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Protecting forests' social values through partnerships

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential of public–private partnerships to contribute to the resolution of decision-making dilemmas concerning private goods that also provide public services. We focus on forests that deliver many ecosystem services and are important for biodiversity, which pose problems regarding the values that should be considered in their protection and exploitation. Conflicts between the interests and values concerned (or at least prioritization difficulties) will arise and their satisfactory resolution will require some kind of collaboration between governmental authorities and private forest owners. Thus, the Swedish Forest Agency has initiated a pilot project on a new form of such partnerships, Nature Conservation Agreements for social values, which are considered as a case study here. We use an adapted version of the Ladder of Partnership Activity, which includes theoretical constructs such as context, perceptions and motives, creation of collaborative advantages and the constitution of rules, to see if and how these partnerships can enhance an embedded governance system, by enabling the actors to address collective problems in a mutually satisfactory manner. Our results contribute knowledge on how the governance of forests can be designed, and the kinds of values that could be included to spur the implementation of partnerships.

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Introduction

The governance problem of managing a public and private good is well exemplified by the difficulties associated with protecting forests since forests provide economic, environmental and social values (i.e. different ecosystem services) for their owners as well as for the public at large. Both public and private forests are valued for recreation and tourism, water production (quantity) and quality, amenity values, wildlife and biodiversity as well as for traditional timber productions and other commercial exploitation (e.g. Butler and Leatherberry 2004; Cabbage et al. 2007). In countries that have a large proportion of private forest owners, the government needs to find ways to mobilize these owners in order to enhance and protect the diverse values of forests (Frank and Muller 2003; Wiersum et al. 2005; Mäntymaa et al. 2009; Raitio and Saarikoski 2012). In Sweden, privately owned forests are accessible to everyone due to *allmansrätten*: the right of public access (Sandström et al. 2011). Because of the relatively large proportion of privately owned forests – 330,000 non-industrial private forest (NIPF) owners hold 50% (11.5 million ha) of the forest in Sweden (SFA 2016) – the Swedish government has identified collaboration with NIPF owners as an essential element of forest protection policy (Swedish Gov. Bill 2008/09:214). Furthermore, the importance of protecting forests' social values is emphasized in several of the international and European conventions Sweden has signed, such as the European Landscape Convention (ELC 2004) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 1992). In addition, in recent years the Swedish government has acknowledged the need to

develop New Environmental Policy Instruments (NEPIs) and collaborative arrangements to govern public goods on private land (Glasbergen 2011; Jordan et al. 2013). One collaborative arrangement of particular interest in this context is a pilot project launched by the Swedish Forest Agency (SFA) to create public–private partnerships (PPPs) in the form of Nature Conservation Agreements (NCAs) with NIPF owners (Swedish Gov. Bill 2008/09:214; SEPA and SFA 2010).

NCAs were established in Sweden in 1993 as negotiated partnerships between governmental authorities and NIPF owners that were intended to formalize protection arrangements. Initially, they were implemented to protect forests with high environmental values, although the protected areas usually needed active forest management to preserve these values (SEPA and SFA 2010). The NCAs have proved to be rather inefficient means to meet environmental objectives (Swedish Gov. Bill 2008/09:214), but the SFA and Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) have still decided to increase and expand their usage. Since 2015, it has been possible for NIPF owners to implement NCAs for social values (SFA 2015), following a pilot project called the Komet program, launched by the government in 2010 to boost the limited interest in NCAs and increase interest in forest protection (Komet program 2014). However, forest stakeholders' perceptions of forests' social values vary widely, and more importantly, there is no consensus on how to describe forests' social values on a national policy level (Sténs et al. 2016).

The main purpose of NCAs for social values is to preserve and develop forests with high recreational values. The SFA's

message 9-2013 defines forests' social values as: "those values that are created through people's experiences of the forests" (SFA 2013, p. 6). One of the SFA's goals is to implement 20 NCAs for social values during the period 2015–2016, each signed by an NIPF owner and a regional SFA, County Administrative Board (CAB) or municipality (i.e. a PPP). They should provide voluntary protection of areas with high social values via a fixed term agreement (SFA 2014).

A partnership is defined in this study as: "a process in which actors from various sectors of society (state, market, and civil) restructure and build new social relationships to create a more sustainable management practice" (Glasbergen 2011, p. 1). The Swedish NCA partnership arrangement has been launched to increase areas of protected forests, and thus provides an interesting case to study, particularly since the government recently incorporated social values (i.e. regulating and cultural ecosystem services) in the protection scheme with the aim to engage more NIPF owners in formal forest protection (SFA 2014; Swedish Gov. Bill 2014/15:1).

This paper presents a novel approach since there is a research deficit regarding forests' social values in rural context (Bjärstig and Kvastegård 2016), as well on partnerships in a local rural context (cf. SFA 2014; Bjärstig and Sandström 2017). Previous studies on the development of environmental policy in Swedish forestry has primarily focused on market-driven international governance schemes for forest certification (Gulbrandsen 2005; Johansson and Lidestav 2011; Appelstrand 2012; Johansson 2013). This study focuses on partnership established within the formal protection framework, not the voluntary set asides within the framework of forest certification schemes.

The aim of this explorative study is to investigate the extent to which NCA partnerships potential to incorporate social values in forest protection is made possible by the Swedish government. Theoretically, we build primarily on Glasbergen's (2011) analytical framework the *Ladder of Partnership Activity* (see Figure 1, p. 5) as it facilitates the identification and examination of key phases and aspects of partnership development. We want to highlight the role of both societal and individual factors in the development of a specific partnership. Hence, we departure from an adapted version of the Ladder of Partnership Activity since it incorporates societal and individual factors, and explains partnerships' development in a step-wise manner (Glasbergen 2011).

We examine whether the NCA partnerships have the capacities required to change the political order in a manner that effectively contributes to the protection and sustainable management of forests in Sweden, in accordance with the above definition of partnerships. Our posed research questions are:

How do the involved actors perceive the new policy incentives regarding NCAs for social values, i.e. do the actors have a mutual understanding of the objectives?

What constraints and opportunities can be identified regarding the possibility of NCA partnerships to incorporate new values into the regulation of forest protection in Sweden?

The paper is structured as follows: the next section presents the materials and methods used in the study,

accompanied by an operationalization of the theoretical departure focusing on partnerships' requirements to create public–private regulations. The results are then presented, followed by an analytical discussion.

Materials and methods

Interviews

Our research builds upon data from three sets of sources. First, official documentation including reports, policy statements and strategy expressions from two government agencies, the SEPA and SFA, and two forest owners' associations, Södra Skogsägarna and Norra Skogsägarna. Second, 11 in-depth telephone interviews with one of the few NIPF owners who implemented an NCA for social values in 2015 and key officials at the SFA, the forest owners' associations and two municipalities (Umeå and Jönköping). Third, semi-structured telephone interviews with 57 NIPF owners in 6 counties (see Figure 1). All respondents are listed in Appendices 1 and 2.

The respondents from the SFA and forest owners' associations were identified from official documents. They have all been involved in initiatives linked to the identification, recognition, establishment, restoration and/or protection of forests' social values, and particularly the NCAs for social values pilot project. The respondents were selected to capture attitudes at multiple levels of governance. Since "NCAs for social values" is a pilot project with few participants in national terms, we



Figure 1. Map of Sweden showing the six counties included in the study (named and marked in gray).

sought to interview as many of them as possible and obtained a high level of representation.

In addition to the interviews with officials from the SFA, four officials from two municipalities (Umeå and Jönköping) were interviewed about their work related to the protection of forests social values. One of these officials worked as a strategist at Jönköping municipality's outdoor council, in which both responsible agencies and nonprofit organizations are represented. Furthermore, Jönköping municipality was chosen as a "best case" since it is one of the highest ranked municipalities in Sweden in terms of efforts to protect forest with high social values and promote outdoor activities (Mattisson and Eng 2015). Umeå municipality was selected since it has had acknowledged success in promoting outdoor activities (Krainer 2016), but does not work through an outdoor council. The two officials who worked for the forest owners' associations were interviewed because of their mediating role between NIPF owners and responsible agencies (Törnqvist 1995). We also considered it essential to interview NIPF owners who have signed an NCA for social values with the SFA, but unfortunately only one of the six that so far have sign an NCA was willing to take part in an interview. This owner had the forest estate in Småland, in the south of Sweden, while the others had their estates in Hälsingland (middle of Sweden) and Jämtland (north of Sweden).

NIPF owners from six forested counties (Västerbotten, Jämtland, Dalarna, Värmland, Kronoberg and Västra Götaland) were also interviewed. Since perceptions of forests' social values are assumed to be context dependent and place specific (Kangas et al. 2008; Bryan et al. 2010), both resident and non-resident NIPF owners were included. Previous studies have shown that NIPF owners' views on the social values of forests are influenced by various factors, including whether or not they live on their forest property, gender and age (Eriksson et al. 2013; Nordlund and Westin 2010). Thus, these socio-demographic characteristics guided our selection of respondents in efforts to ensure that the material was as representative as possible. The sample of NIPF owners was derived from *SkogsägarFörteckningen* (www.skogagare.se), a database of all NIPF owners in Sweden. In total, we contacted 105 NIPF owners and invited them to be interviewed at any convenient time (including evenings or weekends) in an attempt to maximize participation. A total number of 57 owners, distributed roughly equally among the 6 selected counties, agreed to participate. However, the 48 who declined were not evenly distributed among the counties (see Appendix 2 for an overview), nor among types of NIPF owners as higher proportions of non-residents and males agreed to participate than residents and females, respectively. The reasons given for declining interviews were primarily lack of time and age/sickness. The first pilot interview was face to face, all the others were by telephone, except for one with a respondent who had impaired hearing and thus answered the interview questions by e-mail. The interviews (both in-depth and semi-structured) lasted between 15 and 57 minutes and were all recorded with the permission of the participants and then transcribed in full. All participants in all of our interviews had the opportunity to read transcripts of their interviews and were given the choice to clarify, change and/or

alter what they said, to ensure validity for this study (Baxter and Eyles 1997). The transcripts were then read closely and all information pertaining to the respondents' perceptions of social values, policy instruments and their implementation was extracted from the texts manually. Specific quotes were identified that illustrated, clarified or confirmed the respondents' views on the possibilities for protection of forest with high recreational values. The original interview language was Swedish: all the presented excerpts of transcripts are our own translations.

The Ladder of Partnership Activity

In our analysis of the interviews, we departure from the partnership literature. By creating a platform for collaboration between public and private actors, partnerships have proposed capacity to promote both public goods and private interests (Bitzer 2010), justifying the Swedish government's decision to use a partnership approach to increase NIPF owners' interest in forest protection by incorporating social values. Following this, our study explores the degree to which the focal partnerships have the required capacity, using an adapted version of Glasbergen's (2011) Ladder of Partnership Activity framework (Figure 2). This has five "steps": (1) the contextual conditions preceding the partnership; (2) the motives and perceptions relating to trust-building; (3) the formation of the partnership, where collaborative advantages are identified; (4) the establishment of rules that guide implementation of the partnership; and (5) finally what Glasbergen (2011) defines as "changing the political order", the collaborative creation of permanent institutionalized regulations for resolving issues with public and private dimensions.

An adapted version of the Ladder of Partnership Activity is applied since it integrates the major perspectives identified in the partnership literature, and explains partnerships' development in a step-wise manner (Glasbergen 2011). However, initially Glasbergen's Ladder framework was designed to address global partnerships. Our study contributes to the field by modifying and applying it in a national context (cf. Bjärstig and Sandström 2017). We have modified the Ladder for the purposes of our study to include context as the first step, since the perceptions of forest protection is depending on context (Juttinen et al. 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to consider context before trust-building, in order to understand the identified partnership's development and limitations in specific areas. To make the Ladder's steps suitable for a national case study, it is also necessary to include a process-oriented approach (Collins and Ison 2009). We have therefore added the collaborative governance framework by Emerson et al. (2011) for studying partnering processes, which includes four basic process factors: discovery, definition, deliberation and determination.

Contextual conditions

Since a majority of the forest land in Sweden is owned by NIPF owners, the government needs to find ways to collaborate with these. Sweden has the right of public access to forests but there have been accusations of misuse of the right of public access. The conflicts are found to stem from

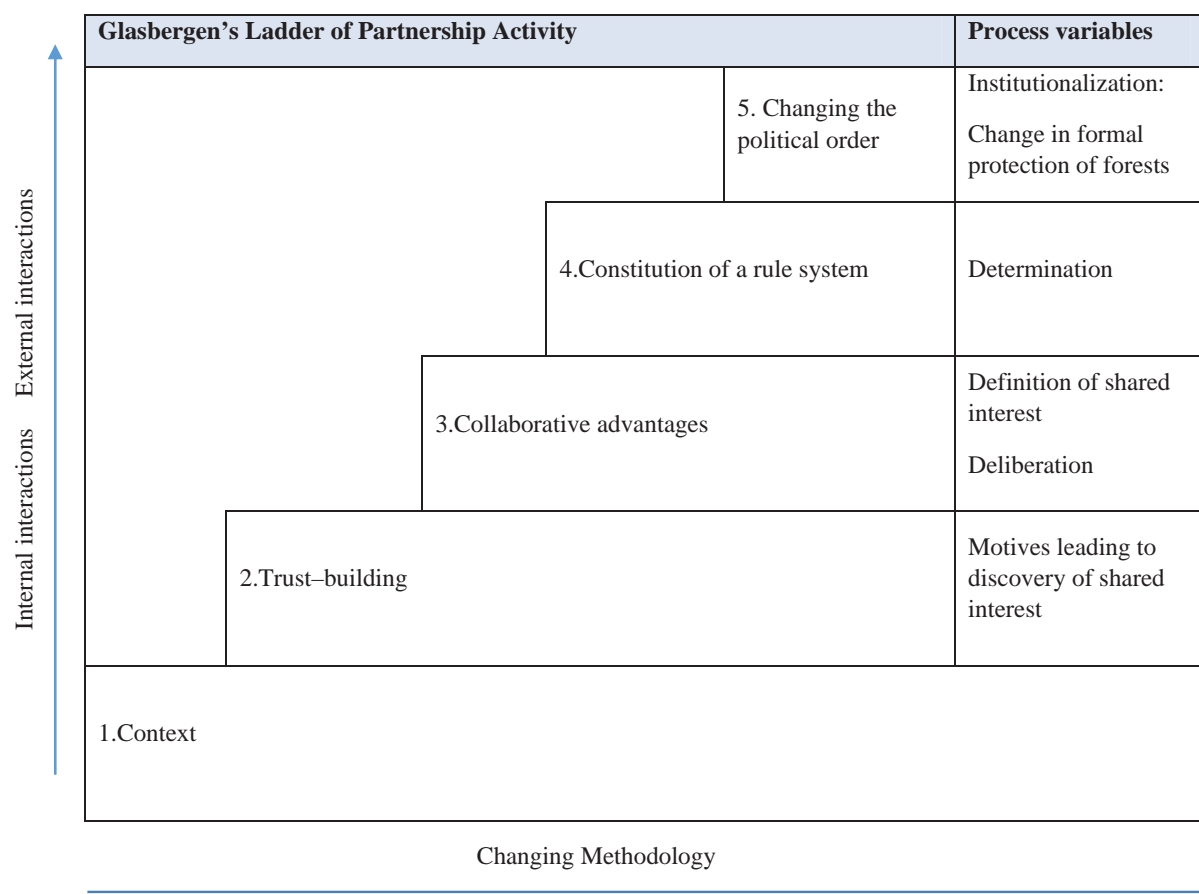


Figure 2. The five steps involved in the development of PPPs according to an adapted version of the Ladder of Partnership Activity (Emerson et al. 2011; Glasbergen 2011).

contradictory concepts concerning property and ideological differences in terms of whether forest resources should be regulated by government or governance (Sandström and Stens 2015). The advantage with implementing NCAs for social values is that the NIPF owner can voluntarily protect forest that has previously not been prioritized in the protection agenda, and are compensated for it. In order to understand the potential capacity of PPPs to influence the political order (and associated practices), it is essential to identify relevant national-level contextual factors that may influence their establishment and development. Such factors include the national policy for formal protection of forests and NCAs for social values initiative. In addition, individual officials' discretionary power – defined here as “the notion of choice and power within a structure of rules” (Cinque 2011, p. 604) – and differences among administrative units' interpretations of strategies and guidelines may contribute to variation in implementation (Widman 2015).

Trust-building

The second step in the Ladder concerns building trust as a basis for interaction between the actors (Glasbergen 2011). In this context, trust-building includes perceptions regarding the establishment of a partnership, and the degree to which actors have a mutual understanding of the objectives (Emerson et al. 2011; Glasbergen 2011). Examination of actors' motives can help efforts to understand perceptions

of policy incentives, which could provide policymakers information on requirements to develop effective relationships (Maier et al. 2014). Many NIPF owners perceive both monetary and non-monetary motives (i.e. some of the social aspects) as important (Primmer et al. 2014). Thus, including social motives (connected to the concepts of social sustainability, regulating and cultural ecosystem services) in combination with ecological and economic considerations can increase NIPF owners' interest in forest protection (Sherrouse et al. 2011).

The actors' motives will vary but the variation can be accommodated if the actors feel their opinions are represented, and they can discover a shared interest and develop mutual understanding of, and respect for, each other's perceptions of the objectives (Emerson et al. 2011). In conclusion, it is important to study the perceptions and motives of participants in a suggested NCA for social values to assess the degrees to which they have reconcilable goals and could formulate agreed ways to attain them.

The creation of collaborative advantages

The third step of the Ladder, the creation of collaborative advantages, concerns whether the formation of a partnership can match involved actors' motives. The actors need to promote their interests and find common ground for shared action to gain advantage (Glasbergen 2011). Collaborative advantages are operationalized through the process factors definition and deliberation, as defined by Emerson et al.

(2011). Definition of shared interests and tasks facilitates development of a deliberative process. An important precondition for deliberation is equity, which implies that every actor should have access to all relevant communications (Zachrisson 2009). Since this study focuses on a pilot project in an initial stage, it is not possible to identify all communications within the partnering process. Therefore, we mainly focus on how NIPF owners' motives are considered in the information disseminated in the campaign to publicize NCAs. However, it should be noted that Swedish NIPF owners perceive a lack of information regarding forests' social values (Björstig and Kvastegård 2016). In summary, formation of an effective, equitable partnership requires transparent distribution of information and grounding in collaborative advantages for the actors. In the focal case, the advantages for NIPF owners and officials may be economic incentives and improvement of forest protection, respectively. Therefore, different interests must be considered in the creation of collaborative advantages.

The constitution of a rule system

The fourth level of the Ladder concerns organizational aspects of institutionalization: the creation of a framework of regulations supporting the partnering processes and their outputs. The success of initial stages in the formation of a PPP depends on both reflection of the actors and their ability to develop a mutual relationship. The output (if successful) will be a contract through which the actors formally invest in each other (Glasbergen 2011). However, the content of the PPP, e.g. how it will be implemented, must be determined and the contract needs to clarify the rules (Emerson et al. 2011). A key factor for institutionalization includes the degree of mutual dependence among actors (Hardy et al. 2006; Austin and Seitani 2012). Leadership capacity and adequate funding from the government are also needed (Emerson et al. 2011). The Swedish government sets conditions for the pilot project NCAs for social values, and thus plays a major role in the allocation of resources, which will strongly affect both the partnering process per se and its outcomes (Glasbergen 2011).

To summarize, in this explorative study we assume that an NCA for social values' potential is influenced by: (1) policy strategies and the discretionary power of individual officials; (2) the perceptions and motives of NIPF owners, SFA officials, municipality officials and representatives of forest owners' associations; (3) the presence (and quality) of deliberative processes that enable exchange of information and (4) the establishment of rules with appropriate inputs from financial funding and leadership from the government.

Results

The results are presented in subsections based on the steps in the Ladder: context, perceptions and motives, the creation of collaborative advantages, the constitution of a rule system and finally the partnerships' potential for changing the political order, based on results pertaining to the other steps.

Context

Our examination of policy strategies' effects on the contextual factors setting NCA partnerships' potential to change the political order and promote public and private goods related to forest protection focused on SFA's strategy document "NCAs for social values". This document briefly presents the purpose of NCAs for social values, but its definitions of social values are rather broad and vague. This has created uncertainty for some of the officials regarding the categorization of social values. Officials' discretionary power has exacerbated this uncertainty, and spawned different interpretations of the policy document: "However, this work is strongly influenced by your own personality and views on social values. If you are interested, you will put more effort into it..." (SFA official, Östersund). The existing strategy document does not clarify how values should be prioritized, consequently forest officials' interpretations vary substantially.

Motives

We assumed that the actors' overall perceptions of forests and motives for protecting them would be related to their willingness to engage in this pilot project. The results indicate that the involved actors generally approve of enhancing social values. However, there are important differences between NIPF owners and the regional SFA's in this respect.

Overall, the NIPF owners living in rural areas tend to favor social values associated with their own privacy, perceiving their forests as their own retreats, where they, for instance, can go berry-picking without any disturbances. In contrast, since the SFA's strategy is oriented towards forests close to urban areas, officials are more inclined to regard such values in terms of citizens' access to forests where they can engage in various kinds of outdoor activities.

Three of the regional-level SFA officials suggested that rather than merely defining social values, local citizen's perceptions of particular forests must be considered. In this respect, the rural perspective needs to be more strongly highlighted, since large numbers of people visiting an area should not be the sole indicator of "high social values". Contrarily, some forests' social value lies in their provision of extremely high recreational values for a few visitors and/or NIPF owners, who regard them as their secret "forest pearls". Hence, the officials said that it was difficult to balance the multiple values and motives (which differ, *inter alia*, in urban and rural contexts). The findings show that both forest owners' associations and the responsible public agencies favor the protection of social values, but the forest owners' associations perceive problems associated with the word "protection", arguing that the social values are enhanced by active management. The participant from the northern forest owners' association was particularly adamant about the need to manage forests with social values: "... it is important that the forests [protected for social values] are managed well because otherwise it can be almost dangerous to visit them ... " (official, Norra Skogsägarna).

Several regional-level officials favored the extension of values that require protection implied by introduction of this arrangement. However, whether NCAs were the right instruments for this extension was questioned. Forest professionals, and more surprisingly the forest owners' associations, perceived NIPF owners as having a generally low level of knowledge regarding social values. One official from the SFA in Östersund argued that "traditional" NCAs are difficult to implement since most NIPF owners do not tend to be interested in this form of protection. NIPF owners want more compensation than they are offered in NCAs, thus they usually chose to set aside land as "woodland habitat", although this is a permanent arrangement. NCAs, in contrast to woodland habitats, are considered as "voluntary" but once established legally binding according to the "Jordabalken" (Legal Land Code) and defined as a form of formal protection by the SFA (Beland Lindahl 2008, p. 44). One official perceived NCAs for social values differently from "traditional" NCAs since: "... I think it is more legitimate [to use NCAs for social values] due to the type of values that you want to protect ..." (SFA official, Östersund). This refers to the perceived need for regular management of forests subject to NCAs in order to preserve their values (SEPA and SFA 2010), particularly social values, since they are often "managed forests" rather than forests with high biodiversity values.

Several of the NIPF owners admitted that their knowledge of social values was quite low, but they also perceived a lack of knowledge among other actors, such as forest entrepreneurs, municipality officials and forest owners' associations. Thus, the overall shortage of knowledge is considered a major obstacle to the protection of social values, and their prioritization, although the NIPF owners argue that the social values are important and integral elements of the value of their forest holdings. Of the 57 NIPF owners interviewed, 53 perceived their forests to have high social values, if not always for the public, at least for themselves. In addition, one NIPF owner explicitly stated: "I think there are many forest owners who are not really completely certain about the definition of the social values" (female, non-resident, Årjäng, Värmland). Drawing general conclusions about the nature of social values is not straightforward due to differences in perceptions among different groups of participants (notably NIPF owners in rural areas and the SFA officials). For instance, many NIPF owners have inherited their forests, have strong personal connection to them, and when they experience "their" forest it is often in remote areas and/or rarely visited places where they can be "alone" and feel privacy: "I would not like a lot of people to be running around there, I want it as my private place" (female, non-resident, Strömsund, Jämtland). The interviewed NIPF owner who had implemented an NCA for social values had not inherited the property, but still felt responsibility to manage the area harmoniously with previous owners' decisions to refrain from clear-felling the forest: "... it was not the social aspect that was my motive but it became the means to get this piece of forest land protected ..." (NIPF owner, Malmö).

None of the 57 interviewed NIPF owners had heard about the possibilities to draft and participate in NCAs for social values, but they generally favored the chance to enter

partnerships to protect forests' social values. When we informed them about the possibilities offered by an NCA for social value, 39 stated that it is a policy instrument they favor, provided (some added) there is sufficient compensation: "Yes it is good, but it should be voluntary, and compensation must be proportionate to the value of the timber, and the future value of the timber" (male, resident, Vilhelmina, Västerbotten). However, 15 of the NIPF owners were still undecided, or neither for nor against the NCAs, and 3 were explicitly antagonistic. Most of the NIPF owners (32) did not want to see any form of legislation regarding the social values, while 21 of them had no firm opinion about the desirability of legislation since they felt they lacked sufficient knowledge and information. Only four of the NIPF owners said they would like some kind of formal legislation to protect social values, rather than the use of NEPIs. Most of them perceived that "traditional" forest management to a great extent also enhances social values, by making their forests beautiful and accessible, especially if clear-felling is avoided (although some of them did not see a problem with clear-felling since it generates a lot of grazing for moose, thereby enhancing their hunting opportunities). Several NIPF owners highlighted the importance of actively managing the forest in this respect, a concrete example mentioned being the need to remote trees uprooted by stormfellings that could otherwise cause lethal accidents.

The municipality officials had varying perceptions of the use of NCAs, apparently reflecting variations in efforts to map social values and promote outdoor activities in their respective municipalities. In Jönköping, these efforts involve regular meetings in councils focused on forests' social values, while Umeå municipality has adopted a more individual approach. In Umeå municipality, it was suggested that social values are contested since suggestions from the SFA have implied: "an intense discussion between those who want to manage forests for timber ... and those who want to use forests more as recreational places ..." (nature conservation planner, Umeå municipality). Jönköping municipality perceived forests with high social values as those that are highly accessible for visitors, i.e. forests close to cities, urban areas and/or roads. Protecting social values in rural contexts can also be problematic, as noted by an official in Umeå municipality: "... it is the forest owners' perspective that is crucial; I own the land, I rule and I make the decisions ... it is not like you see some form of solidarity or social responsibility for the overall area ..." (nature conservation planner, Umeå municipality). This official considered NCAs too small to cover social values, as they need to be addressed at landscape scale.

The creation of collaborative advantages

We assumed that the partnering process needed to be based on identified collaborative advantages for the actors. However, the procedures that should be used to identify and map forests' social values were not clear to our interviewees. In work related to NCAs for social values, involved actors did not meet other stakeholders regularly in board meetings, although the interviewees stressed the importance

of ongoing dialogue with municipalities, CABs and other stakeholder groups. This discrepancy may arise from deficiencies in the strategy document in terms of clarifying how social values should be construed, which hinders the definition of shared interests. Neither are the NIPF owners' motives fully considered in the strategy. Although NCAs for social values aims to increase NIPF owners' interest for formal protection of forests, the strategy does not consider, for instance, NIPF owners living in rural areas and their perceptions.

The representatives of the forest owners' associations argued that citizens and nonprofit organizations need to be actively involved in the management of forests; otherwise, conflicts between the forest sector and these actors will continue. The official from Södra forest owners' association argued that although most people may not know what high biodiversity values are, everyone knows how to appreciate the social values they experience when visiting a forest. This official argued that these individual experiences need to be highlighted more strongly in the protection debate: "People need to know what we do in the forests" (official, Södra Skogsägarna).

NCAs for social values tend to engage not only NIPF owners and/or environmental organizations but also other people, as they are rooted in individuals' relationships with forest areas that they often visit. Including "new" actors may further complicate the definition of shared interests, as illustrated by feelings of residents of a small village near Östersund who wanted to protect a popular forest area threatened by clear-felling: "... we had an important area for this particular village, for which the inhabitants and people who had grown up there showed interest and suggested that they wanted to protect the area ..." (SFA official, Östersund). Together with the villagers, the official found the area suitable for implementing an NCA for social values because it had low biodiversity value, but high recreational value due to its location close to the village. A minor conflict arose in the village since the NIPF owner declined the regional SFA's offer to protect the area through an NCA. However, the NIPF owners regard the possibility to decline as crucial, which they contend must be a voluntary form of protection, as they should have the final say regarding the management and use of their own forests, partly because the right to public access according to several respondents already challenges their ownership rights. One of the NIPF owners expressed this concern as follows: "... one can say what you want about it, but allemansrätten [the right to public access] is a bit of a problem sometimes. Some [visitors] believe that they can do whatever they want under the protection of allemansrätten" (male, resident, Avesta, Dalarna). This finding shows that including social values can provide a platform for the participation of new actors, which is essential for a deliberative process to emerge.

Our interviews provide mixed indications of the optimal ways to disseminate information to as many NIPF owners as possible. The NIPF owners expressed a wish to receive more information and advice on social values, and suggested that the SFA should have the main responsibility for providing it, but the forest owners' associations should also play important

roles in distributing good examples of approaches to enhance social values. The SFA and its regional agencies emphasize their responsibility to inform NIPF owners, since the Forestry Act stipulates that the social values should be considered. Nevertheless, only 11 of the 57 interviewed NIPF owners said they had received some form of information from the SFA, and/or engaged in any dialogue with SFA officials, about their forests' social values. Thus, unsurprisingly, most of them wanted the SFA to become more pro-active and informative about social values: "I think they [the SFA] should be more active ..." (male, non-resident, Bräcke, Jämtland). The NIPF owner who had implemented an NCA for social values wanted to protect the area and thus contacted an SFA official, who then informed the owner about this opportunity.

The regional SFA has had organized "Forest Evenings" and invited NIPF owners to attend and learn about various issues, including forest protection. During one Forest Evening, one official had led the participants to an area protected under an NCA for social values. The invitees responded very positively to this experience according to the official. However, most of the officials at regional SFA have felt that more efforts to disseminate information were needed, particularly regarding the need for areas protected under NCAs to be actively managed by their NIPF owners.

In Jönköping municipality, active efforts are made to raise awareness of and promote forests' social values, as illustrated by the establishment of both an internal and external outdoor council, in which various potential actors are invited to collaborate and exchange information: "... we talk about outdoor activities and recreation, and efforts in general so that we are synchronized with each other, and aim for the same goals ..." (strategist, outdoor council, Jönköping municipality). Information is not exchanged through regular meetings of councils in Umeå municipality, but social values are raised in various interactions with individual stakeholders or in relation to strategic discussions regarding management of forests:

... it is not like we have a lot of joint consultations about NCAs, rather it is an issue between the SFA and the forest owner, who may have sent in a felling notification or asked for help to develop a Forestry plan (Nature conservation planner, Umeå municipality)

The representatives from the forest owners' associations expressed beliefs that lack of knowledge can be addressed by increasing amounts of targeted information. They regarded informing members, i.e. NIPF owners, as one of their associations' duties. Therefore, representatives of the northern forest owners' association have attended the Forest Evenings arranged by the regional SFA and CAB. They believed that their presence facilitated engagement of NIPF owners in formal protection since it is usually the agencies that "do all the talking", which is not necessarily helpful since they tend to focus too much on biodiversity aspects. The forest owners' associations are also involved in efforts to develop goals in the *National Forest Strategy for formal protection of forests* (SEPA and SFA 2005), which will be revised in 2017 and include a new communication model that will focus more on communication with NIPF

owners and citizens who do not own forests. This communication model will be a manifestation of a transformation from a production-oriented approach towards integration of other values in forest management.

In summary, since involved actors have not defined shared interests, it appears difficult for them to identify individual advantages in the project. In particular, NIPF owners' motives do not appear to have been considered or addressed in the strategy either document or information campaign. All of those involved in the efforts to protect forests' social values need to reflect more on ways to distribute information effectively, as the NIPF owners explicitly ask for more information and guidance on ways to enhance the social values of their forests.

The constitution of a rule system

In this final part of the results section, we consider the potential to institutionalize NCAs for social values. Support for these NCAs among the interviewed NIPF owners was generally high; they did not want to sign an NCA themselves, but most of them favored other NIPF owners doing so (especially those who have forests in urban areas or near villages). The NIPF owners wanted the SFA to take a leading role in this process and coordinate other actors when necessary, but as already mentioned the forest owners' associations were also identified as important arena for learning about social values, developing and disseminating related ideas, and coordinating associated activities.

Several of the interviewed officials expected the revised version of the *National Forest Strategy for formal protection of forests* (SEPA and SFA 2005), due to be completed in 2017, to emphasize social values more strongly and facilitate the governance of "new" values. One official stated that the directives developed for protecting social values must clarify whether areas should be prioritized from a national, regional or local perspective, and that ways to promote social values need further development: "... we could provide better incentives for forest owners, and promote these efforts more effectively if we considered every individual area" (SFA official, Östersund).

The representatives of the forest owners' associations argued that the public agencies had placed too high expectations on "traditional" NCAs, and expressed doubts about their potential value, suggesting that if NCAs are to have a more permanent impact within the forest sector they must change, and the compensation for NIPF owners' must be increased. In contrast to the regional SFA, the forest owners' associations preferred to discuss how forests with high social values should be managed rather than "merely" protected. This is also consistent with the NIPF owners' perceptions, since they (at least to some degree) see a potential to develop forests' social values in terms of "new" goods and services that can complement and/or replace traditional forestry. The northern forest owner association representative indicated that a more open discussion is needed regarding how public agencies prioritize values in practice, in order to understand how tensions between biodiversity and other values are manifested.

In accordance with the SFA, the forest owners' associations agreed that municipalities should be more active, but particularly questioned the capacity provided by the government in terms of funding. The NIPF owners also wished that the government and authorities (especially the SFA) would more proactively engage in matters regarding social values. Similarly, the officials at Jönköping municipality desired more involvement from the regional SFA: "... We have tried to contact the SFA and involve them more in our work but I have not been able to reach them even to start discussions ..." (strategist, outdoor council, Jönköping municipality). Through their external council, they attempted to raise consideration of social values to an administrative level via continuous dialogue between an "ambassadors group" and politicians: "It is about making politicians understand the necessity of social values ... as outlined in regulatory documents ..." (strategist, outdoor council, Jönköping municipality). However, Umeå municipality is less positive about the adoption of NCAs for social values: "I do not think that they are the right instruments ... because you tend to find social values in larger contexts ... and you want a landscape picture ..." (nature conservation planner, Umeå municipality).

Regarding the overall responsibility for collaborating on social values, the NIPF owners expressed mixed views. Some stated that it was the responsibility of all actors concerned, others that it was up to the single forest owner to handle, while some stressed the role of specific authorities, such as the SFA, municipalities and CAB:

... of course the municipality and SFA can invite [potential participants], but it is still the single forest owner's interest to engage, to be involved in this. That's what I mean; it's a need to change the forest owners' basic attitudes. (Female, resident, Strömsund, Jämtland)

According to the forest owners' associations, the government needs to improve funding and incentives to raise NIPF owners' interest. One such incentive, suggested by both the forest owners' associations' officials, is to expand NCAs to enable their implementation with some form of annual compensation. Such expansion would imply that the considered forest areas could no longer be managed solely for producing timber (or other forest products). Realization of such expansion would be dependent on annual financial compensation based on site quality class and prices of lost products. The municipalities could distribute the compensation. The forest owners' associations also wanted clearer political instruments to guide the protection of social values, and transformation of existing compensation models. They assumed that all this would require political changes that will need a long time to fully develop.

The lack of resources was also considered a hindrance by SFA officials since "we have so little funding for implementing this, it is a bit problematic since we have a lot of officials working to protect biological values, and they feel stressed ..." (SFA, Umeå). Although the same financial funding is distributed to the counties from the government, there may be regional differences, for instance, in the number of NIPF owners waiting for compensation. Most of the interviewed officials, particularly at regional levels, assumed that adoption

of this pilot project would raise prioritization dilemmas due to budgetary constraints. These officials' major priorities were to meet official biodiversity targets, and those at Umeå municipality felt they had a limited budget to spend on developing NCAs for social values in forest protection.

To conclude, since the NCAs for social values program is an ongoing pilot project, its requirements cannot yet be fully discerned. However, responsible SFA officials (at the regional level) do not prioritize social values in forest protection because they are not prioritized in governmental forest policies, which place more importance on biodiversity values than social values. The NIPF owners do not prioritize social values either, because they treat such values as integrated parts of the value of their forest holdings and/or they lack sufficient resources (knowledge, economic means, time or interest). Although the implementation of NCAs for social values has evoked fruitful discussions among active participants, most actors in the forest sector still lack information about this pilot project. NIPF owners tend to favor such NCAs, but lack sufficient incentives to implement them. Since information has not been adequately disseminated, and SFA officials have only recently been educated about social values, most of the NIPF owners are not aware of the possibility to implement an NCA for social values. Perceived constraints in budgets for forest protection further limit (to varying degrees) SFA regions' willingness to implement NCAs for social values. See [Table 1](#) for an overview.

Discussion

The adapted Ladder of Partnership Activity is deemed suitable for analyzing NCAs for social values' potential since it emphasizes the need for dialogue and the establishment of beneficial interactions between the partners in the initial steps (i.e. context, trust-building and creation of collaborative advantages). By applying the Ladder framework, we are able to examine and analyze the partnering processes and the problems that arise within a national forest context in a step-wise manner. However, the steps do not always follow each other neatly (cf. Glasbergen 2011). Partnering is a continuous process that is affected by, for instance, evolving experiences of the actors (Collins and Ison 2009). Since we incorporated

factors that influence collaborative governance processes into the framework (Emerson et al. 2011), this helped us to clarify individual actors' sometimes-shifting motives regarding NCAs for social values. As we display in the Results section, most of the involved actors favor the use of NCAs for social values to some degree, at least in principle. However, in accordance with theoretical expectations, mutual understanding of their motives is required (Emerson et al. 2011) as their reasons for favoring the incorporation of social values in forest protection vary.

In accordance with Nordlund and Westin (2010) study on NIPF owners' motives in forest management, we found that there might be a conflict of interest in forest motives, as an NIPF owner can hold both strong recreational and strong production motives. However, an NIPF owner can balance strong ecological and strong production motives through responsible forest management (cf. Nordlund and Westin 2010). Furthermore, in accordance with the results of Baker and Eckerberg (2007), we see that in order to foster better understanding of biodiversity values in practice, it is important to protect social values.

Compared to previous studies focus on market-driven governance schemes for forest certification (Gulbrandsen 2005; Johansson and Lidestav 2011; Appelstrand 2012; Johansson 2013), we analyzed partnerships within a formal protection system nationally. In accordance with previous studies on partnerships for governing rural development, we identified that NCAs for social values need to have clearly defined tasks to function better (cf. Margerum and Robinson 2015; Bjärstig and Sandström 2017). Furthermore, the lack of policy integration appears to constrain implementation of NCAs for social values (cf. Bjärstig and Sandström 2017).

We argue that the SFA's nationwide NCAs for social values pilot project indicate a governance shift that enables the incorporation of new values in forest protection practices. The results show that the fundamental requirements for these partnerships to change the protection policy are present, but need further development. It is clear that although awareness has existed for several years that collaboration at the landscape level is crucial for protecting areas of high environmental value (Appelstrand 2012), this awareness is not fully developed in terms of preserving forests social values.

Table 1. A summary of involved forest actors' perceptions in the adoption of "NCAs for social values".

	NIPF owners	SFA national level	SFA regional level	Forest owners' associations	Jönköping municipality	Umeå municipality
Context	National policies and strategies	National policies and strategies Discretionary power	National policies and strategies Discretionary power	National policies and strategies	National policies and strategies Discretionary power	National policies and strategies Discretionary power
Motives	Social values in relation to privacy	Focus on urban forests	Focus on urban forests	Management of forests-not "protection"	Social values an integral part of outdoor policy	Social values need of a landscape perspective
Creation of collaborative advantages	Individual advantages difficult to identify	Definitions of social values are found in the strategy	Difficult to identify the benefits for rural areas to prioritize social values	Social values require better definition	The councils' meetings facilitate deliberative processes	Lack of knowledge about NCAs in general
Constitution of a rule system	NCAs not yet adapted for rural NIPF owners	NCAs will complement formal protection	Lack of funding obstructs complementary use of NCAs	Better funding and organization needed from the government	More engagement needed from the SFA Lack of time	Limited budget It will not work to protect social values through NCAs

One empirical finding is thus an identified need for better coordination between involved actors at various levels and between sectors. The SFA at the national level seems to be the most eager actor to adopt and implement NCAs for social values, while at the regional and local levels the involved actors' interpretations of social values vary considerably. This is in line with previous studies that found that many NIPF owners are unfamiliar with the term "social values" (Bjärstig and Kvastegård 2016; Sténs et al. 2016). When individual interpretations cannot be shared and discussed with actors at the national level, this may obstruct and/or prolong implementation of the NCAs. Public officials generally regard NCAs for social values favorably; however, they report uncertainty about how they should interpret these new values in their daily work. Thus, the National Forest Strategy must pay more attention to social values and exemplify how they should be considered in the designation of a protected site. The needs for better coordination across levels, inclusion of the municipalities in the initiatives and clearer definitions of what should be protected indicate that the government must provide a more predictable framework for partnerships.

One of the major findings from this study is that NCAs for social values seem to be less relevant in rural contexts than in urban contexts. NIPF owners in the former perceive the social values as important and integral parts of the value of their forests, but since they tend to have strong personal connections to their forests they want to experience their forest alone and feel privacy. At the same time, "the Right to Public Access" (Allemansrätten) already allows the public to roam freely and enjoy privately owned forests' social values. The right to public access is questioned by some NIPF owners, which may explain their reluctance to implement "NCAs for social values", since it could result in even more people coming onto their land. Also, giving public money for NCAs in forests with only a few visitors does not easily fit with the governmental policy intentions. This finding may indicate a potential conflict between the government's policy guidelines and the NIPF owners interests in preserving their "forest pearls" from visitors. Thus, NCAs primarily have a role to play in urban contexts, where the public need forests where they can engage in outdoor activities and recreation. Hence, social values that facilitate such activities should be considered when identifying areas to protect, and emphasized more strongly in the relevant policy recommendations. The goal to implement 20 NCAs by the end of 2015 has not been met: only six agreements have been implemented, which is a cause for concern for involved actors. As it still is a pilot project, the constraints identified so far should be raised and discussed nationally. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between the government's promotion of NCAs for social values and its reluctance to provide sufficient resources, which creates conflict between social values and biodiversity (which tends to be more strongly prioritized as it has greater perceived importance by most officials and their agencies). This finding, and the consequent failure of the present strategy for NCAs to match NIPF owners' motivations, corroborates Glasbergen's (2011) argument that the success of partnerships depends on specific government policies. Although

politicians might emphasize the importance of forest recreation, they are unwilling to act on it (e.g. Mann et al. 2010). This creates a dilemma since the role of the government remains important in partnership processes, particularly in rural contexts, where the government plays a crucial role in initiating, structuring, financing and regulating partnerships (Hodge and Greve 2007; Bjärstig and Sandström 2017). Stronger political prioritization in the protection agenda is thus needed if NCAs for social values are to realize their full potential.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

In-depth interview participant list:

(Title, affiliation. Type and date of interview)

Östersund

Official, SFA. Phone interview 7 March 2016.

Härnösand

Official, expert on social values, SFA. Phone interview 12 February 2016.
 Official, leading the pilot project NCAs for social values, SFA. Phone interview 2016.

Umeå

Official, SFA. Face-to-face interview 23 February 2016.
 Official, Umeå municipality. Face-to-face interview 31 March 2016.
 Official, Umeå municipality. Phone interview 27 April 2016.
 Official, Norra Skogsägarna. Phone interview 29 February 2016.

Jönköping

Official, outdoor council, Jönköping municipality. Phone interview 27 April 2016.
 Forest official, Jönköping municipality. Phone interview 12 May 2016.
 Official, Södra Skogsägarna. Phone interview 26 February 2016.

Malmö

NIPF owner implementing a NCA for social values. Phone interview 18 May 2016.

Appendix 2**Semi-structured interview participant (NIPF owners) list:**

(Gender, municipal where the land is situated. Type and date of interview)

Västerbotten (10 interviews, 4 dropouts)*Resident*

Male, 1968, Storuman. Phone interview 9 February 2015.
 Male, 1977, Vindeln. Phone interview 11 February 2015.
 Male, 1947, Vilhelmina. Phone interview 20 February 2015.
 Male, 1958, Bjurholm. Phone interview 2 March 2015.
 Male, 1982, Vilhelmina. Phone interview 11 March 2015.

Non-resident

Female, 1970, Vindeln. Face-to-face interview 11 December 2014.
 Male, 1990, Vindeln. Phone interview 9 February 2015.
 Male, 1962, Norsjö. Phone interview 10 February 2015.
 Male, 1961, Storuman. Phone interview 11 February 2015.
 Female, 1975, Lycksele. Phone interview 10 April 2015.

Jämtland (10 interviews, 9 dropouts)*Resident*

Female, 1957, Strömsund. Phone interview 16 February 2015.
 Male, 1966, Bräcke. Phone interview 20 March 2015.
 Male, 1973, Strömsund. Phone interview 23 March 2015.
 Male, 1943, Strömsund. Phone interview 23 March 2015.
 Female, 1956, Krokom. Phone interview 16 April 2015.

Non-resident

Female, 1971, Bräcke. Phone interview 9 February 2015.
 Male, 1945, Krokom. Phone interview 26 February 2015.
 Female, 1970, Strömsund. Phone interview 23 February 2015.
 Male, 1953, Härjedalen. Phone interview 26 February 2015.
 Male, 1962, Bräcke. Phone interview 9 March 2015.

Dalarna (10 interviews, 6 dropouts)*Resident*

Male, 1941, Falun. Phone interview 3 March 2015.
 Male, 1970, Avesta. Phone interview 10 March 2015.
 Male, 1944, Älvdalen. Phone interview 23 March 2015.
 Female, 1961, Smedjebacken. Phone interview 24 March 2015.
 Male, 1957, Malung-Sälen, Phone interview 1 June 2015.

Non-resident

Female, 1954, Leksand. Phone interview 16 February 2015.
 Female, 1945, Älvdalen. Phone interview 5 March 2015.
 Male, 1935, Malung-Sälen. E-mail interview 11 March 2015.
 Female, 1951, Mora. Phone Interview 31 March 2015.
 Male, 1952, Ludvika. Phone interview 20 April 2015.

Värmland (10 interview, 10 dropouts)*Resident*

Male, 1944, Karlstad. Phone interview 10 February 2015.
 Male, 1939, Eda. Phone interview 11 February 2015.
 Female, 1980, Kil. Phone interview 11 February 2015.
 Female, 1976, Arvika. Phone interview 24 March 2015.
 Female, 1950, Sunne. Phone interview 8 May 2015.

Non-resident

Female, 1948, Årjäng. Phone interview 10 February 2015.
 Male, 1965, Torsby. Phone interview 4 March 2015.
 Male, 1945, Årjäng. Phone interview 11 March 2015.
 Male, 1952, Hagfors. Phone interview 18 March 2015.
 Female, 1982, Årjäng. Phone interview 20 April 2015.

Västra Götaland (8 interviews, 10 dropouts)*Resident*

Female, 1977, Lidköping. Phone interview 19 August 2015.
 Male, 1964, Mark. Phone interview 11 May 2015.
 Male, 1948, Svenljunga. Phone interview 14 August 2015.
 Male, 1983, Uddevalla. Phone interview 13 November 2015.

Non-resident

Male, 1945, Munkedal. Phone interview 11 May 2015.
 Female, 1935, Borås. Phone interview 12 May 2015.
 Female, 1950, Bengtsfors. Phone interview 5 June 2015.
 Male, 1966, Herrljunga. Phone interview 12 May 2015.

Kronoberg (9 interviews, 9 dropouts)*Resident*

Male, 1950, Ljungby. Phone interview 19 May 2015.
 Female, 1953, Tingsryd. Phone interview 20 May 2015.
 Male, 1978, Växjö. Phone interview 15 May 2015.
 Male, 1959, Uppvidinge. Phone interview 29 May 2015.
 Female, 1959, Lessebo. Phone interview 29 September 2015.

Non-resident

Male, 1931, Alvesta. Phone interview 11 May 2015.
 Male, 1950, Ljungby Phone interview 18 May 2015.
 Male, 1953, Älmhult. Phone interview 28 September 2015.
 Male, 1952, Tingsryd. Phone interview 11 May 2015.