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Mapping cultural ecosystem services: A framework to assess the potential for outdoor recreation across the EU

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Highlights

- â€¢ The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum approach is adapted to map outdoor recreation as cultural ecosystem service at continental level in Europe.
- â€¢ The described framework takes into consideration both potential supply and potential demand.
- â€¢ Indicators of quality of provision, remoteness and accessibility are calculated to characterise Recreation Opportunity Spectrum zones.
- â€¢ Country profiles summarise outdoor recreation potential provision to

Abstract

Research on ecosystem services mapping and valuing has increased significantly in recent years. However, compared to provisioning and regulating services, cultural ecosystem services have not yet been fully integrated into operational frameworks. One reason for this is that transdisciplinarity is required to address the issue, since by definition cultural services (encompassing physical, intellectual, spiritual interactions with biota) need to be analysed from multiple perspectives (i.e. ecological, social, behavioural). A second reason is the lack of data for large-scale assessments, as detailed surveys are a main source of information. Among cultural ecosystem services, assessment of outdoor recreation can be based on a large pool of literature developed mostly in social and medical science, and landscape and ecology studies. This paper presents a methodology to include recreation in the conceptual framework for EU wide ecosystem assessments (Maes et al., 2013), which couples existing approaches for recreation management at country level with behavioural data derived from surveys and population distribution data. The proposed framework is based on three components: the ecosystem function (recreation potential), the adaptation of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum framework to characterise the ecosystem service and the distribution of potential demand in the EU. Results show that 38% of the EU is characterised by a high outdoor recreation potential, which is easily accessible, and that such areas can host about 35.4% of potential demand for close-to-home trips (<8 km). This proportion increases to 37.6% for long distance travelling (<80 km). The analysis framework can be applied to quantify the availability of outdoor recreation potential as an ecosystem service to EU citizens, to describe through country profiles differences in ecosystem service provision at regional level, and can be used as an input to land use planning processes.



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Keywords

Recreation; Recreation Opportunity Spectrum; Recreation potential indicator; Accessibility; Remoteness

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