World Café Report: Summary of partner discussions on the implementation of the Ecosystem Service Approach in the Alps

13th November 2017, 15:45-18:00, San Servolo, Venice

Facilitators: Laura Secco, Mauro Masiero, Riccardo Da Re (University of Padova) Catie Burlando (Etifor). **Rapporteur**: Ilaria Doimo (University of Padova)

Introduction

The Veneto team proposed a two-hour facilitated discussion in San Servolo (Venice) for partners and invited stakeholders and observers on the first day of the AlpES partner meeting, November 13th, 2017. The discussion followed the World Café format and included a focus on four topics. The topics were the following and were addressed in each table:

> **Table A**. What did the stakeholders from the pilot test regions emphasize as important during their discussions with the AlpES interviewers?
>
> **Table B**. What are the benefits that different stakeholders expect to obtain from the implementation of the ecosystem service (ES) approach?
>
> **Table C**. What are the challenges that different stakeholders might face from the implementation of the ES approach?
>
> **Table D.** How can the results of the project be used after the conclusion of the project, by the different categories of stakeholders, i.e., public, private and research institutions?

Participants chose three out of four topics (one for each table) at the beginning of the session (Figure 1) and moved from one table to the next every 20 minutes. Approximately 4-8 participants were at the tables at any one time. Facilitators recorded the discussion on a poster and briefly presented the results of the discussion at the end of the activity.

Figure 1. Choosing the topics.

Table A

What did the stakeholders from the pilot test regions emphasize as important during their discussions with the AlpES interviewers?

Facilitator: Catie Burlando

1. Identify conflicts in the territory and trade-offs among ES. One partner highlighted the need to identify the most important ES when two or more are in the same area and management can lead to conflicts, e.g., potential conflicts between cultural ES and water extraction, or between cultural ES and agriculture (Figure 2).

2. Being familiar with the concept helps discussions. Stakeholder suggested that it was easier to have discussions on how to use the concept and adopt it when it had already been introduced. Stakeholders asked for concrete examples when they were not familiar with the concept.

3. Economic valuation: a powerful concept but with a need to focus on values rather than price. One AlpES partner suggested that what stakeholders emphasised was directly connected to which stakeholders you asked. For example, in one case the government was interested in economic valuation alone. Another partner said that economic valuation was seen as a powerful concept to get the interest of administrations and the private sector, but it was not necessarily the starting point for all stakeholders. In order to deal with critical views regarding valuation, the AlpES partner explained to stakeholders how ES is a holistic concept that focuses not on price but on values. Therefore, municipalities should start from values and avoid focusing on economic aspects alone. In some areas, the local administration and protected areas managers are very interested in PES. There are examples of contracts for supporting conservation practices by farmers, and forms of payments from cities to rural areas. As one observer noted, challenges that have been already been identified include: the problem of valuation, the issue of who actually pays, the understanding of flux and the identification of the functional area of payment. Which stakeholders pay is a political problem.

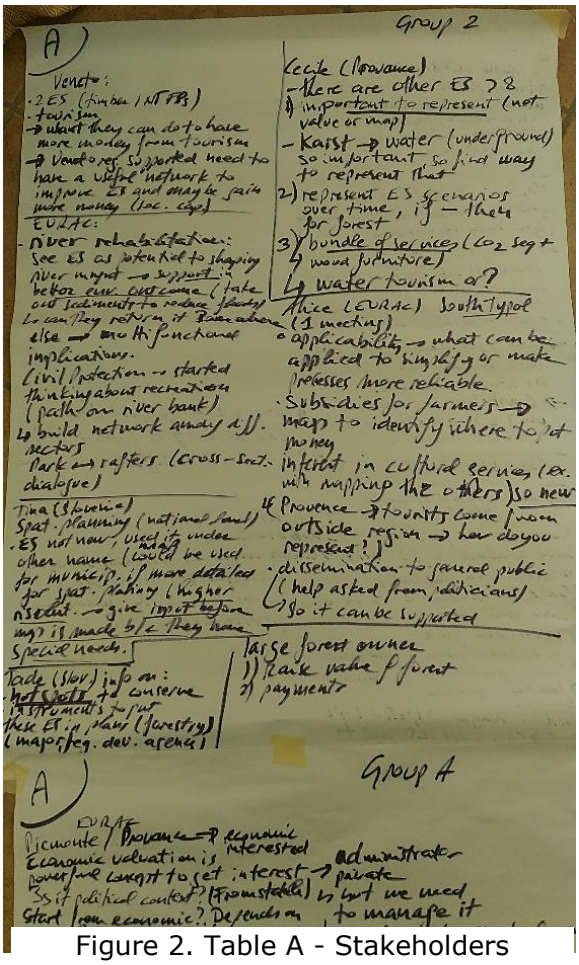

Figure 2. Table A - Stakeholders

4. Difficulty in using the maps created within AlpES at the local level and need for higher resolution maps. AlpES partners highlighted the limitations of mapping only one value per municipality. First, these would have to be at a higher resolution to be useful at the local level. Secondly, some stakeholders were unclear where the value itself came from. In some cases, stakeholders were interested in using the intermediate results of mapping to provide inputs and ensure their needs are addressed before the completion of the maps. In other cases, stakeholders asked for the final maps before discussing the results obtained. One NGO stated their interest in using the maps for their conservation work.

5. Complexity, applicability and usability of the concept. Partners highlighted that the concept is complex and difficult to transfer. Further, in one meeting, stakeholders raised the issue of applicability, asking what could be used and applied in order to simplify or make management processes more reliable? One example of applicability was related to the use of maps to indicate where subsidies should be allocated.

6. Approach to build networks among different sectors and stakeholders. Some stakeholders saw the use of the ES concepts as a way to build a network among different sectors and stakeholders (e.g. discussions between a protected area and its users).

7. Importance of inclusion in regulations or management plans for enabling implementation. The Piemonte partners highlighted that there currently are no instruments and tools at the local level or in local laws that allow the use of PES for planning. In this case, they are working to insert ES in planning instruments by the end of the project. In some areas such as Slovenia, protected areas are interested in more detailed maps (working with six municipalities) for protected areas, that could be used for tourism and local development; and in including ES in the protected areas management plan but this was not possible, because they had no official and financial support, it was not included in legislation, they had no experts to work on it, and no licence for ArcGIS (they realized the technical instrument was also important).

8. Recognition of value for increasing revenue. Private stakeholders (i.e. forest owners) are interested in payments that raise the value of the forest and to provide revenues from and for tourism. In the Veneto region, stakeholders identified two timber and non-timber forest products, as well as tourism, as two ES on which to think about networks that could support increasing value from these resources.

9. Recognition of other ES not currently represented, bundle of services, and scenarios/changes over time. Stakeholders first stressed that there are other ES that are important to represent and that are not included in the list of 8 ES, e.g., karst and underground water. Second, it is important to represent ES scenarios over time (i.e. if, then) especially when considering diverse planning options, e.g. water tourism. Finally, it is difficult to represent ES on their own, but rather, they may be best considered as a bundle of services (i.e., timber - combining CO2 sequestration and furniture). One further consideration was the need to represent the view of those who come from other places (e.g. tourists from the city).

10. Interest in cultural ecosystem services. There was also interest in cultural services, since this would be a new area of application (other ES have already been mapped through other instruments). ES was seen as a way to support river management and river rehabilitation, and thus lead to better environmental outcomes: i.e. can I take out sediments in one part of the river and return to the river bed further downstream, to reduce flooding? Can I look at the ecosystem in a multifunctional way, for example through a river path than can support recreation?

11. Tool for conservation. The regional environmental agency would be interested in identifying hotspots to conserve, and the instruments needed to put ES in plans (i.e. forestry plans).

12. Support for dissemination. Politicians asked for help in disseminating the concept so that it could be supported more widely.

Table B. What are the benefits that different stakeholders expect to obtain from the implementation of the ES approach?

Facilitator: Laura Secco, **transcription**: Ilaria Doimo

From the discussion it was clear that expected benefits are different for different stakeholders, hence different stakeholders' categories are identified below accordingly. The main stakeholders for which benefits were discussed were civil servants and policy makers at the national and local levels (Figure 3).

The discussion started by focusing on **civil servants.** These are closely connected to the local level of decision-making. The main expected benefits are linked to the possibility of having more objective parameters for making decisions, thus increasing their reliability and accountability. The ES approach is seen as a tool for increasing their capacity to provide more information and show their results in a more efficient way to the public. This aspect is also seen as crucial for bridging different sectors. In brief, the Public Administration expects the ES approach to improve both the network and dialogue between the public and private levels of decision-making. Therefore, it is expected to improve their capacity to communicate and reduce the risks of conflicts with local stakeholders.

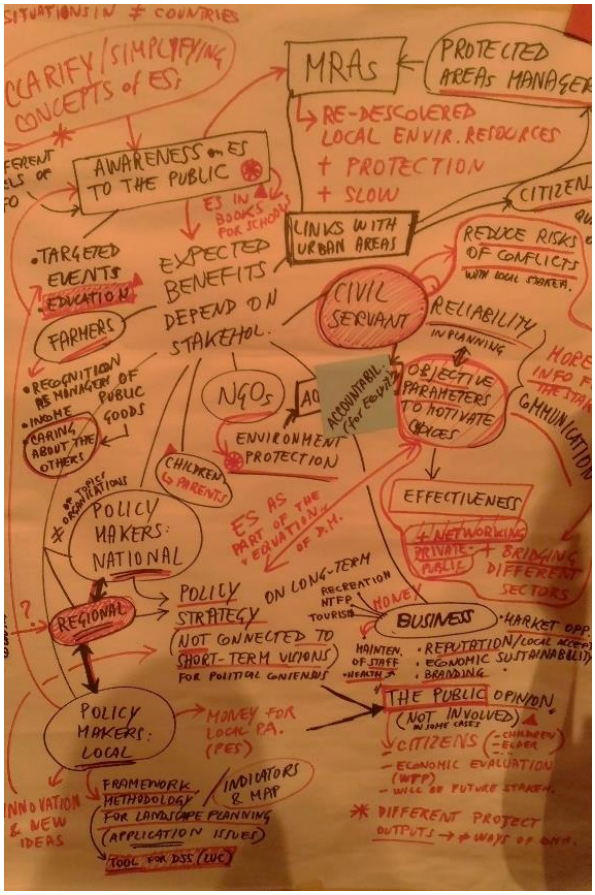

Figure 3. Table B - Benefits.

For the regional level, the conclusion was that the dynamics between different levels of decision-making are country specific. For **policy makers at the national and local levels**, the main expected benefit was the adoption of a long-term perspective. Implementing an ES approach can provide a framework supporting long-term decision planning, and contrasting the political consensus strategy that brings a shorter-term vision for decision-making. With the adoption of a long-term strategy, the opportunity of creating virtuous dynamics of innovation and project opportunities can also guarantee a continuous process of development.

For **local public administrations,** there were three main expected benefits. First, an ES approach is expected to provide methodologies and tools for decision making, such as indicators, maps, methodologies (frameworks) for identifying ES. Second, implementing this approach was also seen as a privileged way for introducing innovation, whereby new ideas can catalyse traditional decision-making and development approaches moving forward. Third, expected benefits relate to the creation of additional income opportunities (e.g. PES) for the local administration, and thus a tool for overcoming budget constraints.

For **NGOs, associations and organizations,** the expectation was to enhance the level of environmental protection due to the growing attention on ecosystems as ES providers. This attention on ES was also seen as the channel to bring and increase awareness to the public around ES themselves and the environment as a whole.

Further, stakeholders involved in the **business sector** were mentioned. For this category, implementing the ES approach could improve their reputation and acceptance from the community; access to new market and branding opportunities and, of course, increase and diversification of incomes. In relation to the case studies conducted by AlpES partners, the main type of business activities presented were connected to recreation and tourism, as well as non-wood forest products (NWFP) use. An interesting example was the use of ES as a way to improve health conditions of staff, facilitating recovery from illness and injuries, stress-relief, and generally, improvements in the working environment.

The ES approach was also seen as a strategic tool for the sustainable development of rural and marginal areas. In this context, an interesting point of view was raised in the discussion. The ES approach is expected to be a way to re-discover environmental resources, as well as a practical way to connect rural and urban areas. Stakeholders such as **farmers** and **managers of protected areas** expressed interest in demonstrating that rural areas deliver ES and goods needed by urban areas. It was mentioned that there is the need to show farmers as producers of commodities as well as providers of services and public goods that are not always visible to the consumer. Farmers see this is a way to show they work for the whole society, not just for their own profit.

The last point raised concerned **public opinion** in the work carried out so far. Initially, AlpES partners stated that public opinion was not an issue; while later on in the discussion the perception changed to address public opinion through the local administration, specifically through **raising awareness** by implementing the ES approach. **Education** was also perceived as an important channel to deliver the expected benefits of the ES approach. The role of the public administration in increasing awareness about environmental services was discussed, through targeted events, especially for children. The complexity and stratification of the concept of ES was stressed, and it was stated the need to find diverse and appropriate ways to communicate ES approach at different levels and to different stakeholders.

Table C.

What are the challenges that different stakeholders might face from the implementation of the ES approach?

Facilitator: Riccardo Da Re

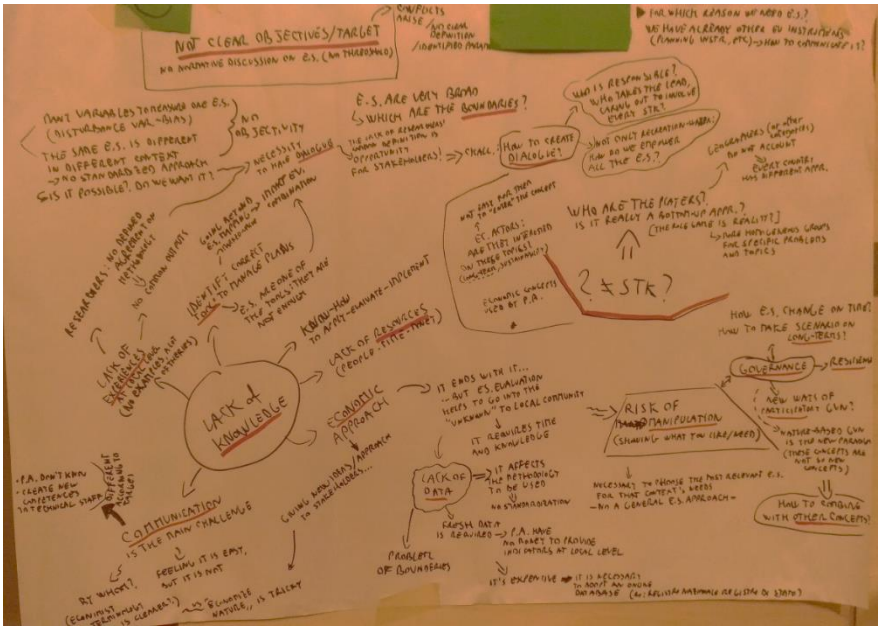

Figure 4. Table C - Challenges.

The main results of the discussion on challenges related to the implementation of the ES approach are summarised in Figure 4, which records three successive discussions.

The discussion followed two different paths: a) the challenges that different stakeholders might face from the **implementation of the ES approach**, and b) the challenges that are generally **connected to the ES approach.** Little time was dedicated to examining the difficulties faced by different stakeholders. First, participants discussed how not all stakeholders count equally in different countries. For instance, geographers (but also other categories) in Italy are not considered key actors in decision-making. Second, only two categories of stakeholders were mentioned during the discussion: public administrators, who are more often trying to use economic aspects for decision-making processes, and economists, who sometimes have difficulties understanding the concept of ecosystem service in depth.

The challenge generally connected to the ES approach is **lack of knowledge**, which leads to several consequences:

1. Communication. Communication is often underestimated by stakeholders who see it as easy and immediate. Instead, communication should be targeted (for instance differentiating between public administrators and technicians). Further, while economic terminology may be generally clear, the idea to "economize nature" could hamper stakeholders.

2. Resources. These include lack of time, funding and people needed to implement an ES approach.

3. Know-how. The lack of know-how is related to the application, implementation and evaluation of the ES approach. Moreover, ES approach is one of several existing methods (mapping, impact evaluation, etc.) available to manage the territory, and it is thus, not easy to identify the correct tool.

4. Concrete experiences at local level. These experiences are available in the literature but few applications exist on the ground.

5. Dialogue. Researchers have not yet found an agreement on how to apply a methodology, and this leads to outputs are not comparable. At the same time, the lack of common definitions

among scientists should be an opportunity for dialogue, but how can we create a dialogue? Who should be responsible for it, taking the lead and ensuring the involvement of all stakeholders? How can we ensure that stakeholders will address all ES and not the most commonly known ES (e.g., the ones linked with recreational activities and water management) and that all the ES will be equally considered?

6. Economic culture. An economic approach can provide an opportunity for stakeholders to get new ideas.

7. Data. The lack of data affects the methodology used and can prevent researchers and evaluators from achieving a common standardization. This is a problem with "boundaries" (e.g. at which level is it possible to obtain data?) and data that is updated (e.g. public administrators have few resources to collect and provide indicators at the local level). Even if expensive, it should be necessary to adopt a national/international online database. Moreover, the lack of data leads to the risk of manipulation: administrators or researchers can show the results that they need without any external control.

8. Resilient governance vision. How do ES change on time? How is it possible to make long-term scenarios? How can participatory approaches be adopted? How can we combine the ES concepts with other nature-based concepts?

9. Clear objectives and targets. Conflicts can arise due to the absence of a definition of ES, a list of shared evaluation parameters, and a normative discussion on ES with clear thresholds.

10. Objectivity. The lack of objectivity is mainly due to two factors: i) the presence of too many variables used to describe a single ES can create biases, and ii) the absence of a standardized approach for each ES could vary with respect to the local context. ES are broad and do not respect the administrative boundaries that researchers and evaluators use to analyse them. Which are the boundaries of ES? Is it possible to define boundaries?

Participants also questioned the need for an ES approach. Public administrators use several instruments to collect data and take decisions, and question the need to study and apply a new approach. Further discussion on this issue is needed to provide a shared answer and create an effective communication tool.

Table D.

How can the results of the project be used after the conclusion of the project, by the different categories of stakeholders, i.e. public, private, and research institutions?

Facilitator: Mauro Masiero

1. A matter of definition. What do we mean by project results? The first issue that emerged was the need to define a common understanding for "results". Should results be understood in a narrow sense (i.e. project outputs) or in a broad one (i.e. any potential impact produced by the project)? Participants initially started mostly from a narrower perspective, considering results in terms of ecosystem service (ES) mapping. Most of them felt that the mapping was unlikely to be used by stakeholders from the local pilot areas because they are developed at a resolution/scale that is not much suitable at this level. Further developments as well as integration with additional data from existing secondary sources should be considered. In some cases (e.g. France) stakeholders pointed out that information made available through the project is already known in the local area and brings in limited added value. Although this was an isolated opinion, it should not be left unconsidered: since stakeholders provide valuable inputs they should also receive appropriate outputs in return. Further discussion brought in a broader concept/understanding of project results. The Veneto Region highlighted that we should also account for stakeholder involvement and awareness raising about ES, as well as the idea that ES should be taken into account when making decisions. Participants mostly agreed that this broader perspective is the most appropriate one: while project outcomes remain paramount, results go far beyond.

2. Different stakeholders, different uses of results. Following inputs provided by the Table D guiding question, different perspectives where considered for addressing uses of project results. These included: **A. PUBLIC stakeholders**: (1) ES assessment and mapping could inform and drive decision making and investment priorities, in particular under public budget constraints; (2) AlpES results could also facilitate the development of new policies and regulations including the ES concept. Examples might include the use of the ES approach as a basis for land use planning (e.g. Aosta Valley and Piedmont regions in Italy) or new national policies on ES management (e.g. in Slovenia); (3) AlpES results could also be used for providing internal training to public entities. **B. PRIVATE stakeholders**: (1) Possibility to improve existing products or develop new ones by valuing ES. This might include the development of market based instruments or the contribution to local development. (2) Possibility to use Environmental Impact Assessment to assess impacts associated with development activities and investments, set-up specific mitigation or compensation measures as well as prevent and manage ES trade-offs. The economic assessment of ES is a precondition to the development of private initiatives willing to market ES, however economic valuation should build on robust methodologies. In addition to the point above, the focus could be on ES that are easier to communicate and could be more easily understood by providers, the market and the general public (e.g., drinking water, slope protection). **C. RESEARCH institutes**: Possibility to build on the AlpES research results to develop further research activities.

3. A cross-cutting issue. Among the expected AlpES results, special emphasis was given to linking mapping/assessment of ES (as well as Wikialps) to capacity building. This might include the development of a (massive) online training course addressing different user types. The creation of this link is already part of a specific WP within the project. This brought to more general considerations on how to effectively use, disseminate and communicate results, which is addressed in point 5.

4. Links with other projects/initiatives. ES currently represents a "hot topic" which is addressed by several projects and initiatives at the EU level, and is likely to continue to be addressed in the future. AlpES is perceived by several partners as a front-runner (or ice-breaker) since it is the first initiative that tries to define an ES approach based on a common set of indicators, for the whole Alpine area. Tools developed by AlpES could thus represent a valuable base for future initiatives and be further developed in future initiatives, for example by increasing the resolution and downscaling.

5. Reaching the desired targets. In order to facilitate sharing and using AlpES project results, questions related to dissemination and communication included the following: Who is/are the target audiences? What do we want to communicate? What are the most appropriate tools to effectively reach each target? How can terminology, language and communication tools be tailored according to the audience? At present, wording, tools and communication channels are adequate to an expert audience, while more efforts should be made to reach the general public through results that are available, accessible, and appealing (e.g. infographics), yet to allow understanding of what is behind them and what they can be used for. Thus, spreading knowledge on ES remains a key-result for AlpES project. Figure 5 shows results for Table D.

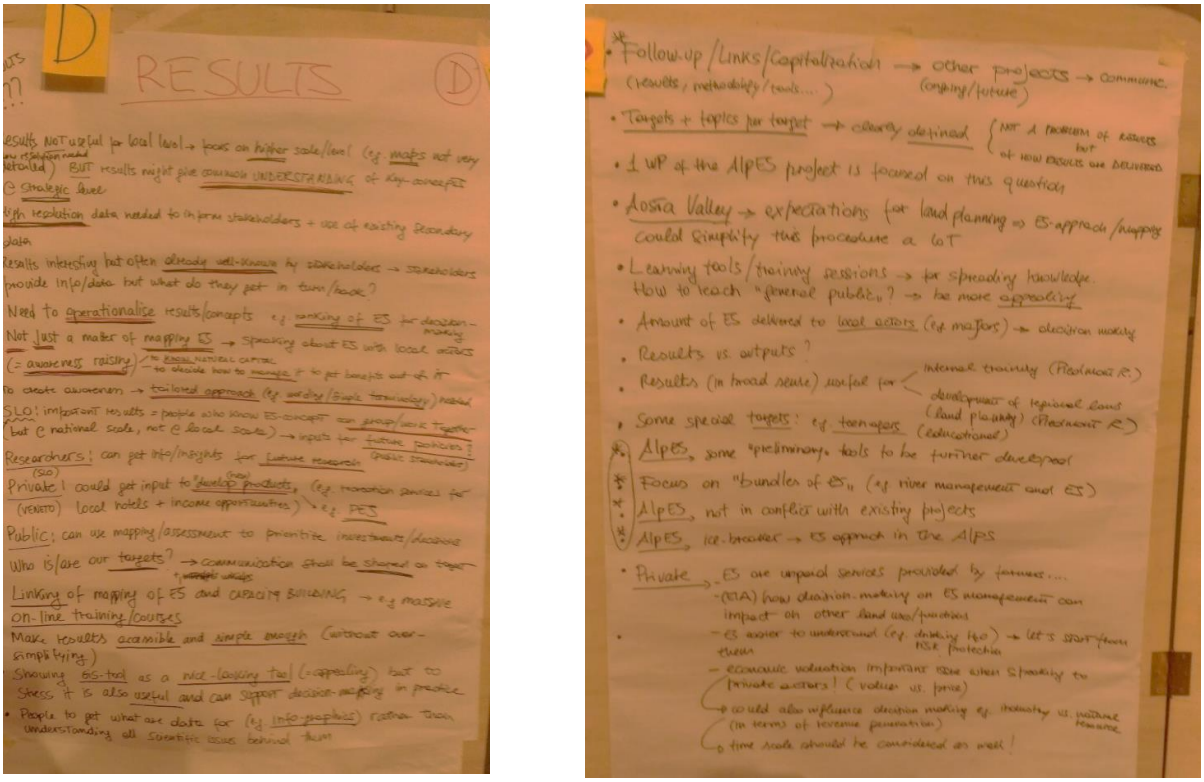

Figure 5. Table D - Results.