

How do you include non-monetary values in decision making?



Summary

Decision-makers need to consider the full range of implications of management decisions and can use various valuation techniques to gain this understanding.

This often involves assigning monetary values to ecosystem services (ES). Unfortunately, monetary valuation lends itself to certain ecosystems and services, to the exclusion of others.

Social values and cultural services are particularly difficult to monetise and so are often ignored. They are informed by personal experience, social institutions and social interactions, which can make them difficult to identify, quantify and explain. They can however be particularly important for certain groups and communities. Social-cultural valuation is a way of making these services, and the values associated with them, explicit. Taking account of the full suite of ES can ensure that proposed management practices are more widely accepted and have a greater chance of success.

Key messages

- ▶ Traditional economic methods are insufficient when it comes to valuing the full benefits of ES; socio-cultural valuation can ensure that all values are represented
- ▶ Although sometimes intangible and difficult to quantify, these services are often easiest for people to relate to and value
- ▶ Quantification is not the primary goal of socio-cultural valuation; what's important is that these softer values are acknowledged and represented
- ▶ Environmental and non-environmental values can become bundled together; social-cultural valuation methods can be used to tease different values apart
- ▶ It is desirable and more effective to utilise a range of methods
- ▶ Visual tools and use of language is important
- ▶ Participatory and deliberative processes are most appropriate

Knowledge

Ecosystem services (ES) are a complex and unfamiliar concept for most people and their role can be difficult to communicate or understand.

OPERAs research has found that people relate most closely to Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) as these are experienced in the settings or situations in which people most typically interact with nature and realise its benefits. By comparison, the value associated with Regulating Ecosystem Services (RES) can be overlooked as their contribution is more intermediate or less well understood.

It is important to understand what people value in the environment in order to communicate effectively and gain support for potential management schemes and reduce conflict. As many ecosystem services are linked and depend on healthy ecosystem function, CES could be used as a way of communicating the value of the whole ecosystem – and the full range of services it provides.

Social-Cultural Valuation is also important in helping stakeholders to engage with their environment and understand their relationship to it. In this way it can be utilised as a new public consultation model to inform Green Infrastructure planning.

Practice

As there are often a range of services and values associated with an ecosystem, Social-Cultural Valuation must use a variety of methods in order to really understand how and what people value in their environment.

The OPERAs projects used a range of methods, often in combination:

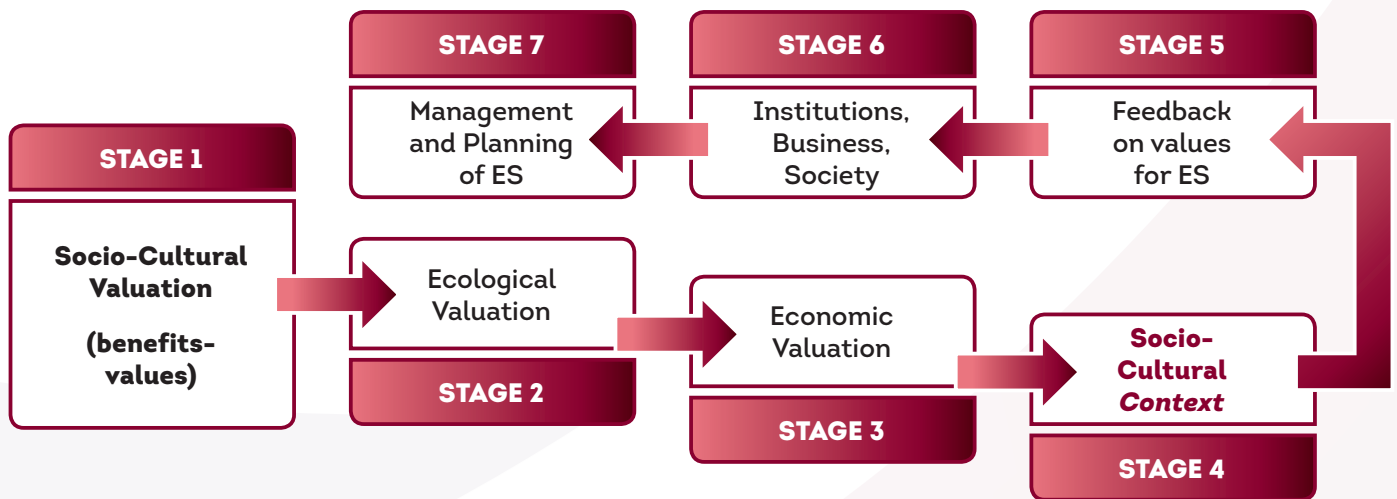
- Participatory Mapping of ES (PPGIS) helps people to connect their values to the landscape and to see the area as a whole. Decision-makers can also identify 'value hotspots', or areas where conflicts might arise.
- Deliberation allows people to develop their ideas through iterative discussion, building consensus and learning throughout the process.
- Choice experiments force people to think about what they value most using weighting or ranking techniques.
- Visualisation tools can help people to better understand the ES and landscapes in question.
- Scenario techniques encourage people to think about the type of future they would like and what sort of management might help to get there.

Irish Exemplar: Dublin, Fingal Socio-Cultural Valuation of the north Dublin coastline

This exemplar set out to understand the values associated with the coastal ecosystem of Fingal, County Dublin. A combination of mapping, visualisation, scenarios and deliberation techniques were used over three workshops and a set of interviews with stakeholders. The mapping exercise encouraged participants to see the areas as a whole and highlighted places with value bundles,

as well as areas where values may conflict with land use strategies. Through ranking and prioritising tangible and intangible values and services associated with the area, it was revealed that intangible values are considered more important. These views were re-enforced through deliberation. Stakeholders were very positive about engaging in the process.

Figure 1: Positioning the role of SCV in the ES Assessment Cascade



Adapted from De Groot et al. (2010a): Source: Joyce, D. (2017). Socio-cultural valuation of ecosystem services – a tool for effective stakeholder engagement to inform land-use planning and management? M. Litt Thesis.

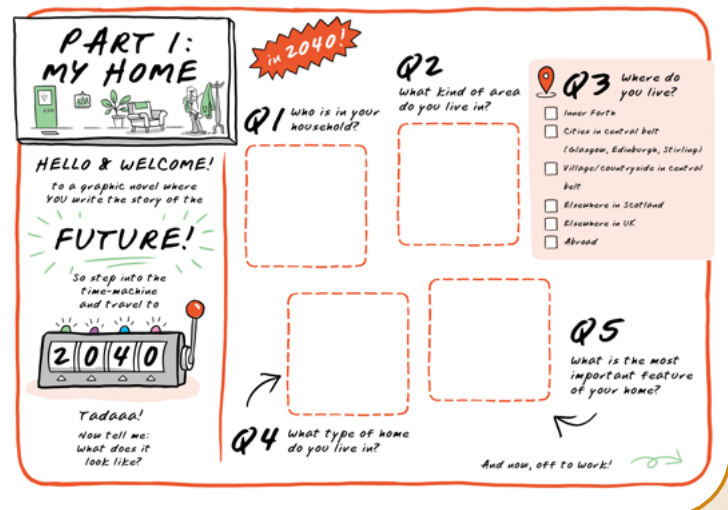
Instruments

Experience from the OPERAs exemplars was used to develop a guidance document to help other projects to use social-cultural valuation to inform their management decisions.

This tool explains different methods of socio-cultural valuation and provides a catalogue of case studies from OPERAs. Each case study includes the aim of the study, stakeholders involved, methods used, study results and details of how decision-makers have used the results. **The guidance is divided into 4 main steps for a tailor-made social valuation procedure:**

1. Define purpose and specific objectives.
2. Identify stakeholders and addressees – i.e. individuals or representatives of groups who make the decisions in ecosystem management, are affected by these decisions, or are particularly knowledgeable about the ecosystem and how it is managed.
3. Choose an appropriate format for data collection – often multiple methods used in conjunction get the best results.
4. Choose appropriate methods – the guidance document contains an inventory of methods with links to examples, tools and guides.

STREAMLINE is a new format for semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. It consists of a set of colourful, laminated A3 canvasses. Set in the future, each canvas invites the interviewee to set out their vision on a particular topic through a series of questions and tiles. This tool helps participants to really engage with the idea of social-cultural values, by thinking about what they want from their environment and what they need for a happy future.



The Future

Socio-Cultural Valuation makes stakeholders' values and preferences explicit, and helps ensure they are taken into account in decision-making processes.

OPERAs research has highlighted the importance of Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) and their potential role in communicating the importance of ES as a whole. Incorporating such knowledge can help to determine multi-functional, feasible and accepted solutions, and has proven to increase acceptance and success of environmental planning, natural resource management and nature conservation.

The OPERAs project has carried out research in a number of different locations, testing methodologies and deepening our knowledge of how people value their environment. The guidance documents and tools produced will encourage others to include Social-Cultural Valuation in their land use and resource management projects, and remove some of the obstacles to wider adoption of such practices.



Baily lighthouse, Howth, County Fingal, Ireland

“I suppose also because the subject of it is looking to 2040. We're so focused on what's happening next week, or the next year or the next five years. And trying to look a bit beyond that, something which doesn't have too many boundaries, is good.”

Renewables Promoter

“Very good idea – I got it – it came across very well.”

Dublin resident

“Very well laid out and thought provoking.”

Inner Forth resident

“Not what I expected. Got me thinking in more 'creative' ways about how the future could be.”

Inner Forth resident

“Very Interesting. Challenging. Fun. Enjoyable. Quirky.”

Inner Forth resident



Find further details about this theme on Oppla:
oppla.eu/operas/non-monetary

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   OPERAsProject

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