

6th ESP Europe Conference

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SESSION DESCRIPTION

ID: X1

Broadening ecosystem services approaches: pathways toward transformative change and just futures

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Abstract:

Ecosystem services (ES) research has played a key role in linking nature to human well-being. Yet, today's intertwined challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change, and socio-economic inequality call for approaches that reach beyond existing ES frameworks. Achieving a nature and people-positive Europe (and beyond) will depend on a more meaningful engagement with diverse ways of knowing, valuing, and practicing ecosystem stewardship. This session examines how expanding or even challenging the methodological and conceptual horizons of ES research through underrepresented and cross-cutting approaches can contribute to transformative change. Such broadened approaches can also be aligned with evolving governance and policy frameworks at international and EU levels, which increasingly adopt alternative framings such as nature's contributions to people, to integrate research into evidence-based decision-making.

We invite contributions and experiences that showcase methods and approaches often less visible in ES debates but with strong potential for advancing systemic change by broadening perspectives beyond narrow utilitarian or anthropocentric framings. Examples include participatory action research, co-production with local communities, justice-oriented frameworks, more-than-human perspectives, and arts-based or creative practices that open new spaces for dialogue and ways of relating to nature. We welcome work that explores such alternative approaches, as well as contributions that combine them with more established ES methods,

such as (but not restricted to) spatial mapping, biophysical assessments, or ES accounting. Bringing these perspectives together can enrich widely used approaches, strengthen the recognition and representation of diverse value systems, and highlight how socio-ecological relationships and reflexive scientific practice itself can contribute to more inclusive and transformative understandings of ES in both urban and rural contexts.

Goals and objectives of the session:

The session contributes to the ESP themes ii) of ecosystem services knowledge for a people- and nature-positive future, and iv) on equity, justice, and inclusivity in ecosystem services. Its aims are: 1) to share experiences where broadening methods has enabled the integration of diverse values in ES assessments; 2) to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of applying these approaches in research and policy contexts; and 3) to co-produce perspectives on how integrating less visible methods, along with reflexive scientific practices and relational approaches, can help foster transformative change toward just and sustainable futures in Europe and beyond.

Planned output / Deliverables:

Expected outcomes include an overview of methodological practices that can both expand and challenge ES research, new and stronger networks among scholars and practitioners working with diverse approaches, and a joint reflection on how these methods can actively contribute (or not) to transformative change. Depending on participants' interest, this may also lead to a co-authored perspective paper.

Session format:

We agreed to prioritize a standard session format consisting of presentations followed by a Q&A of around 120 min. Toward the end, we'll include a 20-30 minute discussion session, structured around a few guiding questions aligned with the proposed session and informed by the presentations received. Depending on the number of presentations submitted, we may consider organizing a roundtable discussion to structure the discussion and conclude the session.

Voluntary contributions accepted:

Yes, I allow any abstract to be submitted to my session for review

Related to ESP Working Group:

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