Feelings and Fellings

Exploring the Process of Communication in Forest Management Conflicts

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Abstract

The way we communicate about forest issues has consequences for how forests are managed. Policies and research suggest that public participation in natural resource management (NRM) leads to better informed and more sustainable decisions about the environment. This thesis seeks to increase understanding regarding how the way people communicate about a natural resource, such as a forested area, affects the decisions taken about that natural resource. This issue is investigated by studying how individuals involved in forest management interpret conflict, participation, and the actions of other people, and how this process of interpretation is connected to the way they act. The underlying assumption is that reality is socially constructed, and that this social construction is accomplished by people communicating with each other, via symbolic interaction. The empirical material consisted of three case studies of forest management, one case of participant observation in two participatory meetings and two cases of conflict concerning final fellings of forest studied via semi-structured interviews.

The empirical material was analyzed using the concepts of *avoidance of embarrassment* and *discursive closure*. The findings suggest that situations where people feel insecure about the role they are expected to play create anticipation of embarrassment and causes them to avoid face-to-face meetings. The findings also show that actors in participatory meetings have numerous different expectations on them, leading to discursive closures, i.e., suppression of certain subjects in the discussion, in order to avoid role confusion and hence embarrassment.

Avoidance of embarrassment and discursive closure in people's interactions with each other, in conflict and in participation, have negative impacts on listening and learning and knowledge exchange. The conclusion in this thesis is that a conscious focus on creating meeting spaces where role confusion is accepted can create discussions where more perspectives are raised, the common knowledge base is increased, and more sustainable decision-making concerning natural resources is possible.

Keywords: communication, symbolic interaction, conflict, public participation, embarrassment, discursive closure, forest management, final felling, Sweden

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Till morfar Yngve som kan allt om kalhyggen och trollstenar

Det är till tystnaden du skall lyssna
tystnaden bakom apostroferingar, allusioner
tystnaden i retoriken
eller i det så kallade formellt fulländade
Detta är sökandet efter ett meningslöst
i det meningsfulla
och omvänt
Och allt vad jag så konstfullt söker dikta
är kontrastvis någonting konstlöst
och hela fyllnaden tom
Vad jag har skrivit
är skrivet mellan raderna

Gunnar Ekelöf

Svensk sammanfattning

Det sätt på vilket vi kommunicerar om skogsfrågor har konsekvenser för hur skogarna sköts. Politiska styrdokument såväl som forskning inom demokrati och naturresursförvaltning hävdar att allmänhetens deltagande i naturresursförvaltning leder till en bredare kunskapsbas och mer hållbara beslut om miljön. Denna avhandling syftar till att öka förståelsen om hur människors sätt att kommunicera om en naturresurs, såsom ett skogsområde, påverkar de beslut som fattas om naturresursen. Denna fråga undersöktes genom att studera hur individer som deltar i naturresurshanterig tolkar konflikter och andra människors handlingar, och hur denna tolkningsprocess är kopplad till hur de agerar. Det empiriska materialet bestod av tre fallstudier av skogsskötsel: Ett fall av deltagande observation av en samrådsprocess och två fall av konflikter kring slutavverkning av skog studerade via semistrukturerade intervjuer. Det empiriska materialet analyserades med hjälp av begreppen "undvikande av förlägenhet" och "diskursiv stängning". Resultaten tyder på att situationer där människor känner sig osäkra i den roll de förväntas inneha skapar negativa förväntningar som får dem att undvika direkta möten med andra aktörer. Det finns många olika förväntningar på aktörer i samrådsmöten, vilket leder till diskursiva stängningar, dvs. ett undertryckande av vissa ämnen i diskussionen. Detta sker för att aktörerna vill undvika rollförvirring och därmed förlägenhet. Undvikande av förlägenhet och diskursiv stängning i människors interaktion med varandra, i olika situationer där naturresurser ska hanteras, får negativa konsekvenser för lyssnande, lärande och kunskapsutbyte. Slutsatsen i denna avhandling är ett medvetet fokus på att skapa mötesplatser där rollförvirring accepteras kan ligga till grund för diskussioner där fler perspektiv lyfts, där

den gemensamma kunskapsbasen ökar och på så sätt möjliggöra ett mer hållbart beslutsfattande när det gäller naturresurser.

Contents

List of Publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

I   Ångman, E., Hallgren, L. & Nordström, E.-M. (2011). Managing impressions and forests: The importance of role confusion in co-creation of a natural resource conflict. *Society and Natural Resources,* 24(12), 1335-1344.

II Ångman, E. Was this just for show? Discursive opening and closure in a public participatory process. Resubmitted to *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*.

III Ångman, E. The social character of conflict and knowledge management in two cases of forest conflict in Sweden. Submitted to *Forests*.

IV Ångman, E. & Haglind, P. What constitutes voice in a Swedish nature reserve establishment? The search for understanding, standing and influence in a mandated consultation process (manuscript).

Paper I is reproduced with the permission of the publisher.

The contribution of Elin Ångman to the papers included in this thesis was as follows:

I   The framework for analysis was developed by Ångman. Ångman wrote most of the text. Hallgren was active as a discussion partner and wrote minor sections of the text. Ångman and Nordström performed the interviews and discussed the findings.

II   Ångman analyzed the empirical material and wrote the paper. Ångman was active in planning the documentation of the empirical material and was present as a participant observer at the meetings studied.

III Ångman analyzed the empirical material and wrote the paper. Ångman performed the interviews that were the basis for the analysis.

IV Ångman wrote most of the text. Haglind collected the empirical material and wrote sections of the text. Haglind & Ångman discussed the material and the framework for analysis.

Abbreviations

NRM   Natural Resource Management
ENGO   Environmental Non-Governmental Organization
SEPA   Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
CAB   County Administrative Board
EIA   Environmental Impact Assessment
SSNC   Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
SFA   Swedish Forest Agency
FSC   Forest Stewardship Council

1 Introduction

Natural resource management (NRM) is often described as a complicated and messy undertaking, because it deals with dynamic and interrelated bio-geo-chemical and economic variables, as well as with people and their different perspectives on management (e.g. Sundqvist, 2003; French, 2007; Matthew & Hammill, 2009; Condor, Scarelli & Valentini, 2011). A prominent suggestion for how to respond to such a situation and achieve sustainable management of natural resources use is through involving citizens, often at the local level, in decision-making processes. The principles of citizen participation in NRM are stressed in policy documents all over the world (e.g., the UN Agenda 21, the EU Water Framework Directive, and the US National Environmental Policy Act). An influential item in the area has been the 10th principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development from 1992, which states:

> Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. […] States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.

International and national conventions and principles provide the message that a prerequisite for sustainable development is that citizens should be included in the management of our limited natural resources. From a research perspective too, public participation is something desirable. Via approaches focusing on e.g., collaboration, social learning, or stakeholder analysis, people participating in decisions about the environment become empowered and the decisions reached are better informed and more sustainable. This view on public involvement is influenced by theories of deliberative democracy, which build on an ideal of dialogue where the

participants can, in a fair procedure, listen, question, and examine each other's standpoints (see e.g. Dryzek, 1987; Smith, 2003). However, working with public participation and the process of communication in practice entails certain difficulties. It is generally difficult for managers to get any guidance in what the participation described in policy documents means in a practical situation (Tuler & Webler, 1999).

Participation can be interpreted in many ways that can result in very different practices. For example, it can be seen as a way of giving citizens substantial influence, or it can be used as manipulation, i.e., as a tool to increase the legitimacy of an authority without actually listening to the views of the citizens (Arnstein, 1969). Actors who become engaged in a local environmental issue, such as forest management, and want to have an influence on the management often meet public authorities or representatives of industry, who view participation as part of their rational, scientific, objective decision-making process. The problems that arise when including citizens in decision-making are that authorities tend to prioritize instrumental goals and specific interests (e.g. Hansen, 2007, p. 344), lack adequate arenas for deliberation, act in a bureaucratic way, or simply use the public forum as a way to legitimize their decision-making (Depoe & Delicath, 2004). Participation in the deliberative sense, however, implies that actors should listen, question, and learn by listening. In short, it means that participants have to communicate with each other. In the bureaucratic context, where experts are influenced by the scientific objective world view, communication is understood as the transmission of facts (Carey, 2007, p.38). The purpose of the instrumental participatory process is then not to communicate, but rather to inform and educate the public.

In this thesis, the *management* part of NRM is considered to be closely linked to *communication*. In general, use of the NRM concept is to take an anthropocentric view of the environment, implying that people manage nature and decide over and manipulate the environment, which is seen as a resource. In this thesis I use NRM in the sense of a professional arena for civil servants and forest managers and I also talk about two different kinds of NRM *situations*, i.e., case studies, which were limited in time. These comprised a participatory process and two cases of conflict concerning, all three situations concerning the management of forests. I also perceive NRM as being a general meaning-making process that is diachronic and that is happening through many different actors communicating with each other. The link to communication is that humans manage nature through the way they talk to each other about nature. Through discussions, people learn about important issues and decide how they should act in relation to nature.

The importance of the ability to communicate with other actors has been largely ignored in understandings of natural resource conflicts (Owens, 1985; Bergseng & Vatn, 2009). Conflict has been described as originating in a clash of interests, for example as pressure of many sources on a limited natural resource (in e.g. Blackburn & Bruce, 1995, p. 2; Ewert, Dieser & Voight, 2007, p. 337). These kinds of definitions do not explain why a difference in interests sometimes results in a constructive dialogue and sometimes in a destructive conflict. In this thesis, I stress the point that natural resource conflict is not only about having different goals for the management of a forest; it is also about relationships and the ability to communicate with other actors. During my interviews with actors involved in a conflict over a final felling (the removal of up to 98% of a forest in order to plant new trees), I was struck by how little the actors seemed to have discussed forest and forest management with each other and how they seemed to avoid face-to-face interaction. In order to learn more about the prerequisites for constructive dialogue in NRM, I decided to start by investigating what it is that keeps the actors in conflict from talking to each other and investigating other people's views further. I did this by studying communication in conflict and public participation.

Communication is central to this thesis, since it is through our communication with each other that we listen, learn, argue, and decide whether e.g. a natural resource is worth preserving or not (Cox, 2006, p. 11). This social constructionist perspective (see Burr, 2003) on how knowledge is created results in the way people communicate about a resource, influencing the quality of the decision concerning that resource.

The version of social construction chosen for this thesis is symbolic interactionism (see Charon, 2010). According to symbolic interactionism, human behavior is a dynamic process in which individuals are continuously defining and interpreting the acts of others (Benzies & Allen, 2001). For this thesis I was interested in learning about the process by which perspectives and actions develop. The standpoint that meaning is constantly changing in an interpretive process gives a focus on learning and change that I believe to be important and promising. By regarding action as co-created, as opposed to being made in single individuals and values being the base of action, I regard the process perspective as an opportunity to create change. If the aspects of communication that are likely to cause problems are known, work can be done to improve these.

Despite that the forms and management of public processes having been criticized, studies that closely examine communication processes during public meetings are rare (Leighter, Black, Cockett, & Jarmon, 2009).

Without a process description of what takes place during meetings, it is difficult to understand why a particular process succeeds or fails. There is a need for empirical studies on decision-making concerning NRM that can display the process of decision-making and the factors that make people act in different ways. A focus on the process of communication within empirical material provides an opportunity for identifying where decision-making and influence take place.

For the symbolic interactionism perspective, it is imperative to understand what individuals know about their world and what they believe to be important (Benzies & Allen, 2001). This thesis examines two cases of conflict development concerning final felling of forest and one case of public participation in planning of the development of a forested area. These cases provided opportunities to investigate how actors perceived the conflict they were involved in and to study how they acted in meetings regarding forest management. I was interested in how they interpreted their situation, how they attributed meaning to the actions of other persons involved in the same issue, and how this was linked to their action in conflicts and meetings. The intention with this thesis was to provide a deeper understanding of how aspects of the way actors communicate with each other affect the way they understand conflict, how knowledge is created and how these aspects of communication affect the decisions taken.

2 Aim and research questions

In order to understand how people affect forest management, the process of communication among actors performing participation and conflict in practice was analyzed in three cases of forest management.

The overall aim of the work was to achieve an increased understanding of how the way in which people communicate about a natural resource affects the decisions taken about that resource.

To fulfill this aim, specific objectives were to: 1) Study the process of communication in NRM situations; and 2) exploring how the way communication is carried out affects the development of conflicts in NRM situations.

I investigated this by studying how individuals involved in forest management interpreted conflict, participation, and the actions of other people, and how this process of interpretation was connected to the way they acted in NRM situations (two conflict cases and one participatory process).

Each of Papers I–IV had its own specific objective. These were:

I) To reveal hidden aspects of NRM conflicts by analyzing a conflict case with the help of the concepts of impression management and avoidance of embarrassment.

II) To use the concept of discursive closure to analyze empirical material derived from a public participatory process and to examine whether discursive closure can be used to understand the quality of the participation.

III) To describe two cases of conflict over forest management, with the focus on the importance of social relations for knowledge management

IV) To examine what it means to be heard in a mandatory consultation process and the consequences of not being heard.

In order to understand how the communication process affects the development of conflict and decision-making, we need to know how people involved in NRM handle decision-making and conflict. Section 4 (Background) describes what actors involved in forest management today perceive as problems when it comes to managing the forest together with other people. First, an outline of the thesis is given in Section 3.

3   A guide for the reader

In this section I outline the sections that form the rest of this *cover essay*, which is the place where the researcher can explain and discuss all the things that do not fit into the scientific paper format. The cover essay is also the place for explaining the connecting threads of the thesis and showing how the appended scientific papers are related to each other.

After having introduced my research interest (Section 1) and the aim of the thesis (Section 2), I go on to explain the background for the thesis (Section 4). To provide a context for my research aim, I present voices of natural resource managers that provide different perspectives on how to understand conflict and public participation in forest management. Section 5 presents my epistemological platform, i.e., my understandings of how knowledge is created. This is an important section since it formed the basis for how I approached the issues in this study and guided my choice of methods. In Section 6 I review some previous literature on public participation and conflict in the context of environmental issues and NRM. The review serves to place my thesis in a research context, as well as showing the reader the area in which I want to make my contribution. In Section 7 I describe the methodological assumptions based in my social constructivist epistemology, as well as the methods I used in relation to the empirical material. I also discuss other choices I made during my research journey connected to ethics, rejected theoretical perspectives, and self-criticism. The purpose of Section 7 is to give the reader a clear picture of how I approached research. Section 8 describes the theoretical concepts that guided my interpretation of the empirical material and Section 9 provides an account of the three empirical cases studied. The aim was to provide the reader with sufficient information to understand and criticize my interpretation of the events in the cases. Section 10 contains summaries of Papers I-IV. In Section 11 I synthesize and discuss the findings presented in

Papers I–IV and propose a guide for reflection in the hands of the natural resource manager. Finally, in Section 12, I identify areas for future research.

4 The background: From the perspective of natural resource managers

Which aspects should be described in the background section of a thesis? What is the background to how people act in natural resource management cases in Sweden? Often the attitudes people have to forests and forestry are said to depend on factors such as age, cultural background, gender, and social class (see Lindkvist *et al.*, 2009, for a summary). The problem with this kind of classification is that social factors should then be seen as correlating with certain attitudes and values, which results in research aimed at trying to predict actors' behavior to forest and to other individuals. Instead of focusing on cultural backgrounds, this thesis focuses on the communication that creates cultures and norms (further explained in Section 5). Traditionally this part of a thesis would contain descriptions of the official "policy field" of forest management, i.e., the rules that direct public participation. Since I am convinced that our views and actions are formed not only in relation to laws and regulations, but also in relation to other people, I was interested in how different actors involved in forest management perceive their situation.

Below I present a cross-section, based on interviews and official documents, on how individuals from different perspectives frame their "problems" connected to decision-making, participation, and other actors in forestry and NRM in Sweden. The interview statements are taken from telephone interviews in a pilot study and from interviews made for the empirical cases, (described in detail in the Methods section). I want to stress that I do not see for example "civil servants" or "the public" as coherent groups or as "stakeholders" with firm, unchanging views. Instead a perspective is an "angle of reality" (Charon 2010, p. 4) and presented here are what some voices claim to be reality in their specific circumstance. After providing space for some voices from the forest industry, the authorities, citizens, and Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOs), I

describe the Swedish forest management context from an official point of view, presenting rules and regulations that guide forest management and public involvement in forest management

4.1 From the perspective of some representatives of the forest industry

I start off by displaying and interpreting some quotes originating from representatives of the forest industry. From their point of view the economics of forest production are very important and public participation is seen from this vantage point. In the trade journal *Skogsvärden* (Hildingsson, 2006), the Foundation *Skogsällskapet* explains why it decided to provide 23 million SEK (2.5 million Euros) of funding for research about "Conflict land".

> The concept conflict land means land where production of wood has a great influence on, or is affected by, other interests. Examples of such lands are urban forests with high recreation pressure, as well as forests with high biodiversity […]. More and more people are growing up in urban environments with little or no connection to the country-side, agriculture and forest. This fact demands increased information and education.

From the point of view of this representative of the forest sector, other interests, such as recreation, cause problems for the production of wood, and one way to create a smoother process for forest owners is to educate the public. It is implicit in this quote that as soon as urban people learn more about forestry, they will also favor production of wood. A representative of a major forest company explained in an interview how ownership plays into the interpretation of what it means to involve the public in decisions regarding forest management:

> But that's the meaning of consultative meeting (*samråd* in Swedish). Otherwise the law or the certification could force us to something. For example, that everybody has to agree. But it isn't like that, consultation that is when everybody is out in the forest and so to speak exchanges information. And it can end up in negotiations, but at the end, we are after all the landowners who actually can make the decisions. (Head of Environment, Forest Company, 2007)

While the theoretical background for the participatory approach in NRM is built on deliberative ideals where the focus is on process, the practice often perceives public participation as a measure to improve efficiency in decision-making with a focus on outcomes (Parkins & Mitchell, 2005; Buchy & Hoverman, 2000) and reaching consensus (Peterson, Peterson & Peterson, 2005). Among the forest sector, rather typical explanations of intense conflicts include an 'unfavorable' resource structure, which means the existence of old-growth forests, and an 'unfavorable' market structure, which means having to export to environmentally aware markets (Hellström, 2001).

A part of the way that companies handle disagreements about their management has to do with fear of bad public relations:

> So when we decide, should we cut the forest or not, then you weigh if it is worth logging, the principal issue, and how bad PR we are going to get. You know that it will be bad PR when we log and it gets into media, it easily becomes black and white. The forest company runs over the villagers and so on, I can easily imagine the headlines. (Head of Environment, Forest Company, 2007)

To summarize, the perspective of the forest industry thus suggests that there is a need for educating and informing other groups, that participation should be used to improve efficiency, and that external structural factors are the cause of forest conflicts.

I have described a broad view of the forest industry. On the individual level, representatives of the forest industry can have good relationships with the local community. A forester working for a large forest company stressed the need for mutual learning between actors during a telephone interview:

> It is not only us that should inform and present and get a yes or no, it has to be mutual […] It is good to look at the object together, when you walk in the forest there are a lot of discussions, you learn a lot, and it is mutual.(Forester, Forest Company, 2006)

4.2   From the perspective of some civil servants

In Sweden the official institutions responsible for natural resource management include the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), the County Administrative Boards (CAB), the municipal authorities

and the Swedish Forest Agency (SFA). These authorities are expected to work to implement political goals, which result in them having internal goals that seem to be contradictory. For example, SFA works for the benefit of dynamic local industries, global sustainable development, biodiversity, and to raise the social values of forests (SFA, 2011a). SEPA present proposals for environmental policy and ensures that environmental policy decisions are implemented. In a report, SEPA identifies two bases for conflict as:

> Where can you ride and where can you not? Conflicts of interests between landowners and riders may occur. In nature reserves it is up to municipalities and CABs to weigh the interests in keeping an untouched nature and see that the usage is sustainable. (SEPA, 2008)

> The organized outdoor life sometimes collides with the interests of landowners. Beautiful natural areas can draw large groups of people and sometimes this can have a big impact locally. Clashes of interest can lead to conflicts where the authorities get involved and are expected to judge fairly. (SEPA, 2008)

From these quotes, it appears that the problems perceived by the Swedish EPA involve weighing and judging between different interests.

The participatory paradigm within Swedish NRM has caused dilemmas for civil servants at the CABs in Sweden. Administrators within Swedish NRM feel insecure about new roles that mean combining their roles as experts on factual matters with including local interests and tacit knowledge (Westberg, Hallgren & Setterwall, 2010). For example, the SFA is responsible for judging the conservation quality of logged forest areas, as well as creating "good dialogue" between forest owners and recreationists (SFA 2011a; 2012). In a study of advisory encounters for farmers' nature conservation, Bergeå (2007, p. 143) shows how the advisory activity has a double agenda, advice-giving as well as surveillance. The advisor has to balance between professional loyalty and the social solidarity of the situation with the farmer (Bergeå, 2007).

Within planning, an institutionalized tool for public participation is Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), where the environmental considerations are combined with consultations with those concerned. In an EIA, the planners stated that interaction with the stakeholders increased the quality of the project, and that the planners had learned from the residents about the local conditions (Blicharska, 2011). However:

> It was clear that the planners sought for information that would facilitate a smooth planning process, and not any new knowledge leading to profoundly revised plans. (Blicharska, 2011)

The reason the planners did not seek new knowledge might be that natural resource planning has long been based upon the rational–comprehensive model (Lachappelle, McCool & Patterson, 2003). Problem solving according to the rational-comprehensive model involves, according to Forester (1989), defining the problem carefully, collecting all relevant information, ranking values, evaluating alternatives, and selecting the best strategy. This model is impossible to follow in any strict sense, without simplifying steps, but the inclination in planning to get "all the facts" is a strong one (Forester, 1989, p. 50) and the rational-comprehensive world view is deeply rooted in Western thought (Forester, 1989, p.50; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.186).

From the perspective of civil servants, the issues seem to be that the authorities need to weight up different interests and balance their roles as experts that have an instrumental goal, with a new role as advisors and facilitators.

4.3   From the perspective of some citizens

> Fellow citizens. In the village Granberget, between the counties Dalarna and Värmland, we have seen that StoraEnso has marked the trees before the clear-cutting. The forest is close to our village and is the last large continuous old forest where we pick our chanterelles, our blueberries and enjoy the life of the forest. Here we see the capercaillie saunter, the forest tit nest, and nature living in its inimitable way. It is with sadness we witness how the forest company marks the trees so closely to our village without asking our opinion. (Oldhammer, 2008)

The villagers who wrote this open letter to the forest companies Bergvik Skog and Stora Enso wanted the forest to be saved and they felt they were entitled to be asked about such measures. Beland-Lindahl (2008, p. 280) identified different argumentative frames held by citizens in a conflict setting in Jokkmokk municipality. One frame that suits the quotation above is the "forest-protection-for-biodiversity" argument, the proponents of which want forest protection to be increased in order to maintain biodiversity. The open letter, which was quoted in the local newspapers, also contain the

argument that Beland-Lindahl (2008, p. 282) calls "forest protection for community benefits", which involves protecting forest for reasons of recreation or local economic development.

These arguments were also mentioned in a conflict in western Sweden where six hectares of forest used for recreation were scheduled for final felling. One of the citizens that used the area for recreation and picking berries and mushrooms explained (Björklund, 2011):"If the forest is cut down, it will not be possible to get it back. It would be completely crazy".

Some people living close to the forest distributed leaflets and started a facebook group and an internet petition, which now has over a thousand signatures (Björklund, 2011). The arguments are common in media and internet forums reporting on local disputes over forest management, and the sequence of events is usually the same – felling is planned and citizens using the forest react in protest (for additional examples of citizens' voices regarding forest felling, see *Protect the forest* network: PTF, 2005; 2011). The citizens who wrote the open letter above in the local newspaper wanted the forest company to ask for their opinion before they decided to log the forest. Soneryd (2002) showed in an EIA study how the process was not able to take the citizens' view into account. The local people had to find other ways than the EIA process to make their voices heard, and the conclusion drawn from the study was that environmental conflicts are a sign that citizens no longer accept being spoken for (Soneryd, 2002, p. 60).

A representative of a local forest group interpreted during a telephone interview the conflicts that often occur in urban forest as originating in the attitudes and education of forest managers:

> The conflict was that you had traditional forest management; it doesn't make sense in urban forest. But the people who are educated, it is the same all over Sweden, they have one truth. That causes a lot of problems in urban forests. (Representative local ENGO, 2006)

Above I chose to display some voices from citizens *against* final fellings. However in Sweden many forest farms are owned by individual landowners. They have a different perspective on who should have a say in forest management. Two individuals commented thus on an article about a stopped final felling:

> But if I, as a landowner, am not allowed to use my forest because there is an organization who stops my possibilities, I would still log that forest, cut it into planks and sell it over internet because nobody who buys my planks

knows that they are protected. Nobody can stop me from felling my pine trees even if there are protected species in my forest. (Person 1, NSD, 2011)

If private landowners can be hindered from using their forest, they must get economic compensation. What if someone were to barge in and stop you from renovating your house because they have support from the law. (Person 2, NSD, 2011)

From the perspective of the citizens who want to protect the forest, they should be asked about management measures affecting them, and if they are not asked or not listened to, they may find alternative ways to make their voices heard. Other persons take the perspective of the landowner and see inference as something unfair, sometimes as theft. Some citizens dissatisfied with official NRM organize themselves in NGOs.

4.4   From the perspective of some environmental NGOs

In an article from the magazine "Swedish Nature" (Olsson, 2003), the forest network *One Step Ahead*; a group belonging to the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) doing inventories of red-listed mushrooms and lichens in order to identify valuable forest areas before they are logged. This group is described as being involved in a fight against Forest Companies. Terms used in the article include "strategy of war", "conquering", "attack" and "final victory".

In similar language, the debate articles in the Forest Network (SSNC, 2010) are headlined as follows: "The forest company Holmen Forest is sabotaging mating grounds for capercaillie", "The forest company SCA lacks respect for nature", "How stubbornly can anyone close their eyes to forestry facts" and "The forest is turned into an industrial landscape". In statements from various NGOs, the different views on forest management are often framed in terms of war and strict opposition.

NGOs have played a major role in the institutionalization of e.g. Forest Certification, by "naming and shaming" companies and countries to create opinion for environmental demands on suppliers of forestry material (Keskitalo, Sandström, Tysiachniouk & Johansson, 2009). Since the 1960s, environmental movements have questioned the modern science view of nature and brought forward alternative types of knowledge (Jamison, 2003, p. 54). Some of the NGOs are involved in dialogue, collaborative planning and formalized negotiations (for example the SSNC), but others keep

framing their view of the problems in rhetorically harsh terms of war. Jamison (2003) explains how the dominant culture in environmental politics is trying to make environmental protection economically feasible, while on the other hand there is still a culture of resistance that is trying to connect environmental politics to justice, local democracy, and participation. Traditionally the most important NGO involved in forestry issues is the SSNC, with its 190 000 members and with forestry as a high priority for most local branches (Elliott, 2000, p. 180).

From the perspective of the NGOs, the challenge seems to be to make themselves heard and to frame nature-loving NGOs in strict contrast to the forest "industry".

4.5 Rules and regulations, the official perspective

In this section I outline some basic facts about Swedish forestry, with the focus on the rules and regulations that concern involvement of the public in forest management.

4.5.1 Public participation in Swedish forestry

An address from the government "A collected nature conservation policy" 2001/02:173 states (my interpretation):

The dialogue with the citizens needs to be strengthened within nature conservation (*naturvård* in Swedish). The working forms of nature conservation should be developed. Planning and realization of nature-conserving measures should happen in dialogue with the local actors concerned to reach firm establishment and so that local involvement in protection, management, and restoration as well as information efforts are stimulated.

In Sweden, around 23 million hectares of available land area (53%) are covered with productive forest land. The distribution of ownership is approximately 50% individual private owners, 25% private sector companies 6% other private owners, 3% state-owned, 14% state-owned companies and 2% other public ownership (see SFA, 2011b). There are differences in management practices between different owners, with companies tending to manage the forest more intensively (Yrjölä, 2002). Felling areas on private land encompass on average 3 ha and on company and state land 11 ha (Yrjölä, 2002). Forest management on forest land is regulated by the Swedish Forestry Act (1979:429). In Sweden two public authorities, the SFA and the CAB, have the responsibility for forest and forestry. The SFA is

an authority under the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, and is obliged to ensure that forestry is developed according to the policies decided by government and parliament. The SFA works with advisory services, inventories, information, and support to forest owners. The CABs are the representatives of government and parliament in the counties and implement the decisions made by these. The CAB is responsible for hunting and fishing, nature conservation, and nature reserves. The SFA is responsible for forestry in Natura 2000 areas that are not nature reserves and for forestry close to protected areas. The SFA has the remit to defend the cultural, aesthetic, and social values of forest (see the national environmental goals in Government Bill 2004/05:150), especially forest close to towns (SFA, 2004) and to support dialogue between landowners and other users in order to minimize conflicts between different interests (SFA, 2011a).

In general, Swedish forest management has gone from a focus on commercial activity to an understanding of a "multiple-use" forest (Sandström, Lindkvist, Öhman & Nordström, 2011). Forest management underwent modernization in the 1950s when it was rationalized through scientific input and became characterized by efficiency and clear-felling (Lisberg Jensen, 2011). In the 1970s the budding environmental movement criticized the negative impacts of modern forest industry and in the 1980s the new term *biological diversity* emerged to describe the ecological status of forest land (Lisberg Jensen, 2011). In the Forest Conservation Act of 1994 (1994:547), the goal of preserving biological diversity is accorded the same weight as commercial productivity, but whether biodiversity actually has the same weight in reality has been questioned (see e.g. Hoffner, 2011).

Most of the forest in Sweden is included in different certification standards and 10.4 million ha (almost 50% of Swedish forest) is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This standard is intended to represent a balance between different stakeholder demands and requires consideration to be given to the environment and nature, local people's rights, the benefit of indigenous people, and sustainable and economically viable production. Certified forest owners owning more than 1000 ha have to consult with local stakeholders before final fellings (HSSL, 2012; FSC, 2012). According to article 4.4.4 of the FSC standard, the forest owner must send out notice of a consultation meeting and must ensure that the consultation meeting has the purpose of reaching an understanding in the cases where stakeholders have opinions on the forest management" (FSC, 2012). Large forest companies and municipalities, as well as hundreds of smaller land owners, have certified forests (SSNC, 2006).

4.5.2   Private forest

As mentioned earlier, about 80% of the total forest area in Sweden is privately owned and these private landowners have the freedom to make decisions concerning management in forests on their own land (Svensson, Fries & Jougda, 2004). Forest owners are obliged to report to the SFA any final fellings larger than 0.5 ha, at the latest six weeks before the final felling is initiated. Biological diversity, cultural heritage, and social values must be preserved, but the consequences of this preservation must not be so far-reaching that they make ongoing forestry activities significantly more difficult. The practical interpretation of this is that the forest owner cannot be required to leave more than approximately 2% of the wood volume that is to be harvested. A permit is needed for final fellings in areas difficult to regenerate, protected forests, and valuable hardwood forest (SFA, 2011b).

Access to private land by the public for non-destructive recreation exists in Sweden through The Right Of Common Access, which is also called the Public Access to Land, Everyman's Right, or "right to roam" (Colby, 1988; Campion & Stephenson, 2010). The right of public access applies for the general public using land belonging to others (NMR, 1997) and can be seen both as making space for recreation and as a way of restricting land ownership (Sandell & Fredman, 2010). The significance of this right has shifted in a historical perspective, from use and towards recreation (NMR, 1997; Elgaker, Pinzke, Nilsson & Lindholm, 2012) and the right to roam has strong support among the Swedish public (Sandell & Fredman, 2010). Colby (1988) notes that Everyman's Right is an example of a different kind of land "ownership" that comes from a respect and sensitivity for land in Sweden. He views the right as an uncommon example of a "desirable philosophical attitude" (Colby, 1988).

4.5.3   Municipal forest

Sweden's 290 municipalities own 1% of Swedish forest and as this forest is often located near urban areas and used for recreation, which according to Lidestav (1989) increases the risk of conflict over its use. For most municipalities timber production is the main purpose of the forest, but recreation is an almost equally important goal (Lundquist, 2005).

In Sweden, when new buildings are planned to be constructed close to a populated area, the municipality has to produce a detailed plan for the development project. This plan must contain information about the

geographical area, the type of buildings that are planned, the purpose of the plan, and a description of implementation. The idea is that the planning process should be open and democratic (BV, 2012). The public is invited to look at the draft plan and to give their opinions in order to give the municipality "broad and initiated decision support". The planning proposal must be displayed publicly for at least three weeks, within which period the public can give their opinions in writing, and those individuals who have done so have the right to appeal a decision on approval of the plan.

5 Epistemology: Construction and interaction

> The way we communicate with one another about the environment powerfully affects how we perceive both it and ourselves and, therefore, how we define our relationship with the natural world (Cox, 2006).

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. In this section I explain my understanding of how knowledge is constituted. Via the concepts of social construction and actor/structure, I arrived at the perspective of symbolic interaction. The understanding of knowledge informed by symbolic interaction formed the base for the rest of the work described in this thesis in the sense that it had consequences for the questions I asked, the methods I chose, and the guiding concepts I used in analyzing the material.

5.1   How we construct the world through interaction

This thesis takes the standpoint that reality is socially constructed, and that people accomplish that social construction by means of interacting with each other (see Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985). This is not to say that reality is a creation of the mind, but that reality can only be known through cognitive structures, and only in interaction with other social actors (Gergen, 2003; Delanty 2005, p. 137). Different scholars put different meanings into the term social construction (Burr, 2003, p.2) but what most definitions agree on are (Burr 2003, p. 2): 1) A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and ways of understanding the world. A view of knowledge as co-constructed challenges the positivistic assumption that knowledge is derived from objective and unbiased observations of the

world; 2) a view of knowledge as historically and culturally specific. Our understanding of different categories and concepts has changed over time, and knowledge is the product of a specific cultural context, depending on the economic and social arrangements of that time; 3) knowledge is sustained by social processes. It is through our daily interactions between people that our versions of knowledge become fabricated; and 4) knowledge and social action go together. Each type of construction invites a different kind of action. It is easy to understand that reality is socially constructed in a cultural and historical perspective through looking at the concept and attributes of e.g. "teenager", which is a 20th century invention. Another example is how the concept of "woman" or femininity has been regarded and changed over time (see Backlund & Sjödahl Hayman, 2011).

Carey (2007) describes how society is created through communication: "communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed". This can be compared with a view of communication as transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver (see further explanation in Section 6.1.1). Mead (2007) theorizes that communication is putting oneself in the place of another and communicating via significant symbols, and the basis for communication is that a person: 1) Has something to communicate; and 2) has access to symbols (e.g., language) that the other can understand. The symbol must have a meaning for both parties, as otherwise there will be no communication. Communication is thus a process by which meaning is conveyed in an attempt to create shared understanding.

When people construct the world together, i.e., when they communicate with each other, they produce the structures that they are also bound by, and maintain structures already in place. These structures are created when certain knowledge becomes taken for granted, habituated into the interactions people have with each other (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 72) and can be called culture, norms, the system, or politeness. The structures are rules, but also resources (Giddens, 1984). Such structures are necessary, as people would not be able to understand each other at all if they did not have these shared patterns of action and meaning, i.e., they need a society and common culture to be able to understand the world (Craig & Muller, 2007). Thus by communicating with each other we create our ideas, attitudes, and world views (Carey, 2007). The social structures of daily life are the basis for knowledge, which is hence socially structured knowledge (Giddens, 1984). Knowledge is then culturally specific and views and actions that are possible in one society or situation may be impossible to express in another culture or situation (Haugaard, 2003).

Each time people learn something new, they try to give this new information meaning by fitting it into their existing understanding of the world. The way people communicate with each other can then re-establish or counteract the structure already in place (Haugaard, 2003). Haugaard (2003) explains how socially competent actors know what kind of response is likely to go against the structure in place, and do not put themselves in a situation of attempting to reproduce structures which others are likely to find inappropriate. "It could be argued that part of being a competent social actor, indeed the process of socialization itself, consists in learning and knowing how to avoid putting yourself in the infelicitous situation of challenging the established order of things unnecessarily". (Haugaard, 2003, p. 95).

5.2   Agency or structure?

Haugaard (2003) concludes that actors choose not to go against certain structures. The construct of dualisms such as agency/structure, self/other, and individual/society has led to debates on whether human beings are ruled by the structure or are free to act at their own will. According to Boglind (2003) Durkheim presented structure as a forcing "social fact" that affects everything in daily life, in this approach the social course of events are explained without having to refer to the motives of individuals, because the structures were there before the individual was born. The antithesis of structuralism is Sartre's existentialism, which stressed the responsibility of the individual actor (Boglind, 2003). Social institutions are indeed in place when an individual is born, but as the individual can also choose between different alternatives, she is not a victim of the structure (Giddens & Griffiths, 2007, p. 110). Giddens (1984) describes via his concept of *structuration* how structure and action are interdependent. Society only has structure to the extent that humans behave in a predictable way, and individual action is only possible for an individual who possesses a lot of socially structured knowledge (Giddens, 1984).

The symbolic interaction view on meaning-making helps circumvent the issue of dominance of actor or structure. An actor-centered view such as existentialism would assume that humans are free to make up their own minds about their actions in the world, while the structuralistic perspective assumes that they are ruled by the norms and structure of society. From the point of view of symbolic interaction we are carrying the norms of society within us, but we are also those who create and change them. Instead of emphasizing social structures as conditions for human action, the people

according to symbolic interactionism can direct themselves and shape their actions.

5.3 Symbolic interactionism

Within the perspective of symbolic interactionism, knowledge of the world is obtained by active interpretation of the meaning of objects (Blumer, 1968; Benzies & Allen, 2001). The term symbolic interactionism was coined by Herbert Blumer in 1937 to present an alternative to the behaviorism and structural-functional approaches of the era (Charon, 1995). Blumer based his understanding of interaction on George Herbert Mead's work and Mead in his turn is said to have been inspired by pragmatists such as William James, John Dewey and Charles Cooley (Charon, 1995, p. 29). For the pragmatists, including Mead, truth is fluid and knowledge should be continuously applied to new situations and should be judged for its usefulness (Charon, 1995, p. 30).

Mead's concept of how consciousness relates to society is explained by the interdependency of self and other (Burr, 2003, p. 193). Babies try out different gestures and their parents give these gestures meaning, so eventually the babies also understand what the gestures mean (Mead, 2007). These gestures eventually develop into symbolic forms, language. When people have symbols for actions they can reflect on their own actions and represent things both to themselves and to others; the baby requires a mind and sense of self, but this self is inevitably tied to how others have responded to the baby. This understanding of how individuals learn means that the world can only be known through others. Our consciousness and our mind, our ability to reflect on our own actions and on those of others, all come from our social interactions (Burr, 2003, p. 194).

Successful interaction through symbols requires an understanding of what one's actions mean to others (Burr, 2003, p. 194). How the individual should use a specific meaning occurs through a process of interpretation. First the actor identifies the things that have meaning. In this step the actor interacts with herself. Next, the actor transforms the meanings in the light of the present situation, and uses them as guidance and formation for action (Blumer, 1969, pp. 1-15). When people interact through language they know that the gesture has the same meaning for all. This provides access to the minds of others and, importantly, it provides choice. "We can imagine what would happen if we act in a certain way, and can therefore consider alternative actions" (Burr, 2003, p.194).

As children, people learn how to evaluate and control their behavior in reference to the groups to which they belong (Blumer, 1969, p. 82; Mead, 1934). According to Mead, this kind of social control is not to be perceived as restraining individuality; instead the process is constitutive for the development of individuality. *"For the individual is what he is, as a conscious and individual personality, just in as far as he is a member of society, involved in the social process of experience and activity, and thereby socially controlled in his conduct"* (Mead, 1934, p. 255). There is freedom and choice in human behavior, but within the societal norms. The individual and the context in which that individual exists are inseparable (Benzies & Allen, 2001).

Symbolic interactionism sees learning and action as a process of change. Ideas and behavior change depending on how the individual interprets and understands the world (Benzies & Allen, 2001), which means that a person that holds a specific "interest" in e.g. a forest issue, may change their mind during a conflict process, as they receive new insights. Mead describes the individual as both subject (actor) and object (self). The "self" is the object of the actor's actions, the actor can think and reflect because she has the ability to have an internal conversation and that conversation is possible because of the symbols she has learned. People "pull things" out of the world around them, define them and give them meaning according to the use they have at the time, and then act (Blumer, 1969, p. 64).

Over time, symbolic interaction creates culture, and that culture, viewpoint or perspective creates continuity over time and guides further action (Charon, 2010, p. 158). One important aspect of understanding culture is the concept of the "generalized other", the socially created conscience that guides people to correct their behavior in a group. Berg (2003) explains this as though there is a representation of society as an abstract person in the psyche, and it consists of the network of institutions that all are part of, e.g. family, religion, economy, and education. The generalized other is so much part of the individual that their experiences are no different from those of others. As Burr (2003, p. 195) emphasizes, it is important to note that the generalized other involves much more than imagining how others would react to one's behavior. It means feeling how they would act, because one is not differentiated from the other (Burr, 2003, p. 195).

According to symbolic interactionism, human behavior is a dynamic process in which individuals are continuously defining and interpreting each other's acts (Benzies & Allen, 2001). In the descriptions of the cases studied here, I refer to the individuals involved as *actors*. To claim that people are

social actors is to stress the importance of man as an active agent and to acknowledge that people act towards other persons (and objects) according to their understanding of them. The person, in symbolic interactionism, is capable of reflection and of changing behavior based on that reflection, through the ability to see oneself from the "outside", as an object.

In this thesis I sought to learn about the process by which points of views and actions develop. The perspective that meaning is constantly changing in an interpretive process gives a process-related focus on learning and change that I think is important and promising. By regarding action as co-created, as opposed to decisions being made within single individuals and values being the base of action, the process perspective provides an opportunity to create change.

6 Public participation and conflict

Why has "public participation" become the buzzword in NRM policies, regulations, and practice all over the world? How is it supposed to work, and what happens when it doesn't work? In the following sections I describe traditional institutionalized forms of public participation and then move on to the values of the new paradigm of public participation and the meaning of deliberation. In the last section I describe how conflicts over natural resources are perceived from different perspectives. Lastly, I argue that a communication focus on public participation and conflict is important for developing a better understanding of processes.

6.1 Public participation in natural resource management

6.1.1 The instrumental perspective

From a policy perspective, it seems quite established that members of the public should be involved in environmental decision-making (e.g. the UN Agenda 21), but the exact nature of this participation in practice usually remains ill-defined (Tuler & Webler, 1999). In a representative democracy, people influence society's development and the environment where they live by casting their vote. There are also other ways where the public is invited to influence decision-making, at the local level, via public hearings and consultation periods where individuals and interest groups are expected to express public interests and values (Harrington, Curtis & Black, 2008).

This type of public participation has traditionally used a top-down approach where a public agency with authority manages the process (Daniels

& Walker, 2001, p. 8). These traditional modes of public participation have been criticized for being administrative in nature (Walker, 2004) and lacking space for creating trust (Jarmon, 2009), informed dialogue (Senecah, 2004), and transparency concerning intended goals and outcomes of process (Black, Leighter & Gastil, 2009).

From the instrumental perspective, public participation is just one method/tool among others to reach an end-goal. Both in practice and in the natural resource literature, the emphasis is on outcomes (Parker & Mitchell, 2008). As an example of the "participation as tool" focus, Johnson (2009) frames the reasons for public participation in watershed management as an incorporation of public values into decisions. Johnson assesses the relative effectiveness of public participation as a mechanism for improving environmental conditions. In this case the public values were to be incorporated into a existing model of expert decision-making. The public opinion was then simply an "add on", to be utilized if environmental decisions were deemed by experts to be improved by this input.

Viewing participatory decision-making from an instrumental standpoint means emphasizing the goal of decision-making more than the process. Market-driven governance systems such as the forest certification initiative FSC frame public participation activities as an important part of their decision-making processes (Auld & Bull, 2003; Parker & Mitchell, 2008). FSC has developed systems for ongoing dialogue between citizens, research managers, and the scientific community (Auld & Bull, 2003). The question is how corporate organizations, whose ideals are very much influenced by an instrumental model with prioritization of "facts" and "glorifying of expertise" (Deetz, 1992, p. 119), can handle participation aimed at dialogue. Although these endeavors might produce substantive results in terms of the inclusion of local knowledge, market-driven attempts are expected to be cost-effective and probably foster a goal-oriented understanding of public participation.

The view of communication as transmission and the consequence for public participation

Apart from the NRM institutions (the CAB, the SEPA, the SFA) that coordinates the state's activities, also the environmental movement has become increasingly professionalized (Jamison 2003). Westberg, Hallgren & Setterwall (2010) suggest that Swedish natural resource managers working professionally with wildlife, conservation, and climate change issues, most often have a background in the natural sciences. A perspective on natural

resource management originating from a positivistic camp comprises a certain ontological view, i.e., a view on how the world is constructed, that has consequences for how people in this camp view knowledge, which in turn has consequences for how they practice and plan participation. The foundation for positivism is the idea that science is the study of an objectively existing reality that can be reduced to observable units (Delanty, 1997). This means that the positivistic reality is "out there", independent of the language used to describe it. From a research perspective, a problem with positivism is that natural science is generally taken to be the model for all sciences, resulting in the view that the natural science methods should be used to guide social science (Delanty, 1997). The practical problem in society with the positivistic paradigm is that citizens need experts from institutionalized systems to tell them what is right, because (natural) scientific knowledge is assumed to be superior to other kinds of knowledge.

Societal and scientific changes during the Reformation (16th Century) and the Age of Enlightenment (18th Century) resulted in a rational view of science and society that also encompasses language. Communication has a long history of being understood as the rational transmission of thought or knowledge from a sender to a receiver. Mattelart (2007) suggests that Western societies' view on communication derived from the engineers' attempts to create the perfect transport system in France in 18th Century Europe. Along these new roads merchandise and knowledge were intended to be transported to the poor and ignorant. In this manner, the image of communication as a means for experts to transfer knowledge to the rest of the population was created, and communication was seen as a way to control the masses (Mattelart, 2007; Carey, 2007). An influential model in the "communication as transmission" school is Shannon and Weaver's Mathematical Theory of Communication from 1949 (Fiske, 1982, pp. 6-23). In this theory, communication is presented as a simple linear process with an information source that uses a transmitter to send a signal (the message). The receiver then gets the message, but the extent to which the signal is received correctly depends on the amount of disturbing noise. Shannon and Weaver focused on how the channels of communication could be used most effectively. Despite the fact that the model was created by an engineer and a mathematician at a telephone company, they claimed that it could be used for all types of human communication (Fiske, 1982). Indeed the model has proven very influential, probably due to its characteristics of simplicity and linearity (Fiske, 1982).

Models that portray communication as transmission tend to focus on the sender, who is in possession of an important message that needs to be

forwarded. The problem arising when trying to apply the transmission view to a resource dilemma is the focus on the "sender", and the fact that it ignores other important parts of an individual's decision-making, such as the structural conditions, the individual's background, and the current situation (Nitsch, 1998). A problematic aspect of the model from a power perspective is that the core of the transmission model is the transfer of messages over distance, for the purpose of control (Carey, 2007). The information is portrayed as something formed in people's minds and transmitted as an unaffected "package". The information is something already there; it exists as an independent truth, not as something created together by people interacting with each other. The model conveys a static view of human beings, where the only way to achieve change is through rhetoric, not through listening to others. Public participation as it has been traditionally understood means inclusion of citizens in consultation periods and hearings and has its roots in a rational world view where communication is seen as transmission of facts. However, alternative methods and perspectives of participation have been developed.

6.1.2   Towards deliberative decision-making in NRM

As Forester (1989) explains, the instrumental view on public participation based on a rational world view, while criticized, is still very influential, and in practical NRM the use of participatory processes is still often regarded as a method among others, not as an ideology with any deeper impact (Parkers & Mitchell, 2008; Buchy & Hoverman, 2000). The diverse perspectives on participation of citizens in decision-making can also be understood by scrutinizing the level of inclusion of citizens. Arnstein (1969) describes via the ladder of participation how public participation can be understood in different ways, describing eight steps ranging from non-participation to citizen control over decision-making. The first steps of the ladder are non-participation levels; the participants should be educated or cured. In the middle of the ladder the participants may be heard but cannot be sure that their views will be involved in the decision-making. Higher up, the decision-making and planning responsibilities are shared and at the top the participants take over control of public property

Alternative modes of public participation, on the higher rungs on Arnstein's ladder, promise to create other types of processes where stakeholders together define problems and generate solutions (Depoe & Delicath, 2004; Innes & Booher, 2004; Peterson & Franks, 2005). According to several scholars (e.g. Walker & Daniels, 2001, p.8; Depoe &

Delicath, 2004; Cox, 2006, p. 126;) the new interest in alternative perspectives on public participation in NRM is based on recognition of the failures of traditional participatory mechanisms, and has developed as a critique against the instrumental perspective.

The "alternative" versions of public participation with the focus on dialogue and common learning have several historical roots; here I name a few influences from the history of ideas, just to remind the reader that the current trend of "public participation" within the sustainable development movement is not built on newly invented ideals. Democracy for the Ancient Greeks was certainly not about a representative democracy, but was direct and participatory among those who were granted participation, as decisions were reached by discussion and argumentation until everybody could agree (Pitkin, 2004). In the 18th Century Rousseau had great influence on political thinking when speaking about freedom, a freedom that was only possible through active, personal participation of all, jointly deciding public policy (Pitkin, 2004). In his book *Émile* Rousseau (1762; 2007) described the ideal learning process where critical thinking and forming of own opinions were essential. In *Democracy and Education* (1916), the philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey was critical of the view of teaching as the "transmission of facts" and proposed "learning by doing", an approach that would foster informed critical citizenship, as compared with a school where students memorized without reflecting (Berg, 2003; Shyman, 2010). In the present day, Habermas criticized the dominant scientific (positivistic) understanding of society and provided an alternative view on how to improve society, via dialogue and process-related rules (Outhwaite, 1996). Paulo Freire's work in critical pedagogy during the end of the 20th Century framed learning as an interactive process between two equal partners, not a teacher and a learner, and concluded that the goal with education was to foster critical reflection that could reveal power and fight oppression (Cahill, 2007). Today Smith (2003) explains how deliberative democracy can allow for reflection and discussion on the plurality of values involved in environmental decision-making and Dryzek (1987) proposes that a deliberative approach can process the inherent uncertainty and complexity of environmental problems. These are some ideas that influence different parts of the public participation paradigm today.

From the ideas above, we can understand that participation has to do with equality and freedom, to have knowledge so as to be able to criticize the privileged. The arguments for public participation include the ethical-normative arguments and the substantive arguments (Fiorino, 1990). The ethical-normative arguments claim public participation for its own sake.

From the normative camp, participation in environmental decision-making is a critical component of democracy. Peterson & Franks (2005) summarize the general reasons for public participation as: 1) The public can best judge its own interests; and 2) participation will enhance the public's ability to participate in the democratic system; 3) reduce feelings of powerlessness; and 4) increase the legitimacy of the governing body. The substantive argument is that better dialogue and exchange of ideas and knowledge will lead to a broader and better knowledge foundation on which to base decisions. When citizens have argued and listened, they can take decisions that are actually qualitatively better for the environment.

As a part of the new approaches to participation, different participatory practices have been proposed as an alternative to traditional public participation methods (see Daniels & Walker, 2001; Heath, 2007). Methods such as the "collaborative learning" approach developed by Daniels and Walker (2001) and the "participatory analysis" of Laird (1993) emphasize the importance of collaboratively defining problems and evaluating possible solutions. Participants are intended to engage in mutual learning and an exploration of each other's values. These approaches can have both substantive and normative reasons, and common arguments for decentralizing resource management are essentially substantive: in contrast to distant decision-makers, the local stakeholders often have better knowledge about site-specific conditions, a greater feeling of responsibility for the area, greater ability to change rules when ecosystems change, and greater ability to maintain rules if they have been involved in creating the rules (Sandström & Tivell, 2005).

So, the participatory approach to NRM promises empowerment, legitimacy, better knowledge, and, not least, better decisions about the environment – in short a more sustainable type of decision-making.

6.2 Understandings of conflicts and natural resource management

Participatory processes are often initiated because of conflicts over NRM. Conflict in the area of NRM has been described from several theoretical perspectives and the approach used to manage NRM conflicts depends on our understanding and definition of the concept. In the following sections I explain conflict when seen as originating in interests and when seen as a type of relationship.

6.2.1   A conflict of interests?

A common way to describe conflicts is to use an interest or stakeholder perspective, which conveys the perception that the conflict originates in the fact that people or groups have different views on how a natural resource should be managed. Blackburn & Bruce (1995, p. 2) define environmental conflict as "when […] parties involved in a decision-making process disagree about an action which has [...] impact upon the environment". Similarly, Ewert, Dieser & Voight (1999, p. 337) define recreational conflict as: "A condition that exists when […] people experience […] an interference of goals or the likelihood of incompatible goals, as the result of another person's or group's actions, threat of action, or personal attributes". According to Church, Gilchrist & Ravenscroft (2007), these kinds of definitions of conflict have led to an emphasis on examining competition between user groups (for examples see Jacob & Schreyer, 1980; Barli, Baskent, Turker & Gedik, 2006; Clark, Hendee & Cambell, 2009; Hunt, Lemelin & Saunders, 2009; Mann & Phillipe, 2009). Conflict definitions based on competition also have practical consequences in that the attention in meetings and processes is often on interests and experts, while the communication is regarded as routine and not in focus (Hamilton & Wills–Toker, 2006).

Researchers in studies of environmental psychology are interested in explaining and predicting people's behavior in environmental issues based on investigations of their attitudes and beliefs (see Payton, Fulton & Anderson, 2005; Vining & Merrick, 2007; Stern, 2008). An example of their findings is that natural resource managers can better direct their actions if they monitor local people's trust levels and levels of place attachment (Payton, Fulton & Andersson, 2005). In this tradition, researchers want to find out what is prompting a certain social behavior, and individuals will communicate with others when they want a change in behavior from the other person. The psychological perspective is mainly interested in communication as a means of conveying information and of predicting environmental behavior.

In studies applying the theoretical concepts of frames to forest conflicts (e.g., Beland-Lindahl, 2008; Raitio, 2008), the different standpoints that different actors take are explained by their underlying world views. Frames are social constructs that affect behavior and conflict management strategies (Raitio, 2008). For example, the place-related frames of the actors are identified and the analysis shows how fundamentally conflicting place meanings divide these actors (Beland-Lindahl, 2008). From this perspective, the culture and society that people live in very much affect their conflict

behavior, and in this Durkheimian approach conflicts seem determined by structural constraints. Frames are able to change through reflection (Raitio, 2008, p. 53), but as they are representatives of structures they seem to have a long-term underlying position that makes them appear as constants, and individuals' options in terms of choice between world views seem limited.

Theoretical models finding explanation for conflict in interests, culture, or psychology offer diverse and insightful explanations as to why the actors are engaged in an issue. However, the direction of subsequent actions by the actors or the reasons why the conflict escalated and destructivity increased are not as well developed. Gulbrandsen (2004) explains how forest conflicts in Sweden from the 1960s to 1980s concerned issues such as the use of non-native tree species, clear-cutting, protection of old-growth forests in the south and mountain forests in the north, and the use of herbicides. However, the fact that people have different views on how to manage old-growth forest does not, on its own, explain why a conflict started. When actors perceive their goals to be incompatible with those held by other actors, there are a number of potential scenarios of action along a scale from constructive dialogue to direct violence (Glasl, 1999, pp. 83-103) and Carpenter & Kennedy (1988, p.4) describe how disputes often develop into the destructive "spiral of unmanaged conflict". In conflict concerning natural resources and local stakeholders the "conflict spiral" often involves elements of strategic media use, collections of signatures via petitions, the establishment of local protest groups, and negative stereotyping of other actors (see descriptions of conflicts in Hallgren, 2003; Hendry, 2004; Beland-Lindahl, 2008; Buijs, Arts, Elands & Lengkeek, 2011; Gerner, Heurich, Gunther & Schraml, 2011).

Conflict perspectives that take interaction for granted, as a means to produce behavior, do not usually explain what happened in a specific conflict development. A standpoint in this thesis is that meaning is produced in communication, talk, and that it changes through interaction. Therefore it is interesting to examine perspectives that see conflict as being based in interaction.

6.2.2 Conflicts as social interaction

The quality of social interaction between the actors involved in conflict is an important, and often forgotten, aspect of environmental and NRM conflicts (Owens, 1985; Hallgren, 2003, p. 7; Hallgren & Ljung, 2005, p. 133; Bergseng & Vatn, 2009). Scholars that have moved beyond the pure interest-based descriptions of natural resource conflicts also refer conflicts to

social aspects and relationships. Daniels & Walker (2001, p. 40) argue that definitions based on competition have significant limitations, since environmental conflicts stem from various sources in addition to disagreements and incompatible goals. Findings by Hellström (2001) suggest that the value structure and types of relationships between the various actors are perhaps more crucial for explaining the intensity of conflict than structural aspects such as policy, market, and resources. Studies have found that it is not the interest, the substance, of the conflict that determines the outcome, but rather the relationships (Carolan & Bell, 2003; Buijs, Arts, Elands & Lengkeek, 2011; Gerner, Heurich, Gunther & Schraml, 2011) and the procedure for managing the conflict (Buijs, Arts, Elands & Lengkeek, 2011).

Back in 1908, Georg Simmel mooted the idea of conflicts as relationships. Conflict had been seen as a separate subject of study on its own, when in reality it is just a part of interaction and integration into/creation of society (Simmel, 1955). Conflict is, according to Simmel, a way to achieve unity and is part of how we create our personalities (Simmel, 1955). In this approach conflict is positive, as well as negative, and those two aspects cannot be separated. Simmel (1955, pp. 21-45) also stresses that opposition or conflict may be an important part of a relationship between people and in fact can be the function which actually constitutes a relationship. Two quarrelling neighbors can become very close, in the sense that they focus much more energy and thought on each other than they would have done had their relationship been free of conflict.

Hallgren (2003, p. 16) suggests conflict to be defined as social interaction during which the trust of the interacting actors in the interactive situation decreases. To "trust an interactive situation" means that the actors involved believe they know how the other will interpret them and that they are able to interpret the other. A conflict occurs when an individual perceives that he or she does not know what to expect from the other party and thus believes that it is impossible that other person will understand him or her. The individual therefore acts strategically to change the preconditions for the interaction in his or her own favor and turns to other people for support. The individual also tries to change the arena for the conflict; in a natural resource conflict it may typically involve the local newspaper. The problem is that these actions tend to reduce the trust of the other even more and the conflict escalates through their reciprocal interaction.

As mentioned earlier (Section 5), the foundation for my thesis is that meaning is produced in communication and changes through further communication and interaction. Therefore I base my understanding of

conflicts as inherently involving communication and regard trust as essential for constructive communication in conflict situations. What I investigate further here is why actors lose trust in the first place, i.e., what it is that keeps them from investigating other people's views further. Why choose the relationship constituted by conflict and mistrust, rather than that where forest management can be discussed? This conflict perspective intrinsically excludes deliberation, because it is not possible to investigate each other's arguments in a fair way if one cannot trust the situation or the other person.

6.3   Participation and conflict management in practice

Protagonists of collaboration and participation claim that citizens in participatory processes need to have influence, they need respect, esteem, and opportunities for dialogue and genuine empathy (Senecah, 2004). Core requirements for successful collaboration (Cox, 2006, p. 134) are: 1) Relevant stakeholders are at the table; 2) participants adopt a problem-solving approach; 3) all participants have access to necessary resources; 4) decisions are usually reached by consensus; and 5) relevant agencies are guided by the recommendations of the collaboration.

Habermas states that communicative action aimed at understanding can be reached through fair procedural rules and the discourse ethics, with which it is possible to ensure that all viewpoints, interests, and values are heard, which can happen when everyone is allowed to speak and express their beliefs (see Outhwaite, 1996, pp. 187-191). According to the Habermasian discourse ethics, the only way to come to sustainable decisions is when a community of people discursively agree on those decisions (Outhwaite, 1996, p. 181; Ingram 2010, p. 116). In the deliberative procedure people have to listen empathically, they have to question each other's statements and respond to the challenges posed by other people. This means that any decisions that are made are sustainable.

In parallel with the increasing body of literature on alternative and more inclusive forms of public participation, the literature on how to create better processes and manage conflicts has also expanded. Such literature usually offers advice on how to create more democratic processes, is more or less hands-on, and provides more or less theoretical background. Advice on how to adopt a solving-problem approach to reach sustainable decisions can be found in "tool-books" with instructions on how to use story-telling, exercises, and drama in groups to create a space that is characterized by respect, co-creation of social values, collective intelligence (Holman & Devane, 1999; Brown & Isaacs, 2005), and group synergy (Hunter, Bailey &

Taylor, 1995), in order to find a common ground for future decision-making (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000).

6.4 The "black-box" vs. process descriptions

In this section I compare how two different ways of analyzing and describing NRM: The "black box" way, where institutions and systemic constraints are seen as objects; and process descriptions, where the researchers try to understand what it is in the process of communication that creates certain outcomes.

6.4.1   Decision-making as a black box

In this section I show how various studies on participation in NRM decision-making focus on the limitation to mandatory public participation processes posed by the dominance of powerful organizations and describe shortcomings in these descriptions.

Harrington, Curtis & Black (2008) criticize the NRM discourse for its "excessive focus on place-based communities". Many descriptions of public participation initiatives are indeed case studies, but the problem as I see it is not these case studies themselves, but the way in which the public process is analyzed and described. In much NRM literature on public participation, the institutions responsible for decision-making procedures are identified as having the power to define the problems and choose participants and are criticized for being ill-equipped to deal with the complexity of NRM issues (see in e.g. Kaminstein, 1996; Finger-Stich & Finger, 2003; Hare, Letcher & Jakeman, 2003; Capitini *et al.*, 2004; Johnson, 2009). Kaminstein (1996) makes this view of the mandating organization explicit when asserting that "public officials not only have the power to define problems, but they also have the legal power to decide solutions, regardless of citizens' reservations and concerns". Hare, Letcher & Jakeman (2003) claim that "the existing power structures in the management area can have a large influence on stakeholder selection". In these examples it is not clear *how* the existing power structures actually influence participation and the organization seems like a fixed entity.

The domination of the organization is stressed by Capitini *et al.* (2004) when framing the problem they faced in a participatory process in Hawaii as grounded in legislative systems generally ill-equipped to deal with the inherent complexity and unpredictability of biological systems and different

human cultures. Thus, the system produces "solutions" that fail to evolve in pace with the development of new knowledge and emerging understandings between or among stakeholders (Capitini *et al.*, 2004). Those authors concluded that the process they investigated was a seemingly sound process, but one that tended to frame issues in terms of scientific perspectives. In order to better understand and to produce better processes, there is a need to know *how* meetings are framed to focus on scientific issues, and *why* legislative systems cannot deal with emerging understandings among stakeholders. How are these levels connected and how can this be investigated?

A problem with a focus on powerful organizational forces is that the researcher then needs to investigate social, economic, and political contexts and material constraints that often lie beyond an actor's awareness, which can result in that the individual is theorized as powerless (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). The sociologist Norbert Elias uses processual nouns, such as "courtisation" and "sportisation", to stress that sports are always done by people, i.e., that the noun "sport" would not exist without people practicing sport (Quilley & Loyal, 2004). The nouns we use sometimes lead us to forget that no social structures can exist outside the movement of interaction. The focus on structure frames public participation as something that can only happen on the terms of the organization and leaves very little room for individual agency. This way of framing participation downplays the formative powers of communication (see Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004), i.e. does not focus on the social interaction.

The statements derived from the literature are a *result* from communication; a product of the process of discussion, a process of discussion that is hidden from us. The interesting thing is to understand what happens in that "black-box" of a process. Without a process description, it is difficult to understand why a particular process is successful or not.

6.4.2 Process descriptions

Above I explained why certain descriptions make it difficult to understand the merits and pitfalls of the public participation process. In this section I provide a few examples of the kind of analysis that I believe can open up another way of understanding qualities of decision-making and individual expressions of structural constraints, an area to which I wish to contribute.

Analysis of empirical material from a participatory process focusing on the process of communication can identify where decision-making and influence take place and where space for change exists. Despite the fact that the forms of public meetings have been criticized, studies that have looked

closely at communication processes during public meetings are rare (Leighter, Black, Cockett, & Jarmon, 2009). Black, Leighter & Gastil (2009) describe the three central issues that need to be addressed in relation to public participation processes in order to legitimize them: the level of *trust* between community members and authorities, the understandings of *community*, and the understanding of the intended *goals and outcomes* of the process. What they stress, and what I agree on, is that it is not enough to emphasize the importance of such issues, but there is a need to have a clear understanding of how these components are created, maintained, and challenged in communication (Black, Leighter & Gastil, 2009). Rich empirical work can lead to insights about meeting problems and opportunities (Leighter, Black, Cockett, & Jarmon, 2009). Communication aspects that can be studied in participation processes include for example non-verbal behavior, responses to expressions of mistrust, framing of problems, storytelling, and how people talk about other social groups.

Below I present some examples of how the study of communicative practices can provide knowledge about NRM processes. Jarmon (2009) used conversation analysis to investigate how participants in a public meeting displayed trust and mistrust towards each other and found that participants' ideas were shut down by the use of "no, but…", while they were able to build on and improvise on each other's ideas if "yes, but.." were used instead. This is an interesting example of how a focus on communication can reveal aspects of decision-making that can be of real use for practitioners.

Bergeå (2007) video-recorded meetings between farmers and nature conservation advisors. By looking in detail at how they talked about and moved in connection to certain objects, such as a specific plant, she was able to draw conclusions about the different meaning this specimen had for the farmer and the advisor, and how their specific knowledge, profession, and different views on the land determined where the communication and understandings between them faltered.

Black (2009) exemplifies and describes how narratives presented during a meeting help to construct the narrator's identity. This opened the way for a discussion about how identity construction via stories can function to reify or challenge the authority structures in meetings by privileging certain voices. According to Black (2009) the use of stories portraying people as insiders/outsiders can challenge the authority of "outsiders" such as council city members.

In a 14-month study of community collaboration, Heath (2007) showed how collaborative outcomes are communicatively accomplished by

identifying 13 examples of "dialogic moments" where new perspectives and ideas created creativity in the collaboration.

Leighter & Castor (2009) investigated how participants frame the communicative event in which they are participating by investigating meta-communication, how participants talk about talk. Their analysis showed that participants co-construct the communicative scene in which they are participating, and that the acting consultant team was unprepared for talking about their framing of the event. It showed among other things how the consultant leading the meeting framed the meeting as any view would be considered worthy of discussion, and when citizens questioned this framing (claiming that the meeting involved informing rather than communicating), the consultant denied this. A focus on meta-communication can be a way to evaluate public meetings and help facilitators and leaders be observant; w hen there is talk about talk, this should not be closed down if true participation is to be achieved (Leighter & Castor, 2009).

The studies paying close attention to communication provide input into the research on public participation, and give concrete advice to practitioners. This could not have been achieved without a close focus on the communication during the meetings, and by studying interaction moment-by-moment. The explicit use of the transcribed material makes it easy to follow what happened. The studies that focus on the micro-moves of decision-making provide clues as to where ideas "take", e.g., the kind of discursive moves that create change and listening. These are the instances where power is executed and where it can be seen if participants in a process trust each other or not. Since there is a focus on process, it is also possible to determine how meaning and focus change over time.

7 Methodology

This section describes the philosophical assumptions that guided the research process, as well as the specific methods used. It also describes the different stages of the research process.

7.1 An interpretive perspective

As explained in Section 5, my epistemological platform guided me to a specific way of investigating NRM. For the symbolic interaction perspective, it is imperative to understand what individuals know about their world and what they believe is important (Benzies & Allen, 2001). The pragmatic roots of symbolic interactionism teach that knowledge is believed and remembered because it is useful, and that humans must be understood by what they do in their situations (Charon, 2010, p. 30). Therefore, to learn more about conflict and participation in NRM, I needed a way to understand situations from the perspective of individuals involved in NRM. How did the actors in my empirical cases interpret their situation, how did they attribute meaning to the actions of other persons involved in the same issue, and how was this linked to their action in conflicts and meetings? In this empirical part of the study I listened to the actors' interpretations in interviews and via participant observation.

My approach to the empirical material was inspired by the fact that we often take communication for granted, i.e., we do not notice the existence of communication until something goes wrong, when prior understanding of how something works is not enough (see Chang, 2007; Taylor, Groleau, Heaton & Van Every, 2007). The imbrication theory (Taylor, Groleau, Heaton & Van Every, 2007) explains how most of what occurs as activity is routine. Imbrication means overlapping like roof tiles, where each tile has its

own integrity but is the interdependency that provides the capacity of the roof. A single event, such as a journey by plane to another country, involves actions from thousands of actors, which are "invisible" until breakdown happens (Taylor, Groleau, Heaton & Van Every, 2007). Therefore I paid particular attention to the places in my texts (interview statements and notes from participant observations) where communication seemed to break down. I was also inspired by the critical perspective stating that sedimented meanings, things people take for granted as "natural", should be questioned (see e.g. Hansen, 1993, Craig & Muller, 2007). The "truths" that people create together and consider normal can be filled with unequal power structures (i.e., the statement "women are carers" can mask the fact that men have the power). This perspective helped me question what I, as a researcher, take as natural, and to examine what participants take for granted by paying attention to the "smooth" moments where everyone seemed content. I explain further how I interpreted the material in Section 7.2.1. Below I go through the stages of my research process and the methods used.

7.2   Method

This PhD work formed part of a larger project being carried out by a multi-disciplinary group with experts in ecology, forest management planning, forest modeling, computer visualization, remote sensing, and environmental communication. This group's research goal was to develop a decision support for landowners planning forest management (SLU, 2006). My goals within this project concerned understanding conflicts and determining how communication could be improved. Hence I had my own goal within the research group, but I also worked with the group in organizing a workshop, creating a questionnaire, and producing reports (Eriksson *et. al*, 2010; Ångman & Nordström, 2010).

   To get an overview of the practical aspects and the views on conflict and conflict management in Swedish forestry, the research group and I conducted: A) A questionnaire survey, B) telephone interviews, and C) a workshop with forestry professionals. We then identified four cases involving conflict over forest management where I and another PhD student D) conducted semi-structured interviews with the actors involved. We identified another case with an ongoing discussion concerning the management of a forested area and I and a co-researcher E) planned and facilitated (participatory) meetings locally.

A) In the first step of the process, a questionnaire was sent to ecologists at the municipal authorities and the district directors of the SFA. Responses were received from 57 individuals (17% of the population). The low rate of response was at least partly due to a software problem. The questions included: To what extent do disagreements or conflicts concerning forest management occur in your district? Which kind of values were affected by the management, according to the actors involved in the conflict? To what extent do you agree with the statement "My impression is that the conflict was managed in a good way"?

The respondents stated that they knew of few conflicts concerning forest management, and that when conflicts occurred they most often concerned final fellings (also known as clear-felling) or thinning of forest (see results in report Ångman & Nordström, 2010). When asked about the values that were affected by forest management, the respondents most commonly mentioned the appearance of the landscape. Several of the respondents believed that the conflict they knew about had been managed in a good way, even if the different parties in the conflict had been dissatisfied with the final result.

B) I conducted telephone interviews, 15-45 minutes, with seven people who stated in the questionnaire that they were willing to take part in an interview. The interviews were open-ended and started with a question such as "Can you please tell me about a conflict that you are aware of or that you were involved in?" (see Ångman & Nordström, 2010).

From the interviews I learned that in urban forests, complaints are often raised about residues after logging (e.g. sticks and branches), deep tracks after machines, and damaged walking paths. Users of urban forests often have views on how the forest should be managed. The SSNC is sometimes involved in conflict situations, as an observer or as an active party. The opposing parties try to engage the SSNC in "their side" of the conflict. According to the interviewees, in some cases the SSNC has taken a more active role, trying to push the issue in the media and raising the question to national and principle level. Interviewees mentioned that there are internal problems with communication between different units within municipal authorities dealing with for example forest management and nature conservation. Bad communication between municipalities, CAB, and the SFA was also mentioned as a problem for conflict management. Some interviewees identified a clash of cultures between traditional forestry and the protagonists of conservation. A good example of conflict management cited was the use of notice boards to provide information about impending

forestry measures, such as final felling. Another example of good practice was to let different parties participate in an early stage of planning of forest management.

C) In the one-day workshop with forest managers we discussed the importance of individual character traits in a conflict situation. The importance of having good personal relationships with other parties was stressed. Both good and bad conflict management were said to originate from the status of the personal relationships. The forest managers stressed the need to be able to show other actors, in an understandable way, the consequences of forest management. They said that people educated within forestry often use a "jargon" that distances them from other actors.

The questionnaire, telephone interviews, and workshop were discussed with the research group and with a reference group with representatives from the SFA, municipalities, and forest companies. The goal was to find cases that were interesting and typical from the forestry professionals' point of view, as well as researchable from a communication aspect. The criteria chosen were thus affected by input from various scientific and practical perspectives (see Eriksson *et. al*, 2010) The criteria on which we based our selection of cases were:

- ➢ Concrete and local conflict
- ➢ More than two conflicting parties
- ➢ Active forest management
- ➢ Conflict acted out, in the sense that interviewees should not have to worry about affecting a current formal matter
- ➢ Documentation should be available
- ➢ Long-standing process
- ➢ The matter should not be unambiguous
- ➢ Public
- ➢ Can have principle/ideology aspect but has to be concrete
- ➢ The conflict should include different economies/industries (e.g. forestry sector) standing against each other
- ➢ Bad publicity is a risk for forest owners
- ➢ Should have a landscape perspective, e.g. the last forest in the area
- ➢ Not about establishment of natural reserve
- ➢ Could look at different forms of forest ownership.

D) Based on these criteria, four cases in different parts of Sweden were chosen. The different actors involved were identified based on information from the questionnaire and telephone interviews, as well as media reports and letting informants direct us to other actors involved (so-called snowball technique, see Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 114). Together with the other PhD student involved in the project, I performed interviews with 26 people involved in these four conflicts. Most of the interviews were performed individually (I did 16, the other student did 8 interviews), except for two where we were both present.

Each interview started with me contacting the person via telephone and arranging a meeting, at that person's choice of venue to make it convenient for them, most often that person's home. In this telephone conversation I explained the research goal and pointed out that the interview would be presented anonymously, so that the interviewees would not be inhibited from talking openly about the conflict. The interview questions were open-ended, e.g., What happened? How did you (and others) act? How did you react to their actions? Follow-up questions were asked for clarification purposes and to deepen the description of the issue and aspects of interest.

The interviewees were informed that nobody except from the researchers directly involved with the material would know their identity. They were provided with contact information for myself and the research group. Of the four conflict cases studied, I chose to present and analyze two in this thesis. The reason was that the two other cases were unambiguous and had conflicts only of a principle nature, e.g. one person that had insights into the case thought that it was an important case of a conflict between recreation/outdoor life and profit, but the actors involved agreed on what had happened and did not have any conflict.

E) One aim of overall research project was to look at conflict management in practice, where researchers could contribute constructive management advice. The research project and the reference group together discussed what criteria would be interesting in terms of geographical size of the forest, number and types of actors, initiator of management, and character of conflict. In the end it was difficult to find a case with an ongoing process. We were advised about the following case from a forest manager representing the research funding body.

Since this was an ongoing case of planning and public participation, we used a participatory action research approach. Action research deals with the practical concerns of people in problematic situations, while the situation is being studied by researchers, and the interventions made are informed by

theoretical considerations (O'Brien, 1998, Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4). Action research suited the study because it provided an opportunity to examine the process critically while at the same time making people meet in a constructive way. A basic part of the action research approach is the researcher's reflective process (King, Singh, Reddy & Freebairn, 2001). As a facilitator and researcher, I found a way to distance myself from the material by using the theoretical concept of *discursive closure* as a way of criticizing all voices, including my own, in the process. This analytical concept was something I found after the process was finished, it was not known to us as we were planning the process.

The planning of the process involved discussion between researchers (one of my supervisors and I) and the civil servants at the municipal authority. We researchers brought with us knowledge from theory and from having practiced facilitation earlier. The civil servants were accustomed to arranging meetings with the public and gave their perspective on what was important.

We conducted three meetings in the small town in question. We recorded the meetings and students took notes.

Between the meetings, my co-facilitator and I had contact with the person responsible for planning at the municipality and the forest manager. We let them know what our plans were, and we formulated invitations to the meetings together with them. We took notes during telephone conversations and saved e-mail correspondence.

7.2.1 Ethical considerations

Interviewing is a moral enterprise since the interaction affects the interviewees and the knowledge produced affects our understanding of the human condition (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 62). In this case I interviewed and studied individuals in their everyday situation of conflict and decision-making, and here I present my interpretations of their accounts. I know that I would probably protest about an outsider's interpretation of my own actions, and therefore I paid attention to the ethical issues of my research.

When I contacted potential interviewees I informed them about the purpose of the research project, told them that I wished to record the conversation, and stated that I would keep their names confidential. Via telephone or in the actual meeting, I gave them my contact information and informed them that they could contact me with any questions regarding the research project or the interview.

The reason for confidentiality was that I did not want them to worry about being recognized when discussing (possibly) sensitive issues regarding

conflict. I also see no point in revealing who said what, as I want to discover structures and patterns of interaction that might be generalized, rather than individual behavior.

However, concerns remain about how the interviewees will view themselves on reading the material. I tried to make it clear in the interpretations that these were made from a particular theoretical perspective that assumes something about humans and interaction *in general*, i.e., the interviewees were representatives of people in a forest conflict. I was not interested in psychological reasons for why a specific person acted in a specific way.

Concerning funding of the project and bias, the money for the research project in which I participated came from Stiftelsen Skogssällskapet, and their interest lay in creating a tool primarily for the benefit of forest owners. Thus there could be an ethical problem here – did I favor in any way the perspective of the forest owners? I do not think so, since I was aware of the source of the project money from the start and never accepted the object of working for "one" side of society. My goal was to understand what happened in the cases, and if improvements were to be suggested, these would be improvements in terms of communication that would "benefit" everybody involved. To ensure an "equal" treatment of the interview statements in the material, I used a firm theoretical perspective during analysis. By displaying this as transparently as possible to readers, they have the possibility to judge the quality of my interpretations.

7.2.2 Interpretation

The interpretation process started with my prior understanding of the situation, based on, among other things, experiences from a natural science education and my understanding of forestry in Sweden. Interviewees were identified on this basis and during the interviews my prior understanding changed. When looking at the transcribed material I moved from trying to understand details to seeing the text as a coherent narrative. This description of the process of interpretation is based in my understanding of hermeneutics, (Ödman, 1994) which describes the process of learning as a movement between understanding certain aspects of an event understanding the course of event in its totality, as a whole. Some things stood out in that they did not make sense. I searched for concepts that could guide my interpretation, those that made most sense to my questions to the text. I found concepts, such as Goffman's avoidance of embarrassment, which I used as a lens to interpret the material. In the way I chose concepts I was also guided by what I already knew about e.g., symbolic interaction. Thus

theories from certain disciplines may have been more available to me. I was also guided by the fact that I view communication as a feature that shapes reality. That means that I did not choose theories or concepts that depict communication as transmission of already formed world views. After my analysis, which was on a level in close contact with the empirical material, I tried to take a step back and look at the analysis as a whole. Did it seem plausible, did it help me understand more about decision-making in NRM and will the results be of any use in practice?

For the two first conflict case studies (Papers I and III), three criteria were used for identifying critical situations of relevance for interpretations: 1) When one or more of the actors involved in an interaction talked about the interaction as strange or problematic; 2) when interviewees reported that the intention of the behavior of others was difficult to decode/interpret; and 3) when interviewees reported they did not know how to behave in a situation. For the third, process case study, the criteria used for identifying critical situations were: 1) How did different actors take part in the discussions? 2) how did they express that they had heard from the other actors? and 3) did they comment on how the communication in the meeting functioned, i.e., did they use meta-communication?

I used the software ATLAS.ti to categorize statements from the transcribed material. The categories included: 1) Blaming other parties, 2) interpretation of other parties' actions, 3) financial arguments, and 4) arguments about biodiversity

I aimed to make the interpretations in the analysis part of Papers I–IV as transparent as possible by being descriptive in the methods section, and describing the use of theory clearly. In reflexive interpretation the elements of interpretation should be made apparent, to aid the researcher with awareness of problems with interpretation. Through increased awareness the risk of conveying "certified truths" or superior insights is avoided (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994, p. 324). If readers are given the underlying assumptions, criteria, observations, and interpretations, this provides the opportunity for them to make up their own minds about the role of embarrassment and discursive closure in conflict escalation. In interviews I observed people's interpretations about how they behaved in specific situations and their thoughts on how other people behaved. I am not claiming that I observed role confusion in action. In the case of the participant observation, we did not set out to search for discursive closures during the interaction, but this was something appearing from the material.

I discovered parallels between the descriptions of human behavior by theoreticians (E. Goffman and S. Deetz) and the behavior our interviewees

told us about and which we observed. This was the reason I chose to apply these theories to the material. I am not suggesting that Goffman's theory provides the one and only way of understanding the events from the conflict described in Paper I, or that the process described in Paper II can only be understood when using discursive closure as a theoretical lens. The interaction taking place in the cases can be explained in different ways, but the point is that each interpretation emphasizes different aspects and each is based on a different perspective. The value of an interpretation lies in the insight it gives, so that the reader's understanding of the phenomena has increased (Ödman, 1994, p. 102).

So how can one choose the most plausible interpretation? According to Ödman (1994): 1) The parts of the system of interpretation have to be internally logical; 2) the interpretations need to be connected to the object of study; and 3) the interpretations have to improve the reader's understanding of the phenomenon. Can the reader understand how conclusions were reached, or judge the quality of the interpretations based on the description given? These criteria were used to evaluate the increased understanding that the interpretation would give the reader and the researcher. I also added a fourth criterion, the usefulness of the insight from a practical perspective: 4) Does this insight provide any guidance when trying to act in relation to a natural resource conflict? Craig & Muller (2006, p. 72) express this from another perspective as "a combination of plausibility and interestingness constitute the presumptive practical relevance of a theory". I would like to say the same about the insights from my analysis – if they are plausible following Ödman's (1994) points 1–3, and interesting for the practical context, they can also be practically relevant. I would like to stress that the "practical context" does not necessarily have to mean working with conflict at a CAB or acting as a facilitator in a participatory process. It certainly includes the issues of those practitioners, but also the usefulness of the theory for me as a practitioner in research.

7.2.3   Rejected perspectives

Based on the fundamental research interest and the research questions that existed at the beginning of the research project, other perspectives, theories, and analyses than those used here were possible. Below I display some perspectives that came to my attention and that could have been used. However, since my basic epistemological standpoint was that I saw society and structures as created via communication, this led me to reject perspectives that I thought neglected the process perspective.

The PhD period provided opportunities to get comments on the ongoing work through seminars and papers. Reviewers provided advice on other theories that could suit my empirical material. There follows a description of the perspectives that I or others considered suitable for the material and analysis I wanted to make.

Frame theory and psychological theory

At a seminar, the concept of "frames" came up as a suggestion. In studies applying the theoretical concepts of frames to natural resource conflicts (e.g. Beland-Lindahl, 2008; Raitio, 2008), the different standpoints that various actors take are explained by their underlying world views, e.g., the actors' place-related frames are identified and the analysis shows how fundamentally conflicting place meanings divide the actors (Beland-Lindahl, 2008). From this perspective the culture and society in which people live greatly affect their conflict behavior. Frames are social constructs that affect behavior and conflict management strategies and frames are able to change through reflection (Raitio, 2008, p. 53). From this perspective I could have investigated the different actors' world views and the conflict behavior would have made sense when understanding the differences in perspectives.

One reviewer thought that environmental psychology would be a fruitful approach for understanding role conflict and embarrassment in NRM. While a frame perspective places great emphasis on the structural constraints of people's actions, environmental psychology focuses on inherent processes. Researchers in environmental psychology are interested in explaining and predicting people's behavior in environmental issues based on investigations of their attitudes and beliefs (see Payton, Fulton & Anderson, 2005; Vining & Merrick; 2007 Stern, 2008).

Frame theory could probably make sense of why different people with different backgrounds and world views acted as they did towards each other. A psychological perspective could also have explained action, but interpreted from the point of view of the inner motives of the individual. I chose not to use these perspectives because they do not focus on communication and hence do not open the way for change. The problem with frame theory is that even if the frames are supposed to be able to change through reflection, they still convey a long-term underlying position that makes them appear as constants, and individuals' options in terms of choice of action seem limited. Using a perspective where actors are divided into groups "locks" people into having certain perspectives. What these two perspectives have in common is the view of communication as a result of

processes, rather than being the process. I believe that the process of communication creates all the other visions of reality and hence I decided to focus on communication instead of the outcome of communication.

Gender

In a gender course I worked with the material from one of my cases from a gender perspective. Stereotypical gender labeling such as "hysterical housewives" provided an interesting insight into how the actions and initiatives of women in particular are judged, and the material provided indications of such judgments. However, stereotypical gender labels seemed to be one of the attributes (others being environmentalist, money-maker, company guy) given by the actors in order to blame and belittle others. My interest was in understanding why it was important to disparage other parties in a process of conflict.

Identity

In the interview material there was a category of statements by interviewees praising their own behavior and criticizing that of others, i.e., the interviewees rationalized their own behavior. This was a sign of how the different actors created their identities through their communication with me (see Alvesson, 2003). This was interesting because the way they constructed their identity (as self-promoting) could have parallels to how they acted in the conflict.

The concept of identity revealed itself as theoretically problematic. It has been used in numerous studies with different underlying meanings. Previous studies have used the concept on a scale from identity as a base for action, as a group phenomenon, as the core, the "self" of an individual, or as a product of interaction (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Identity in everyday language suggests something stable and long-term, while in taxonomical categories (age, sex, woman) it is also locked (stable), whereas the common social-constructivist view is that identity is fluent and ever-changing. An identity is something an individual has, a condition, and it is confusing that this condition is so dependent on the context, is contradictory and has many variations (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). From a semantic point of view, identity means stability over time, so it is confusing when the continuous construction of identity is constantly demonstrated (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

When studying the concept of "identity", one piece of advice I kept in mind was to work with identity, but try to be clear about which aspects of identity I found interesting (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), those which human beings need for recognition, and the subsequent need for impression management. The description of identity as ever-changing and developing matched my view of communication as constitutive for human action and development.

7.2.4   Self-critical reflection

One early morning in March 2005, standing in the middle of a wetland sampling the newly melted water, it hit me: I wasn't very interested in how many milligrams of nitrogen the water contained. I was working on my Master's thesis, studying how efficiently a wetland could immobilize nitrogen and phosphorus. Throughout my high school and university education, I believed that natural science was the only right way to address environmental "problems". While I still felt that it was important to avoid eutrophication of lakes and seas, I felt uncertain about my role in the work for a better environment. My contribution was at the end of a long process of pollution, finding facts about consequences, and describing this in a scientific paper. It is important work to catalogue the impacts of human activities, but I felt that I wanted to be part of addressing the issues before the problem occurred. I realized that this is probably best done by working with people. Later my perspective changed, from wanting to inform people about how to behave better to starting to question myself about the "problem" as such. Who decided that it was a problem, and how do people decide when and how to act in a natural resource issue?

Two things are important to mention with regard to my research process and the topics that interested me. I have a natural science background, and I conduct research at a life sciences university very much based in the natural science tradition, but I do this in a department of social sciences. These two facts have probably induced my interest in the positivistic world view and the communication conditions for natural resource mangers educated in natural science. I have myself found that natural science is not sufficient to understand why the world looks like it does.

The larger research project of which this PhD work forms part is entitled "Conflict management in multiple-use forests" and was funded by "Stiftelsen Skogssällskapet" (the Forestry Society Foundation) under the call "Conflict land". Skogssällskapet is a forest management company which

manages forests for private landowners, companies, and municipalities. This means that the interest from the perspective of the forest owners, to create smoother, cost-effective processes, has influenced the research project. I tried to stay critical of the perspective of the forest owners in my material and to look at the conflict and NRM issues from different perspectives and for the good of society as a whole. However, I have concluded that the beginning of the project, when I was choosing interviewees, was biased towards forestry cooperations and forest authorities, with less attention to environmental NGOs and the general public.

Taking the approach of social construction to the research process meant that I viewed the interviews with actors involved in conflicts as something co-constructed. That meant in turn that I could not visit e.g. a forest owner and "collect" information about what actually happened in the conflict (Kvale, 1997, p. 12). If I had done so, I would have to have focused heavily on perfecting my interview technique in order to obtain the "truth" and such a focus on methods can actually become an obstacle to understanding (Ödman, 1994, p. 23). Instead I accepted that the forest owner and I would construct the story of what happened together. If I had asked another researcher to perform the interviews, she would probably have obtained slightly different answers from the interviewees. An interview can be empowering, like therapy, or threatening (Alvesson, 2003). I sensed both of those emotions in interviewees. Another issue to be aware of is that it is natural for human beings to use moral storytelling (Alvesson, 2003) to make their own role in a chain of events morally defensible and comprehensible for themselves. However, these aspects did not make the information gained less valuable. They only meant that I, as a researcher, have to be aware of what kind of claims to truth I can make from this material. I may not have obtained information about exactly what happened in a conflict scenario, but I gained information about what different actors believed to be important to point out and reflect upon. As the interviewer, I was very much involved in the sense-making process.

The normative part of my methodology comes from the fact that I believe that a more qualitative deliberative approach to NRM would foster democracy, empowerment, and actually produce more sustainable outcomes from an environmental perspective. This view has the consequence that I tend to be critical of perspectives that perceive public participation in an instrumental sense.

And the language issue

When communication, foremost through verbal communication, is considered an important part of how knowledge is created, it must have some implications for my understanding that I chose to write this thesis in English. Writing in Swedish would have meant having access to my native language, with all the understanding of nuances that entails. However, most of the research to which I wanted to contribute is in English, I wanted to reach a wider audience than the Swedish, and my possibilities for future collaborations and research were more numerous with writing in English. Therefore I am satisfied with my choice of English, even though I am very curious about how it limited or directed my understanding of the theories I used.

8 Description of the three cases

The three cases that I worked with exist as about 25 hours of recordings and many pages of transcribed material. This meant that it was difficult to display all the information I had and still provide a concise and interesting case. Below I try to display as much information as possible to make sense of the cases. The goal is for the reader to be able to assess whether the interpretations I made in Papers I–IV are valid, based on the information I had in my empirical material.

8.1 Case 1

> I want to keep the blueberry forest and the birds, especially the cuckoo
> (Comment found on petition).

The quote above was an addition to a signature on the petition "I am against final felling of Well-known Forest". The people interviewed for this case study were: The forest owner, two representatives of the "Save Our Forest" action group, a representative of the logging/harvesting company, an employee at the SFA, a representative of the SSNC and a civil servant at the municipal authority.

The area in question is situated some 20 kilometers outside a city, and interviewees mentioned the fact that the area is expanding. Many of the summer cottages have become full-time residences.

In the beginning of the year, a landowner notified the SFA that he planned to log three areas of forest, some 15 hectares in all. A major harvesting company was contracted to do the felling. The SFA raised no objections to the plans. Forest owners are obliged to report to the SFA any final fellings larger than 0.5 ha, at the latest six weeks before the final felling is initiated. Biological diversity, cultural heritage, and social values must be

preserved, but the consequences of this preservation must not be so far-reaching that they make ongoing forestry activities significantly more difficult.

In spring of the same year, a woman living close to one of the forested areas saw a man from the harvesting company in the forest marking trees and when she asked what he was doing, he explained that the area was up for clear-cutting. According to the woman he said "Well, yes, it's all coming down!"

The woman explained in the interview how desperate she felt after this exchange. The closeness to nature and forest is one of the reasons why she left the city and moved to the countryside. She walked her dog in the forest each day and her children used it as their playground. She immediately contacted one of her neighbors because she felt an urge to do something about this. The two women contacted other neighbors that might be interested in getting involved. They contacted the SFA, the CAB, and the municipal authority to learn about forestry regulations and clear-cuttings. They also contacted Greenpeace, SEPA, and the SSNC.

The municipal authority subscribes to reports about clear-cuttings from the SFA. The authority can then keep track of what is happening in the area and can compare their own plans and inventories with the planned clear-cutting. They can then contact and discuss with the landowner if they think that is necessary. In this case, the municipality had not noticed the report about the final felling and became aware of it only when one of the local residents called and asked for information.

After having received information from different authorities, the neighbors reached the conclusion that the only thing that could stop the planned final felling of the forest was if a "key biotope" existed in the area. They also noted the concept of "urban forest" and wondered about the rules attached to calling a forest "urban". The neighbors started the protest group "Save Our Forest", encouraged by a report written by the municipality after an inventory, which mentioned the variation in the forest, with wetlands, trees of different ages, and swamps that are uncommon for the area.

The "Save Our Forest" group produced a petition for local residents to sign, with the information: "Stop the felling of Well-known Forest". The petition was placed at the local store and received about 150 signatures.

The forest owner reported in interview how a friend called on him one night to tell him that there was a public petition against the final felling of his forest. He described how this shocked and hurt him. He had often talked to the members of the protest group when he met them in the forest walking their dogs. The forest owner did not understand why they did not

discuss their worries with him instead of putting out petitions at the store. He felt he could have explained his point of view to them. He described himself as a reasonable and listening man, but claimed that he had not been treated as such.

The two representatives of the protest group that I interviewed explained that they did not contact the forest owner because they had the feeling it would not be possible to discuss the issue with him, he would only twist it, but another reason was also that he was "so nice". Other reasons, or background, they gave for their action were second-hand information claiming that he has managed a previous land sale badly, that a forest manager they knew said that the planned felling was a way for the forest owner to get "fast money", and that they had walked in a young forest owned by the forest owner which they thought was "a disgrace to walk in and look at".

The forest owner then wrote a letter to the municipality. He pointed out the fact that the forest mentioned as Well-known Forest in the petition was a 100 ha hiking area that he did not own. His forest had a different name and was much smaller. He also pointed out that there would be a lot of area left for walking after his small logging. The forest-owner wrote: "the rude, mendacious and defamatory judgment they have made about me without knowledge about, and without bothering to inform themselves about, the actual circumstances concerning this property is absurd. […]". From the point of view of the forest owner, the case was fairly straight-forward. He owned the forest, the forest was aged and ready to harvest, and the price of timber in that year rendered the forest suitable for logging.

The environmental coordinator at the municipality decided to arrange a meeting in the forest scheduled for clear-cutting. Those present were the forest owner and representatives from the protest group, the municipality, the SFA, the Landowners' Association, the SSNC, and the harvesting company, 13 people in all. The SFA recorded the minutes of the meeting and resulting in half a page describing how and when the clear-cutting was planned to take place, and what areas/individual trees could be saved.

Before the meeting, the representatives from the SFA and the municipality discussed some issues and decided that if the media were present, they would refuse to take part in the meeting. In the correspondence on the issue, one of those active in the protest group had used an e-mail address showing that she worked at a major television company. One of the interviewees saw the use of that e-mail address as an underlying threat.

The representative from the harvesting company described the protest group as being well-informed and "tough" during the meeting. During the meeting, one person from the protest group did the talking, while the other watched and wrote down "every word". "I got the feeling that anything I said could be used against me", explained the representative from the harvesting company.

When I conducted my interviews, I got the feeling that all parties felt relatively satisfied with the meeting. The protest group felt it had been heard. The forest owner stayed in the background and let the Landowners' Association represent him. The forest owner explained that he attended the meeting due to his good will, since he was in no way required to do so. During the discussions in the meeting, the forest owner agreed to save specific trees and "screens" of trees. The representative from the harvesting company noted in interview that the forest owner acted very generously in this regard. However, the SFA and the SSNC told me that these parts of the forest would have been saved anyway, due to the normal regulations on "considerate logging".

Not long after the meeting, the protest group sent a request to the CAB asking them to postpone the clear-cutting while awaiting an inventory for nature reserve establishment. The group claimed that the meeting in the forest did not achieve anything. In the letter, the group referred to the inventory that the municipality had made in the area and to biologists saying the forest could be developed into a future key biotope. They also mentioned the historical relics in the forests and the rich outdoor life. The CAB responded that they had treated the case as an application for establishment of a nature reserve and had denied the application since the areas did not have the high nature values needed to fulfill CAB demands for forest reserve status.

A month later, a letter from the protest group to the municipality ended with:

> I have to say that we have had a very good collaboration with the County Administration Board, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Forest Agency, but we haven't heard a word from the municipality. How far do you want us to go? Is the next step to bring the media to you and demand an answer to our requests, answers that we have received from all other instances?

In the autumn the forest was felled. The protest group was angry after the clear-cut, because they believed that the agreements made at the meeting had not been fulfilled, they felt deceived. One member of "Save Our

Forest" described in interview the despair and powerlessness she experienced when one afternoon she saw the trees she had marked for saving being cut down. She ran out into the forest and approached the machine driver, making him very uneasy.

The active persons in the protest group spent a lot of time on their activities, and they felt that this had cost more than it was worth. At the same time, they are sure that the sections of trees that are still standing are there because of them and that without their engagement the logged area would look even worse. The forest owner and his family still feel very bad, find it difficult to meet other villagers in the local store and wonder what people think of them.

The representatives of the SFA and the municipality visited the area after the felling. The SFA was satisfied with the logging and claimed that the landowner had saved far more than the law demanded of him.

8.2 Case 2

> And emotionally so to speak, when you are doing, I mean this consumes a lot of energy. When you go through this insecurity on how to deal with and judge, am I acting in a correct way? You always have to do that, consider whether you are acting the right way. And this is a real energy thief. (Regional head of Forest Company)

Those interviewed for this case were: Two employees at the forest company, four villagers, whereof one was the initiator of the protests against the felling of forest, a representative of the SFA, and a member of the youth organization of SSNC.

In this case a 10 ha area of forest owned by a forest company was being used by the inhabitants of a small village. The forested area was located close to the village and was therefore easily accessible and used for skiing, hiking, and fishing. The forest company decided to harvest the forest, and the plans reached the village. A few villagers started to collect signatures from the surrounding households, demanding that the forest be left for recreation. They also contacted a member of the SSNC, who made an inventory of the nature values in the area, and found potential for development of nature values.

One representative of the village contacted the forest company and described the nature values, as well as the importance of the forest for

recreation. At a meeting in the village, the discussion concerned the enlargement of some zones that were already protected from felling.

Representatives of the SFA, the forest company, and the village had a meeting in the forest. The forest company stated that the meeting was about details of the management, such as saving specific stands of trees. Minutes were recorded by the forest company.

Before signing the minutes, the villagers added views they had on management that they thought should be included. They also demanded another meeting. They claimed that since the meeting had been a consultation meeting, all their views would have to be added to the minutes. They also claimed that the company could not decide when a consultation process is finished, but that this must be agreed on together. They claimed that a consultation meeting means that all views can be expressed and recorded. The forest company did not want to sign the minutes after items that were not discussed at the meeting had been added.

The regional head of the forest company described the process as an "energy thief" because he all the time has to consider whether he was taking the right decisions. He also describes the anger he felt when the villagers did not accept the meeting in the forest as a "consultation" meeting. He felt like he wanted to fell the trees immediately.

The most active member against the felling told how the villagers had video-recorded every marked tree. They also took care to record everything at the meeting with the forest company; "we have this recorded if anyone thinks we are lying". The villager felt sure that forest companies only do a minimum of effort for recreational and biodiversity benefits.

At this point one of the villagers had investigated the standards of the FSC, under which the forest company was certified, and found a paragraph referring to the social values of the forest, and the need for public participatory meetings in the event of disagreements.

The interactions thus centered around this paragraph in the FSC standards and, more specifically, the acceptance of a specific point in the protocol, and were conducted via e-mail. The forest company held discussions with the FSC auditor, who contacted the Swedish FSC about the rules concerning participatory meetings. Finally, the forest company let the FSC assess their meeting and it was judged as being of a participatory nature. The forest was eventually felled.

The regional head of the forest company commented on the fact that the company chose not to discuss the user right of the forest owner with the villagers. The environmental co-ordinator at the forest company commented on how the company should have handled issue of the forest felling:

In retrospect we find out, many [villagers] didn't even know where the [running] path was, and which forest there was conflict about. So we think, from our side, we should have had some more…more dialogue and…a meeting where we could have met more people, to hear what they are saying

8.3   Case 3

But you want to keep the forest!
(Municipal planning officer, 2009)

The quote above originates from one of the public meetings that were studied for this case. In the meetings recorded, participants included: Two facilitators from the university (of which I was one), a planner from the municipal authority, the environmental coordinator from the municipal authority, a boss from the municipal authority, students taking notes, the forest manager employed by the municipality, and citizens from the area.

The municipal authority in a Swedish town was planning a clear-cutting of a forested area for a subsequent housing development. Through a forestry research project we were asked if we could help facilitate a discussion between the municipality (*byggnadsförvaltningen*) and the public concerning the plans. Our contact was the manager of the forests belonging to the municipality, and the environmental coordinator at the municipality. The author and another communication scholar acted as facilitators.

Fifteen years previously a forest in the same area had been logged. The logging created great involvement from the local community. Citizens protested, used local media, and made inventories of the forest flora and fauna. The forest was eventually logged. Now, a forested area next to this area had come to the fore in the municipality's plans for housing development. A political decision had been made that the municipality would grow in the next ten years and that new housing would be needed for new citizens. The area in question had been in the municipality's cursory development plans since the 1920s. The people responsible at the municipality suspected that the inhabitants in this area would become very engaged in the possible development.

From the perspective of the authority the reasons why we, as facilitators, were allowed to plan a process were: 1) The suspicion that there would be a conflict, as had occurred fifteen years previously and, connected to that: 2)

The obligatory participatory process the municipality has in all development cases is usually not very successful – people have become angry at the meetings and tend to appeal decisions, so that they become very delayed; and 3) the municipality had a new political directive stating they should work for more public involvement and local democracy.

We sought to design meetings where the participants could have their say about the plans, where they could be informed about the plans of the municipality and where they could listen to each other and question each other's ideas in a respectful way. The planning was based theoretically on a deliberative model, with inspiration from collaborative planning with the aim of creating a platform for dialogue, opening the way for listening and exploration of each other's views.

The first meeting took place at the municipal building, with eight representatives from the municipality, three researchers/facilitators, and two representatives of the forest management team. This meeting (3 hrs) was recorded. The first public meeting took place in a school and 60 members of the community attended. Two students took notes and the meeting (2 hrs) was recorded. The second public meeting took place in the same school and 50 members of the community attended. Three students took notes and the meeting (2 hrs) was recorded. Before the second public meeting, the forest manager took the interested members of the community on a walk through the forest, explaining the forest management team's view on the forest, and answering questions. The students took part in this walk and took notes.

Between the meetings, my co-facilitator and I had contact with the person responsible for planning at the municipality and the forest manager. We let them know what our plans were, and we formulated invitations to the meetings together with them. We took notes during telephone conversations and we saved e-mail correspondence.

A map of the area was placed on each table, which had room for 5-7 people. The instructions were for citizens to point to areas they used, or felt a connection to, and explain which of their needs these specific or general areas fulfilled. The exercise with the map was intended to get the participants to start thinking about what they thought important in connection with the area. One of the facilitators presented all the views raised on a board visible to all. The participants explained that they wanted forest, the feeling of forest, forest for meditation, forest for dog walking and for school children. One person suggested that houses could be built on the nearby fields instead of the forest. The representative of the planning committee was then given the floor to comment on the views of the participants. After that, she explained the committee's plans for the area.

After her explanation, the floor was given to the citizens to comment on the plans. The comments were negative, and suggestions are also given for other areas that would be better suited for exploitation. The representative of the planning committee explained the choices made by the municipal authority. At the evaluation at the end of the meeting, the facilitator asked what the participants thought of the meeting. One citizen replied: "If you do not take our views into consideration, this meeting was just for show".

Between the two public meetings, the planner prepared three plans for the area that she had constructed after listening to the views of the participants in the previous meeting. The planner had also visited the forest with the forest manger and she learnt a lot from this visit, which had an impact on her new alternative plans. The participants commented and re-designed the plans. A recurring comment was that the citizens wanted green strips between the old area of housing and the new one; they did not want new plots right next to their houses.

The participants were happy with the meeting and they would have liked more meetings. The planner at the municipality was also happy with the meetings and thought they fostered better relationships with the community. At the point of writing the development plan was accepted by the building authority, after having gone through the mandatory process of consultation with the public. The visible input from the citizens, according to the planner at the authority, was that walking paths would be preserved and that the "feeling of forest" that the citizens claimed to be important had been achieved.

9 Concepts to guide interpretation

The two theoretical concepts I used to guide my interpretation of the empirical material are the concepts of embarrassment and impression management, and the concept of discursive closure. Below I explain the concepts and exemplify how I think these concepts can develop the understanding of conflicts and participation in NRM.

9.1 Embarrassment and impression management

In Section 5 I explained my view on social construction and communication. I chose to use a perspective of symbolic interaction for my empirical material. The focus of symbolic interaction on interpretation and dependence of interaction of social interaction led me to the work of Erving Goffman through his most famous book called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman has contributed to sociology with micro-level studies of human behavior and identity creation, and there are many suggestions on how he should be understood (e.g. Schwalbe, 1993; Chriss, 1995; Manning, 2000; Waksler, 2006;). The different concepts he coined have inspired interpretations of many different aspects of society. To name a few: Goffman's concepts of *presentation of self* and *impression management* have been treated in investigations of construction of meaning in naming of lipsticks (Merskin, 2007), identity creation through obituaries (Bosu, 2007) and identity creation among school department leaders (Schmidt, 2000). Goffman's concept of life as a theatre has been used in descriptions of *dramaturgical performance* in US election campaigns (Brown, 2005) and in organizational change (McCormick, 2007). Another well-known example is Goffman's concept of *frames as interpretive perspectives* (Goffman, 1974), used

for example for explaining environmental world views (Brewster & Bell, 2009) and drunk-driving (Gonzales, 1993).

Goffman's early work focused on embarrassment as a central aspect of human experience (Schudson, 1984). Applying a scientific focus to embarrassment, shame, and emotions is unusual within the social sciences. While Charles Cooley, Sigmund Freud, and Norbert Elias pointed out the importance of investigating the emotional part of human interaction, this area of study has been neglected (Schudson, 1984; Heath, 1988; Scheff, 2003). Interestingly, one cause of this negligence could be that it is shameful and embarrassing to discuss and research shame and embarrassment (Scheff, 2003). Emotions have been studied within psychology, and in this discipline emotion is theorized as occurring in an interpersonal process with the focus on the individual, independent of social and communal aspects (Rimé, 2009). In Goffman's version, emotions occur when people interact with others, or see themselves as objects. According to Darwin, blushing is a distinctively human manifestation that has its origins in the ability to see oneself from the point of view of others (Schudson, 1984). According to Scheff (2003) Charles Cooley, in 1922, proposes something equivalent when saying that shame arises from seeing oneself negatively from the point of view of others.

The concept of "embarrassment" as such can have different meanings in different languages, e.g., it has counterparts in other languages that denote something slightly different or sometimes does not exist at all (Wierzbicka, 2009). According to Wierzbicka (2009), the solution to making texts about emotions universal is to explain the emotions by other concepts such as "know", "think", "want", and "body", i.e., not taking for granted that everyone interprets the word in the same manner. In Goffman's explanation (1967, p. 97), "embarrassment" denotes fumbling, blushing, stuttering, quavering speech, sweating, tremors, absentmindedness, and incoherence of the expressed idea. There are also subjective symptoms such as feeling of wobbliness, consciousness of strained and unnatural gestures, and dryness of the mouth (Goffman, 1967, p. 97).

Goffman (1967, pp 97-148) explains how becoming embarrassed is a sign of low status, connected with defeat, and because of this it is disturbing to encounter. People's performance in a meeting is dependent on other people, foremost through their internalized ability to see themselves from the outside. People have to identify with the other person, and that means that they also see themselves from the other person's point of view. This ability to see oneself from another person's perspective can result in individuals seeing themselves in a less flattering light. Embarrassment arises when

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something happens which questions the identity projected by a participant (Goffman, 1959, p. 209).

9.1.1 The anticipation of embarrassment as a social driving force

Goffman (1959) explored the process of role-taking and how it influences human behavior, and established the conceptual model of impression management. This model suggests that actors in a communication situation will try to influence how others interpret and experience the situation. When entering a communication situation an individual wishes to be perceived and accepted as a particular person. Participants sense what sort of conduct is appropriate for the particular situation and have expectations about the kind of actions that will take place, and about what others expect from them. Individuals are expected to behave in a manner that fits the situation; they have implicitly and intersubjectively agreed upon a common appropriate behavior (Goffman 1967, p. 105). Consider people who enter a room organized for the defense of an academic thesis. The room, the expectations, the previous experiences, the clothing worn, and the number of professors attending all work to create an atmosphere that demands a specific behavior from the actors. During the following interaction something might happen, something said or done, that threatens an actor's particular presentation of self, an identity that was adjusted for this particular situation. For the individual, a role conflict occurs when a particular interaction creates a confrontation between the presented self and the self expected from the social situation (Goffman,1959, p. 242; 1967, p. 106). When something happens and questions the identity people have presented, they become embarrassed. Going back to the academic example used above, professors attend the event in their professional role as competent scholars. If someone in the audience addresses one of the professors on a personal note, or says something that reveals the professor to be an incompetent scholar, their role has been confronted with a role not suitable to the situation, and embarrassment may ensue.

Embarrassment is not only felt by the person whose identity has been threatened (Goffman, 1967, p. 108). All participants in a social encounter may feel embarrassment for the two people who are arguing or for the encounter as a whole. If the person who becomes embarrassed is a representative of some group, members of that group are likely to feel embarrassed too. As Goffman (1967, p. 99) puts it "in these matters ego boundaries seem especially weak", and people usually work to avoid putting others in embarrassing positions. In addition, people will often pretend not

to notice that a person is ashamed or has grounds for being ashamed (Goffman, 1967). The social effect of this fear of embarrassment is that people try to avoid doing or saying something that can cause these embarrassing moments. They become busy with keeping themselves from committing acts that might not fit the common agreement, keeping others from doing so, and smoothing things over when this happens. All participants are responsible for reconstructing the situation and getting the interaction back on track (Goffman, 1967, p. 106).

As I explained in Section 5.3 regarding symbolic interactionism, society is constructed based on the fact that individuals have the ability to put themselves in the roles of others and to see themselves from the outside. This means that we have the capability to judge beforehand situations that may become embarrassing and act to avoid them. In this sense it is not the embarrassment as such that is the driving force of socialization, but rather *anticipated* embarrassment. Embarrassment in itself does not occur very often, but the anticipation and avoidance of it do: "For Goffman's actors, social interaction, if not a vale of embarrassment, is a slippery slope because of the constant anticipation of the possibility of embarrassment or even more painful variants" (Scheff, 2005).

Goffman has been criticized (Eriksson, 2007, p. 46) for portraying people in a negative manner, as scared and evasive (see Philips & Smith, 2004 for a study on incivility and avoidance). As much as Goffman's people are afraid of embarrassment for the sake of protecting their "selves", I believe the origin of that feeling is that they want to be recognized and accepted in the role they have presented. This is something that is important to consider when studying or working with improving the relations between people, people need to be accepted to feel comfortable.

The individuals in Goffman's theories have been viewed in different ways; as completely governed by situational forces or as having a free will and mind that are more or less manipulative (Berg, 2003; Manning, 2000). The former portrays an individual who is completely governed by the interaction order and the situation, only able to do what structural protocol dictates, honoring the selves projected by others. The latter focuses on "impression management" and the individual who projects a self can be perceived as making a deliberative choice to represent and even misrepresent herself in a specific manner, and thus be "deceptive". Even though Goffman himself claimed to be a structuralist (Lofland, 1984; Scheff, 2005), his individuals can certainly be understood as being both able to make their own decisions *and* at times captives of interaction rules.

I think it is a merit to Goffman that his work is interpreted in opposing ways. The description of humans as being focused on impression management *as well as* getting trapped in the structures of social convention is anchored in reality, and fits with a perspective of symbolic interaction. Think about an individual involved in a forest conflict: She can come to a meeting with a clear view of the impression she wants to make and the views she want to put forward. Then, in the face-to-face meeting, something in the atmosphere and the actions of the other people makes her angry and she behaves in an unplanned way, a way that she later regrets upon reflection. The view of Goffman's individuals used in this thesis is in accordance with Johansson (1999). In Johansson's (1999, p. 82) reading of Goffman, it is necessary for the individual to create a distance to the self presented in order to gain self-understanding. However, sometimes this distance to the self presented is lost and the person is completely absorbed by the role that is being acted out during impression management. Johansson claims that people can *to a certain extent* choose whether to put on a certain mask or role. The rules that govern people's interactions are a strong cogent power, but they can to a limited degree maneuver within the rules and present themselves in a way that makes others accept their identity claims.

According to this theory, the origins of mistrust in the empirical description in the conflict in Case 1, Section 8.1, depend on avoidance of role conflict. The people that were unhappy with the plans for forest management in Case 1 did not discuss this issue with the forest owner. Instead, they chose to create a petition. The forest owner in his turn responded by finding collaborators and writing angry letters to the authorities. The development of the conflict seemed destructive. The avoidance of face-to-face meetings was due to the fact that the different individuals already had different roles, as friendly neighbor, acquaintance, and local farmer. The conflict meant that the actors had to present themselves in other roles, or be treated as playing other roles, such as exploiter, activist, or simply trouble-maker. The individuals understood that this change in roles would cause embarrassing situations and chose to avoid them altogether.

A part of what it means to manage embarrassment has been omitted in this case, namely the possibility for individuals to voluntarily put themselves in potentially embarrassing situations (Schudson, 1984). People all put themselves in situations where they risk losing face and become embarrassed. However, it is also most people's common understanding that situations that challenge their fear are often those where they actually learn something and develop, but that aspect is not treated here.

During my work with the thesis, different (Swedish and American) reviewers of the texts suggested that fear of embarrassment is a problem in the conflicts studied precisely because they took place in Sweden. Swedish people are believed to be consensus-oriented and afraid of conflict. I do not know whether those reviewers meant that blushing, feeling inferior, or trembling in the presence of others is not embarrassing in certain cultures, or whether these aspects of social situations do not exist in certain other cultures. For my part, I think there is a cultural difference, in that different cultures find different things embarrassing. From the international groups of students I have met during teaching, I have learned certain things you should not say or do in a Chinese setting, others not in a Pakistan setting. Some cultures or situations may prefer lively or argumentative encounters, and these are the equivalent of the Swedish consensus-oriented style because they are the standard in their specific context. In this thesis I assumed that the knowledge creation as described in symbolic interactionism is universal, i.e., that the way people learn things through studying others is the same all over the world.

9.2 Discursive closure

The other concept I worked with in addition to avoidance of embarrassment when analyzing my empirical material was that of "discursive closure". I consider the search for recognition a social driving force in Goffman's style; people want to avoid embarrassing moments and co-operate to create smooth meetings. I found that Deetz (1992) provides a way to scrutinize, on micro-level, what happens with decision-making, and the quality of the environmental decisions, when human beings are keen to avoid conflict. I chose to work with discursive closure because it can be used to analyze decision-making from a process-related and relational perspective. What is it in a public meeting that makes people take the decisions they take? The literature instructs us that facts such as the power of dominating actors (Martin, 2007), the artifacts in the room (Coreen, Thompson, Canestraro, & Bodor, 2006), the education of the stakeholders (Senecah, 2004), and previous experiences (Walker, Cass, Burningham, & Barnett, 2010) affect the decision-making. I was interested in finding out how these aspects, which can be said to be part of the structure, affect decision-making.

The work by Stanley Deetz (1992) on corporate colonization and democracy has become a seminal piece in the field of organizational communication. Within organization and managerial studies, a number of

scholars have examined discursive closures and structural conditions, for example within organizations (Kersten, 2000; Leonardi & Jackson, 2003), workforces (Bergstrom & Knights, 2006), cultures (Harter *et al.*, 2005; Heath, 2007), and interpersonally (Mumby & Putnam, 1992).

Deetz's work is based in a critical tradition (e.g. Hansen, 1993, Craig & Muller, 2007) which challenges the rational validity and assumptions of authority, tradition, conventions, and the objectivity of science. Deetz (1992) stresses that democracy is about a society's practices in reaching decisions, in the day-to-day processes of forming views and actions rather than the process of selecting politicians. Democracy should not be viewed as a right to express self-interests, but rather as a form of social relations that aims both at individualization and the collective good. Deetz (1992, p. 71) wants to find ways to enable useful responses to society's dilemmas and wants to see a stronger everyday democracy where participants have the task of investigating and understanding the power and the processes of decision-making that affect them. Influenced by both Habermas and Foucault Deetz states that norms based in communication and democracy do not define the direction in which we should develop, but provide a means to promote conflict and discussion, and this meaningful change could take place in everyday micropractices (Deetz, 1992, p. 4).

The concept of discursive closure is based in Habermas' (1987) notion of the ideal speech situation. Habermas's theory of communicative action describes how participants in an "ideal speech situation" have equal opportunity to challenge the validity of each other's statements and together develop their arguments through communicative rationality. In this ideal situation there is no other power than the force of the better argument. With every utterance, people make claims that what they say is true, that certain norms are correct, and that they reproduce their subjective experience truthfully (Månsson, 2003). Other participants in the conversation can question these claims and in this way test the validity of the statements. Reaching understanding (*Verständigung*) means that the participants have agreed on the validity of the claims (Habermas, 1987 Part 2:120). When people discuss with each other they can question each other's validity claims, and in this way develop their argumentation, through "communicative rationality". When two people come to an understanding, it means that they have agreed on validity claims (Outhwaite, 1996).

Whenever any of the conditions of the ideal speech situation is not met, understanding is prevented and communication is distorted. Systematic distortion is confusion between actions oriented to reaching understanding (communicative action) and actions oriented to success (strategic action).

Communicative rationality is something different from "instrumental rationality", which has a final aim that is determined in advance and controlled by specific interests (Elling, 2004). The problem modern society according to Habermas is that an increasing number of areas tend to be guided by instrumental rationality where actions is coordinated not via understanding, but through "steering media" such as money and power (Månsson, 2003).

When people know they are acting strategically they are morally reprehensible but in systematically distorted communication the individual is self-deceived, which is also within the definition of the process of hegemony. People believe they are engaging in communicative action but are actually engaged in a concealed strategic action, concealed even from themselves. While the term "systematic distortion" usually characterizes an entire communicative system, "discursive closure" usually refers to the suppression of a particular conflict (Thackaberry, 2004). This concept provides a micro-focus on communication processes while showing how discourse allows disqualification of certain groups or how certain discourses are privileged over others. The closures described as quiet, repetitive micropractices, which function to maintain a normalized, conflict-free experience.

Deetz (1992, pp. 189-198) identified eight discursive ways in which conflict and opposing views can be suppressed. Disqualification (1) is the process by which individuals are excluded. Claims of expertise and non-expertise can help disqualifying certain views. In naturalization (2), one view of the subject matter is frozen as the way the thing is. Naturalization stops discussion at precisely the place where it should be started. Neutralization (3) of language means that one system of valuing is treated as the only one possible, this is seeing the world as it "really" is. Claims of objectivity will hide activities and values. In topical avoidance (4), some subjects are avoided. The interaction must be structured around this issue. In subjectification of experience (5), when meaning is personalized, differences of opinion can be resolved only in power politics. Plausible deniability (6) involves ambiguous messages and deniability of messages, which are extremely effective means of control. Legitimation (7) occurs through the invocation of higher order explanatory services. By pacification (8), conflictual discussion is diverted by an apparently reasonable attempt to engage in it.

In my analysis of the empirical material I searched for indications of discursive closure in the actual statements made in a participatory process. Previous studies using the discursive closure concept have used the concept

on other levels, not using a micro-discourse approach as I have done, but a grand discourse approach (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) with the focus on the dominant language use in, for example, corporate culture or ideology. When certain discourses dominate or become institutionalized, other discourses and ways of being are made invisible, and this is seen as a discursive closure. For example, Kersten (2000) sees how the dominant discourse of the "diversity management" movement within organizations becomes an ideology that hides problematic areas in connection with the conception of "race" and prevents those issues from being discussed. Heath (2007) looked at how creative solutions are negotiated within meetings that she defined as discursive closures in themselves, since the mandated collaboration process was bureaucratic and had a focus on resources. Bergström & Knights (2006) provided an example of a micro-level discourse analysis of a process when they studied recruitment interviews, and showed how the candidates adapted to the way the interviewer framed the company. The interviews were framed as open and mutual discussions, but there was no space for the candidates to express any views except those fitting into the organizational discourse (Bergström & Knights, 2006).

According to the concepts of this theory, the conflict behavior that was described in the empirical description in Section 8 depends on the discussions about important issues being closed down in order to maintain a conflict-free atmosphere. When organizations such as the SFA refer to forestry experts instead of listening to the wishes of villagers, this is an example of the discursive closure called "disqualification", which means that people who are not professional experts in a particular area cannot possibly have a say, and are thus disqualified from having a view. When the forest company claimed that it was only a few loud and willful individuals in the village who complained about the logging, they were using "subjectification of experience", which is a discursive closure aimed at showing that their views were not representative, and not valid. The forest company claimed that it was saving a lot of extra trees for the sake of the villagers, while the village organization claimed that the consideration taken was just the normal consideration for nature that any logger has to do according to the law. Using discursive closure as a theoretical concept, the villagers in that case suspected the forest company of making the "pacification" closure, which means that the company appeared to listen and take different views into consideration, while continuing their work just as planned.

9.2.1 Discursive opening

In Paper II the concept of "discursive opening" is used. In distorted communication, a particular view of reality is maintained at the expense of equally plausible views. Deetz (1992, p. 4) explained that the solution to the problem of discursive closures is that such expressions should be examined for possible suppressions of alternative voices, as a part of an ongoing community development. Discursive practices can *either* lead to open formation by further exploration or divert, distort, or block the open development of understanding. "Open" communication refers to the ability of stakeholders to question established procedures, meanings, rights of participation, and even preferred ways of being (Deetz, 1992; Thackaberry, 2004). Therefore it is also important to search for moments of "discursive opening" that might lead to productive changes toward representing the interests of a variety of stakeholders (Thackaberry, 2004).

The concept of discursive opening has not been used as extensively as discursive closure (for a study where metaphors are seen as discursive openings see Dougherty & Herson, 2009). However, it has been developed in a study by Thackaberry (2004) that treats discursive closure on a micro-discursive level and focuses on the concept of discursive opening. Thackaberry uses the concept of discursive openings when describing an organizational self-study undertaken by the US Forest Service. Discursive openings are moments that are "markedly different" and where participants see an opportunity for a significant change and question knowledge and procedures, or provide alternatives (Thackaberry, 2004). For example, irony can be used, as it asks the listener to confront the contingency of language and its inability to completely capture the meaning of a particular discourse (Thackaberry, 1999). According to Thackaberry, the organizational self-study in itself was something different from the normal routine, as a markedly different kind of event. This could encourage participation organization members that normally have little influence. These new voices can then potentially shape new discourses in alterantive and creative ways (Thackaberry, 2004). That study focused on one opening, the suggestion from firefighters engaged in the self-study that they should "develop a safety culture that encourages people to think, rather than just obey rules" (Thackaberry, 2004). This was interpreted as an opening because the firefighters articulated a new vision for managing safety in firefighting operations. Thackaberry goes on to show how this discursive opening was closed down by the discursive closures subjectification of experience, pacification, naturalization, neutralization, and legitimation.

Discursive opening is not particularly well-defined in the literature. Should it be understood as any suggestions of alternative views or new ideas, or is it when substantial change has happened and new discourses are established? I think it is a problematic but interesting concept, since it leads the attention to the visions and new ideas that can come from participatory meetings, if they are managed in a way that supports creativity and visionary knowledge creation. As the concept of discursive closure is defined today, it hints at points in the course of events where sense-making takes turns and changes directions, and can give clues to what are accepted discourses. If the concept of discursive opening is to be used in its more transforming way, we need to look further for dialogic investigations of participants' views and, more importantly, try to create conditions for openings by creating an arena with a genuine potential for listening.

10 Summary of Papers I-IV

In this section I summarize the main points from Papers I-IV, which form the base of this thesis.

10.1 Managing impressions and forests: The importance of role confusion in the co-creation of a natural resource conflict

Paper I built on the theoretical framework of symbolic interaction and explored how Ervin Goffman's concept of avoidance of impression management and self-presentation during social interaction could contribute to the understanding of NRM conflicts. The empirical base for the study was a Swedish case concerning a conflict which occurred over the final felling of a forest (Case 1). Paper I describes the escalation of conflict, from a friendly relationship between landowner and neighbors, via petitions, letters, and the involvement of authorities to a final situation characterized by mistrust, disappointment, and bad relationships. The behavior of the actors cannot be explained by their interests in the forest, for example: The actors avoided meeting face-to-face, instead sending letters to the authorities or signing petitions. This behavior can be explained by the social driving force of avoidance of embarrassment. All human beings are dependent on recognition from other persons, and present a role to others that they want them to honor. This role, or identity, is dependent on the specific circumstances of the situation, i.e., people have different roles in different situations. When the identity or "self" presented by people is questioned, they can become embarrassed. In this paper the authors drew the conclusion that the actors avoided meeting face-to-face because they wanted to avoid embarrassment. The actors had previously presented themselves as nice neighbors, dog-owners, family providers, responsible landowner, etc. In the conflict situation they anticipated being treated in face-to-face meetings as

trouble-makers, activists, and exploiters. The main point of Paper I was that when we assume that people's actions are most basically dependent on being accepted and avoiding embarrassment, we see a completely different picture than when we assume that people base their actions on their interests or attitudes. Having information about the initial interests and values of the actors involved in a NRM conflict is an important consideration, but it is not enough to provide guidance when designing/facilitating meetings aiming to create constructive communication. Rather, there must also be consideration regarding the need for participants to have their self-presentation confirmed, and to avoid anticipation of embarrassment within the NRM arena.

10.2 Was this just for show? Discursive closure and opening in a public participatory process

Paper II is set against the background that NRM public participation literature has identified, that public officials and organizations have the power to define problems, choose participants and in general are ill-equipped to deal with the complexity of NRM issues. The organizations that set up the mandatory process are framed as powerful and dominating. As the empirical material for this case provided recorded information on the discussions that went on in two participatory meetings, Paper II investigated whether a process owned by the municipal authority is indeed dominated by the organization, and *how* that domination is expressed. Critical communication theory, through Deetz's (1992) concept of discursive closure, provided a way to display how certain choices are privileged over others via the process of communication. By the usage of discursive closures, "discursive openings" such as interesting alternatives and alternative visions raised in meetings are not investigated further. Analysis of the empirical material showed that discursive closures were used during the meetings, foremost by experts from the municipal authority and the facilitators. Paper II discusses how these closures were used to maintain a conflict-free discussion, and how the conflicts that were suppressed were based in structural constraints. The participants had many different reasons for making closures.

In practical terms, the point of Paper I is that discursive closure can be used to identify moments in meetings where decisions are actually made, where suggestions are turned down or recognized.

10.3 The social character of conflict and knowledge management in two cases of forest conflict in Sweden

Paper III described social relations and their connection to conflict and knowledge management in conflict situations using the examples of two cases of conflict within local forest management in Sweden. The paper was set against the research literature claiming that public involvement in decision-making is intended to create an exchange of knowledge that will provide a more sustainable base for decision-making. A management process characterized by increased common knowledge would, according to theories of deliberative democracy, lead to participants taking better quality, more sustainable decisions regarding the environment.

The theoretical base of Paper III was that the outcome of NRM conflicts depends on the relationships between actors, and the analysis focused on the way the interviewees commented on the origins of conflict and on the behavior of other actors, and the way that knowledge about forest issues was treated. In the two cases, which concerned final fellings of forested areas, the actors involved expressed: 1) Emotional involvement; 2) a focus on one issue; 3) changing argumentation; 4) avoidance of face-to-face interaction; and 5) stereotypic blaming of the other side. The conclusion drawn from the categories found was that an opportunity for a constructive discussion about forest ownership, management, and user rights was lost because the actors were busy predicting the behavior of the other party, avoiding interaction, and fitting the actions of their adversary into stereotypic frames.

The conclusion drawn in Paper III has consequences for practice, since a focus on interests and knowledge about forestry can make forest managers overlook the importance of the relationships between people for the development of conflicts. An awareness of the importance of these patterns of social networks for creation of knowledge can help forest managers create better conflict management processes, where "better" in this context indicates a discussion where participants trust each other and can exchange knowledge.

10.4 What constitutes voice in a Swedish nature reserve establishment? The search for understanding, standing, and influence in a mandated consultation process

Paper IV looked at how people can make their voice heard in a consultation process and at what is needed in terms of access and standing to achieve influence.

The paper focused on how people in a mandatory consultation process can make their voices heard, and achieve influence. The starting point of the paper was that the CAB that is responsible for nature reserve establishment has a goal of creating transparent consultation processes where landowners can understand how decisions concerning land are taken. An exchange of letters between a landowner and a civil servant regarding the planned establishment of a nature reserve on private land showed how the responses from the civil servant caused the landowner to change arguments. The landowner first tried to achieve understanding for her point of view (that she did not want a nature reserve on her land) by narrating the emotional ties to the land. The response she received was bueraucratic, and she responded by changing her argumentation to a more rational, bureaucratic language. The interesting point from Paper IV was that the way the communication was managed by the civil servant affected the outcomes, i.e., the CAB was regarded as "it's like talking to a wall", creating low legitimacy for the authority. Even though the landowner had some actual influence in terms of being heard, this was overshadowed by the way she was treated. The aim of the CAB, to create a transparent process, failed, and the language which was not aimed at understanding hurt the legitimacy of the authority.

11 Discussion

Before the discussion I want to remind the reader of the overall aim of the thesis. This was to increase our understanding of how the way people communicate about a natural resource, such as a forested area, affects the process around, and the decisions taken about that natural resource.

I sought to achieve this aim by: 1) Making a study of the process of communication in NRM situations and; 2) exploring how the way communication was carried out and understood, affected the development of conflicts in NRM situations.

I investigated how individuals involved in two conflict cases and one participatory process interpreted conflict, participation, and the actions of other people, and how this process of interpretation was connected to the way they acted. The results of the study are summarized below in connection with the two aims, and discussed in detail in the following sections.

1) The study of the way actors communicated showed that this occurred via letters, in meetings in the forests, that they avoided face-to-face meetings, that they seemed not to discuss forest issues, they used intimidation strategies, they categorized others in a negative manner, and used discursive closures. This behavior was explained via:

2) The concepts of discursive closure and avoidance of embarrassment. The discursive closures were signs that the actors were suppressing uncomfortable views and argumentation. The reason why these arguments were uncomfortable was explained by the avoidance of embarrassment theory. The avoidance of embarrassment theory also explained why actors avoided meeting face-to-face and used intimidation strategies; an insecure situation made them scared of role-confusion.

The deliberative ideal stated that the quality of the decision regarding our common environment depends on we are able to create processes where we

can exchange knowledge and learn from each other. In this thesis I drew the conclusion that certain aspects of the way people communicate with each other, e.g., the avoidance of face-to-face interaction and avoidance of listening and discussing difficult issues further, have negative impacts on listening and learning and knowledge exchange.

The term NRM was used in this thesis to stress the "management" part of environmental problems; how people should treat nature is decided by them, through their discussions with others. By talking to each other, people create the norms that guide their behavior. Using symbolic interactionism, I make the point that through reflection on the way we manage natural resources, we can change that management to become more constructive. A conscious focus on the aspects of embarrassment and discursive closure can create better, safer discussions that can contribute to more sustainable environmental decision-making.

11.1 The contribution of closure and avoidance of embarrassment to the understanding of conflict

The main conclusion presented in this section is that conflicts escalate because of the phenomenon of "avoidance of embarrassment". A consequence in NRM practice of the occurrence of "avoidance of embarrassment" is that people sometimes close down uncomfortable paths of argumentation to avoid the possibility of being embarrassed. As for the concept of embarrassment, this is framed (by Erving Goffman) as the driving force of social interaction. People's search for recognition, or avoidance of embarrassment, will have consequences for social situations involving discussions and decision-making.

Following the definition of conflict as a decrease in the trust to the communicative situation (Hallgren, 2003, described in Section 6.2.2) the actors (in Papers I and III) lost trust in their ability to make themselves understood to other parties, and hence they chose to act strategically via the media and other channels, rather than discussing with other individuals. But why did they lose trust in the first place, what stopped them from investigating other people's views further? Why choose the relation constituted by conflict, rather than the one where forest management can be investigated? The answer is to be found in the avoidance of embarrassment theory. If people expect that another party in a discussion will not understand the role they present, they will avoid that situation because they do not wish to be embarrassed. That is why they choose other paths of

making themselves heard rather than actually engaging in a dialogue aimed at mutual understanding.

An insecure situation, characterized by anticipated embarrassment, can influence the possibility to express views and emotions regarding the management situation, and instead create more insecurity and conflict. The meeting in the forest (see Paper I) did not have any particular process rules or stated aim. I claim that an insecure situation where people do not know what to expect causes people to rely on impression management. Via impression management, participants in Paper I focused on presenting themselves as a scary and cunning action group. With this focus on impression management, it was not possible to listen carefully to the views of the other parties, and the other parties felt uncomfortable with the roles projected by the action group.

The concept of discursive closure provides a way of empirically seeing how communication is distorted. By certain discursive moves, actors can avoid discussing important issues (important from the perspective that it is better for the common knowledge pool to listen to, and scrutinize, many different points of view). What the concept of avoidance of embarrassment adds to this understanding is that it explains *why* the closures that one person makes are accepted by other participants. In the definition of discursive closure, Deetz explains how closure is a way to maintain a conflict-free process. But why would participants in a participatory process need a conflict-free process? The answer, according to this thesis, is because people cannot face the group with a presentation of themselves including arguments that may cause role conflict and embarrassment.

In the conflicts investigated, the individual interpretations of how others might think and plan to act involved conceptions of the others as malevolent counterparts (see Papers I and III). Simmel (1955) stressed that opposition or conflict may be an important part of a relationship between people, and conflict can be the function which actually constitutes a relationship. In this sense conflict as such (as relationship) may become more important for different opposing parties than the topic under discussion, for example the forest, may ever be.

11.2 The suppression of conflict and deliberative decision-making

From the analyses in Papers I-IV, an important message is that things do not always go noticeably wrong, in an open way, which might include open accusations, anger, and threats. A conflict with such traits may in a sense be easier to handle, as at least people recognize it. In the understanding of the cases using discursive closure and embarrassment, people are so sensitive, due to anticipation of embarrassment, to their own feelings and limitations and those of others that they move skillfully around the delicate issues, with the help of discursive closure. Participants might even be quite happy with a participatory process (see the case in Paper II), even though analysis showed that discursive closures had been used throughout the process to keep it smooth and conflict-free. However, the fact that individuals are happy with a process does not ensure the quality of the process. If participants do not get to hear each other's views and knowledge, then they do not achieve a stronger foundation on which to base their decision, and better quality NRM cannot be achieved.

As explained in Paper II, the people who make discursive closures probably have good reason to do so. There are different expectations on, for example, a civil servant as being responsible to a department for acting as a "good planner", being responsible to the authority for acting "democratically", while at the same time being a nice, listening person in a meeting. This can make different role presentations collide, and the possibility of role confusion causes discursive closures.

In the cases studied here, discussion about what concerned the citizens with regard to NRM seemed not to be prioritized. During the interviews the actors provided, to me, several different arguments for and against forest felling. According to the empirical material I had access to, these arguments were not investigated: Individuals did not take the chance to express their views, to listen carefully to others or to reflect upon what would be the range of alternative solutions for the common good.

The cases showed how people were allowed in different ways to express their views (meetings were arranged) and to some extent have an influence (e.g., make landowners come to meetings, save stands of trees, make the municipality consider leaving green areas, or get their views recorded in consultation notes). However, a common feature in descriptions (Papers I-IV) was that participants' arguments were not questioned on the claims they made, they did not have to debate and morally defend them, the focus of the actors was on how they affected the other parties and on their self-presentation.

From a deliberative perspective, decisions would guarantee a better environmental status if citizens were truly involved in democratic processes. According to Habermas discourse ethics, the base for a democratic conversation is that people question the validity of each other's statements. The problem with avoidance of embarrassment and discursive closures is that they may prevent participants from raising arguments or from listening to each other's arguments, and questioning and investigating each other's statements. This means that the interesting facts that participants may know about their life situation and the material reality, the limited natural resource at hand, may never be raised. So can anything be done to change these apparently basic human ways of behaving?

Goffman's view of avoidance of embarrassment has been criticized as presenting a negative view of human behavior the "avoider" seems like an anxious person who does not want to take part of meetings (Eriksson, B, 2007, p. 46). According to Goffman's concept, people are occupied with how they look in the eyes of others, and are dependent on recognition of their projected self. They want to communicate with other about the importance of a natural resource, but they also sense that the meeting could be problematic. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, people shape their knowledge about the world in relation to others, and therefore have been, and are, very dependent on them. This is not a negative perspective, but an opposition to individualistic theories on human behavior that in its implementation instigates a search for ways to influence human behavior in desired directions. It is important to stress that the consequence of the symbolic interactionist perspective is an active, reflecting person who determines very much what they think and do (Blumer, 1969, p. 62). In the next section I discuss the consequences of my perspective for practice.

11.3 Conclusions for practice

The conclusions drawn (Papers I–IV) on the importance of avoidance of embarrassment and the occurrence of closures are in line with the research claim that process managers should not only focus on the content of the meeting/conflict, but also, or first, on process (Glasl, 1999; Hallgren & Ljung, 2005; Black, Leighter & Gastil, 2009). "By developing some sensitivity to the nuances of interaction, public meeting leaders can act as facilitators who comment on the meeting processes and act in ways to shape the interactions to be more in line with the principles of public engagement" (Black, Leighter & Gastil, 2009,p. 155). Managers, planners,

and facilitators not only have to manage disagreements, but should also try to be sensitive to the comfortable discursive closures that hide disagreements.

Section 4 presented a cross-section of what different natural resource managers thought problematic in their daily work and life. The issues mentioned concerned disparities in power, difficulties with implementing "participation", and difficulties with getting other people to learn more about the issues managers believed to be important. My understanding is that natural resource managers need to know how to deal with relations and communication with other individuals. In every NRM situation, managers will encounter the obstacles of anticipated embarrassment, norms, and habits that make people want to avoid open confrontation and embarrassing situations and cause them to close down the factors that can cause uncomfortable situations.

An important finding from the "role confusion" perspective (Paper I) is that planners of participatory processes, meetings, etc. have to create safe arenas with clear rules and mandates where people feel comfortable with expressing perspectives, questioning perspectives, and changing perspectives and roles.

As mentioned in the beginning, the basic tenet for symbolic interactionism is that we all have the power to take a step back and reflect upon our previous actions, and plan for the future. The solution, according to Deetz (1992), is reflection, where the concealed strategic expressions are examined for possible suppressions of alternative voices. Hopefully an awareness of the things we as natural resource managers do every day to keep a comfortable environment can help us see where we are failing, where we are serving the interests of the institutions in power, and when we should choose the uncomfortable situation. All individuals are inherently attentive to their context, and will adapt to the situation and ensure that they fit into society. On the other hand, they also communicate with themselves when they make sense of a situation, and their own action. The existence of closures and avoidance of embarrassment need to be raised to a discursively conscious level, letting people notice, and reflect on, the basis of their decision-making. People may come to the conclusion that they want to do exactly as the municipality tell them to do, but at least it will be a conscious decision, open for criticism. Based on the concepts used in this thesis, I have developed a guide for reflection that natural resource managers can use for identifying and appraising relational aspects of practical NRM.

11.3.1 A guide for reflection

Participatory meetings, or any type of meeting occupied with environmental decision-making, should have clear time-frames and transparent rules regarding the meeting, and be clear about decision-making mandates (see for example Daniels & Walker, 2001). The foundation for my approach is that if participants have better information and a better understanding about the structure and object of the meetings, they can more easily accept the importance of listening and learning, i.e., change their roles. If the rules and structure of the meeting are unclear or difficult to follow, participants feel it is more important to stand their ground and to convince others of their perspective, this happened in the meeting in the forest, where the action group used a "scribe" to intimidate the other parties (see Paper I). In such a situation it is more difficult to change roles without becoming embarrassed.

The framework I propose was inspired by Agger's critical theory which states that the first step to free speech is to identify illegitimate power relations, the second step is to develop communicative competence, which would then result in the third step, which is the articulation of a new sensibility that would replace instrumental control with "humanistic productive relations grounded in dialogue free from repression" (Curry Jansen, 2007). Based on the results from this thesis and inspired by Agger, the first step of the guide for reflection is to use the concept of discursive closure as an analytical lens to discover the points where conflict is suppressed and whether a particular discourse is dominating the meeting. I see this guide for reflection in the hands of a person, a natural resource manager, who could be a facilitator, an invited stakeholder, a concerned citizen, or an "expert", interested in understanding more about the process she takes part in. In the list below, I outline steps that could assist in such reflection.

1. Use material from a process and search for discursive closures.
2. Reflect on the background of the closures from the perspective of avoidance of embarrassment. Could someone's role presentation be questioned if this argument is pursued further? Are different roles and expectations colliding?
3. What could be an alternative to these closures?
4. What can I take to the next meeting?

The discussion or material (notes, recordings, artifacts) that the meeting or process has produced would be the base to work from (1). This could ideally

be done in the beginning or middle of a process, but also afterwards, in order to learn for the next time. Closures are used to keep a conflict-free atmosphere, so those may be exactly the points to open up a more unsecure space for learning.

The second step would be a reflection with input from the perspective of avoidance of embarrassment and symbolic interaction. The manager can consider the background of expectations that cause participants to have different roles. Are different roles colliding here?

The third step would then be for the manager to go back to the particular discursive closures and reflect on their alternative meanings, and envision alternative scenarios. This would create an understanding of conflict behavior and an acceptance of changes in role expression. The increased understanding would allow for listening and learning and provide a better base, where more people have more knowledge, for taking decisions. This understanding could feed back (4) to the mandates and rules of the meeting, since natural resource managers would understand more, question more, and suggest changes in meeting structure.

This approach could be used by managers, such as facilitators or "owners" of a mandatory participatory process, to ensure the quality of the process, and to more or less include all participants. Ideally, all participants should be included in all these steps for maximum impact and learning, but I realize that the reality of many processes would cause facilitators to decrease their legitimacy if they started investigating power structures.

The guide based on the cases and theories in this thesis can help researchers, facilitators, and practitioners obtain new insights because it shows us how to uncover and reveal the process of closure, and thus create potential for openings. They can then understand why people avoid face-to-face meetings, see the kinds of arguments that are favored and identify, through discursive closure, the points where conflicts and potentially constructive discussions are closed down. If good, sustainable decisions are based on shared knowledge, there is a need to create spaces where this knowledge can be created. If practitioners reflect on this approach, they will hopefully dare to listen to others and thus learn more from each other. This will create a space where all have roles as "learners", who by definition do not know everything from the beginning, and can be open for new insights.

12 Future research

 In this section I describe two areas of future research: A systematic investigation of the occurrence of role confusion and avoidance of embarrassment; and analysis of the openings and possibilities of meetings and communication.

This thesis focused on understanding the events in conflict and decision-making from an interpretive perspective. The interpretive approach gave insights into how conflicts can be understood. Knowledge about how avoidance of embarrassment and role confusion are created and managed can provide a base for creating more sustainable spaces for decision-making. Based on these insights, future studies should be designed specifically to examine avoidance of anticipated role confusion and embarrassment. This would include observations of meetings between natural resource managers, the public, and interest groups. In such meetings, attention should be given to interactional sequences and meta-discursive statements in which actors:

➢ Demonstrate ambiguity or insecurity about the role they are playing and what is expected of them
➢ Defend the role they are playing; e.g., through explicitly pointing out their role or identity, responding defensively to suggestions of changes of communicative patterns, making their opinion more extreme, or repeating role-specific actions and statements.
➢ Suggest that other actors change communication patterns (e.g., tell a quiet person to share his or her views with the group)
➢ Avoid taking on a role and/or responsibility suggested by other actors
➢ Categorize and assign attributes to other agents e.g., "you landowners", "you tree huggers", "you unrealistic utopian", or categorization through circumlocution: "since I am a realist and pragmatist…", thus indicating the other is neither realistic nor pragmatic

➢ Use any of the eight discursive closures (disqualification, naturalization, neutralization, topical avoidance, subjectification of experience, plausible deniability, legitimation and pacification). The closures specify where conflict is being evaded and indicate avoidance of embarrassment.

This type of analysis can contribute to increased understanding of decision-making in NRM. A further aspect to pursue via interviews is how participants experienced the situation; this could put words to the feelings experienced, so the researcher is not limited to Goffman's definition of "embarrassment". A further aspect to develop would be to look at the structure of meeting situations. Expectations, experiences, and regulations affect people's prior understanding of a situation, and have consequences for a meeting. The next step in research in connection with avoidance of embarrassment could be to investigate whether structural constraints can be linked to specific uses of discursive closure and anticipation of role confusion.

The other interesting area for further research is *discursive openings*. "Openings" as they are described today are an underdeveloped concept, where it is difficult to understand what the difference is between just stating/defending an opinion and creating visions, activating change, and sharing knowledge. There are suggestions on how voice and listening should be defined (see Paper IV). One way of working with these concepts could be to trace ideas, statements, and feelings from participatory meetings to action, to see what kind of communication opens up new perspectives. For future research on openings, it would also be valid to develop a method for identifying situations where participants seem to accept changing roles and actually shift their characterization of individuals or groups. In which kind of institutional settings or arenas is this change of roles possible without fear of embarrassment? To develop the concepts of roles and avoidance, I think it is important to look further into the instances where people choose to go against fear and put themselves in situations where embarrassment is likely. I think we all have experience of deliberately putting ourselves in situations where embarrassment is likely to occur, and many of us can agree that these are usually situations where we learn something.

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