Comparing Payments for Ecosystem Services in Europe and Asia: A Systematic Literature Review Approach

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Payment for ecosystem services (PES) is a compensation concept used to incentivize landowners to improve land management practices in order to maintain and provide ecosystem services. Examples of such services include river basin protection, forest conservation, flood control, or carbon sequestration. Since the early 1990s, hundreds of PES schemes have been implemented worldwide, with varying degrees of success and has only become a new trend in Asia for the last decade. While analyzing PES cases can identify the factors that contribute to specific outcomes, given the high cost of implementing such schemes and the range of stakeholders involved, our study aims to compare PES cases in Europe where historically the human-nature relationship is more balanced and progressively protected with cases in Asia under rapid industrialization and urbanization. Methodologically, we employ a systematic literature review approach to include a total of 134 articles in Scopus database between 2009 and 2023 for systematic scrutiny. The study analyzes different aspects of the literature growth over the past decade, including project types, beneficiaries, who pays for activities (in USD), spatial scale and current size, and implementation barriers. Our analysis provides insights into the factors that contribute to the success of PES schemes for the goal of improving future research agenda and generating policy recommendations for Asian PES in the near future. In particular, we emphasize the importance of considering the environmental, socio-economic, political, and dynamic contexts of PES policies when designing and implementing such schemes.