

### **Revealing lay people's perception of biodiversity and its value using Q-methodology**

#### **Authors and affiliation:**

**Kennet Uggeldahl, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen**

**Søren Bøye Olsen, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen**

**Thomas Lundhede, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen**

**Jette Bredahl Jacobsen, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen**

Nature and biodiversity are in an unprecedented decline. One of the main policy solution for reversing this trend involves putting a value on biodiversity. However, one of the concerns about valuing biodiversity using stated preference methods has revolved around the general public's lacking understanding of this abstract and complex concept. Yet, few studies have investigated what the public actually perceives as biodiversity, and what their perceptions of its value are. We use two Q-methodological studies to explore lay people's perceptions of non-contextualized biodiversity, and their perceptions of the value of its protection. The results indicate that lay people's perceptions of biodiversity to a large degree include the main element of the academic and institutional definitions of the concept, but also include more broad concepts linked to biodiversity, such as naturalness, complexity, connectedness and balance. The value of biodiversity protection includes functional values of biodiversity, and values related to uncertainty, but arguments related to moral obligations, intrinsic value and nonuse values also play an important part. The results suggest that using more broad representations of biodiversity in stated preference studies might better reflect people's underlying perceptions of the good being valued.