range of non-monetary techniques for valuing ES, particularly cultural ES (e.g., Brown et al., 2012; Brown and Fagerholm, 2014; Hernandez-Morcillo et al., 2013; Milcu et al., 2013; Raymond et al., 2009; UK NEA, 2014; TEEB, 2010).

Here we explore the concept of transcendental values (TVs) and its links to the valuation and management of ES. Kenter et al. (2015) refer to Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, pp. 551) to define TVs as: “[a] concepts

or beliefs, about desirable end states or behaviours, [b] that transcend specific situations, [c] guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and [d] are ordered by relative importance” (brackets added). TVs thus include more than just ethical principles such as ‘fairness’ and ‘honesty’, but also include things that can be characterised as desirable end states, such as ‘a varied life’, ‘family security’ or ‘mature love’. TVs can be differentiated from contextual values, which are values in the sense of the worth or importance of something, and from monetary or non-monetary value indicators such as willingness to pay (WTP) rankings and ratings (Kenter et al., 2015). For example, one might value living in harmony with the environment, but also health and equity (three different TVs). On this basis, one might believe that it is more important to enhance green infrastructure that is accessible for recreation by those in urban deprived neighbourhoods, rather than expand agri-environment schemes to improve water quality (contextual values for two different policy options for providing various ecosystem services). Consequently, he/she may rank, score or vote on these options differently or be willing to pay different amounts to implement them (different kinds of indicators).

Differentiation of transcendental and contextual values bears some resemblance to the division of values into ‘held’ values (guiding principles held as important) and ‘assigned’ values (values assigned

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: chris.raymond@enviroconnect.com.au (C.M. Raymond), jasper.kenter@sams.ac.uk (J.O. Kenter).

to people, places or things) by Rokeach (1973) and further discussed in an ecosystem service context by Ives and Kendal (2014). However, Kenter et al. (2015) argue that this conceptualisation is incomplete and ambiguous. While TVs are indeed held, and indicators are assigned, contextual values, as opinions about the importance of something, could be seen as both held and assigned, so it is unclear into what category they fall. Moreover, we argue that specification of values as context-specific or context-transcendent is more informative than whether they are held or assigned.

Studies of TVs have revealed that there are differences in value priorities both at the level of individuals, and of societies and cultures. The contrasting value priorities across levels of society may reflect differences in genetics, personal and collective experiences, geographic location and socialisation (Hofstede, 1991, 1983; Inglehart, 1995; Schwartz and Bardi, 2001). TVs are grounded in the cultural heritage of a society and pervasively reside within societal institutions (Frey, 1994). While the relative importance of different TVs differ across cultures, Schwartz and colleagues have demonstrated that there is a universal structure to TVs (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990, 1987; Schwartz, 1999, 1994, 1992). They devised a set of values structured across 10 categories, which are located across four poles (self-transcendence, self-enhancement, openness and tradition, Table 1) and two axes (self-transcendence vs self-enhancement, and openness vs tradition). Individual and cultural TVs are likely to correlate positively with other values within the same and adjacent categories, and negatively with values located in proximity to the opposing poles. In the environmental psychology literature, a simplified subset of Schwartz values is often applied and divided in a three dimensional structure of biospheric, altruistic and egoistic values. Biospheric values represent a set of associated values for the environment and the biosphere (e.g. protecting the environment, preventing pollution), altruistic values represent a set of values for the welfare of others (e.g. equality, being helpful) and egoistic values are associated with maximising personal benefit in various ways (e.g. social status, wealth) (de Groot and Steg, 2008).

TVs are important for ES valuation and management for a number

of reasons:

- 1) *Environmental valuation elicits TVs (whether or not intended).* Given that mainstream economics conceives of behaviour, preferences, choice-making and WTP as closely aligned (Salvatore, 2008; Lawson, 2013), if TVs affect environmental behaviour they are also likely to affect WTP for ecosystem services. Indeed, it is well established that stated preference methods for environmental valuation elicit not just utilitarian, contextual values, but a wide range of different value expressions based on TVs, including rights-, duty- and virtue-based judgements (e.g. Keat, 1997; Clark et al., 2000; O’Neill et al., 2008; Spash et al., 2009; Liebe et al., 2011; Wegner and Pascual, 2011; Kenter, 2017). Kenter et al. (2016c) argue that valuation should actively seek to include deliberation on transcendental values in valuation processes, and provide participants the opportunity to apply them to the context under consideration through a carefully designed, structured process, in order for contextual values to be formed in a more transparent way.
- 2) *Transcendental values directly and indirectly affect behaviour.* A large number of studies employing regression analysis have found significant negative associations between the egoistic value orientation and pro-environmental intentions and behaviour (e.g., Stern and Dietz, 1994; Schultz et al., 2005; Schultz et al., 2005). In contrast, biospheric and altruistic values have been found to be significantly associated with pro-environmental intentions and behaviour (e.g., Karp, 1996; Schultz et al., 2005; de Groot and Steg, 2008, 2010). This has implications for the degree to which people will support and engage with the sustainable management of ecosystem services.
- 3) *TVs influence the way we view knowledge and establish evidence.* As much as our TVs influence how we behave towards the environment, the way we view knowledge and establish evidence can influence our TVs at a cultural level. The local and traditional ecological knowledge literatures suggest that there is a close connection between these values, the knowledge we maintain of the environment, and our practices (Raymond et al., 2010; Tengö et al., 2014). For instance, Houde (2007) points out that TVs, cultural identity and cosmology interact with factual observations, management systems and past and current land uses. Each of these components represents interrelated dimensions of traditional ecological knowledge.
- 4) *TVs may be shared when contextual values are not.* Different groups with conflicting interests typically form conflicting contextual values. Nonetheless, they may share similar TVs in relation to the environment and its management. For example, Ranger et al. (2016) elicited TVs using ethnographic video interviews in relation to management of marine protected areas, which were compiled in a documentary that then informed deliberation on management options. While there were conflicting interests and views on management between conservationists, different types of fishers, and other stakeholders, the reflection of shared TVs in terms of deep bonds with the sea supported a deliberative contextual value formation process around how protection measures should be implemented. Reed and Kenter (2014) identified similar results around moorland management conflicts where farmers’ and conservationists’ stories expressing their bonds with wildlife resonated with each other. Deliberation around shared TVs expressed through shared experiences can thus help generate common ground that may prevent or reduce conflict.
- 5) *TVs underpin social representations of nature.* While TVs may be shared, this does not mean there are no differences in the importance of particular TVs to different individuals and social groups. TVs are crucial in understanding social representations, which describe a system of values, ideas and practices that serve (a) to establish a social order that enables individuals to orientate themselves and master the material and social world in which they

Table 1

Schwartz’ overview of key transcendental values (Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987). Schwartz argues for a ‘universal’ structure in values across cultures, which consists of a range of categories (italics) across four poles (headings).

Self-transcendence	Self-enhancement	Openness	Tradition
<i>Universalism</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Self-direction</i>	<i>Tradition</i>
– Protecting the environment	– Social power	– Creativity	– Devout
– A world of beauty	– Authority	– Curious	– Respect for tradition
– Unity with nature	– Wealth	– Freedom	– Humble
– Broad-minded	– Preserving my public image	– Choosing own goals	– Moderate
– Social justice	– Social recognition	– Independent	– Accepting portion in life
– Wisdom	– Social recognition	<i>Stimulation</i>	– Detachment
– Equality	<i>Achievement</i>	– Daring	<i>Conformity</i>
– A world at peace	– Successful	– A varied life	– Politeness
– Inner harmony	– Capable	– An exciting life	– Honouring parents and elders
<i>Benevolence</i>	– Ambitious	<i>Hedonism</i>	– Obedient
– Helpful	– Influential	– Pleasure	– Self-discipline
– Honest	– Intelligent	– Enjoying life	<i>Security</i>
– Forgiving	– Self-respect		– Clean
– Loyal			– National security
– Responsible			– Social order
– True-friendship			– Family security
– A spiritual life			– Sense of belonging
– Mature love			– Reciprocation of favours
– Meaning in life			
– Healthy			

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