Socio-Ecological Practice Research (SEPR): What does the journal have to offer?

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Published online: 12 October 2018
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The founding editor-in-chief

1 A mission

The journal *Socio-Ecological Practice Research (SEPR)* publishes scholarly articles on socio-ecological practice research, a transdisciplinary inquiry that strives to achieve the dual ambition of producing new knowledge and improving socio-ecological practice. It provides this service to the international communities of scholars and practitioners who work on or are interested in issues pertaining to the socio-ecological practices of planning, design, construction, restoration, and management. By doing so, SEPR aims to cultivate and celebrate topnotch scholarship in *Ecopractology*, the study of socio-ecological practice (Xiang 2019, this issue), across all four intertwining streams of scholarly inquiry—knowledge (co)production, transfer, implementation, and impact—with a focus on knowledge implementation and impact research (knowledge I&I research).

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2 A fleet of scholarly articles

The eleven types of SEPR articles contribute to this enterprise from a suite of distinct yet complementary angles and thus fall into five clusters of *Research*, *Retrospect*, *Opinion*, *Showcase*, and *Special Issues* (Table 1).

2.1 SEPR Research Articles

Each of the four types of SEPR *Research Articles* reports a class of socio-ecological practice research conducted from a specific angle and within a particular quadrant in the Schön–Stokes model of research in socio-ecological systems (Fig. 1).

2.1.1 Practice research on *knowledge coproduction*

An SEPR article of practice research on *knowledge coproduction* presents an original research conducted in Pasteur's quadrant (Fig. 1; for discussions on research in Pasteur's quadrant, see Xiang 2017, pp. 2244–2246). It describes how scholarly rigorous knowledge was generated that was useful—directly relevant, immediately actionable, and foreseeably efficacious—to the real-world practitioners who were in specific knowledge needs under particular circumstances of socio-ecological practice; it further demonstrates how the high caliber scholarship built through the research *can be* inspirational to scholars and practitioners from around the world who have comparable interests in socio-ecological practice research.

2.1.2 Applied basic research on *knowledge transfer*

An SEPR article of applied basic research on *knowledge transfer* presents an empirical research done in Bohr's quadrant (Fig. 1; for discussions on applied basic research and pure basic research in Bohr's quadrant, see Xiang 2017, pp. 2242–2243). It demonstrates, through experiment or case

Table 1 SEPR article types by clusters

	Cluster				
	<i>Research</i>	<i>Retrospect</i>	<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Showcase</i>	<i>Special Issues</i>
Article type	Practice research	Review	Perspective essays	Showcase	Any combination of the preceding article types
	Applied basic research	Reflective essays and intellectual (auto)biographies	Communications		
	Action research		Comments and rejoinders		
	Follow-up research		Editorials

Fig. 1 The Schön–Stokes model of research in socio-ecological systems (After Xiang 2017, p. 2243) [Xiang (2017) retrofitted Stokes's (1997) model with Schön's ideas (2001) for its use in a broader context of socio-ecological systems, and named the retrofit *the Schön–Stokes model of research in socio-ecological systems*. For the seminal articulation of the original model, see Stokes (1997, pp. 70–75).]

study, how the scholarly theories, scientific methods, and techniques developed by scholars of pure basic research in the same quadrant (*Ibid.*) can be made relevant to and actionable for the solution of problems real-world practitioners care about; recognizing the challenges this knowledge transfer process faces, it offers caveats as well as recommendations to practitioners pertaining to necessary measures of adaptation in actual use.

2.1.3 Action research on *knowledge implementation*

An SEPR article of action research on *knowledge implementation* presents a professional project completed in Edison's quadrant (Fig. 1; for discussions on research in Edison's quadrant, see Xiang 2017, pp. 2242–2244). It showcases how the existent scholarly theories, scientific methods, and techniques were actually employed in socio-ecological practice to achieve the applied goal(s) of problem-solving; without seeking a thorough investigation of the scientific principles underlying the suggested solution(s), it shares the

experience, lessons, caveats, and reflections of the participating scholars and practitioners.

2.1.4 Follow-up research on *knowledge I&I*

All the three types of *Research Articles* above-mentioned are accompanied by a sequel type of follow-up research. An SEPR article of follow-up research on *knowledge I&I* features an assessment that is performed in Johnson's quadrant and can serve as a precursor of research in other three quadrants [Fig. 1; for discussions on research in Johnson's quadrant, see Xiang (2017, p. 2243), and Xiang (2018)]. It tracks and evaluates the state of the practice—the practical implementation and ensuing impacts—of the new knowledge generated in a previous study and reported in credible publications. Pertinent research questions include, but are not limited to, the following [adapted from Xiang (2017, p. 2241)]:

Was the new knowledge ever delivered to and accepted by the designated practical beneficiaries—planners, designers, engineers, managers, or decision-makers? Was it actually used in their practice? Was it effective in helping produce desirable or expected results they care about? What kind of and how much difference in their practice did the implementation of the knowledge make, if at all? Why or why not? What could have been done differently for the better?

Typically, 2 or 3 years after their research articles have been published in SEPR, authors are invited to write *knowledge I&I research* articles and submit for publication considerations. Unsolicited proposals for *knowledge I&I research* articles by researchers who are not authors of SEPR-published articles will be equally welcomed. Furthermore, *knowledge I&I research* articles are forever solicited that assess the state of the practice of SEPR pertinent works reported in other journals.

2.2 SEPR Retrospect Articles

The two types of SEPR *Retrospect Articles*, respectively, present socio-ecological practice research reviews, and feature intellectual reflections on scholarly or professional experience.

2.2.1 Review articles

An SEPR *review article* systematically assesses the state of the practice of policy instruments, industrial standards, or professional guidelines in socio-ecological practice [e.g., European Landscape Convention, the Active Beautiful Clean (ABC) Waters Program in Singapore, the Sustainable SITES Initiative]; it may also critically examine the state of the art of theories, methods, or techniques in a pertinent knowledge domain (e.g., ecosystem services valuation in ecological planning, landscape performance assessment, urban growth modeling, soil sequestration, urban renewal, collaborative rationality, land ethic, and ecological wisdom). In both cases, it scrutinizes through either a panoramic lens of knowledge (co)production–transfer–implementation–impact or a more-focused lens of *knowledge I&I*. In addition, an SEPR *review article* may seek insights from philosophical lenses of ontology, epistemology and methodology, and share with the journal community of often less philosophical readers.

Compared with the follow-up research articles on *knowledge I&I*, SEPR *review articles* cover a broader range of topical areas and a greater time span (e.g., a review on the socio-ecological impacts of *A Sand County Almanac*, a 1949 book by Aldo Leopold).

2.2.2 Reflective essays and intellectual (auto)biographies¹

An SEPR *reflective essay* presents personal convictions or reflections of scholars and practitioners on issues pertaining to knowledge (co)production, transfer, implementation, and impact in socio-ecological practice. It may take the form of an intellectual autobiography in which the author describes the emergence and evolution of scholarly ideas as an integrated part of the unfolding and procession of her/his scholarly career. It may also take the form of an intellectual biography of a respected scholar or practitioner of international influence. In both cases, an intellectual biography or autobiography serves as an instrument of socio-ecological practice research to celebrate and cultivate what C. Wright

Mills calls a *quality of mind* that fuses rigorous research and personal experience (Mills 1959, pp. 5–6) for a well-lived, fully realized, and meaningful life (Xiang 2016, p. 54).

2.3 SEPR Opinion Articles

The four types of SEPR *Opinion Articles* provide forums for expression of ideas and open discussions.

2.3.1 Perspective essays

An SEPR *perspective essay* presents scholarly or professional opinions on issues pertaining to knowledge (co)production, transfer, implementation, and impact in socio-ecological practice. It may also present new ideas on emerging or enduring topics in socio-ecological practice research.

2.3.2 Communications

An SEPR *communication* succinctly presents and analyzes an issue, a “hot” topic, an intriguing idea, or a controversy that, either immersing or enduring, falls within the SEPR scope and is of interest to the journal community.

2.3.3 Comments and rejoinders

An SEPR *comment* is a note on an article published in SEPR through which non-author scholars and practitioners make critical or complimentary comments, or call for further investigations. Authors of the previously published article which the *comment* is made upon are offered the opportunity to respond with a *rejoinder* which may be published together with the *comment*.

2.3.4 Editorials

An SEPR editorial is a forum for the editor-in-chief or invited guests to share perspectives on pertinent issues, introduce special issue essays, and communicate matters relevant to the journal community.

2.4 SEPR Showcase Articles

An SEPR *showcase* presents exemplars of successful socio-ecological practice from around the world and throughout human history. For each instance featured, it offers insights into the key reasons for success through the *knowledge I&I* lens and highlights the roles scholars and practitioners played in the process.

¹ The idea for this article type is inspired by Haselsberger (2017). The 16 essays of intellectual autobiography the volume features are examples prospective SEPR authors can emulate in their autobiographical essay writing.

2.5 SEPR *Special Issues*

An SEPR *Special Issue* (SI) is a coherent collection of 10–15 articles on an important emerging or enduring theme in socio-ecological practice research that has a broad international appeal. Each SI entry is an SEPR article from one of the above-mentioned four clusters and contributes to the collective caliber of the special issue.

3 A set of important commonalities

All five clusters of SEPR articles share a set of commonalities that enhances the effectiveness of their scholarly presentations of socio-ecological practice research.

3.1 Attentiveness to the dual ambition

All SEPR articles are equally attentive to the dual ambition of producing new knowledge and improving socio-ecological practice; they are reflective of SEPR's overarching motto "From practice, for practice, beyond practice" in distinct yet equally meaningful ways.

3.2 Interest in the usefulness of knowledge

All SEPR articles take a genuine interest in the usefulness of knowledge to both scholars and practitioners; they regard as a benchmark for exemplary socio-ecological practice research the tripartite requirement for knowledge usefulness—direct relevance, immediate actionability, and foreseeable efficacy.

3.3 Commitment to scholarly rigor

All SEPR articles are committed to scholarly rigor; they demonstrate and celebrate the effectiveness of a broad array of approaches from sciences and humanities in rigorous socio-ecological practice research.

3.4 Writing with style, accuracy, brevity, and clarity

All SEPR articles engage and inform readers in a straightforward yet elegant manner through stylish writing; they are effective academic prose of accuracy, brevity, and clarity that speaks eloquently to both academic and professional audiences.²

² Two useful reference books on stylish academic writing are *Clear and simple as the truth: writing classic prose (second edition)* by Thomas and Turner (2011) and *Stylish academic writing* by Hellen Sword (2012).

3.5 The quality of international appeal

All SEPR articles are crafted appealing to the international communities of scholars and practitioners; they present research of local, regional, or national importance within an international context and elaborate in ways understandable and intriguing to the international audience.

4 The prospects

In summary, with a fleet of scholarly articles that provides quality services to the international communities of scholars and practitioners, the journal *Socio-Ecological Practice Research (SEPR)* is well positioned to pursue the mission of cultivating and celebrating topnotch scholarship in *Eco-practicology* and contributes, through this endeavor, to the communities' collective quest for the greater good (Anonymous 2013).

Acknowledgements I wish to thank the following individuals whose work and ideas inspired and helped the development of this editorial (in alphabetic order): Varenym Achal (Guangdong Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, China), Christian Albert (University of Hannover, Germany), Ian Bishop (The University of Melbourne, Australia), Steven Cooke (Carleton University, Canada), Christopher Cvitanovic (CSIRO Oceans & Atmosphere, Australia), Christine Fürst (Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Germany), Shu-Li Huang (National Taipei University, Taipei, Taiwan), Klaus Hubacek (University of Maryland, USA), Judy Innes (University of California at Berkeley, USA), C.Y. Jim (Education University of Hong Kong, China), Buyana Kareem (Makerere University, Uganda), Daniele La Rosa (University of Catania, Italy), Steffen Lehmann (University of Portsmouth, UK), Kuei-Hsien Liao (National Taipei University, Taiwan), Paul Opdam (Wageningen University Research Center, The Netherlands), Duncan Patten (Arizona State University, USA), Stephan Pauleit (Technical University of Munich, Germany), Steven Pinker (Harvard University, USA), Qing Shen (University of Washington, USA), Fritz Steiner (University of Pennsylvania, USA), Hui Wang (Nanjing University of Forestry, China), Xinhao Wang (University of Cincinnati, USA), Yuncai Wang (Tongji University, China), Jianguo Wu (Arizona State University, USA), Wentao Yan (Tongji University, China), Bo Yang (University of Arizona, USA), Xingzhong Yuan (Chongqing University, China).

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