

Eszter Kelemen, Heli Saarikoski: The potentials and limitations of deliberative methods in ecosystem service valuation

Summary

Deliberative valuation invites stakeholders and citizens (the general public) to form their preferences for ecosystem services together through an open dialogue, which allows consideration of ethical beliefs, moral commitments and social norms beyond individual and collective utility. The aim of this paper is to review the promises of deliberative valuation with a critical eye. Based on a detailed literature review and our previous research experiences with deliberative valuation, we assess how the key assumptions of deliberative valuation are reflected in empirical studies and what challenges are faced. We suggest that different tools should be used at different steps of the deliberative valuation process (i.e. problem framing, knowledge co-generation, decision making), and that the used approach has to be flexibly adapted to the decision making context as well as to the broader socio-cultural environment.

Abstract

Deliberative valuation is based on the assumption that valuation is a social process in which values are discovered, constructed and reflected in a dialogue with others (Wilson and Howarth 2002). Therefore, deliberative valuation invites stakeholders and citizens (the general public) to form their preferences for ecosystem services together through an open dialogue, which allows consideration of ethical beliefs, moral commitments and social norms beyond individual and collective utility (Aldred 1997, Satterfield 2001, Wegner and Pascual 2011). Deliberative valuation is considered particularly appropriate when valuing ecosystem services and benefits derived from them, because they are common goods the existence of which has consequences for other people, in other parts of the world, and across generations. These choices are fundamentally ethical and hence the right question is not what "I want" (individual rationality) but rather what is right to do (collective rationality) (Vatn 2009). Open discourse, generated by deliberative techniques, is able to unfold relational values and reflect upon the social context of valuation. Therefore, deliberative methods are also proposed to account for social equity issues in valuation (Wilson and Howarth 2002). Deliberative valuation is particularly suited for understanding the meanings that people attribute to nature and nature's benefits to people, such as holistic concepts of the land, and it can accommodate diverse world views and forms of information such as narratives and story-telling. Therefore, deliberative valuation is found helpful for addressing cultural ecosystem services such as traditional knowledge and cultural diversity (e.g. Chan et al. 2012, Kenter et al. 2011). However, deliberative processes are no panacea, and they are subject to the same problems as participatory processes in general (see e.g. Dryzek 1990). Therefore, the extent to which deliberative processes live up to the expectations is highly dependent on the ways in which stakeholders and the general public is involved in the process. A further challenge to deliberative processes is representation and unequal access, or ability, to participate in a dialogue (Vatn 2009).

The aim of this paper is to review the promises of deliberative valuation with a critical eye. Based on a detailed literature review and our previous empirical experiences with deliberative valuation, we

will highlight the potential fields of application as well as the limitations of different deliberative processes as well as tools and deliberative designs (Dryzek 1990).

We will start with the key assumptions behind deliberative valuation, summarized by Wilson and Howarth as follows (2002, p. xxx):

1. Socially fair outcomes are guaranteed by employing a fair procedure of deliberation.
2. The provision of a forum for debate will encourage individual participants to engage in collective thinking about the common good.
3. Deliberative techniques will expose participants to a wider range of points of view and contribute to learning.
4. The act of deliberation and debate among participants leads to better and more informed decisions.

We will examine existing empirical literature against these assumptions. Key questions to address by the help of the literature review are: (a) whether empirical examples reflect the above assumptions and (b) what those assumptions are that seem to be the most hard to achieve and why.

In the second part of the paper we will assess the different tools and methods used for deliberative valuation in the literature and identify the most frequent contexts of application. Recently a large number of social scientific and participatory methods are applied for the deliberative valuation of ecosystem services either individually or in combination, including focus groups, citizens' science applications, participatory action research techniques such as the photovoice and others, citizens' juries, consensus conferences, participatory MCDA, joint fact finding processes etc. (Fish et al. 2011 and Christie et al. 2012). Deliberative tools are frequently combined with qualitative and quantitative non-monetary valuation techniques (e.g. preference assessment or time use study) as well as with monetary methods (e.g. contingent valuation). Due to the richness of available tools and techniques and their uncounted combinations, choosing the most suitable method to the specific context is not always easy. Therefore we propose a toolbox approach which takes into account that the exact combination of different tools should depend on the contextual characteristics (e.g. the needs and expectations of the stakeholders, their time and resources devoted to the process, the willingness and capacity to actively participate etc.). This toolbox approach is summarized in Table 1. At each step of the valuation process there is a large variety of available methods from the quantitative and qualitative research tradition as well as from participatory research, but we are focusing only those of a deliberative nature.

Table 1: A toolbox approach of deliberative valuation of ecosystem services

Steps of the valuation process	Main objective	Proposed tools
Problem framing	Understand the main problems related to ecosystem management through the eyes of local stakeholders and commit them to the valuation process	Stakeholder analysis and in-depth interviews (these are general techniques with no deliberative characteristics)
Knowledge co-generation	Co-generate knowledge with local stakeholders and citizens on the local perceptions of ecosystem services, and initiate an open dialogue to form preferences to ecosystem services collectively	citizens' science applications, photovoice method, focus groups variations (concept mapping groups, photo elicitation groups)
Decision making	Broaden and democratize the decision making	citizens' juries, consensus conferences, and

	process by involving the general public and / or key stakeholders	deliberative applications of integrated evaluation tools such as MCDA
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The key messages of the paper will finally be derived from the combination of the two analytical approaches and will shed light on the ways different approaches and tools for deliberative valuation help achieving the objectives (i.e. key assumptions) of deliberation.

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