

Discussion summary  
Wolfgang Cramer's talk on 6.09.2009

The discussion concentrated mainly on the presence of the biodiversity concept in the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment. It seemed to be present almost as an afterthought, so has the MEA strengthened the case for the conservation of biodiversity? This brought the discussion to the issue of definitions and different understandings of biodiversity e.g. between economists, anthropologists and social scientists.. Actually, the concept revolves around the positive valuation of the functions of ecosystems. I.e. there is not much emphasis on biological information in the definition of biodiversity. In this way, the process at the MEA can be seen as a social experiment with the conflicts due to the above concept and the (necessary, in this context) rejection by biologists of that non-biological definition. The DIVERSITAS project uses a biodiversity definition that is much more biological in nature, therefore it is expected that information on e.g. genetic variation, species diversity and abundance, will make it into that assessment. Ultimately, the issue surrounds the links between: biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human well-being. The first link between biodiversity and ecosystem services is harder to make than the second. There are very different relationships between biodiversity and ecosystem services and these are likely to differ between systems. But in the contest of assessments, what is known should be included. What is not yet known cannot be waited for.

Kristina Raab