

Towards an Ecological Economics of Water

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The complexity of water-related issues, at the crossroads of economic, ecological, social, and political concerns, calls for an update of the state of the water researchers' community within the broader field of ecological economics and its ability to influence practices (management and water policies and users' practices).

The aims of this session are threefold. Firstly, identifying the community of researchers involved in transformative research on Ecological Economics of Water. In the context of climate change and of increasing pollution and depletion of the resource, research at the nexus of water, food, energy and land issues is expanding rapidly. Nevertheless, such huge challenges as access to water and sanitation, water security, pollution, etc. remain topical. Shaping sustainable water paths will require the involvement of researchers, practitioners and users. From a reflexive perspective, this session will question the capacity of current research to build these bridges.

Secondly, from an epistemological perspective, this session aims to discuss whether the ontological specificities of water justify a distinctive theoretical approach, an "ecological economics of water". This issue is related to the previous one. Should the development of an integrative and transformative approach lead to reconsider the object of water itself, not as a resource among others, but as a particular system (of resources and use)? This session will discuss the originality of water to identify the opportunity of a suitable analytical framework that would both build upon existing work in ecological economics and be highly relevant and performative. Existing literature in ecological economics, and particularly recent studies, attest the feasibility of such an approach.

Thirdly, from a theoretical perspective, the session will discuss the links between (social) ecological economics and other theoretical and disciplinary approaches, particularly those pertaining to institutional economics and (urban) political ecology. The objective will be to identify conceptual and theoretical proximity but also potential incompatibilities. Fostering the dialogue with other approaches would reinforce the call for a renewal of water research, and more generally, should be fruitful for the overall reflexive goal of the conference to open up disciplinary boundaries.

Based on the aims and scope of this special session, we can identify clearly several explicit links with the key topics of the call for papers and special session, namely:

- 1.1. Philosophical and methodological reflections: epistemology, theory and praxis integrated, action research and action learning, arts-based research on sustainability, indigenous perspectives on science and research, activism
- 2.4. Natural resource management: adaptation, conservation, control, empowerment, governance, participation, resilience, sustainable use, etc.
- 3.4. Bringing power back in: power of science on knowledge production and use, inclusion and exclusion in ecological economics, political ecology and the ecological economics discourse