



# Shifting Contexts:

How changes in governance frameworks,  
stakeholder engagement, and  
research application influence project outcomes

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**Leah Sharpe**

**ORD/NHEERL**

**Gulf Ecology Division**

**Co-Authors:**

**Kathleen Williams, Matt Harwell**



# Disclaimer

***The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.***

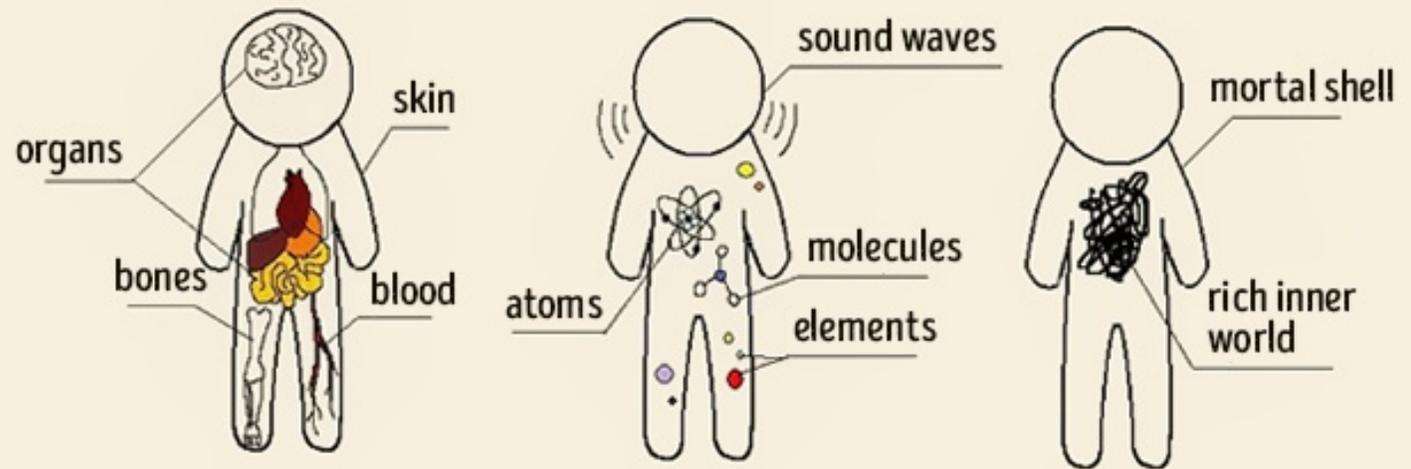
- **Introduction to the social science universe**
- **Our Study**
  - **Governance frameworks**
  - **Stakeholder engagement**
  - **Connection to outcomes**
- **Key Takeaways**
  - **Why should you consider governance?**
  - **How might you approach your governance assessment?**

## What is social science?

The study of:

- How society works
- Relationships
- Individuals
- Organizations
  - Businesses
  - Governments
  - NGOs
- Things that determine human behavior

## What are we made of?



Biologist:

Physicist:

Social  
scientists:

BRIGHTSIDE.ME



# Myths and Misconceptions

## Common myths

- **Jargon heavy**
- **Not objective**
- **Not hypothesis driven**
- **Anecdotal**
- **Doesn't include data**
- **Not science**

## Social science is not

- **Outreach**
- **Extension**
- **Opinion or public input polling**
- **Easy?**



# Data and Methods

## Quantitative data

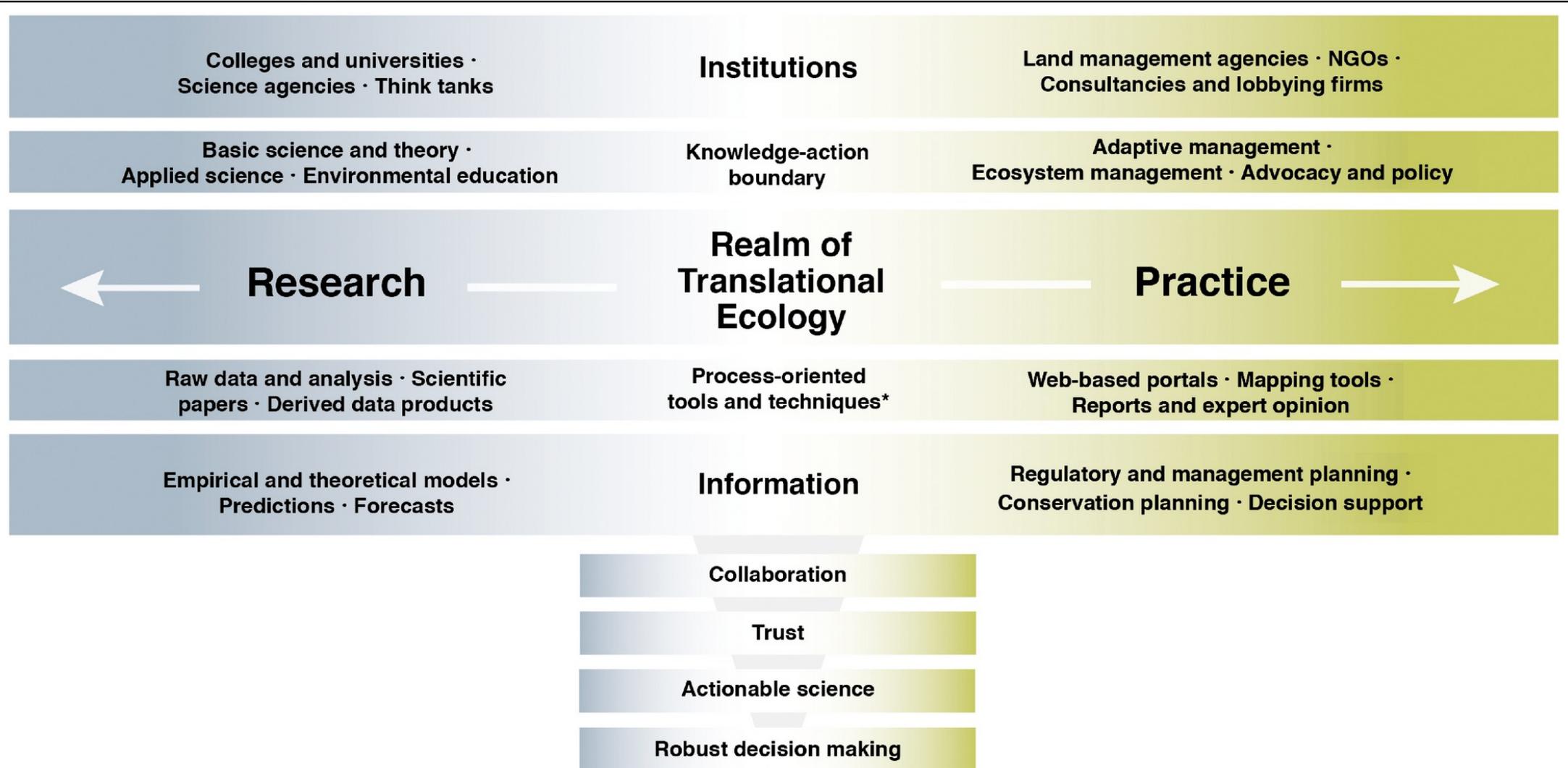
- Experiments
- Surveys
- Secondary data
- Content analysis
- Market data analysis
- Social network analysis

## Qualitative methods

- Field
  - Participant observation
  - Ethnography
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Photo elicitation
- Participatory mapping
- Scenario building



# Translational Approaches



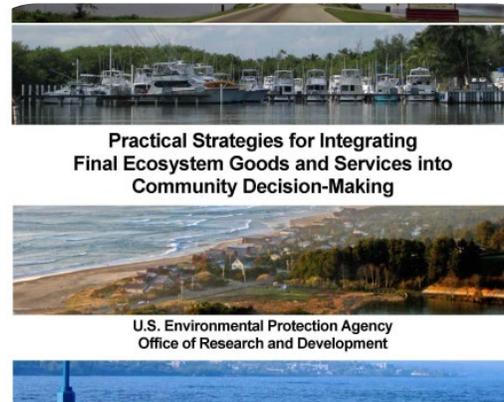
Enquist, C.A., Jackson, S.T., Garfin, G.M., Davis, F.W., Gerber, L.R., Littell, J.A., Tank, J.L., Terando, A.J., Wall, T.U., Halpern, B. and Hiers, J.K., 2017.

Foundations of translational ecology. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 15(10), pp.541-550.

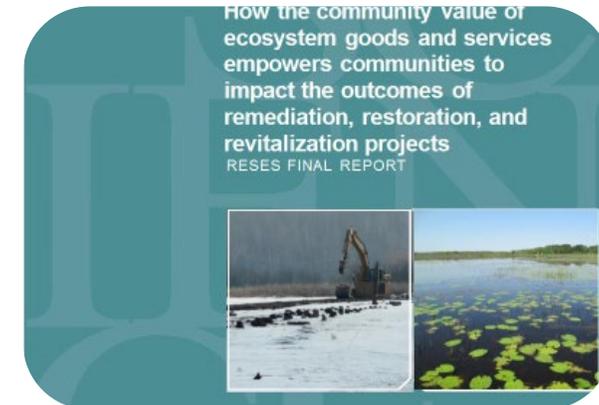
- Ongoing work focuses on introducing ecosystem goods and services thinking into community decision processes via a series of coordinated community case studies
- Recent reports looking at these case studies have examined:



**The current status of ecosystem services in community-based decision support**

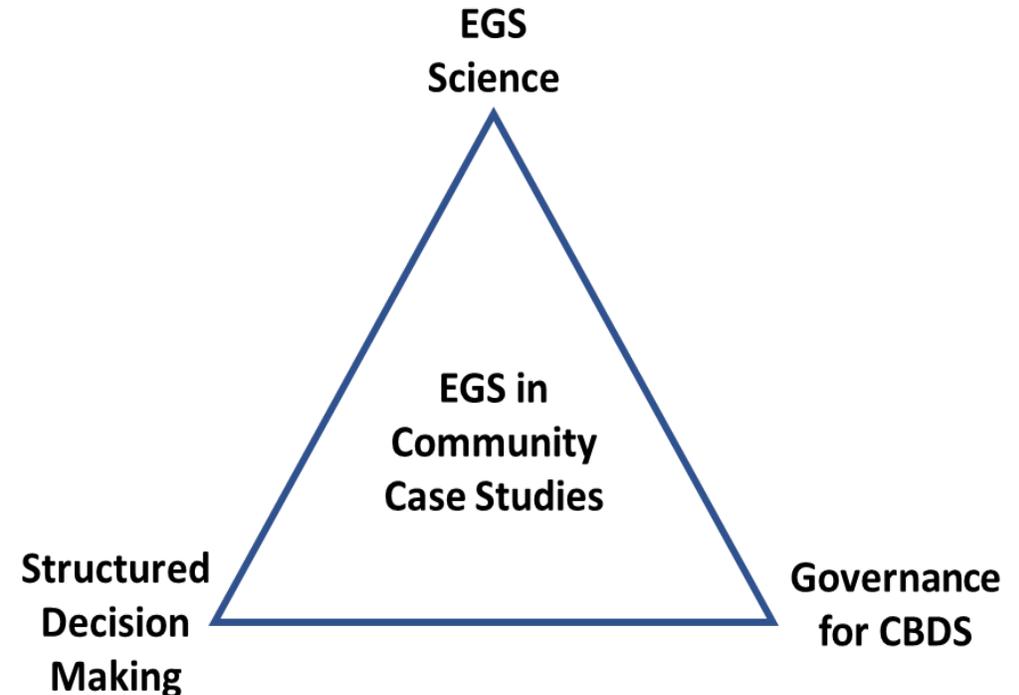


**Practical strategies for incorporating ecosystem services thinking into existing decision-making processes**



**Exploration of how decision context influenced the who, what, where, and how of restoration decisions**

- Study looks across full suite of coordinated case studies to explore how contextual factors influenced project options and outcomes
- Increasing understanding of influence of key contextual elements will help researchers incorporate ecosystem services thinking into community-level decision making



## Six case studies

- Tampa Bay
- Mobile Bay
- Puerto Rico
- Pacific Northwest
- Great Lakes
- Southern Plains



Coastal Gulf  
of Mexico



San Juan,  
Puerto Rico



Pacific  
Northwest



Great Lakes  
AOC



Southern  
Plains

Each tackling different issues, in varying states of progress, and with differing sets of partners engaged

## Document analysis and qualitative interviews

- **Governance frameworks**
- **Stakeholder engagement**
- **Connection to outcomes**

## Cross-cutting elements to be explored

- **Research questions**
- **Geographic context**
- **Program context**
- **Stakeholder invitations**
- **Stakeholder participation**
- **Decisions made**
- **Tools used**

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**Research questions**

**What were they?**

**Where did they come from?**

**Geographic context**

**What is the geographic scope?**

**Program context**

**What programs and agencies are involved?**

**What is their relationship with each other?**

**Stakeholder invitations**

**How were stakeholders identified?**

**How were they invited to participate?**

**Stakeholder participation**

**How was stakeholder participation structured?**

**How did their input influence decisions made?**

**Decisions made**

**Who was making the decision?**

**How were decisions communicated?**

**Tools used**

**Were any structured decision making tools used?**

**How did tool outputs influence the decision?**

# Who

# What

# Where

# How

# Outcomes

City of Duluth



MVD

EPA: R5

Citizen-stakeholder input goes here (during planning process)

Urban Waters  
Brownfields Assessments  
Irving-Fairmount AWP  
Chambers Grove Park improvements



Citizen-stakeholder input goes here (during planning and implementation processes)

Environmental R2R are MEANS to end



Need to determine EGS valuation here → priorities

Stormwater reduction  
Improved aesthetics  
Land reuse  
Neighborhood enhancements  
More equitable development

AOC



RAP

EPA: GLNPO

Citizen-stakeholder input goes here (during planning process)

Minnesota Slip  
21<sup>st</sup> Ave W  
40<sup>th</sup> Ave W  
Knowlton Creek  
Kingsbury Bay-Grassy Point

EGS valuation applied here if known



Environmental R2R IS the desired end

Remove BUI  
Cleaner water  
Safer fish  
More habitat

EGS valuation has impact here → helps tell story

## Definition

*The set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes.*

*(Lemos and Agrawal, 2006)*

## Representative case and details

- **Governance ≠ Government**
  - Government still part
- **Coordinated Case Studies**
  - Learn from experience
  - Comprehensive analysis
- **Shift conversation**
  - No longer “not using ES”
  - How using ES
- **Describe decision context, decisions, path to action, and outcomes**



# Stakeholder Analysis

- What do we mean by stakeholder engagement?
- Stakeholder engagement is consistently valued, but varies widely in implementation
- Understand/Characterize:
  - How stakeholders are defined and identified
  - The roles stakeholders played in the decision process roles
  - How findings and decisions were communicated to stakeholders
- Expected outputs/results include:
  - Understanding of the roles that engaged stakeholders play in both the process and the community
  - The impacts of the governance structure on stakeholder engagement, participation, and influence



# Outcome Analysis

- What do we mean by outcomes?
- Looking to map the effectiveness of the effort to the governance model in place
- Understand/Characterize:
  - Effectiveness of how tools were utilized in the process
  - How decision context shifts and is defined in practice
  - How desired outcomes may be defined by different participants
- Expected outputs/results include:
  - Concept maps of relationships between ORD and states, EPA, and tribes
  - Descriptions of context and how research can contribute to decisions
  - Best practices for collaborative problem-solving, working with stakeholders and applying research



# Key Takeaways

- **Unpacking Decisions**

- Look beyond “help decision makers”
- Unpack which decisions, making what decision, with advice on how they can implement vision

- **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Stakeholder engagement is a key element of community decision-making, but implementation varies, impacting the process and how it is viewed
- Understanding these implications can help researchers looking to influence the process

- **Outcome Analysis**

- Looking at more than whether the project was completed or successful
- Using systems thinking to analyze project outcomes includes more than the science outcomes

- **Overall**

- For a given project, more pieces probably exist to conduct a governance assessment
- Case study examples have demonstrated the utility of governance assessments and key lessons learned can be transferable



# Questions?

**Contact Information:**  
**[Sharpe.Leah@epa.gov](mailto:Sharpe.Leah@epa.gov)**  
**850-934-9323**



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