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“The Social Sciences and the Humanities in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)”

Special Issue (Supplement)

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• 0 - The Social Sciences and the Humanities in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

Authors Alice B. M. Vadrot, Mariam Akthar-Schuster & Robert Watson

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Short title Why are social sciences and humanities needed in the works of IPBES?

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• 1 - The role, importance and challenges of social sciences and humanities in the work of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES)

Authors Marie Stenseke & Anne Larigauderie

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Abstract Qualified competences in social science and humanities are required across the various deliverables of the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES) in order to fully address the objectives of IPBES. Building integrative approaches has long been acknowledged as a scientific challenge. Hence, new paths have to be forged, including revisiting basic ontological and epistemological considerations, such as how we understand the world, what knowledge is, and the role of science. Constructive interdisciplinary dialogues in IPBES supports the development of innovative frames and terminologies. One example is the evolution from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment ecosystem service framework to the Nature's Contributions to People classification now applied in IPBES assessments. IPBES is still in a learning phase and critical examination of what is accomplished this far is useful when refining ongoing modes of work and in long-term strategic considerations.

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• 2 - Engaging diverse experts in a global environmental assessment: participation in the first work programme of IPBES and opportunities for improvement

Authors	Malte Timppte, Jasper Montana, Katrin Reuter, Maud Borie & Jascha Apkes
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Abstract	<p>The need for interdisciplinary expert groups from different regions of the world to be involved in the fields of sustainability science and environmental change research is increasingly recognised. The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was established in 2012 as a science-policy interface and has gone beyond previous initiatives in its articulation of a clear commitment to inter- and transdisciplinary approaches that mandate a diversity of genders, disciplines and regional backgrounds within its expert groups. The first IPBES work programme, carried out between 2014 and 2018, has been supported by 17 expert groups, comprising over 1000 experts, who have been selected from over 2000 government and stakeholder nominations through formal procedures. In this paper, we present and critique the framework through which IPBES identifies and selects experts to participate in its processes. In addition, we synthesise and carry out a quantitative analysis on the expert nomination and selection data relating to the first assessment activities of IPBES. Identifying that the balance of regions, genders, disciplines and knowledge systems represented within these expert groups is still disproportionately dominated by male natural scientists from the Global North, the paper makes recommendations of how to better engage knowledge holders from different disciplines and diverse knowledge systems in future iterations of the IPBES work programme.</p>
Short title	Engaging diverse experts in a global environmental assessment
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• 3 - Distribution and selection of experts in the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES): the case of the regional assessment for Africa

Authors Katja Heubach & Cosmas Kombat Lambini

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Abstract

In 2013, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) agreed to carry out a regional assessment for Africa. Since then, roughly 100 authors have been working to deliver, in 2018, a document that not only synthesises existing knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services for the African region but to distil from it knowledge that is relevant, credible, and legitimate for both societal and scientific practise. This requires, firstly, to carefully constituting the group of authors and, secondly, to design an assessment process that allows for deriving at an integrated perspective amongst these experts. Such a joint process of knowledge production that encompasses both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration can be framed as co-creation. In this contribution, we analyse whether the IPBES African assessment accounts for these two prerequisites for an effective assessment process. Our particular interest lays in the question whether scholars from social sciences and the humanities are sufficiently involved. Our analysis is based on the curriculum vitae of 97 members of the expert group, and reads quite straightforward: there is an overall lack of non-natural science perspectives and expertise that might lead to essential knowledge and data gaps when wishing to understand the effects of the diverse human concepts of and activities on biodiversity and ecosystem services. In order to address these gaps and to derive at an assessment report truly relevant for policy makers as well as other social and scientific actors, IPBES needs to widen its outreach to networks of scholars from the social sciences and the humanities and to inform them appropriately about the specific roles they could play within IPBES processes, particularly assessments.

Short title Distribution and selection of experts in the intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES)

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• 4 - The significance of meaning. Why IPBES needs the social sciences and humanities

Authors	Jens Jetzkowitz, C.S.A. (Kris) van Koppen, Rolf Lidskog, Konrad Ott, Lieske Voget-Kleschin & Catherine Mei Ling Wong
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Abstract	<p>The term “biodiversity” is often used to describe phenomena of nature, which can be studied without a reference to the socially constructed, evaluative, or indeed normative contexts. In our paper, we challenge this conception by focusing particularly on methodological aspects of biodiversity research. We thereby engage with the idea of interdisciplinary biodiversity research as a scientific approach directed at the recognition and management of contemporary society in its ecological embedding. By doing this, we explore how research on and assessments of biodiversity can be enhanced if meaning, aspiration, desires, and related aspects of agency are methodically taken into account. In six sections, we substantiate our claim that the discourse on biodiversity (including the IPBES (Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) debate) is incomplete without contributions from the social sciences and humanities. In the introduction, a brief overview of biodiversity’s conceptual history is provided showing that “biodiversity” is a lexical invention intended to create a strong political momentum. However, that does not impede its usability as a research concept. Section 2 examines the origins of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by way of sociological discourse analysis. Subsequently, it proposes a matrix as a means to structure the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the CBD. The matrix reemphasizes our main thesis regarding the need to bring social and ethical expertise to the biodiversity discourse. In Section 3, we offer a brief sketch of the different methods of the natural and social sciences as well as ethics. This lays the groundwork for our Section 4, which explains and illustrates what social sciences and ethics can contribute to biodiversity research. Section 5 turns from research to politics and argues that biodiversity governance necessitates deliberative discourses in which participation of lay people plays an important role. Section 6 provides our conclusions.</p>
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• 5 - Why are social sciences and humanities needed in the works of IPBES? A systematic review of the literature

Authors Alice B. M. Vadrot, Aleksandar Rankovic, Renaud Lapeyre, Pierre-Marie Aubert & Yann Laurans
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Abstract Despite the increased attention, which has been given to the issue of involving knowledge and experts from the social sciences and humanities (SSH) into the products and works of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), little is known on what the expectations towards the involvement of SSH in IPBES actually are. The aim of this paper is to close this gap by identifying the range of possible SSH contributions to IPBES that are expected in the literature, and discuss the inherent challenges of and concrete ways to realize these contributions in the particular institutional setting of IPBES. We address these two points by: Firstly, assessing the literature dealing with IPBES and building a typology describing the main ways in which contributions from SSH to IPBES have been conceived between 2006 and 2017. We discuss these expected contributions in light of broader debates on the role of SSH in nature conservation and analyse some of the blind spots and selectivities in the perception of how SSH could substantially contribute to the works of IPBES. Then, secondly, by looking at one particular example, economics and its use in the first thematic assessment on pollinators, pollination and food production, we will concretely illustrate how works in a given discipline could contribute in many different and unprecedented ways to the works of IPBES and help identify paths for enhancing the conservation of biodiversity. Finally, we propose a range of practical recommendations as to how to increase the contribution of SSH in the works of IPBES.

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• 6 - Borrowing trouble. Finding ways out of value systems discord for biodiversity policy-making

Author Yann Laurans

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IPBES' conceptual framework, and the related debates prior to its adoption, provided an interesting opportunity to witness an old and ongoing tension between two value systems, namely an "economic" and utility-based value system, and a "cultural" and comprehensive value system. Arguments for and against both value systems relate, at least partly, to criteria such as practicality, democracy, comprehensiveness and respect for various forms of worldviews. However, disputes regarding the legitimacy of these value systems mostly rest on theoretical ground since they generally focus on the potential threats and future promises of approaches related to these value systems, rather than on their actual impacts and performance. This article aims to contribute to filling this gap. Typical instruments of the "economic" value system are cost-benefit analysis and its correlate, ecosystem services valuation. The key selling point of these instruments is their ability to support efficient, transparent and democratic policy-making processes. On the other hand, their most often denounced threat lies in paving the way to the commodification of nature. In this paper, these promises and threats are put to test in the context of Official Development Assistance and the decision-making processes of five Official Development Agencies (ODAs) such as the World Bank, the European Investment Banks and three bilateral ODAs. The paper provides for an analysis of the role of cost-benefit analysis and ecosystem services valuation for supporting decision-making in the fields related to the local environment in these ODAs. Results suggest that, however favourable the context of ODA appears for economic valuation instruments, the "economic" value system has failed to deliver both in terms of its most commonly boasted promises and its most often denounced threats. This suggests renewing our views on the tension between the value systems. All value systems give birth to languages, concepts and representations that can be used as complementary rather than conflicting resources as long as the economic analysis is no longer considered as a proxy for decision-making, but rather as a useful language to speak of material interests and of distribution, and to bring these concerns into deliberation processes.

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• 7 - Where do IPBES delegates in Europe see challenges, needs, gaps and opportunities in policy uptake of “Nature’s contributions to people”?

Authors Roger Keller, Hans Keune & Simone Maynard

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Abstract

This research note illustrates how European national delegates to the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) perceive the challenges, needs, gaps and opportunities related to the policy implementation of “Nature’s contributions to people (NCP)” in their nation. Until now, only little information has been available on how IPBES delegations perceive national policy-uptake and the implementation of the IPBES core concept of NCP. Based on an online survey with IPBES delegates, we aim to provide a stock-take of how IPBES delegations see NCP currently being incorporated in national government policies in Europe and how these policies are being implemented through programmes. Survey results show IPBES delegates consider a lack of relevant data and methodologies for NCP assessments to be a major obstacle to the uptake and implementation of NCP concepts in Europe. We wonder if availability of data and methodologies are the most prominent challenges to make IPBES a success, and consider the need for policy uptake and implementation to be more prominently addressed within the IPBES process.

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