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Laura Pla · Fernando Casanoves
Julio Di Rienzo

Quantifying Functional Biodiversity

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Laura Pla · Fernando Casanoves
Julio Di Rienzo

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Prof. Laura Pla
Department of Agricultural Technology
Francisco de Miranda National
Experimental University (UNEFM)
Complejo Docente El Hatillo UNEFM
Apartado 7434
Coro 4101, Falcón
República Bolivariana de Venezuela
e-mail: laura@reacciun.ve

Dr. Fernando Casanoves
Tropical Agriculture Research and
Higher Education Center (CATIE)
Turrialba 30501
Costa Rica
e-mail: casanoves@catie.ac.cr

Dr. Julio Di Rienzo
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
The National University of Cordoba
Avenida Valparaíso s/n CC 509
Ciudad Universitaria
5000 Córdoba
Argentina
e-mail: dirienzo@agro.uncor.edu

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Contents

Abbreviations

CWM	Community weighted mean
DGC	Univariate partitive mean comparison method
ES	Ecosystem services
FAD1	Functional attribute diversity, index 1
FAD2	Functional attribute diversity, index 2
FDc	Functional diversity index community based
FDis	Functional dispersion index (multi-trait)
FDiv	Functional divergence index (multi-trait)
FDvar	Functional divergence (single-trait)
FEve	Functional evenness index (multi-trait)
FRic	Functional richness index (multi-trait)
FRO	Functional regularity (single-trait)
GFD	Generalized functional diversity index
gDGC	Multivariate partitive mean comparison method
LA	Leaf area
LDMC	Leaf dry matter content
LMA	Leaf mass per area
LNC	Leaf nitrogen content
LTS	Leaf tensile strength
masl	Meters above sea level
MEA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
MFAD	Modified functional attribute diversity index
NPC	Leaf phosphorus content
PFT	Plant functional types
RTQ	Mexican land use system 'roza-tumba-quema'
SLA	Specific leaf area
TRY	International database of plant traits
WD	Wood density
wFDc	Weighted functional diversity index community based
wFDp	Weighted functional diversity index plot based

Chapter 1
Introduction

Abstract Functional diversity is an increasing used concept to address changes in biodiversity. It is an emerging concept which summarizes key properties of ecosystems of special interest in global climate change studies and in the evaluation of the effects of land management in the preservation of ecosystem services for human wellbeing. In this chapter we introduce the main notions associated with functional diversity approach, including definition of functional diversity, ecosystem processes, and ecosystem services and linking these concepts to species traits. We highlight the importance of functional diversity approach using some examples to show the relationship between ecosystem services with species traits.

Keywords Ecosystem services · Functional traits · Functional diversity assessment · Millennium ecosystem assessment · Functional ecology

1.1 Functional Diversity Approach to Quantify the Biodiversity

Functional ecology establishes principles and tools to forge links between the characteristics of communities, and ecosystem functions and services (Cornelissen et al. 2003; Lavorel et al. 2007). For example, the energy and materials flow through the biotic and abiotic components of an ecosystem is directly related to productivity, while resistance and resilience are measures of the ability of a system to respond before the disturbance or adapting to change (Díaz and Cabido 2001).

The functional approach allows simplify the floristic complexity and the effects of vegetation to understand the responses, in terms of key ecological processes. It also provides tools to identify and monitor global change effects and other consequences of human activity, emphasizing ecosystem services (ES). This functional

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approach transcends the descriptive analysis. It can be done in a relatively easy, inexpensive and standardized way, allowing the comparison among communities and between community properties and environmental variables.

According to Grime (1998) three groups of species may be identify related to its contribution to the community performance: dominants, subordinates and transients. Dominant species are the most important species as determinants of ecosystem properties such as productivity, carbon sequestration, water relations, nutrient cycling and storage, litter quality and resistance and resilience to perturbations. Ecosystem functions are likely to be closely predictable from the most abundant species, those which contribute highly to the total plant biomass. This is known as mass ratio hypothesis (Grime 1998). The contributions to ecosystem functions are dictated by the laws of physics and chemistry. They state that the greater the effects of large autotrophs within the ecosystem, there will be a greater participation in processes like photosynthesis, resources inputs, nutrient cycling, and hydrology cycle, among others. This implies that ecosystem properties should be determined mainly by dominants species and some subordinates, and much less by transients' species.

Application of the mass ratio hypothesis is restricted to autotrophs in ecosystem processes. In animals, when attention is turned to trophic elements, like parasites, herbivores, and predators, impact on ecosystem functions is less related to abundance (Grime 1998).

Functional diversity approach using plants is based on the most abundant species, which implies the inclusion of all the species necessary to account for the 80% of the total biomass. When species' biomass is not available, other measures like cover, basal area or abundance may be used as surrogate for biomass (Díaz et al. 2007a; Lavorel et al. 2008). The protocols applied for the functional characterization comply with this recommendation discarding the less represented species in the community.

Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans obtain from ecosystems for support their survival and quality of life. The benefit may be directly associated to survival like food production or to effects indirectly related to quality of life, like energy provision (MEA 2005). ES are also used to link the ecological concept of functional diversity with the social concept of social actor strategies (Díaz et al. 2011). Going deeper into the links among biodiversity, ES, and social actors it is necessary to consider the contributions that biodiversity provides to an ES, the social actors perception, their needs, access, and management capability of the ES (Carpenter et al. 2009).

The ecosystem services depend on ecosystem properties which in turn are determined by ecosystem functions and ecosystem processes. For example, soil fertility (as service that ecosystem provide) depends on textural composition, organic matter accumulation and nutrient cycling. Not all ES depend directly upon ecosystem processes; some are associated to aesthetic or spiritual value of species (Díaz et al. 2007a; de Bello et al. 2010). For example, the aesthetic value of flowers from *Rafflesia arnoldii*, a parasitic species, with flowers up to more than 1 m, the largest in the world, growing in Sumatra (Beaman et al. 1988), or the presence of a relic species of dolphins, *Lipotes vexillifer*, in the Yangtze river in China (Zhou et al. 1998), which is threatened by the dam harbor the largest hydropower plant in the world (López-Pujol 2008).

The ecosystem functions are determined by the role of different species in maintaining ecosystem processes. Changes in species composition and changes in the relative abundance have a direct implication over ecosystem structure in terms of community dynamics. Ecosystem properties related to ES would be referred as a function or process. As emphasis of functional diversity is placed on the services that an ecosystem can provide, we will use ecosystem properties to describe collectively the ecosystem processes and functions.

1.2 Functional Diversity Assessment

Functional diversity is defined as the value, range, distribution and relative abundance of the functional characteristics of organisms in a community (Chapin et al. 2000; Loreau and Hector 2001; Hooper et al. 2005). In contrast to the taxonomic biodiversity, based only on the relative abundance of species in the community, functional diversity summarizes various aspects of the biological composition and hence the role of populations in the community. Functional diversity may be linked directly to the ecosystem services (Díaz et al. 2007c).

As functional diversity states for characteristics of individuals of species in the community, a set of characteristics has to be evaluated. A trait is a well-defined, measurable property of organisms, usually measured at the individual level and used comparatively across species. A functional trait is one that strongly influences organismal performance in the community (Lavorel and Garnier 2002; Cornelissen et al. 2003; Violle et al. 2007). Trait values influence growth, reproduction and survival of organisms, and affect relationship among organisms of different species. These, in turn, drive the properties and services that ecosystem may provide (Luck et al. 2009).

The best subset of traits are those that provided the most complete information related to an ecosystem service under study and that, simultaneously, may be easily measured with the least sample effort and at a low cost. For example, to study photosynthesis capacity, measurement of area and weight of leafs may be used to estimate specific leaf area, meanwhile, maximum high or diameter at breast height registered at two or more times may be used to study growth rate.

There is empirical evidence that specific leaf area is positively correlated with photosynthetic potential and hence growth rates, recruitment and mortality, and negatively correlated with longevity and investment in defenses. For example, Garnier et al. (2004) found that the 58% of variation ($r^2 = 0.58$) of specific above-ground net primary productivity (g kg^{-1} d^{-1}) in 12 plots of vegetation in south France may be estimated using specific leaf area (m^2 kg^{-1}). Also, leaf dry matter content, and leaf tensile strength are negatively correlated with photosynthetic potential and hence growth rates, recruitment and mortality, and are positively