Global Challenges and Valuing Nature – Reflections from the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme

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Valuing Nature Annual Conference, Cardiff, 13th Nov 2018

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ESPA was launched in response to the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

ESPA's goal was to ensure that ecosystems would be conserved and managed more sustainably – in ways that alleviate poverty and enhance wellbeing

ESPA's research approach…

- Aimed to achieve development impact
- Was highly interdisciplinary
- Employed systems thinking
- Involved partners in global South and North
- Used innovative methods for data collection and analysis
- Insisted on feedback to stakeholders

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ESPA in numbers

922 Researchers
50% from developing countries

53 Countries
where research has taken place

8,516 Citations
from 419 papers

125 Research Projects
supported by ESPA

£43.9m
Total value of ESPA programme

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Headline results of ESPA's research

Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation

Trade-offs and Governance

https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780429016295

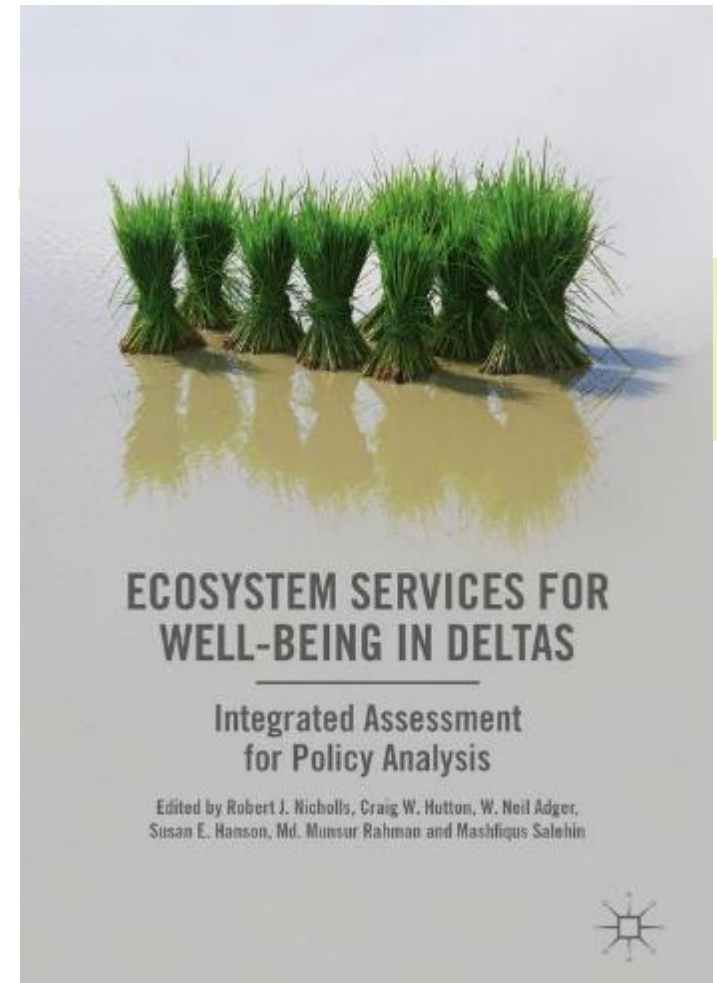espa
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1. Hidden costs of environmental interventions – for the poorest

- Expect trade-offs!

- Environment-based policies and programmes will inevitably have implications for human wellbeing and may even bear hidden human costs – unless there is due assessment and care

Impact: ESPA Deltas modeling society-ecology interactions in coastal Bangladesh

- Modelled impacts of different development interventions, e.g.
  - Sea wall
  - Mangrove strips
  - Polders
- Polders are most effective for poverty reduction but:
  - Displacement of flood risk
  - Poor forced off valuable land
  - Polders only work if maintained

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES FOR WELL-BEING IN DELTAS

Integrated Assessment for Policy Analysis

Edited by Robert J. Nicholls, Craig W. Hutton, W. Neil Adger, Susan E. Hanson, Md. Munsur Rahman and Mashfiqus Salehin

https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9783319710921#aboutBook

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2. A focus on wellbeing is needed

- Different social groups use and value environmental resources differently

- A 'blind spot' around gender

- Wellbeing is a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon incorporating objective, subjective and relational aspects

- More rounded and respectful term than 'poverty'

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Impact: Integrating the environment into poverty measures to influence policy

- Expanding poverty measures to include the role played by nature in relation to human wellbeing

- 'Proof of concept' - focus on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

- Working with the UN Poverty Environment Initiative to inform policy thinking in Rwanda and Malawi
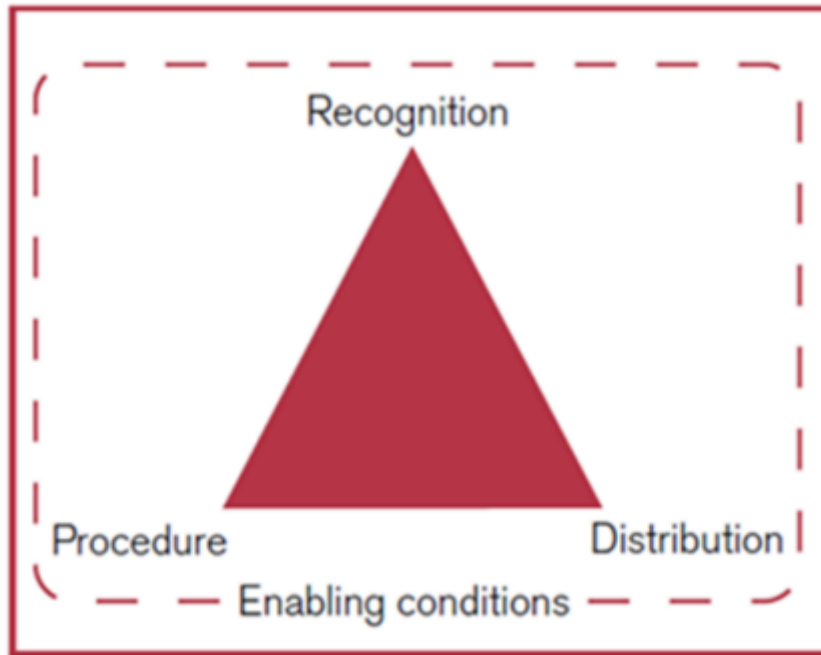

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3. Core principles of good governance can highlight and address trade-offs fairly

- Accountability, transparency, participation…

- Adaptive processes & learning

- An environmental justice framework can help reconcile diverse perspectives on environmental management and change
  - Recognition
  - Fair procedures
  - Distribution of benefits, costs, risks

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Impact: Enhancing justice and equity in the context of protected areas

Impact: Influencing policy and practice on water management in Peru

- Mountain Evo project used inexpensive, replicable and traditional technologies to improve water management in the Peruvian highlands, including the restoration of pre-Inca canals.

- Lima's water company is now investing in 'green infrastructure', including restoration of traditional canals - benefitting the livelihoods of people in rural upstream communities and Lima.

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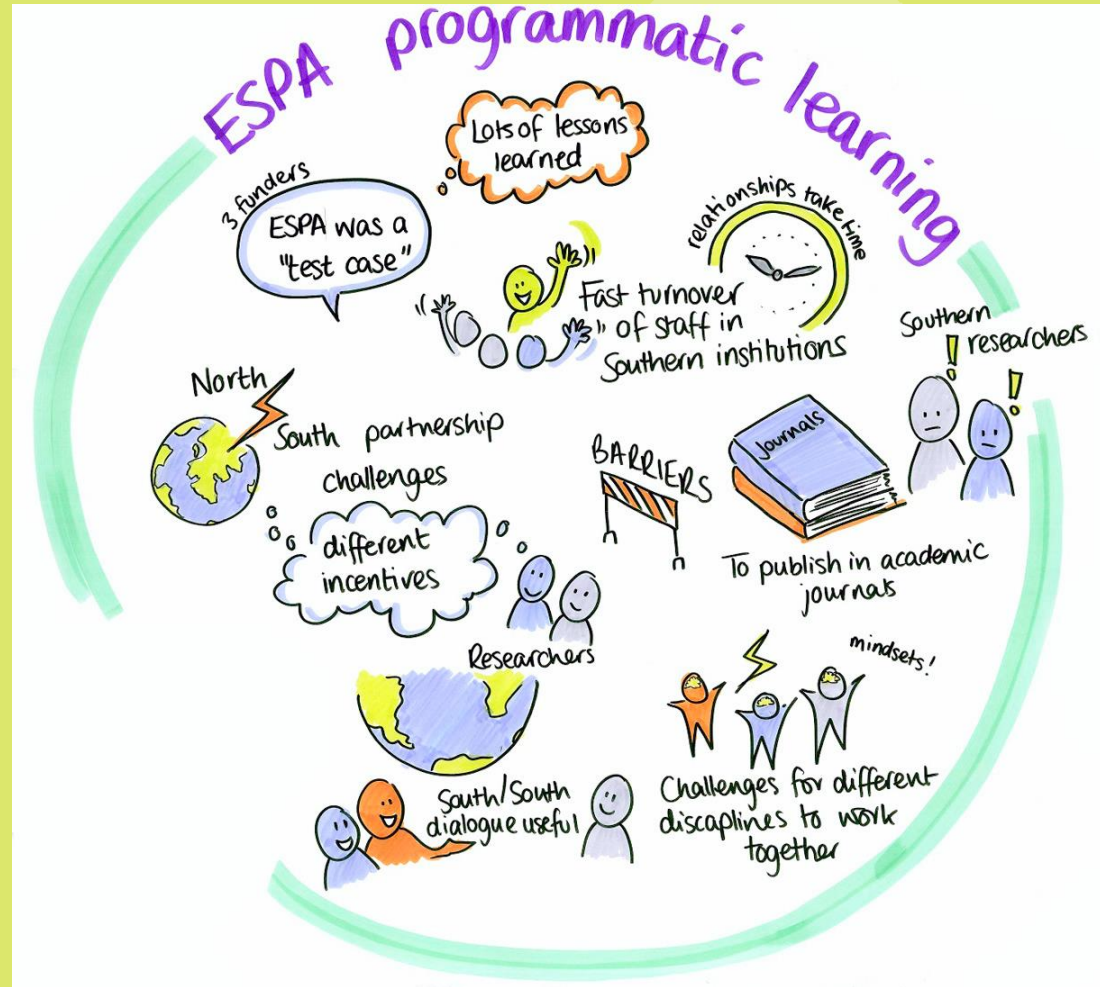
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Ecolimits: Promoting sustainability and wellbeing in Ghana's cocoa forests

- Highlights issues around:
  - Whose values count?
  - What constitutes wellbeing?
  - Local to global governance challenges
- Highly interdisciplinary
- Systems approach
- Research in partnership with communities, NGO, govt and private sector
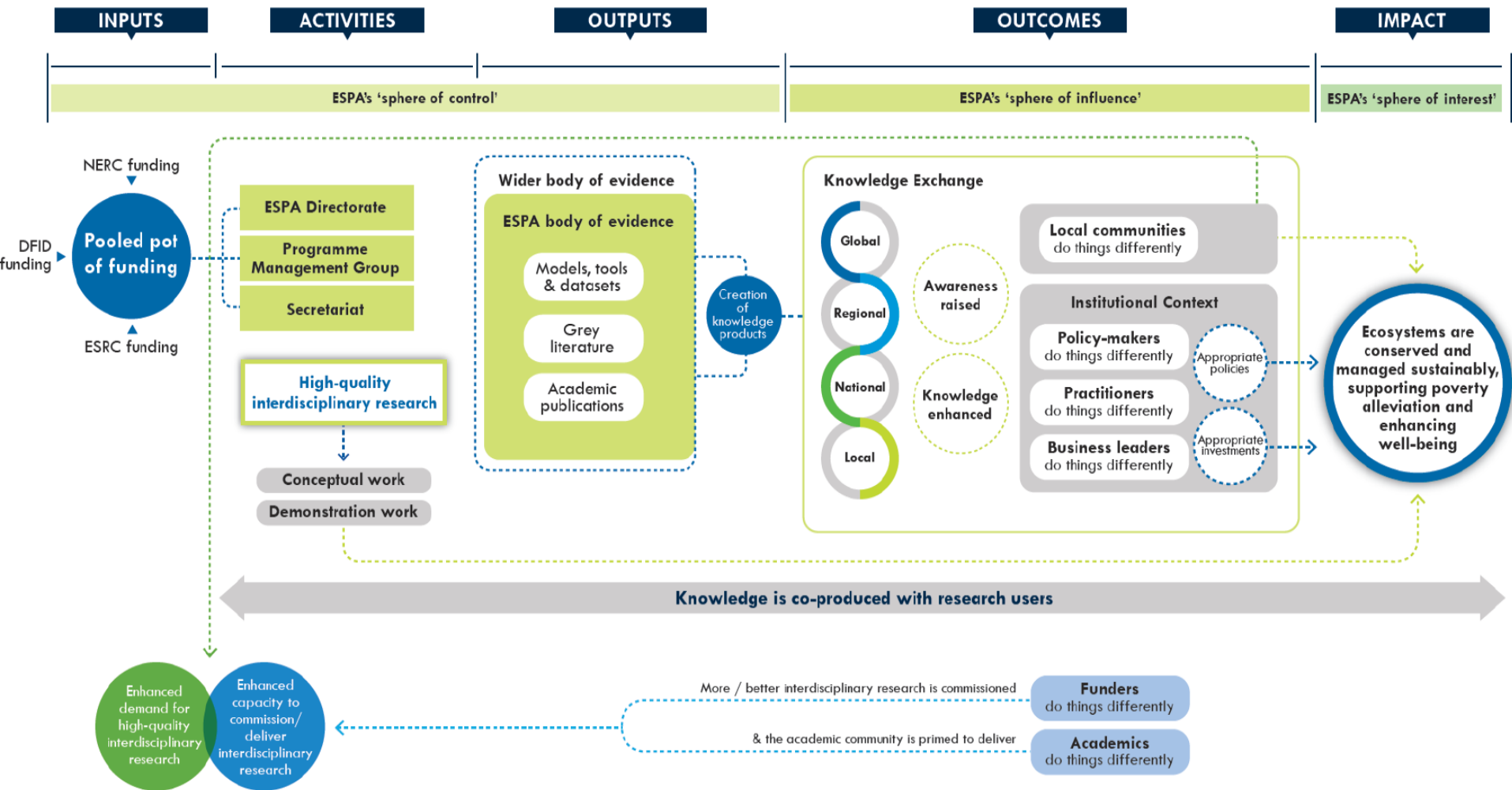

https://www.espa.ac.uk/multimedia/video/promoting-sustainability-and-wellbeing-ghanas-cocoa-forests

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Doing research with development impact

Start with a Theory of Change

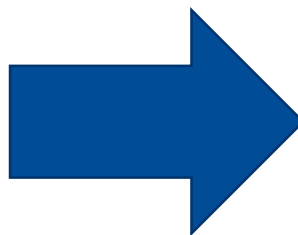# How do we go….

…from here…   …to here?

Agent-Based Modelling to Assess Community Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods

Samantha Dobbie[1], Kate Schreckenberg[1], James G Dyke[1], Marije Schaafsma[1], Stefano Balbi[2]

Understanding trade-offs in upscaling and integrating climate-smart agriculture and sustainable river basin management in Malawi

Co-production of knowledge with research users

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Project lessons: equitable research partnerships that deliver impact

- Building partnerships is a long-term process
  - **Recognition** of partners' different incentive structures
  - Clear **procedures** for all to have a voice – on data-sharing, authorship, dispute resolution
  - **Distribution** of money affects power relations among partners
- Impact is not an add-on
- Projects can only go so far…

> *"… the fact that we built our ESPA project on the back of an existing longstanding professional relationship was a massive advantage. We had existing trust and credibility within our key team members from the start."*

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Programme lessons: Creating a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts

- A 'central unit' can help to:
  - Enhance impact potential of individual projects
  - Facilitate collaboration and sharing among projects
  - Build capacity among researchers (North and South)
  - Synthesise academic findings to support larger scale policy impact
  - Plan legacy and learning

- Special skill set needed at project and programme level:
  - Impact officers, including regional evidence advisers
  - Knowledge management (communications)
  - (Interdisciplinary) facilitation skills
  - 'Critical friends' (research users)

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Global challenges and valuing nature: Taking an ESPA approach

- Develop (and use) a theory of change

- Go beyond a narrow sectoral focus to integrate the natural and the social

- Embrace the real-life complexity of social-ecological systems, including local to global interactions

- Recognise different people's rights and values

- Understand how different people access and use the environment to achieve their wellbeing

- Explicitly address trade-offs in environmental decision-making through open, just and democratic processes

Find these projects and more about how ecosystem services can support people's wellbeing:

www.espa.ac.uk
www.espa.ac.uk/impact