



Tropentag, September 11-13, 2024, hybrid conference

“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Exploring support for ecosystem cooperatives: Assessing environmental and cooperative values

RISHABH MAHENDRA, HARVEY JAMES

University of Missouri, Division of Applied Social Sciences, United States

Abstract

This research investigates a novel approach to ecosystem restoration and conservation: collective efforts in the form of cooperative organisations (for example, agricultural cooperatives). We explore the characteristics of individuals who might be drawn to participate in these organisations. Existing conservation efforts often face limitations due to fragmented involvement and high costs, among other reasons, hindering their effectiveness. Cooperatives, that are a collective action organisational structure where individuals pool resources to achieve shared goals, present a promising solution. However, it is essential to study the willingness and profiles of potential participants in these organisations, specifically focused on ecosystem preservation, which remains unclear and thus creates a critical research gap. This research aims to identify the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of individuals willing to engage in such collaborative efforts by assessing their environmental and cooperative values as well as their altruistic traits. We hypothesise that a preference for both environmental and cooperative values is crucial for people’s participation in such efforts, as well as an altruistic outlook. The objectives include examining the correlation between these values, determining the percentage of individuals exhibiting high levels of these values, and exploring the statistical connection between high values and characteristics such as occupation, economic status, and political inclination. The conceptual framework categorises individuals based on their environmental and cooperative values, suggesting that those with high levels are more likely to participate in collaborative ecosystem conservation activities. The study employs purposeful sampling for a values assessment survey, ensuring diverse participant representation. A mixed-methods approach gathers quantitative data through Likert-scale questions and qualitative data through interviews. The significance lies in understanding the values driving individuals, validating the concept of collaborative ecosystem conservation through cooperative organisations, and informing targeted interventions for sustainable behaviours. The study’s outcomes provide implications for policy-makers, educators, and advocates to develop strategies leveraging shared motivations for effective conservation initiatives and unified responses to societal and environmental challenges.

Keywords: Conservation, cooperative organisations, eco-coops, ecosystem restoration, environmental values, mixed-methods research, policy interventions, sustainability