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# **(Re)discovering spiritual values of forest ecosystem services**

## **European and Asian perspectives**

**Multi-author paper**

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# Multi-author paper



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# Understanding “spiritual values” of forests...

## Why this paper?

- **“Re-spiritualisation of forests”?** Certain boom of “non-material” forest ecosystem services in several countries
- **Synergies and contrasts:** Europe and Asia
- **Research gaps:** Difficult to tackle – interwoven with overall human-nature relationship

## What is “Spiritual” values?

- **Not only religious:** all aspects of the human spirit (the inner character and feelings)
  - Distinguished from the body or material matters
  - spiritual **renewal**; - **enlightenment**; - **enrichment**; - **experience**; - **identity** (TEEB, 2010)
  - Direct and indirect spiritual values
- **No clear division** from other (cultural) ecosystem services



*There is no Wi-Fi in the forest, but you will find a better connection!*

# Method

## Expert opinions, specific case studies

- Workshop
- Preparation document
  - Main issues addressed:
    - Human-nature-relationship
    - Governance mechanisms
    - Forest management
    - Economics
  - Qualitative analysis (MaxQDA)
- Literature

Please provide a short written statement (can be bullet points!) responding to the following questions summarizing the state-of-the-art scientific knowledge on the topic as well as your expert opinion, supported by scientific evidence in the context of your region [China, India, Iran, your selected region/country in Europe].

**1 SES in forest management:** How do SES generally influence forest management and use of the forests in your region? (max 400 words)

**Guiding questions to refer to:**

- What has been the importance of SES in forest history (use for SES; management; cultural history)
- What implications do SES have for forest management today – do they matter in forest management practice? Which trade-offs and synergies with other forest ecosystem services do they generate and how are these usually handled in management practice?

**2 Social importance of SES and their governance:** How do SES generally influence people forest interrelations in the respective context, and how are they addressed in policies and governance mechanisms (on different levels) in your region? (max 400 words)

**Guiding questions to refer to:**

- How are SES perceived and demanded for by different stakeholders today (general public, forest users and owners, public authorities responsible for forest affairs)?
- Are SES reflected in policies, are they only collaterally addressed, or not at all governed by formal policies and regulations?
- What governance mechanisms exists?
- What is known about implementation and effectiveness of such policies and mechanisms?

**3 The Economic importance of SES:** Which market innovations exist and how do they influence management of SES? (max 300 words)

**Guiding questions to refer to:**

- Do markets determine/influence the management of forests for their spiritual values, or are they driven by other aspects (policies or traditional values)?
- What kind of business models/market innovations exists for SES?
- Does monetisation play a role or are other values (pertaining to human-wellbeing/spiritual/religious) more important?

**4 Monitoring SES:** How are SES monitored/analyzed? (max 300 words)

**Guiding questions to refer to:**

- Which methods are used for mapping and measuring SES?
- Which methods exists for quantification and valorisation of SES?
- Which methods exists for qualification of SES (to determine the symbolic spiritual meaning of forests and forest ecosystem services?

**5 Future Research:** What are the most important knowledge gaps and perspectives for future research regarding SES in your region? (max 300 words)

**Guiding questions to refer to:**

- What has been researched and what not (topics, disciplines, questions)?
- What are major open research questions?

**6 Interesting cases/examples:** Please (very) shortly describe up to three interesting examples (case study) for SES in your region.

**Guiding questions to refer to:**

- Consider traditional, religious or sacred approaches OR/AND innovations (market or governance) in SES (ideally min 1 example each).



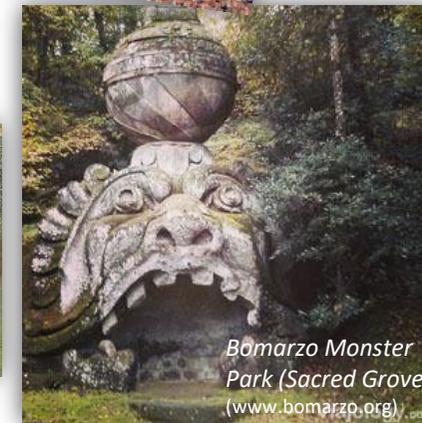
# Countries and Cases presented

- Asia
  - Japan
  - China
  - Iran
  - India
- Europe
  - Finland
  - Germany
  - Austria
  - Switzerland
  - Poland
  - Czech Republic
  - Italy
  - Spain
  - Greece

- **Places of sacredness**
- **Places of worship/pilgrimage**
- **Therapy/healing/mindfulness**
- **Burial**



*"The Sacred Grove, Beloved of the Arts and the Muses"*  
Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (www.Wikipedia.com)



*Bomarzo Monster  
Park (Sacred Grove  
(www.bomarzo.org))*

# Governance and Society

- **Spiritual values of forests take different shapes, but there are also commonalities**
  - Omnipresence over time
  - Often connected to monumental (ancient) trees or forest patches
  - Frequently connected to other ES (recreation/tourism, biodiversity)
- **Relationship spiritual values – forest-based economy is complex**
  - Spiritual demands as a major “market” (Japanese “forest services industry”)
- **Governance & management**
  - Rarely formal policies
    - Religious taboos
  - Bottom-up:
    - User demand
    - Community/religious groups - participatory mechanisms
  - If formal – through policies with different objectives (cultural heritage/biodiversity conservation)

# Transition hypothesis: Fluctuating visibility of Spiritual Values in forests

## “Re-spiritualization” of forests?

### • Indicators:

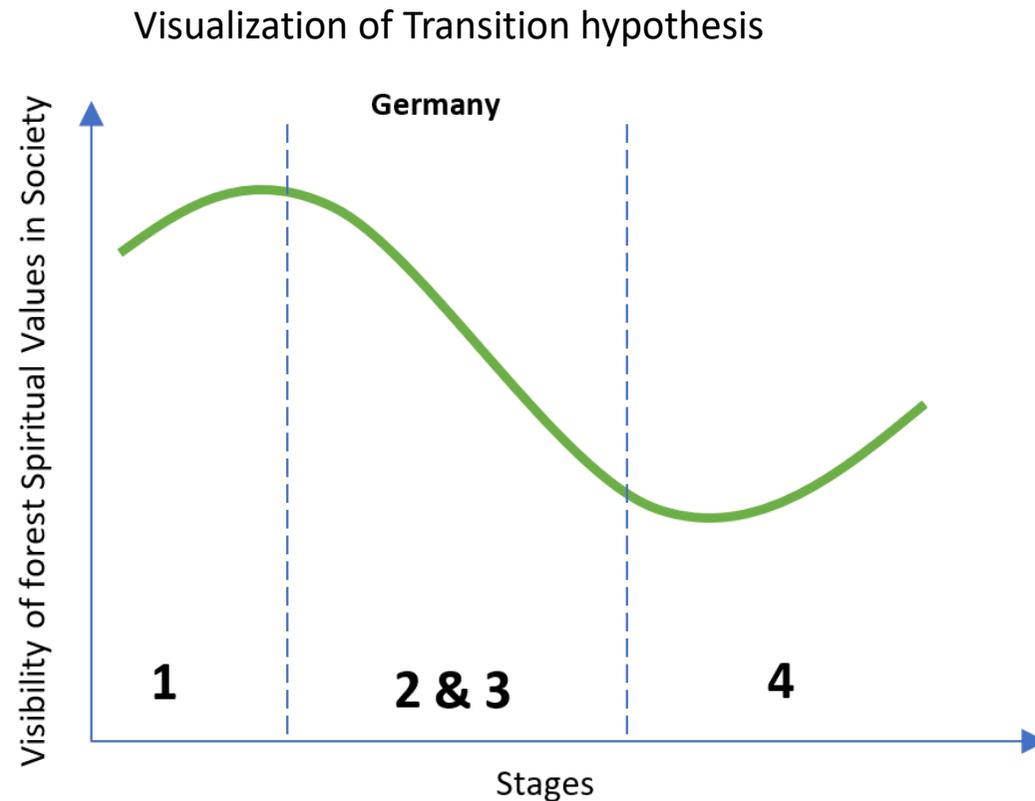
- Number of sites
- Number of visitors
- Reference in policies
- Economic/business innovations
- Media attention
- Research

## Drivers

- STEEP categorization
- Enabling / hindering (depending on context)
- Not always religion
- Economic incentives
- Other ES (tourism/biodiversity)

# Examples: Transition hypothesis - Germany

- 1. Paganism:** High nr of sites (sacred groves/trees worship)
- 2. Christianity:** reduction in Nr of sites (sacred groves and worshipping trees where banned – church policies)
- 3. Urbanisation & Industrialisation:** reduction of number of sites
- 4. “re-spiritualisation”:** increased user demand (*also driven by urbanization*), leading to
  - Increased number of sites
  - Media attention
  - Economic innovations – forest bathing and funeral forests



# Examples: Transition hypothesis - India

**1. Sacred groves/trees worship** (High nr of sites)

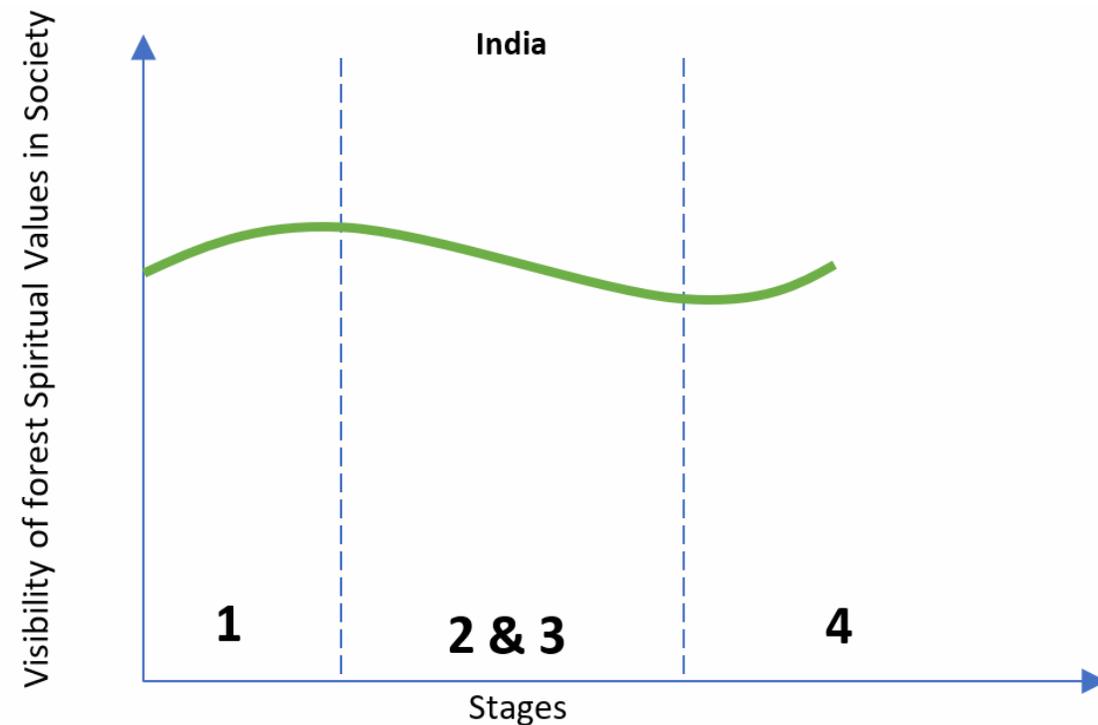
**2. Urbanisation & Industrialisation:** Need for infrastructure (reduction of number of sites)

**3. Hindu temples replace sacred groves** (reduced number of sites)

**4. “re-spiritualisation”:** Sacred groves area acknowledged as biodiversity hotspots

- Increase in research and publications
- Legislation (Indian Forest Rights Act makes reference to sacred groves)

Visualization of Transition hypothesis



# Conclusions

- In some countries: Transition hypothesis holds (“re-spiritualisation” of forests)
- Not a global trend
- Need for further testing
- Drivers: Context specific (Country and time)





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**Thank you!**



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knowledge  
to action*