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Note by the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel

## Information note on applying “nature’s contributions to people”

*Nature’s contributions to people can be characterized, inter alia, as an umbrella concept for a reporting system that allows the synthesis of information from within the specific framings of different communities of practice, including those associated with ecosystem services, ethnoecology, environmental conservation, political ecology, etc., into a pluralistic and inclusive common ground. Hence, the NCP reporting system includes a vast diversity of human-nature perspectives and avoids ‘shoehorning’ these into preexisting categories and classifications, which may derogate their meaning to different stakeholders. By doing so, it enhances collaborations that can enlarge the existing knowledge base and improve examinations of the state of, and future options for nature and its benefits and detriments to societies.*

**Nature’s contributions to people (NCP)** refers to *all* contributions – beneficial and detrimental – that people, individually or collectively at various scales, derive or endure from nature. The concept of NCP offers a pluralistic way of understanding how the status and trends of nature (including biodiversity and ecological processes) link with people’s lives, livelihoods and quality of life, while at the same time acknowledging manifold perspectives and world-views about human-nature relations. NCP serves as an umbrella concept, embodying different notions such as ecosystem goods and services, nature’s gifts and many others, and facilitates respectful collaboration and mutual enrichment between different knowledge systems and worldviews. The aim of this note is to improve understanding and uptake, as well as to inform how the concept of NCP can be used in practice in different contexts.

The key features of NCP are that it:

- Builds on ideas originally developed in the ecosystem services framing, but takes a broader approach, recognizing that culture permeates *all* our understandings, feelings and other relationships with nature. Consequently, NCP allows for the consideration of both unidirectional relationships as well as bidirectional relationships, including reciprocity and care between humans and the rest of nature. The NCP framing is, therefore, designed to encompass different viewpoints (individual and collective) and spatial scales (from local to global), with sufficient universalism to allow comparative analysis of status and trends.
- Provides a space for integrating diverse perspectives by offering two conceptual ‘lenses’: the generalizing perspective and the context-specific perspective (Figure 1).
  - In the **generalizing perspective**, IPBES works with 18 reporting categories of NCP. These categories are organized into three broad groups: regulating, material and non-material NCP, resembling in some cases, but not identical to the ecosystem services framing. The reporting categories are overlapping, often indistinct and fluid (Figure 2), not the least due to the pervasive influence of culture on how people view and value nature and nature’s contributions. For example, culture influences how people view food as material NCP, but this cannot be separated from how food is also connected to non-material NCP, for instance via identity.

- The **context-specific perspective** provides for people to interpret and assess their relationships with nature in their own way, which often does not “fit” easily or entirely within the standard 18 NCP reporting categories. Because these ways can vary vastly between places, social actors and cultural traditions, it is largely not meaningful to strive for a universally applicable schema from this perspective. Importantly, the context-specific perspective is found amongst individuals and societies all over the globe, and is not exclusive to indigenous peoples and local communities.

These two perspectives represent extremes. In reality there is often no clear-cut delineation. Interweaving the two perspectives is often the most appropriate approach in order to obtain a comprehensive, inclusive and fair empirical, methodological and epistemological base.

- NCP can be applied to i) identify and assess the status and trends of the contributions people derive from nature; ii) understand the impact of various policy, governance and management measures; iii) widen the horizon of options when it comes to finding sustainable pathways forward; and iv) communicate and engage with stakeholders.
- The generalizing perspective allows for a common reporting system, using quantitative and qualitative indicators, which can take into account how the contributions vary between individuals and groups. The context-specific perspective facilitates complementary considerations of different worldviews and knowledge systems, including situated perceptions and diverse conceptualizations of values. These could be captured, for instance, through interviews, observations and document studies, as well as by indigenous research approaches, preferably in combination.
- Applications of NCP in policy and planning is still in its infancy. Acknowledging that there are diverse ways of valuing nature, and the importance of the social and cultural context for how humans approach other species and their habitats, the NCP framing accentuates the need for reflexivity on issues such as: contributions for whom, from what perspective/s, and of what importance? How best can one account for contributions that are crucial but cannot be measured in meaningful ways with standard quantitative metrics? Are there conflicting views?
- One intention of the application of NCP is to provide a broad space for dialogue and open-minded engagement, allowing people from different disciplines, sectors, cultures, and traditions, to connect on equal terms, to give their views and perspectives on the multiple values of nature and its degradation, discuss what challenges exist and reach agreements on possible solutions and actions.

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# Figures

Figure 1.

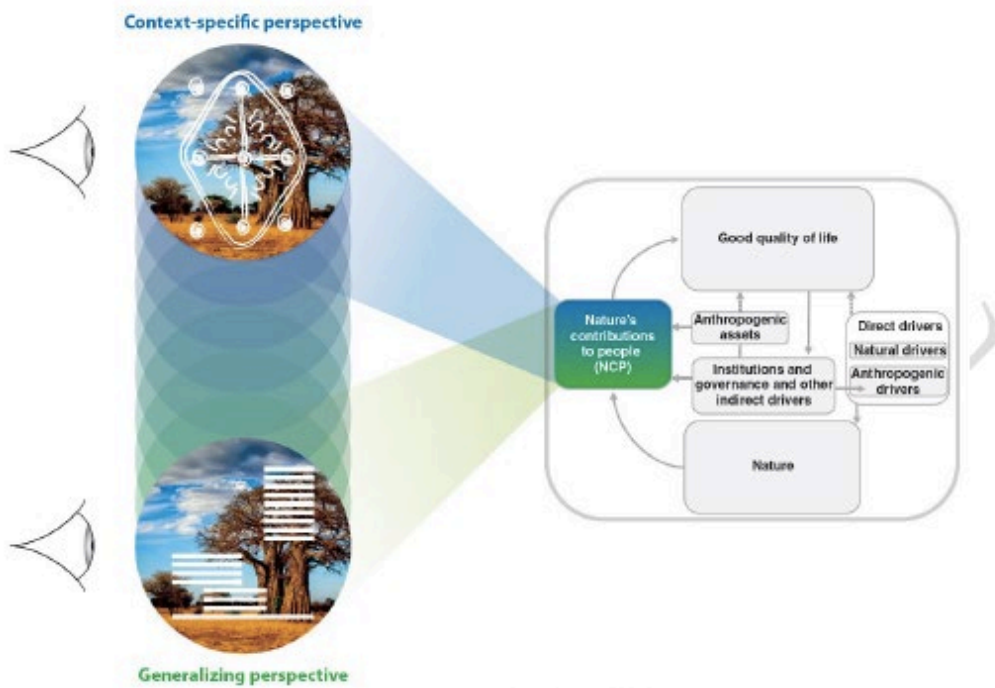


Figure 2.

