Protection Through Valuation: A Case-study Using Q Methodology

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The designation of protected areas is often the global, regional and local response to safeguarding vulnerable marine environments which provide much of our reserves of natural capital. Marine biodiversity specifically is a fundamental delivery network of ecosystem services, including the provision of food and climate regulation, which underpin life on Earth. Intense and extensive human activity particularly focused in the world's coastal regions and the subsequent loss of key marine species will impair the long-term ability of these ecosystems to provide the crucial services that contribute to human well-being. These services from the marine environment include provisioning (e.g. providing food, raw materials), regulatory (e.g. gas and climate regulation), supporting (e.g. nutrient cycling) and cultural (e.g. leisure, spiritual) roles. Currently these marine goods and services are not all valued equally. While it is relatively straightforward to value goods such as fish by reflecting our 'willingness to pay' the market price, it is far more difficult to place a value on non-instrumental services such as climate regulation or natural environmental beauty. A World Bank study undertaken in 2008 estimated that the total annual figure of all Marine Ecosystem Services for which a market already existed amounted to over \$20 trillion. The World Bank stated that 'non market values such as biodiversity and climate regulation were incalculable. and the spiritual worth of an intact seascape and the wonder of a coral reef are impossible to quantify' (World Bank, 2008). This paper discusses valuation mechanisms of the marine environment generally and focuses on identifying the intangible benefits of natural spaces using the Q methodology in a protected harbour area of the UK. The paper examines the value of such an area to its stakeholders based on their responses to various statements about the designation and demonstrates the significance of protecting such an area, and others like it, based on these values. The findings demonstrate that the case study area holds four predominant areas of value for its stakeholders which include the natural world as a place for introspection, reflection and self-development; as a place for recreation and sport, for relaxation and a place to escape the modern world. Areas of strongest disagreement appeared to focus upon the types of ecosystem goods and services on offer, and how they were exploited, whereas there was a strong consensus that the natural world held many educational opportunities for the community. This research is becoming increasingly important within the field of environmental management; a response to a growing body of research that suggests that the public use and value of the natural world, particularly the marine, for things that have no direct economic, and, therefore, measurable meaning. $\ensuremath{\mathsf{E}}$