



Base-line study and stakeholder analysis of the Valle case study area, Sweden

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Summary

This base-line study and stakeholder analysis is process-oriented and developed in participation with the stakeholders involved in the BioGov-project in the Valle District in Sweden. From October 2018 to March 2019 the stakeholders were involved in defining visions, values and what they had at stake regarding future and sustainable land use. We have identified which stakeholder groups to involve and who is to represent each perspective, we have constituted a collaborative working group consisting of 20 participants covering both public and private organisations, business and NGO's, as well as a gender and age balance among them. Furthermore, we have been able to describe existing perspectives and core values which are of most importance within the Valle District. These values seems to be able to co-exist and to be strengthened if stakeholders are able to negotiate their interests taking an integrated and more holistic approach to land and water management in the area. By starting a process of implementing vision and values in concrete landscapes and environments in the area (nature reserves) we make stakeholders negotiate and take joint responsibility for the practical consequences of the need for a multifunctional land use approach. Working with the base-line study and the stakeholder analysis has been instrumental in creating a strong foundation for the future work within the BioGov-project and the whole group now agree on where we are and where we ought to be heading.

Background and aim for the base-line study report

BioGov (Celebrating Biodiversity Governance) aims to improve policy and governance of the natural and cultural heritage. An important guiding principle to reach the goals are to increase the level of participation among stakeholders by developing and implementing new methods for multi-stakeholder communication, cooperation and partnership. This might involve many channels, methods and tools as well as different levels of participation - from information sharing to collaborative learning and joint decision-making. In each unique context the mix of methods will differ, why each case study area in the BioGov-project will need to develop an approach which fits its purpose, existing values and traditions.

In order to facilitate an increased capacity to manage multi-stakeholder approaches in the Valle District, which is the Swedish case study area in the BioGov-project, we need to understand the preconditions both from an ecological, economic and socio-cultural perspective. A base-line study and analysis of stakeholders perspectives, values and roles is thus of uttermost importance, in order to know whom to involve, when and by which means.

The aim of this report is to identify the stakeholders in the Valle District. The aim is also to describe the stakeholders' role in conservation and future development of Valle's natural and cultural heritage, as well as their incentives to participate in the work and governance. The outcome is a new model for biological governance locally implemented, but which also is possible to scale up and out to other processes and geographies.

The Valle District in brief

On the slopes of Mount Billingen to the east, the Ice Age has left behind a unique landscape known as the Valle District, an area of lakes and gently rolling kame. The area is covered in nearly 40 miles of clearly marked trails, crossing meadows, pastures, and fields. There is also deciduous forests and many lakes. The unique cherry trees blossom in May. In the area there are viable agricultural activities, mainly based on grazing systems and cherishing a long historical and natural heritage. This has created an area of with biodiversity values and several nature reserves has been established over the last decades.



The cultural and ecological values in the Valle District is also the foundation of an active tourism sector. There are good opportunities for outdoor life, fishing, and to visit businesses within the cultural sector. Altogether there are many interests to be managed in a rather limited area, why there is a need to develop methods shared decision making.

Methodology and activities

To develop a relevant approach to multi-stakeholder cooperation one needs to work collaboratively and involve stakeholders in the development process. There was therefore a conscious choice to let the base-line study be an integrated part of the development of the project and work with stakeholders. Consequently, the methodological description of this study is also a description of the work done in the BioGov-project during its first phase (October 2018 – March 2019).

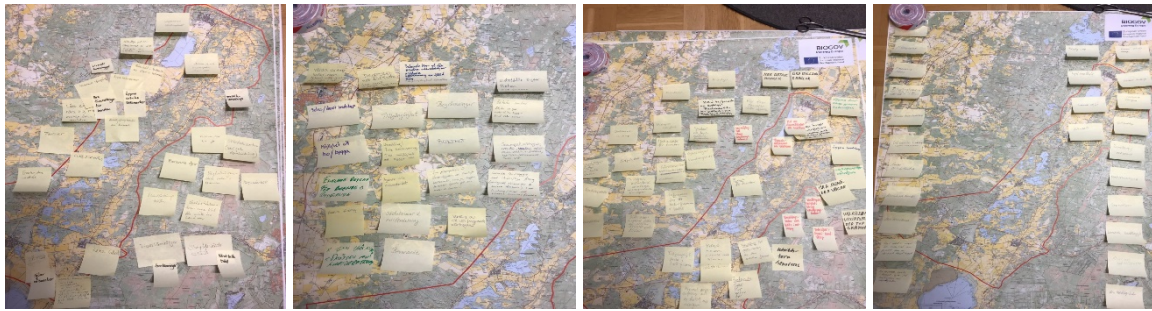
A base-line study and stakeholder analysis can be conducted in different ways but some design principles have guided our work. We wanted an approach where:

- a) All relevant stakeholders should be invited.
- b) Participants must have equal opportunities to speak out.
- c) Participants need to be able to speak freely.
- d) The multiple perspectives (including values, interests, local knowledge and needs) of stakeholders must be explored and taken into account.
- e) Ownership needs to rest with participants as much as possible.
- f) Participation lead to the empowerment of the participants.
- g) Power imbalances among stakeholders need to be rectified as far as possible.
- h) The role of interventionists is mainly to facilitate critical learning and dialogue.
- i) Participatory processes must be flexible and context specific.
- j) Participatory processes must proceed on the basis of joint agreement and mutual respect.

As important as the methods used during the first meeting is the expectations you create as animator or initiator of the process. Such expectations are already created in the first invitation letter or calls you make to the stakeholders. We therefore took specific notice on how we formulated us in the first letter in order to let the stakeholders understand that the process they were supposed to encounter was different from what they were used to. That is built on their knowledge and active participation.

We also had a very broad definition on whom to invite. The list of stakeholder (groups) were long and we also identified key individuals who were important to have a dialogue with in order to successfully implement the ideas behind the collaborative work to come. There is always alternative strategies for core stakeholders to reach their goals rather than getting involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships, why they need to be curious enough to come to the first meeting and experience the potential of new ways of working themselves. Thus, we took the first kick-off meeting very seriously and wanted to focus as much on the participants' perspectives as on explaining the background to and aim of the BioGov-project.

The kick-off meeting took place on the 4th of October 2018. Almost 50 individuals participated and most stakeholder groups were there. Besides to inform about the project we spent much time on the two main questions; a) what is most valuable for me in the Valle region and what does it take to have these values also in the future, and b) what is my role and what can I do to secure such values? We worked in groups and with maps of the area, and the discussions resulted in a lot of values defined by the participants.



At the end of the kick-off meeting we also constituted a collaborative working group who were decided to continue working together during the project. Core stakeholder groups were identified by the participants at the meeting and most stakeholder groups got a designated person to represent each group. We also realised that we missed some important stakeholder perspectives at the meeting, why the project manager got the responsibility to contact them and ask if they were interested in joining the process.

The first meeting with the collaborative working group took place on the 29th of November 2018. At this meeting the main focus was on discussing the outcome of the kick-off meeting, to decide on how this group wanted to work together, the need for additional knowledge in



order to better understand the complexity of the situation, as well as the participants' expectations on the project management. An early draft of this base-line study was presented and whether or not the stakeholders agreed with the emerging analysis was deliberated.

The second meeting of the collaborative working group on the 5th of March 2019 was also the last meeting which facilitated the development of the base-line study. At this meeting the stakeholders tried to develop a shared vision for the Valle area and what it will take to reach such a situation. In addition we asked the participants to give the project some guidance for how to work in practice when develop new management plans for specific areas. One important message was that all values are not be realised in all places. We thus need a landscape approach where certain places should focus its land use on specific values. An important insight enabling the dialogue to reach a point where each stakeholder needs to negotiate its values in relation to other values in each unique context. All stakeholders thus enter the process of becoming decision makers in a sense.



After these three meetings we had enough material to finalise the base-line study.

Sustainable land use in the Valle District

Sustainable land use is based on that all actors are efficiently working together with environmental, social and economic issues. Those issues are parts of a unity building sustainability. The challenge is to avoid working with one issue at a time, but instead integrate different perspective in decision-making processes. Such a vision entitles that identified pre-conditions for efficient collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnership have been addressed, enabled and facilitated.

Stakeholders' views on how policies and governance might be improved to achieve a sustainable and multi-functional land use need to be taken into account. Social and institutional innovations, for instance by developing collaboration and joint working methods, is part of the process of innovating and improving governance and thus land use. But stakeholders also need to better understand the potentials of an active biodiversity management and the development of a green infrastructure. Such learning process benefits from having different perspectives and a closer cooperation. If so, a more efficient governance model for sustainable land use might be implemented which support, catalyse, and coordinate future initiatives. By such measures the high biodiversity values in the Valle District might be strengthened even further by becoming a natural part of stakeholders' decision making processes, both collaboratively and individually.

Sustainable land use aims to integrate the management of land, water, biodiversity, and other environmental resources in order to meet human needs while ensuring the long-term sustainability of ecosystem services and livelihoods. That is, celebrating biodiversity governance implies that one approach biodiversity management from both a social and ecological perspective simultaneously. By doing that we realise that a broad range of stakeholders need to get involved. The quality of decisions made is related to how good we will be in managing stakeholder participation in the decision-making processes. The BioGov-project is as such a welcome contribution to the future of the Valle District.

The stakeholder concept and acknowledging pluralism

In this report we define stakeholders broadly. We see a stakeholder as individuals, groups or organisations that are (or potentially will be) affected, involved or interested by measures or actions in various ways. Stakeholders can either be positively or negatively affected.

There are different approaches on how to categorise stakeholders. One typology is as follows:

1. Professional organisations - public and private sector organisations, professional voluntary groups and professional NGOs (social, economic and environmental). This includes local authorities and government departments, statutory agencies, conservation groups, business and industry organisations, and academia.
2. Local groups – non-professional organised entities operating at a local/regional level. These local groups can be broken down into; a) communities centred on place, e.g. residents associations and local councils, b) communities centred on interests, e.g. farmers' groups, hunting groups, football clubs, anglers' associations, and c) communities centred on identity, e.g. school groups, church groups.

3. Individual citizens, fisherman and companies representing themselves, e.g. local individuals and private businesses.

Regardless how the stakeholders are categorised, managing stakeholders is a deliberate attempt to involve them so that they are able to contribute. Identification of the stakeholders and their potential role and contributions becomes an important issue. The purpose with a stakeholder analysis is thus to describe existing perspectives and interests (stakes) in the given context, which actor has power to influence what, as well as who has to become more involved. It is a tool both for increased participation and collaborative learning and decision-making, but also to manage issues like power, legitimacy and urgency. For instance, understanding power through a stakeholder analysis is important because it clarifies in which way the stakeholder can affect the outcome or if it can increase its power by cooperating with others. Such an analysis can also result in a categorisation of primary and secondary stakeholders according to which primary stakeholders are essential to the wellbeing and survival of the decisions made and therefore should be allocated more attention than should secondary stakeholders. This has not been the case in the BioGov-project in the Valle District where stakeholders have been managed as equal as possible.

A key concept in current discussions on sustainable land use and rural development is pluralism. That is, there is 'no size which fits all', instead stakeholders are best served by the broadest possible array of methods, information sources and structures. From a stakeholder perspective a sustainable governance model is therefore ideally flexible, adaptive and pluralistic. The consequence for the County Administration and other agencies might be quite radical. Acknowledging pluralism may focus attention on platform and multi-stakeholder approaches as an alternative conceptual model for adaptive planning and management. In such a situation, priority setting should be based on discussion of values and principles rather than the drive to implement a specific model.

Consequently, we see a direct link between the way we approach stakeholders and how we do the analysis, and the potential outcome of the BioGov-project, that is, a new governance model. It is truly learning by doing.

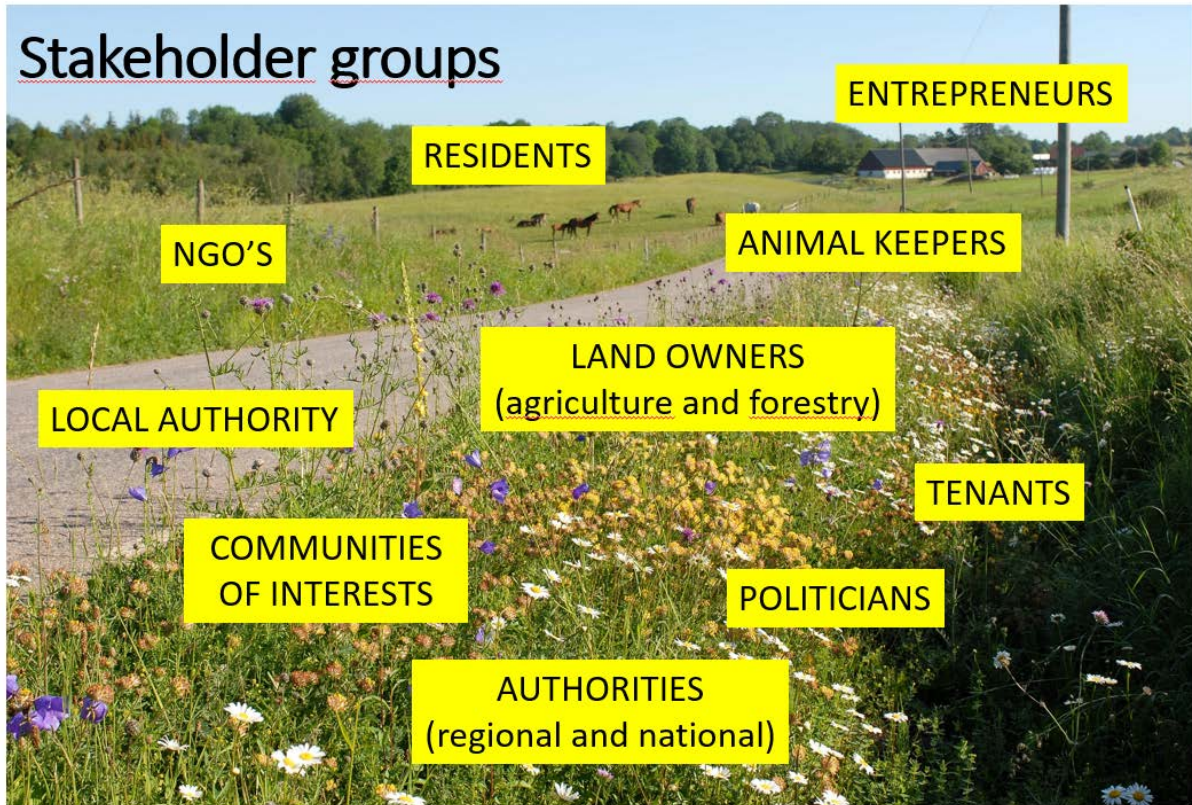
Stakeholder description and representation

To the kick-off meeting an open invitation was sent out to organisations, associations but also individuals that have expressed an interest in the issues to be discussed. Specific measures were taken to make sure that some stakeholders attended the meeting, mainly by direct contact. At the meeting approx. 50 participants were present, representing around 20 different stakeholder groups. They represented professional public and private organisations, as well as NGO's. They also represented different local groups, organised around interests or place, and there were also some individuals there representing themselves.

Having asked the participants about representation and absent stakeholders, they concluded that most of them were present with some few exceptions. We were missing a forestry association, the Swedish church (an important land owner), a very active athletic club, and some representatives for a local group working with the cultural heritage. It was jointly

decided that these groups should be asked to be engaged in the future work and the collaborative working group.

In short the stakeholders represented different interests as described in the illustration below.



At the first meeting it was decided that a collaborative working group should be constituted and also which stakeholder groups that should be part of it. The collaborative working group was as follows:

Authorities (local, regional and national)

- County Administration, nature conservation (project managers) (regional)
- County Administration, rural development (regional)
- Swedish Forest Agency (national)
- Swedish Transport Administration (national)
- The municipality of Skara (local)
- The municipality of Skövde (local)

Business and trade

- Vallevägen, a local business association focused on tourism
- Tourism office at the municipality of Skara
- Vadsbo skog, a forest company
- Flämslätt, a conference facility owned by the Swedish church

Land owners and animal keepers

- The Swedish Farmer Federation and their local organisation
- Orgelgården, a farm business

- Karstorp, a farm business
- Backgården, a farm business

Education

- University College of Skövde

NGO's and communities of place, interest or identity

- Swedish Nature Protection Association and its regional organisation
- A local history society
- Istrum SK, an athletic club
- Two local fish and water management associations

With this mix of stakeholders the participants themselves argued that most important perspectives on land and water management would be represented in the collaborative working group. In addition, there was also the issue of representation. That is, which individual should represent the stakeholder group? There are practical limitations to the number of people who can participate actively in an interactive process, one needs to work with people who represent others. It make sense to stimulate the selection of people who are trusted by their constituents, have a certain amount of power and 'credit', and have good communication skills. Such persons are often better able to work as brokers between their own constituents and other stakeholder groups. As it turned out the collaborative working group had such representatives and the communication in the group became productive although critical in a constructive sense.

It was emphasised in the collaborative working group that the role of the representatives of different stakeholder groups was both to represent their specific interests and issues, but also to contribute to the joint learning and decision-making process. The responsibility was directed towards both their own constituents as well as the collaborative working group, including the shared outcome in terms of a new governance model in the Valle District.

Stakeholders' perspectives and values

The most important part of the base-line study was to identify which perspectives and values that guided the stakeholders view on future land management. This was done by facilitated discussions in smaller groups on what the participants perceived as valuable in the landscape, what was important to preserve and/or develop, and what values that characterised the Valle district for them. The documented group work resulted in two illustrations summarising first the different perspectives, secondly the specific values of the case study area.

Not surprisingly, the stakeholders' perspectives reflected what they had at stake and which interests they represented. A perspective is a stand-point from which you see certain aspects of, for instance, a landscape. Different perspectives are present in the same landscape, but each of them put specific characteristics of it to the fore. In the base-line study it became clear that one general perspective mirrored a view where the landscape was a *production landscape*, emphasising the forest resources, food production or fishing and hunting. Another perspective focused on the *landscape as an arena* for economic activities, such as tourism, outdoor life or angling. A third general perspective on the landscape

connected it to a sense of place, or *landscape as identity*, as reflected in its importance as cultural heritage, its scenery and as the living environment for people. In addition, the *landscape as ecosystem* was obvious when connecting it to biodiversity, environmental objectives, ecosystem services, etc. Finally there were another general perspective emphasising the *landscape as rural area*, an area which was partly marginalised in society and where issues linked to rural development, like infrastructure and public service, came to the fore.



In the Valle District all these perspectives are relevant and present simultaneously. They all need to be taken into account, and be part of policies and other measures. Sustainable land use implies integrating all these aspects in priorities made, but to different degrees in different parts of the landscape.

This last issue – where do people want to do what – became the next step of stakeholder discussions. In order to reach this point we first needed to know how the abovementioned perspectives was expressed in terms of important values in the landscape. Values that were important to manage if we were to create a strong future. The trick of the trade was to transform the stakeholders' perspectives into values, that is, what was important for them. If putting all values together, would it be possible to agree on a vision for the Valle district? And would it be possible to identify basic value-conflicts?

The deliberation on these issues resulted in a thematic summary as described in the next illustration. In short, what the stakeholders argued as core values were:

1. Farmers' extortion rights, that is, the right to farm on a long term basis, being able to invest in the land use, technical infrastructure as well as people.

2. Grazing animals, reflecting that farms with animals were viable and had the possibility to make sure that historically grazed land were grazed also in the future.
3. Historical continuity, making sure that the geological, natural and cultural heritage is taken care of and that the unique characteristics of the Valle District is preserved.
4. Rural development that preserve rural areas by developing them, for instance, in terms of new businesses.
5. Diversity in all aspects of life, from biodiversity to social and cultural diversity and economic diversity.
6. Fishing and other tourism activities which is constantly evolving, but dependent on improved access, increased availability and supporting local services.
7. In general a high level of accessibility, including tracks for walking and riding, as well as measures to help people out and to experience the beauty, for instance by specific clearings.
8. Public service that creates pre-conditions for a sustainable living, such as, IT-infrastructure, roads, maintenance of public goods, and possibilities for housing.



Altogether these values reflects both what is significant for and what ought to become the strengths of the Valle District. When asked if the stakeholders could agree on these values, the answer was yes from all participants in the collaborative working group. They also believed that these values were possible to realise without too many conflicts. It was all about knowing which values where to be in focus when implementing measures in a specific area (such as a nature reserve). The participants understood that it was not the purpose to have all values present in all places, but that the aim of the future governance model was to find a way to jointly decide where to do what for which purpose!

Potentials for a local multi-stakeholder partnership in governance

The base-line study shows that there are a broad range of stakeholders engaged in different aspects of future land use. They are in general interested in taking part in a joint dialogue and learning process on how a new governance model might look like and how to implement it. So far the work done in the Valle District within the BioGov-project has identified core stakeholder and engaged them in discussions. As part of this process we have gained insights of existing perspectives, stakeholders' values and how they perceive their role and responsibilities.

By enabling the stakeholders to take an active part in the analysis of the emerging synthesis of the stakeholders' values and how these can be part of a vision for the Valle District, we have used the local BioGov-process as a way to both develop and implement a new working approach. We have also had the ambition to develop a more socially robust description of the social networks, win-win potentials and potential land-use conflicts, by involving stakeholders in the work. As such the base-line study is co-owned by all participants in the project (the collaborative working group).

Putting values, similarities and differences, on the table and letting this be part of a facilitated dialogue among stakeholders, we believe is a strong foundation for the next step. This phase would be to transform visions, values and stakes into its practical consequences when applying these on a specific place or site. This was done during a field workshop after that the base-line study was finalised, but it showed that the participants had the skills and will to negotiate their own interests depending on pre-conditions and needs related to different environments within a larger nature reserve.



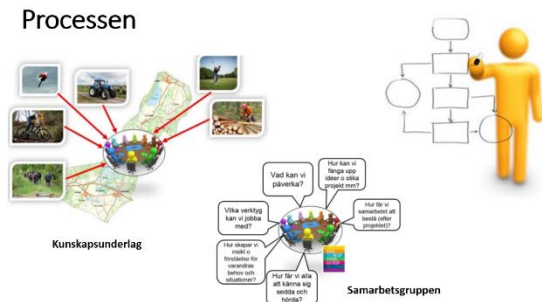
Altogether the work so far and the outcomes show that there is a good potential for local multi-stakeholder partnership a first step towards a new governance model in the area.

Concluding remarks

To implement a multi-stakeholder approach and partnership means that several elements have to be taken into account: the history of social networks and earlier experiences of collaboration, existing cultural and institutional features, as well as the unique context and issues to be managed. Each case will have different ways of developing collective initiatives and meet the specific hindering factors. In the Valle District the ambition has been to tune into ongoing activities and stakeholder networks, but adding an explicit discussion on values, the need for cohesion, accountability and transparency in decision-making processes. Putting an extra efforts during the first phase of the BioGov-project will hopefully lead to that future activities and learning will be more efficient and perceived as highly relevant among stakeholders.

The facilitation of the process has had double purposes;

- a) constituting and managing the collaborative working group, securing representativeness of different stakeholder interests, and
- b) supporting the innovativeness of the new stakeholder network, making actors to take responsibility for an integrated approach for sustainable land use (grounding a new governance model).



Procedural consensus has been instrumental to achieve a constructive discussion between stakeholders. That is, we have had an open discussion not only on the role of the collaborative working group, but also on the principles which should guide the communication and the joint working approach. Important criteria have been to apply a holistic perspective on what we do, test new working

methods and forms of cooperation, ensure transparency throughout the process, allow critical perspectives, utilize the competence of the entire group and create synergies between us, set up measurable goals to create increased power of change, and not closing our eyes to inherent conflicts. These criteria on how to work together has been agreed upon among the participating stakeholders and is the basis for the procedural consensus.

To conclude, the experiences we have made so far is related to the importance of:

- invest in relationships, common goals and group coherence,
- finding a balance between leadership and shared responsibility,
- trying to focus on common ground and win-win solutions to secure cohesion among participants,
- adapting facilitation tools and approaches to different needs and learning styles, and
- monitor and evaluate the project not only on the tangible outputs, but also on the internal network dynamics and to manage an ever-changing process.

We now have a good understanding of which stakeholders to involve, we have constituted a collaborative working group, we have been able to describe existing perspectives and core values of importance in the Valle District, and we have started the process of implementing vision and values in concrete landscapes and environments in the area. Working with the base-line study and a stakeholder analysis has been instrumental in creating a strong foundation for our future work.

Some key references

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