

Assessing the ability of rural agrarian areas to provide cultural ecosystem services (CES): A multi scale social indicator framework (MSIF)

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Abstract: Assessing the ways in which rural agrarian areas provide Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) is proving difficult to achieve. This research has developed an innovative methodological approach named as Multi Scale Indicator Framework (MSIF) for capturing the CES embedded into the rural agrarian areas. This framework reconciles a literature review with a transdisciplinary participatory workshop. Both of these sources reveal that societal preferences diverge upon judgemental criteria which in turn relate to different visual concepts that can be drawn from analyzing attributes, elements, features and characteristics of rural areas. We contend that it is now possible to list a group of possible multi scale indicators for stewardship, diversity and aesthetics. These results might also be of use for improving any existing European indicators frameworks by also including CES. This research carries major implications for policy at different levels of governance, as it makes possible to target and monitor policy instruments to the physical rural settings so that cultural dimensions are adequately considered. There is still work to be developed on regional specific values and thresholds for each criteria and its indicator set. In practical terms, by developing the conceptual design within a common framework as described in this paper, a considerable step forward toward the inclusion of the cultural dimension in European wide assessments can be made.

Keywords; Multiscale indicators; Aesthetics; Diversity; Stewardship; Rural agrarian landscapes

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