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Scaling Up the Multiple Values of Grasslands: Land-Use Scenarios for Europe

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Alpine and pre-Alpine grasslands represent ecologically rich and culturally important landscapes - shaped by long-standing human–nature interactions. By applying surveys in (pre-)Alpine Bavaria, we found that farmers and citizens not only attribute instrumental and intrinsic values, but predominantly relational values to grasslands. The results show that grasslands and their ecosystem services are valued for a variety of reasons on different locations, and point out the need for further investigations of values associated with ecosystem services (Schmitt et al., 2022). Subsequently, by applying the Nature Futures Framework (NFF), we developed pathways that illustrate different trajectories toward achieving EU environmental and land-use policy goals based on the plurality of values (Raymond et al., under review). The (pre-)Alpine environment and grassland ecosystems are explicitly addressed across the scenario narratives: In Nature For Nature, extensive pastures and other semi-natural grasslands are not abandoned, but are maintained by free-roaming herbivores to prevent shrub and forest encroachment, sustaining vegetation structures vital for biodiversity. In Nature as Culture, traditional alpine grasslands are actively preserved as expressions of cultural heritage and identity, supported by strong community involvement in landscape stewardship. In Nature For Society, multifunctional grasslands are valued for their ecosystem services (e.g., flood retention and fodder production) and are integrated into land-use planning through sustainable intensification and agroecological strategies. By linking empirical insights from (pre-)Alpine grasslands with normative, value-based scenarios, this work illustrates how context-specific understandings of nature's values can inform systemic and future-oriented land-use strategies. It underscores the importance of embedding diverse human–nature relationships found in (pre-)Alpine grasslands in land-use modelling and policy to shape desirable and nature-positive futures for Europe.

Keywords: Scenarios, Relational Values, Cultural Landscapes, Policy, Europe

Authorship:

Schmitt, T.M.*, Riebl, R., Martín-López, B., Hänsel, M., Koellner, T., 2022. Plural valuation in space: Mapping values of grasslands and their ecosystem services. *Ecosystems and People*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2022.2065361>

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Primary author: Dr SCHMITT, Thomas (IMK-IFU - KIT)

Presenter: Dr SCHMITT, Thomas (IMK-IFU - KIT)

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