

# Using ecosystem services in municipality planning: Lessons from Sweden

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Municipalities in Sweden with the region of Skåne , where the study was conducted, indicated. Credit: Palo et al. (2016)

In the context of increasing land use and climate change, municipality planning faces a growing challenge finding a sustainable balance between different actions to accommodate citizen's demands of

ecosystem services (ES) and development projects. A new study published in the open access journal *One Ecosystem* looks at the usability of ES as a tool for urban planning and explores its compatibility with other existing methods.

On its way towards sustainable society, municipality planners have identified the need to take advantage of new knowledge and interact with research to be in the forefront of new developments. While ES has been introduced as a policy tool at the governmental level its implementation at the local and regional scale is still needed and municipalities could benefit from collaboration with the research community for state of the art methods.

Municipalities ask for research that takes a citizen perspective and prioritizes questions other than pure environmental considerations. ES as an assessment method is focused on human needs, while the currently widely used Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) methods describe place based assessments on [environmental impact](#) rather than feedback to the society by the intervention.

Studying experiences and practice from municipalities in Sweden, a group of researchers has investigated penetration of ES as an assessment method for municipality planning. The study has identified the need for research support in many different areas, for instance how to set up proper organization for implementation of ES and environmental issues, while priorities remain based on local conditions.

The results also show that collaboration between stakeholders and researchers is needed which can create incentives, so that the decisions made by individuals, communities, corporations, and governments may be able to promote widely shared values compatible with ES to increase awareness and understanding of the relatively new concept.

The article was published as a part of the dedicated collection "Ecosystem Services - Methods, Data and Applications" hosting research presented at the 8th ESP Conference in South Africa, Stellenbosch, 9-13 November 2015.

**More information:** Thomas Palo et al. Priority areas in municipality planning: ecosystem services, environmental impact assessments and research areas, *One Ecosystem* (2016). [DOI: 10.3897/oneeco.1.e9869](https://doi.org/10.3897/oneeco.1.e9869)

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