

The IPBES view on valuing nature's contributions to people: A step towards a pluralistic ecosystem services framing

Unai Pascual

Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3)

Since the publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2003, the term ecosystem services (ES) has witnessed an enormous growth in the scientific literature, and in the application of conservation and development policy support tools, e.g., assessments, scenarios, and instruments, e.g., Payments for Ecosystem Services (Muradian et al., 2013). This is also reflected in the journal of the international society for ecological economics (ISEE). In fact, *Ecological Economics* has published more than 500 papers (and cited more than 17,000 times) since 2003, with no year showing a decline in publication numbers. This is remarkable if we compare it with the times concepts such as 'valuation' or 'sustainability' appear in the title or abstract of papers published by the journal over the same period, ca. 700 and 800 times respectively (ca. 60-70%). In other words, the community is increasingly continuing to debate, refine and apply the concept of ES and it does not seem this trend will decline any time soon. This is also evidenced by the interest in valuation of ES as a precondition for designing policies for environmental sustainability (ca. 250 papers or about half of the papers on ecosystem services in *Ecological Economics*, 2003-17).

Perhaps, since the Costanza et al paper in *Nature* two decades ago, valuation continues to appear as one of the most contentious topics, also in ecological economics. Year after year the regional and international societies of ecological economists attest to this and the 12th ESEE meeting will likely be no exception. In order to enrich this debate, in this keynote talk I will introduce the vision of IPBES with regard to valuing so-called nature's contributions to people (NCP), a more encompassing term than the one of ecosystem services, which can sometimes act as limiting metaphor for social transformation towards sustainability (Norgaard, 2010; Pascual et al., 2017a), and recently endorsed by the Fifth Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), in March 2017. IPBES, established in 2012, is an ambitious intergovernmental global science-policy effort to promote knowledge on the diversity of life on Earth, and its contributions to people. IPBES explicitly recognizes the centrality of institutions and governance systems for the evolution of social-ecological systems (Diaz et al 2015) as well as the need of scientific interdisciplinarity and giving voice to multiple other knowledge systems, including those based on traditional, local and indigenous practices. To date more than a thousand experts, including many ecological economists, have been involved in the work of IPBES on a voluntary basis.

The IPBES vision on values and valuation has been enriched by multiple disciplines and schools of thought, including those from ecological economics, philosophy, ecology, etc. as well as those working on indigenous local knowledge systems, conservation practitioners and many decision makers over the last few years (UNEP, 2015; Pascual et al., 2017b). What is most relevant about the approach IPBES has decided to take on valuing the diversity of so-called NCP? After highlighting a few features of the notion of NCP, I will mention just two main general principles explicitly recognized by IPBES: First, valuation requires the recognition of a broad range of worldviews and thus the need to express and *respect* the ways through which people ascribe meaning and importance to nature, NCP and different constituents of a good quality of life. This clearly calls for promoting social equity in valuation around three dimensions: recognition, participation and distribution of benefits and burdens from value articulation (Pascual et al 2014; Zafra-Calvo et al., 2017). This also means promoting the idea of the diversity of conceptualisation of values, often associated with instrumental, intrinsic and

relational views on nature (Chan et al., 2015). In turn, this involves having the ability to overcome paralysis in the face of value pluralism. Second, valuation requires recognition that the incorporation of values and valuation methods into decision making processes are themselves value-laden. Thus, one must recognise that valuation is potentially subject to manipulation due to existing unequal power relations in society, which in turn implies that valuation cannot be abstracted from a politicization process. Together these two principles suggest the growing intellectual influence of ecological economics about value pluralism over the last decades. I think that this is a promising sign and one to continue nurturing.

References

- Chan, K., Balvanera, P., Benessaiah, K., Chapman, M., Díaz, S., Gómez-Baggethun, E., Gould, R.K., Hannahs, N., Jax, K., Klain, S.C., Luck, G., Martín-López, B., Muraca, B., Norton, B., Ott, K., Pascual, U., Satterfield, S., Tadaki, M., Taggart, J., Turner, N.J., 2016. Why Protect Nature? Rethinking values and the environment. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)*. 113(6): 1462–1465. (web)
- Costanza, R., et al (1997). The value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital. *Nature*, 387(6630), 253-260.
- Díaz, S., Demissew, S., Carabias, J., Joly, C. Lonsdale, W.M, Ash, N., Larigauderie., A., Pascual U., et al. (2015). The IPBES conceptual framework - connecting nature and people. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 14:1-16 (web)
- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: *Ecosystems and human well-being*. Washington, Covelo, London: Island Press; 2003.
- Muradian, R., M. Arsel, L. Pellegrini, F. Adaman, B. Aguilar, B. Agarwal, E. Corbera, D. Ezzine de Blas, J. Farley, G. Froger, E. Garcia-Frapolli, E. Gómez-Baggethun; J. Gowdy, N. Kosoy, J.F. Le Coq, P. Leroy, P. May, P. Méral, P. Mibielli, R. Norgaard, B. Ozkaynak, U. Pascual, W. Pengue, M. Perez, D. Pesche, R. Pirard, J. Ramos-Martin, L. Rival, F. Saenz, G. Van Hecken, A. Vatn, B. Vira, K. Urama. (2013) Payments for ecosystem services and the fatal attraction of win-win solutions. *Conservation Letters*. 6(4):274-279 (web)
- Norgaard, R. B. (2010). Ecosystem services: From eye-opening metaphor to complexity blinder. *Ecological economics*, 69(6), 1219-1227.
- Pascual, U., Palomo, I., Adams, W., Chan, K., Daw, T., Garmendia, E., Gómez-Baggethun, E., de Groot, R., Mace, G., Martín-López, B., Phelps, J. (2017). Off-stage ecosystem service burdens: A blind spot for global sustainability. *Environmental Research Letters*. (web)
- Pascual, U., Phelps, J., Garmendia, E., Brown, K., Corbera, E., Martin, A., Gomez-Baggethun, E., Muradian, R. (2014). Social Equity matters in Payments for Ecosystem Services. *Bioscience* 64(11): 1027-1036 (web)
- Pascual, U., Balvanera, P., Díaz, S., Pataki, G., Roth, E., et al., (2017). The value of nature's contributions to people: the IPBES approach. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 26-27: 7-16. (web)
- UNEP (2015). Preliminary guide regarding diverse conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits, including biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services. Deliverable 3(d). IPBES/4/INF/1. Report of the Fourth Session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2015). Bonn, Germany. (web)
- Zafra-Calvo N., Pascual U., Brockington D., Coolsaet B., Cortes-Vazquez J.A., Gross-Camp N., Palomo I., Burgess N.D. (2017). Towards a Practical Indicator System to Assess Equitable Conservation in Protected Areas. *Biological Conservation*. 211: 134-141