

# **Should spatial planning jump into bed with ecosystem services -** new theoretical developments from an exciting liaison

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New Perspectives on Planning Theory

Bristol, 12 May 2011



# Plan

- Need for interdisciplinarity in planning
- Compatibilities, possibilities and problems for uniting Ecosystem Approach and Spatial Planning
- From practice to theory - reconceptualising the green belt

# The need for interdisciplinarity in a re-shaped planning theory

- Reconnect with the interdisciplinary roots of UK planning
- Overcome disciplinary myopia
- Disciplinary soup or salad bowl?
- Planning theory for who (... practitioners)
- Planning theory-practice disjuncture

This paper draws on research and insights from a practice-led rural-urban fringe project (2010-2011)

# Spatial Planning Framework

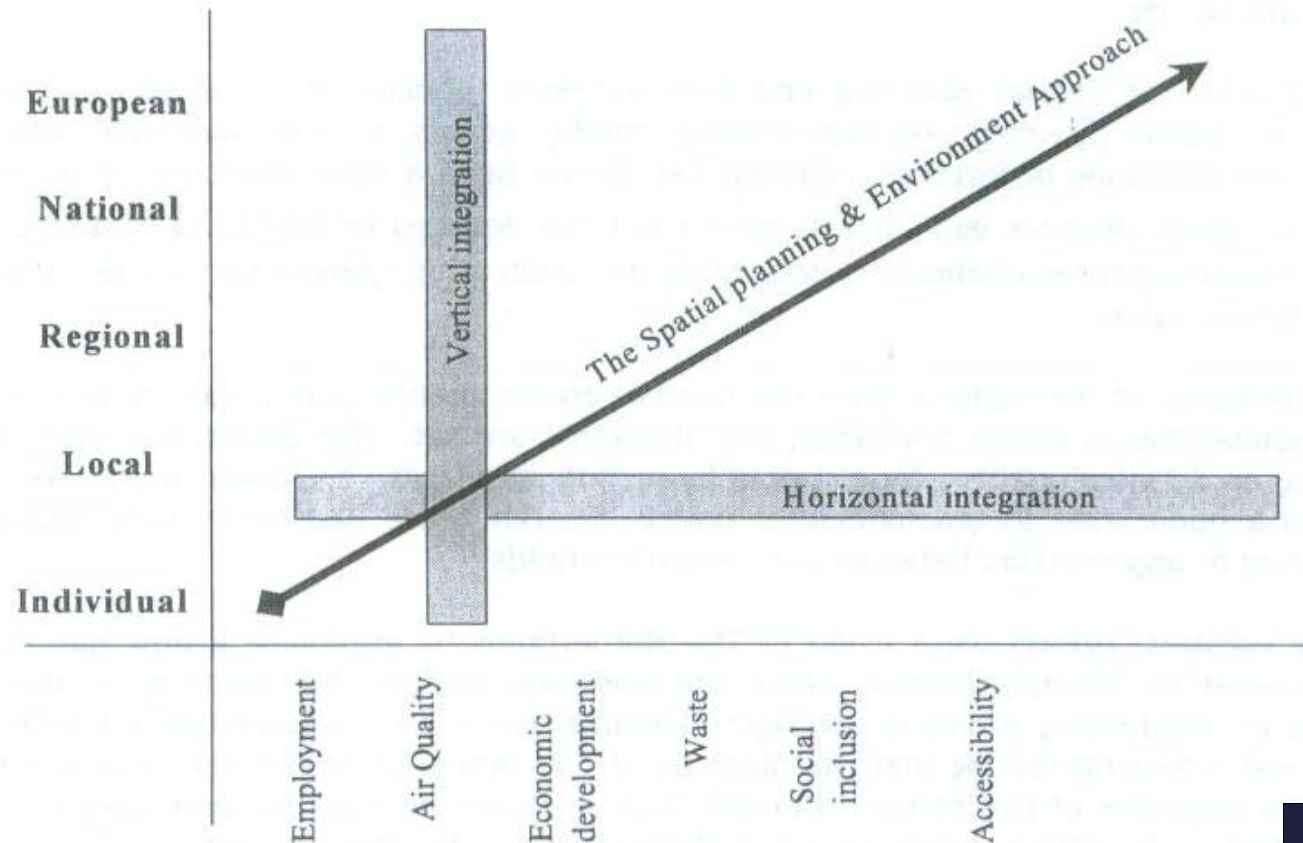


Fig 1. "Diagonal coordination" of different actors and policy areas

EUROCITIES (2004) *The Pegasus files: a practical guide to integrated area-based urban planning*, EUROCITIES, Brussels

*“Collective place shaping efforts aimed to improve the qualities and connectivities of places into the future for the benefit of present and future publics and their potential values”*

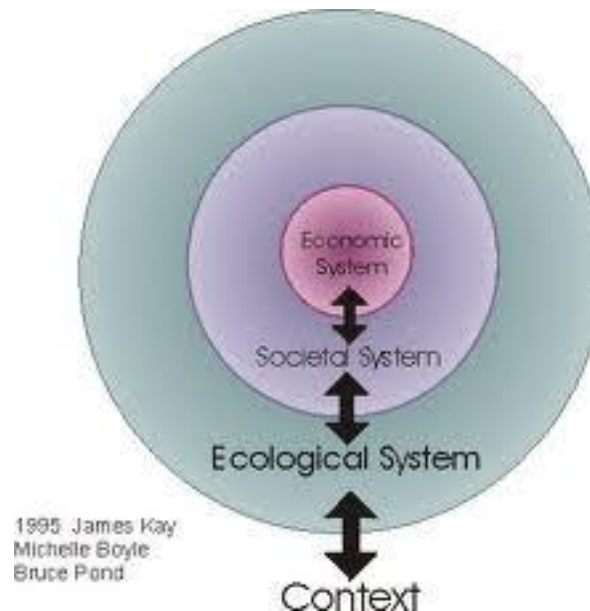
Healey 2008: 3

# Ecosystem approach

"the Ecosystem Approach is a strategy for the **integrated management** of land, water and living resources that promotes **conservation** and **sustainable use** in an **equitable way**"

(Convention on Biological Diversity, COP 7 Decision VII/11)

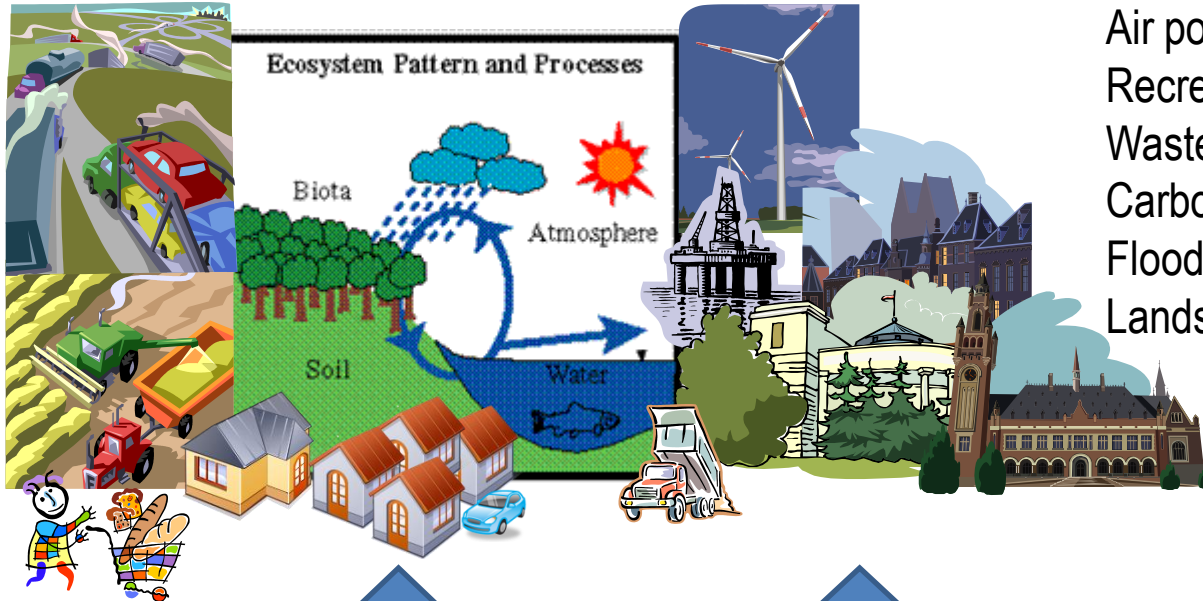
- beyond biodiversity
- beyond 'environmental'
- humans inherently part of nature



# Ecosystem approach

## Structure/Factors

e.g.  
Climate  
Topography  
Rock, Soil  
Water  
Biota



## Processes/Services:

e.g.  
Air pollution 'filter'  
Recreational resource  
Waste receptor / neutraliser  
Carbon storage  
Flood protection  
Landscape diversity

## Natural factors

e.g. extreme weather events; geological events

## Human factors

e.g. pollution; deforestation; urban development

# Ecosystem approach

- Taking an integrative perspective
- Context and consequence co-evolve
  - consider the rich, wider context
  - trace consequence in the decision / planning-process

Kay, J., Regier, H., Boyle, M. and Francis, G. (1999) 'An Ecosystem Approach for Sustainability: Addressing the Challenge of Complexity', *Futures* 31(7): 721-742.



# Ecosystem services

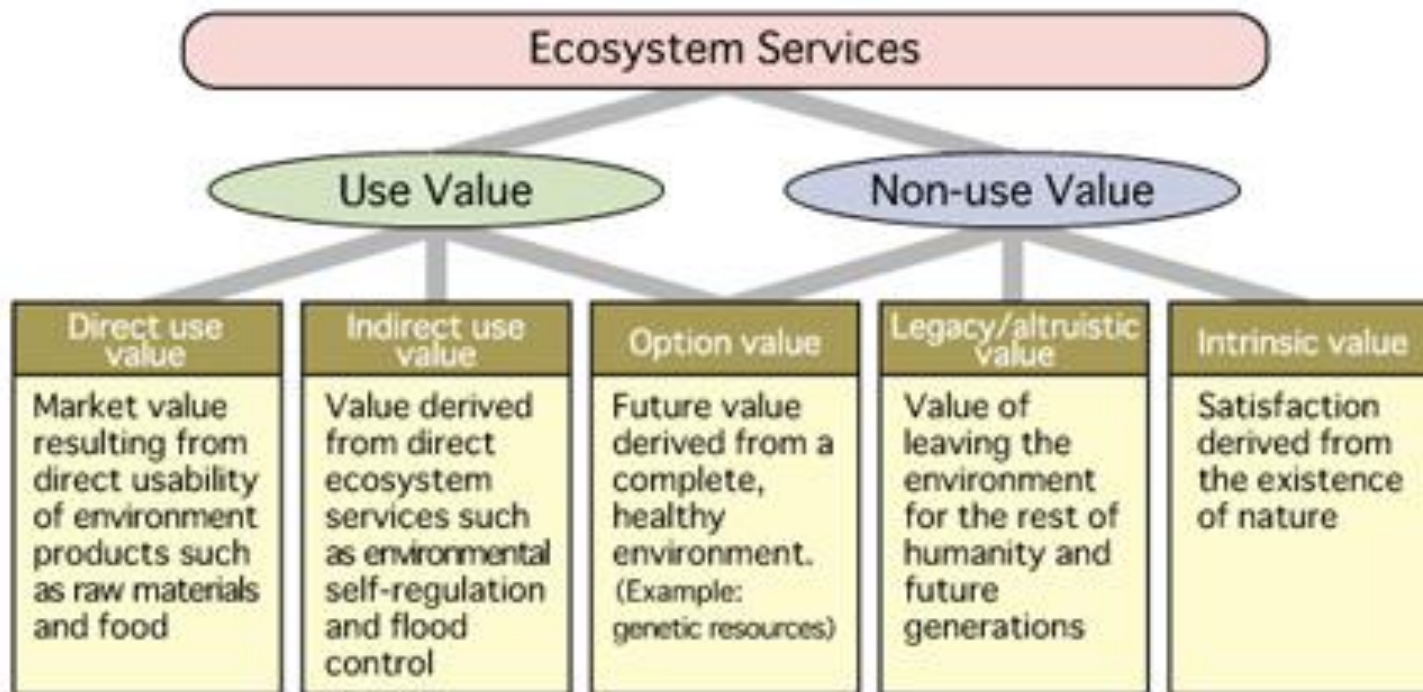


Ecosystem **services**:  
the resources and  
processes that nature  
provides for people;  
'benefits'

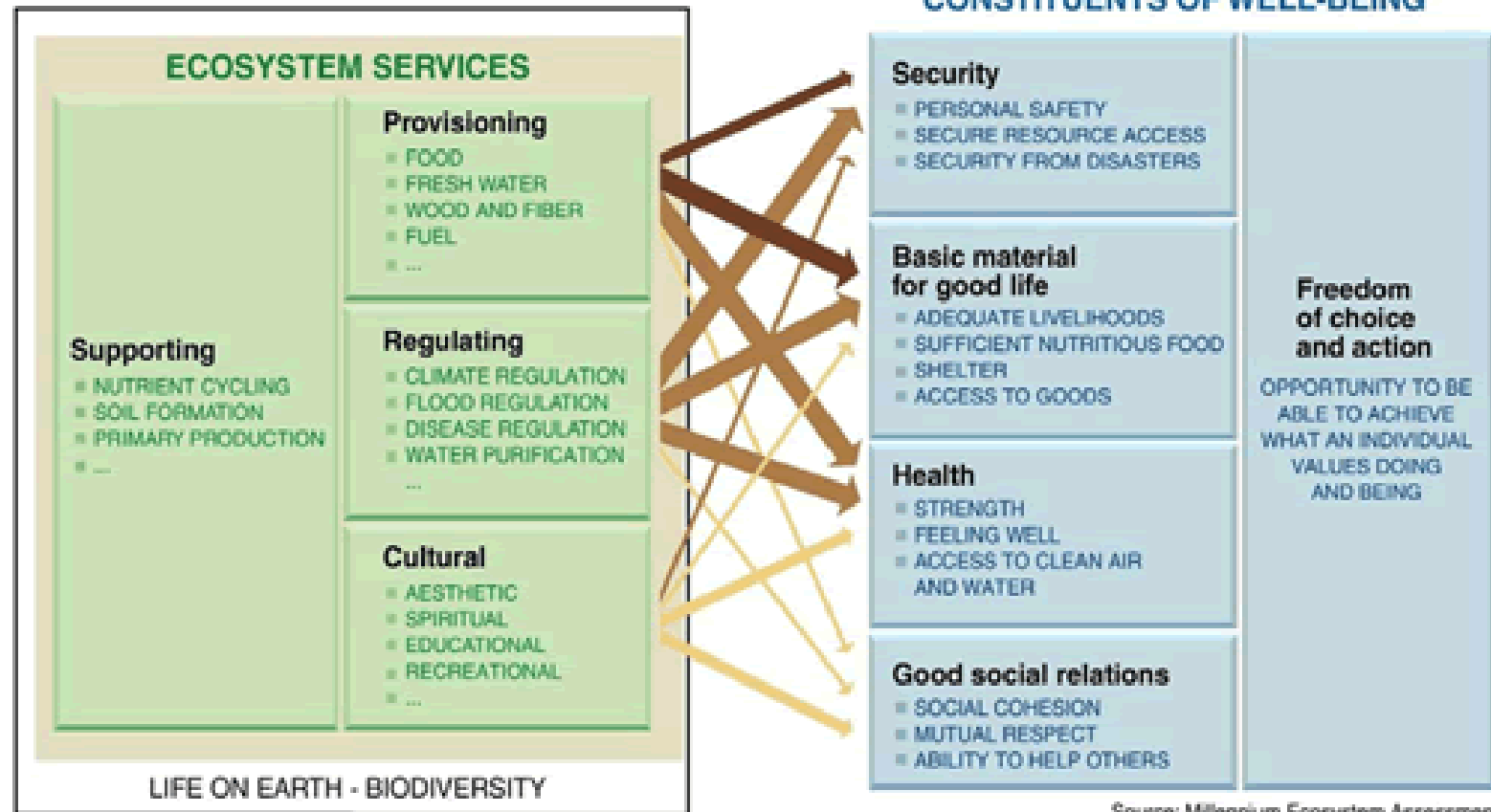
- identification
- quantification

N.B. What we know, consider  
and value is time and place  
dependent

- Ecosystem Approach: Respect for and being mindful of whole system
- Ecosystem Services: Anthropocentric; economic framing common



# Link to Wellbeing



Source: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

**ARROW'S COLOR**  
Potential for mediation by socioeconomic factors

Low

Medium

High

**ARROW'S WIDTH**  
Intensity of linkages between ecosystem services and human well-being

Weak

Medium

Strong

Source: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2003) *Ecosystems and Human Well-being*. Washington: Island Press.

*“... we must learn to apply an adaptive ecosystem approach to ecological planning. This will allow us to deal with the thorny issues of sustainability, itself taken complexly in regional and urban planning, in novel and ultimately more realistic ways.”*

Vasishth 2008: 101

Vasishth, A. (2008) ‘A scale-hierarchic ecosystem approach to integrative ecological planning’, *Progress in Planning* **70**: 99-132.



*“The ecosystem approach may represent a **paradigm shift**. A fundamental change in the way we manage, value and pay for our natural environment. Implemented successfully, it will **mainstream the environment** across all decisions”*

Head of Ecosystem Approach, Natural England (2010)



# SP and EA Compatibilities

- Holistic frameworks
- Cross-sectoral
- Multi-scalar
- Negotiating
- Enabling
- Long term perspective
- Connectivity
- Governance
- Equity goals
- Regulatory
- Market-orientated

# But both ...

- Suffer from salad bowl syndrome (creeping incrementalism)
- Conditional and restricted interdisciplinarity
- Vague and fuzzy
- Disjuncture between theory and practice
- Complex jargon
- Used uncritically
- Value what is measured
- Idealistic goals crossing a legal minefield

# Re-conceptualising the green belt

- Abandon traditional divisions of peri-urban space into artificial zones (e.g. green belt)
- Move away from green belt as a one size fits all 'designation' which does not work within a new theorising of space
- Planning conditional on specific locale, communities, needs and visions – participatory processes a pre-requisite
- Re-consider 'whole place' as pattern of connectivity and dependencies within which society functions – cuts across boundaries; 'get off the escalator'
- Plan development in terms of a place's 'neutral stuff', 'goods' and 'services' to society
- Flexible planning - adaptive management



# Work in progress

- 2 case studies in RELU-RUF project
  - Hampton, Peterborough
  - North-Worcestershire



# Critical reflection



- CLG and Defra divide reflects planning and environment divide
- Interdisciplinary working with complexity requires experimentation and adaptation
- Not add-on but fundamental change: mind-set – policies – institutions – governance – adaptive management



# Where are we now?

- No marriage yet; more than a one-night-stand?; closest to a coalition...

For more information visit:

**<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/research/-centres-of-excellence/centre-for-environment-and-society>**

