

Funeral Forests

Switzerland

Traditionally, there are several places in the Swiss forest where people seek spiritual strength from nature, so-called “places of power”. In the last decade a new form of ES can be seen in the Swiss forests – “Funeral Forests”.

Forests are treasured for their peace and beauty; the Swiss case looks at how they can be managed long-term as spiritual forests.



Setting the scene

Most Swiss inhabitants can reach the forest within 20 minutes by foot, and 80% of the population visit the forest frequently for leisure and recreational purposes. The first funeral forest was created in Switzerland around 20 years ago; since then over 100 such places exist in the country. The average size is between 0.5 up to 5.0 ha.

Burial forests are a typical example of the valorisation of forest ecosystem services. In many cases, however, the actual value creation takes place downstream, or forest owners and forest enterprises merely receive a pension or compensation for a specific use by third parties. There is a tendency towards cremation in burials. There is also an increasing desire on the part of relatives to find a place in nature for the peace and quiet of the deceased.

Objectives

- Analysis of the silvicultural treatment and integration of funeral forests into the existing forest management system.
- Exploration of the social, organisational and economic effects of the funeral forest in the chosen Innovation Action.

Challenges

- Backup of a sustainable forest management.
- Specific forest enterprise skills and procedures needed
- Positioning of the forest enterprise as a combined service unit.

Innovation mechanism

The market in Switzerland for cultural forest ecosystem services (CES) is "disturbed" for three important reasons: (i) Many forest ecosystem services are hardly marketable (e.g. good air); (ii) the free right of access prevents the pricing of many services; (iii) the public sector strongly influences the market (direct and indirect influence). In this context, the underlying innovation mechanism is market-based; idea, concept and implementation comes from the forest owner.

Expected impacts

- ✓ Promotion and marketing of the funeral forest as a market-based offer
- ✓ Transfer of the solution approach to other fields of action in the forest sector

The bigger picture

The case shows results and practices of a successful Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). It opens the discussion of sustainable principles and innovations within the field of cultural ecosystem services.

Action

- ➔ Elaboration of a Business Management Canvas BMC for Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES).
- ➔ Further knowledge transfer and further training concerning silviculture and forest management.

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