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oppla

Ecosystem Science
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1.0	Submitted	26 August 2015	Claire Brown, UNEP-WCMC
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Contents

Enabling decision-making on services offered by nature

Oppla is a web portal that helps you to benefit from nature's services. It:
- *offers quick, easy on-line access to reliable information and knowledge;*
- *contains documents, worked case study examples, online tools and methods, best-practice guidance, videos, maps and other visualisations, services, access to expertise, networking facilities, training, educational materials and news and events;*
- *is supported by a wide community of users from science, policy and practice;*
- *will continue to evolve into the future as an independent legal entity.*

A guide to the labyrinth

People in policy, business and practice are thinking about nature in a new way that focuses on how it can support human well-being. This way of thinking, including concepts of 'ecosystem services' and 'natural capital', allows many actors to become involved, not only nature organisations or environmental Ministries, but also land owners, managers of natural resources, businesses, as well as government and governance across sectors.

Much research has been carried out in this field. There are many examples that support new thinking for decision making or practical applications. However, this knowledge and these examples are dispersed across many sources and are often difficult to access when needed. This means that much valuable knowledge and experience is never used, the search for it is unnecessarily demanding and consequently research is often duplicated.

Science, policy and society have been disconnected. Historically, economic sectors have been viewed separately, research and policy have also operated within silos, and the various actors involved have used different language and concepts. The recent move in policymaking towards a more integrated, transdisciplinary approach, involving multiple stakeholders, provides the right impetus for change. This move calls for easy and quick access to reliable information to integrate thinking about nature's services into natural resource management and conservation activities. There is a need for a guide to the labyrinth.

The Oppla Vision

Oppla is your guide. It assists people to make nature work for the benefit of humankind. It will enable business, citizens and policy makers to better manage our natural capital for human well-being by drawing on robust scientific knowledge and best practice. Oppla is a hub for a community of practice that shares resources, new ideas and practical experience. It also functions as a

marketplace — enabling members to find consultants specialising in natural capital and ecosystem services.

Oppla is a web portal (an 'Open Platform') that provides a number of facilities to support communities of science, policy and practice. It facilitates the practical application of cutting-edge research, linking the outputs of the scientific community with those capable of utilising and maximising their value. The Oppla website is complemented by events, training courses, a helpdesk and other services on demand. All of which will help users to find the information and assistance they need more quickly, more easily and more reliably.

What is Oppla?

oppla = KNOWLEDGE + TOOLS + COMMUNITY

GET HELP FROM EXPERTS

ASK A QUESTION

www.oppla.eu

A web portal linking communities of science, policy and practice

Providing knowledge and resources about natural capital and ecosystem services in ways that are…

QUICKER   EASIER   MORE RELIABLE

The business opportunity

The Oppla prototype is being developed as part of a joint activity between the OPERAs and OpenNESS projects (www.operas-project.eu & www.openness-project.eu) with 60 partners and a combined funding from the European Commission FP7 Programme of ca. €18m.

As it evolves, Oppla will be established as an independent legal entity, providing a continuous resource base and range of services, supported by a growing community of users. Oppla is also a novel test case for how the outputs from European-funded projects can continue to exist and prosper beyond the life of the originating projects.

We apply a novel approach in which research partners cooperate with small businesses to ensure that Oppla is supported by a viable business model upon launch. This requires Oppla to become an independent legal entity that will generate income to both maintain the web portal infrastructure, to mobilize the community of users, but also to develop the system further into the future. Hence, Oppla will be established as a not-for-profit legal entity registered within the European Union.

"I was able to develop new skills in identifying, mapping, assessing and valuing ecosystem services through the range of training opportunities available from Oppla. This enabled me to work through a guided process for embedding natural capital concepts within local plans and policies."

"Using tools, such as Our Ecosystem, Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) and a Protected Area Socio-economic Assessment tool that I found through Oppla, I was able to quantify the role and value our national seagrass beds play in climate mitigation and make the case to our Minister for Energy and Climate Change and Minister for Environment for their long term management and protection."

"Through Oppla, I was able to find and join a community of scientists and decision-makers working in my country on natural capital issues. Joining such a community allowed me to keep up to date on the latest thinking and policy opportunities specific to my country."

"Oppla helped me find experts that I could contract to estimate the cultural values associated with different wetland sites in my local authority. This information was then used to update management plans."

What does this mean for policy?

Once fully operational, Oppla will support policy processes at all levels from the local to the global, by:

- reducing search time through a one-entry platform to all information relating to ecosystem services and natural capital;
- reducing investment in development of websites and platforms for individual projects by offering a readily available platform as a low-cost and long-term host;
- supporting policy implementation by offering a platform for outreach of relevant policy to a global community of actors involved in mobilizing nature's services;
- integrating various policy fields and decisions more effectively, by offering services, tools, and knowledge from a community representing multiple sectors and interests;
- strengthening Europe's position globally by having a central platform as a repository of European experience and knowledge in global processes.

Further information

A prototype version of Oppla will be released in September 2016 with the launch of the fully functional version expected in April 2017. Potential users can sign up to receive further information at: www.oppla.eu.

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