

**Multiple dimensions
of wellbeing in
practice – a review of
ESPA research.**

**Sarah Coulthard,
J. Allister McGregor,
&
Carole White**

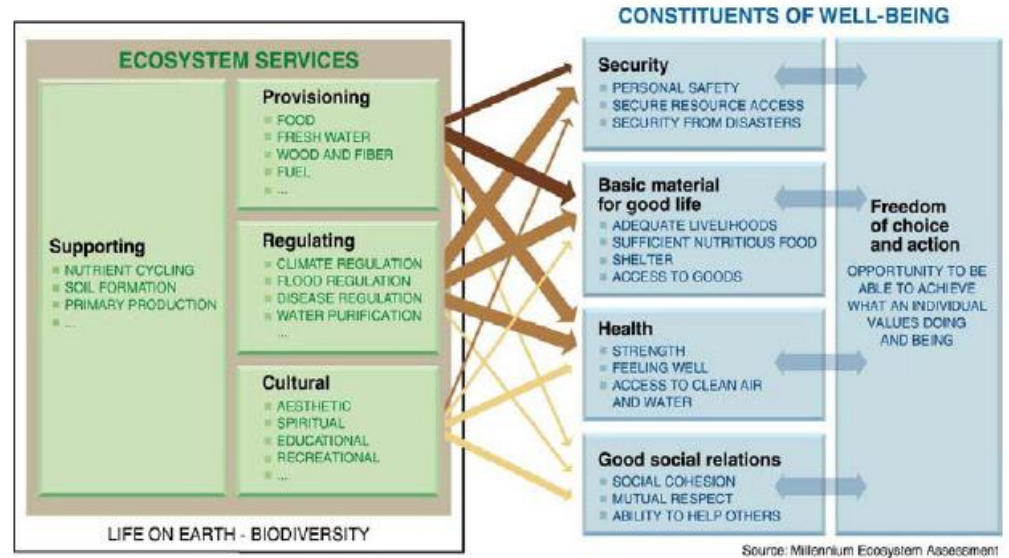


Background

Multidimensional wellbeing as a concept in the MA and ESPA stimulated greater engagement with multidimensional wellbeing in Ecosystem Services empirical research

Review of key contributions from ESPA research which has used multidimensional wellbeing.

Linkages between ecosystem services and human well-being



ARROW'S COLOR Potential for mediation by socioeconomic factors	ARROW'S WIDTH Intensity of linkages between ecosystem services and human well-being
Low	Weak
Medium	Medium
High	Strong

Figure SDM - A - The MA framework

What do we mean by multidimensional wellbeing

- Considers the ***objective*** condition of people
- Their ***subjective*** assessments of their lives.
- A ***relational*** dimension - social relationships and how these shape wellbeing achievements
- Multidimensionality – consideration of interactions between these dimensions

From multidimensional poverty to multidimensional wellbeing – some clarifications

- Blurring of definitions – Multidimensional poverty used interchangeably with multidimensional wellbeing
- Clouds the distinctive rationale for using ‘wellbeing’
- People are not defined by their poverty alone – wellbeing adds further considerations
- Sen - ‘human development’ about more than income
- ‘Participatory development’ (Chambers and Narayan) - Indicates importance of what poor people think and feel and affirms departure from income poverty.



3 key reasons to shift from a 'poverty' to 'wellbeing' framing

1. Poverty **delimits analysis to what people lack**, which underplays what they aspire to achieve and what they do with what they have. It misses the wellbeing strategies that are vital to understanding the relationship between ES and WB.
2. Ethically - wellbeing is a more respectful and well-rounded way of trying to understand a person's life, avoiding labelling and disempowerment.
3. Offers a more holistic account, centered on the person and a more socially enriched analysis.



Contributions of ESPA multidimensional wellbeing research.

Key contribution 1 – ESPA research highlights the importance of social differentiation and the need for disaggregated assessment of how ES can contribute to wellbeing.

Dawson and Martin (2015) problematize inadequate recognition of social complexity in ecosystem services research

“Socio-ecological reductionism”

- **Failure to consider different types of values** – different people may value an ES differently based on how it contributes to their wellbeing and thus may act differently to changes in how that service is managed.
- **Aggregation of people and preferences:** over-simplification of population characteristics (e.g. by using average statistics) means that winners and losers resulting from a particular change are unrecognized.
- **Oversight of power relations and politics:** these determine who controls, or benefits from ES, and who does not.....

- **Key contribution 2 – ESPA research using multidimensional wellbeing contributes to the identification and tackling of trade-offs between the environment and human wellbeing.**

Example: Daw et al.,(2015*) detail trade-offs in coastal Kenya

- when gains for one ecosystem service or group of people results in losses for others
- Disaggregating different stakeholders revealed a range of potential trade-offs and win-wins in different groups' well-being

Particular disadvantages for poorest and vulnerable (beach seiners and women traders)

and

Conflicts undermine the prospects for sustainable management



“Environmental management inevitably involves trade-offs among different objectives, values, and stakeholders. Most evaluations of such trade-offs involve monetary valuation or calculation of aggregate production of ecosystem services, which can mask individual winners and losers...Such trade-offs are often ignored because losers are marginalized or not represented by quantification...” (Page 1, Daw et al., 2015).

- **Key contribution 3 – Identification of the role of inequality and injustice in ES distribution**

- Exploitation of ES have enabled huge growth in wellbeing for some, whilst the negative effects of environmental degradation, and the management interventions designed to reduce degradation, often fall disproportionately on poor people
- High visibility of poor people and their dependency on the environment
- Some conservation and environmental management regimes can and have been particularly punitive for the poorest people

“Some problems are presented as being so urgent that they require states to operate outside of everyday norms of fairness – to act in the wider interest of a nation, or the planet, even if this rides roughshod over the rights of a few. There is a danger that conservation is thought of in this way: that its need for action is so exceptional that almost any activity to save biodiversity is morally justified...”

(Adrian Martin 2017, ‘Just Conservation’)

Example

- Bidaud et al., (2017*) use MD Wellbeing to demonstrate social impacts, and subsequent injustices, resulting from a forest biodiversity offsetting project in Madagascar.
- Implemented where people have high poverty and ES dependency
- Trade offs between material benefits and social disadvantages (e.g. distribution of chickens)
- Role of power in receiving benefits (biggest predictor of a household receiving benefits is not the extent of ES dependency, or poverty, but membership of forest management association)

Conclusion

3 logical queries regarding ES-WB relationships

1. how are people different in terms of their wellbeing needs and strategies;
2. how ecosystem services contribute to people's wellbeing in different ways and what factors underpin who benefits and who does not;
3. the uneven distribution of ecosystem services to wellbeing, and the extent to which this is perceived as fair or unjust.

Conclusion

Advocate fair and 'Do no harm' conservation to enhance the capacity for ES to sustainably reduce poverty

- Urgency problem 'do something'
- Aggregate blame / one size fits all
- Lack of evidence regarding how poor people harm the environment
- Equal voice of social science alongside natural science