

Ecosystem services research and stakeholder involvement: Between theories and practice

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In particular the failure of monetary valuation to provide meaningful valuation instruments requires participation of a representative diversity of stakeholders in ESS research and governance to answer the question what people value, and how -- like in the case of valuing beautiful sceneries like those of the Batad rice terraces in the Philippines -- an UNESCO world heritage site Credit: J. Settele

What do people value, why and how? This should be a leading question in sustainability research, but putting it into practise can be tricky. A new paper published in the journal [Ecosystem Services](#) looks at how to improve stakeholder participation in the research on and governance of ecosystem services (ESS) as a stepping point to more comprehensive and participatory research practises.

Stakeholder participation in the governance of [ecosystem services](#) (ESS) is conceptually necessary, especially in the light of the failure of monetary valuation to provide assessment instruments suitable as policy guidance. To answer the Whys and Hows of ESS research real involvement and participation of stakeholders has proven to be a more valuable tool.

Building upon experience from transdisciplinary research projects in Asia, Africa and Europe, the new paper argues that successful participation depends on the specific socio-cultural context and requires different means and modes of participation during different project phases.

The [paper](#) provides a useful overview of tested methods, with their pros and cons listed. Alongside the challenges on the basis of different projects experiences, the research also outlines the ways in which good project coordination can help for such difficulties to be anticipated and handled. The main conclusions and recommendations are extracted in five core lessons, with regards to:

- Participation;
- Target groups;
- Integration;
- Managing;
- Limits to economic valuation;

More information: Joachim H. Spangenberg et al. Stakeholder involvement in ESS research and governance: Between conceptual ambition and practical experiences – risks, challenges and tested tools, *Ecosystem Services* (2015). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ecoser.2015.10.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2015.10.006)

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