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Investigating Communication and Participatory Processes in Decision Making

– A study of the Swedish Forest Agency

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Abstract

Today, public participation has become mainstream when it comes to decision-making in natural resource management issues. The idea that science and experts hold all the answers is being disregarded in favour of more inclusive processes that should ideally include the views of all interested parties. The forest industry is one such example and the Swedish Forest Agency (SFA) have had, since 1905, the role making sure that forestry is practiced according to forest law as well as offering expert advice to forest owners when needed. In 2000, the SFA were given the task from the Swedish government to carry out 'Målbilder för god miljöhänsyn' (objectives for good environmental practice), which was to be a collaborative project together with interested parties from the forest industry. The goal, to reach consensus through participatory processes and this signalled a distinct change of direction with regards to how decisions should be made. As much of the literature on the subject of participation shows, there are different ways to carry out participatory processes and this is often related to how much power the participants have to influence the situation. Therefore it becomes even more relevant to investigate the SFA because they have traditionally had a very supervisory role in their work and it will be interesting to investigate how much this effects the participatory processes they create.

Based on semi-structured interviews with people who work with dialogue processes at the SFA, a qualitative study was carried out with the overall aim to investigate how the people working with participatory processes make sense of participation from their role at the SFA. By taking a social constructionist framework I believe that how individuals talk about something reflects how they act towards it. This means that the way individuals view communication holds the key to the development of a successful participatory process. Two main theoretical communication traditions are relevant to this research project; the one-way or transmission based view of communication and the dialogue view of communication which sees communication as a joint act of information sharing.

This study shows that the SFA is moving towards using participatory processes as one of its main working methods and how these participatory processes are designed and how much influence the participants have is dependent on the goal of the process. This study highlights the fact that the SFA have designed these processes through using a process of trial and error instead of making use of methods already available within literature and this has created several problems along the way. However, this study concludes that the SFA are on the right track and by combining their own knowledge together with some recommendations from literature then they will have every chance of success in the future.

Keywords: communication, participation, Swedish Forest Agency, semi-structured interviews

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Abbreviations

FCV	Forest Company Visits that the SFA carry out with the aim to improve forest practice.
OGEP	The project 'miljöbilder för god miljöhänsyn' (Objectives for Good Environmental Practice).
NGO	Non-government organisation
NRM	Natural resource management
SFA	Swedish Forest Agency
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

1.1 The Present Role of Participation in Decision Making

In 1992, the United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, for the first time recognized that access to information about natural resources and public participation were huge priorities (Janse et al, 2007). This movement towards more a more environmental type of democracy has today, resulted in participation being a given when it comes to decision making processes about the environment and this is seen clearly in policy documents from all over the world. *'This interest in public deliberation has gained attraction in many practical settings, especially in the European Union, and holds the promise of more legitimate governance of science and technology'* (Lövbrand et al 2010). For example, the Aarhus Convention, which is the UN Economic Commission for Europe's policy with regards to *'Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters'* (European Commission, 2016) specifically states with regards to public participation:

'The right to participate in environmental decision-making. Arrangements are to be made by public authorities to enable the public affected and environmental non-governmental organisations to comment on, for example, proposals for projects affecting the environment, or plans and programmes relating to the environment, these comments to be taken into due account in decision making, and information to be provided on the final decisions and the reasons for it'

The Aarhus Convention came about out of a need to better serve people's interests and give them the means to participate in decision making processes that may have an impact on their lives. This was reiterated once again in 2012, *'at the Rio+20 Conference the international community recognized that good governance and a truly sustainable economy require the effective involvement of the public'* (United Nations, 2015).

The problem, as Predmore (2011) discusses, is that involving the public in decision making, which has been traditionally based on science and rational thought, is not a simple task. The members of the public that are interested in being involved often do so with the primary intention of pushing forward their own specific values and the people involved in creating the process often determine how it should be carried out together with defining its objectives, thereby limiting the public's influence on the outcomes (Predmore et al, 2011). With this in mind it is interesting to note that the Aarhus Convention does not specify exactly how the public should be involved in decision making processes. Further, Lee et al (2003) discuss that *'a serious limitation of the Aarhus Convention, which reflects a more general failure in the movement towards participation, is the lack of engagement with the real nature of participation'*. Further Lee et al (2003) note that unfortunately, the Aarhus Convention makes no actual attempt to extend public participation to directly include the public, *'The real emphasis in the Aarhus Convention is on the involvement of NGOs'* (Lee

et al, 2003). However, we also shouldn't discount the role that non-government organisations (NGO) have and their inclusion in the decision making process indicates a large step forward for the inclusion of environmental values in the political system (Lee et al, 2003). NGO's are included to represent the public and by including environmental values in the political system then at least there is a greater chance that these values will also be able to influence the decisions that are made. The question still remains, however, as to whether The Aarhus Convention has actually paved the way for changes in the way that decision making processes are carried out and even if it has, who is it that holds the mandate to make the final decisions? Elling (2008) moves on to say that if the public does not get to influence decisions at all levels '*then the aims of the Convention will have been negated*' (Elling, 2008).

1.2 The Swedish Forestry Agency

The Swedish Forest Agency's (SFA) main task is to make sure that the Swedish forest policy is understood and adhered to by those who own and manage forests in Sweden. Their main goal being, to make sure that the forests in Sweden are managed in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way (Skogsstyrelsen.se, 2016). From the Swedish government, the SFA receive instructions that define their duties and responsibilities over a longer period of time (Skogsstyrelsen.se, 2016). Traditionally these instructions have been very similar for all government departments and has revolved around three pillars, namely; law, advice giving and administering grants but due to the forest industry in Sweden being very self-sufficient the use of grants is very small and so it is therefore the first two that have shaped the SFA's primary duties. More specifically; supervising the forest industry so that they uphold forest law and providing the forest industry with information about best forest practice. A situation which has lead to the use of a very direct form of one-way communication.

However, Forest Law in Sweden has, since 1993, been at a basic level and so in order to achieve their goals, the SFA have, since then, been expected to work together with forest owners and companies. Further the more traditional type of advice giving is now being taken over by information from their website and indeed a closer review of the instructions received for 2016 reveals that many of the tasks include participating with other organisations in order to achieve their goals. For example the *Nationellt Skogsprogram*

(The National Forestry Program), is a long term strategy for how forestry can contribute to a sustainable and green economy and this involves a section on just participatory processes and the project *Målbilder för God Miljöhänsyn* (objectives for good environmental practice) (OGEP), which is a joint project between the SFA, the forest industry and other interested organisations to jointly determine a new set of environmental objectives in forestry. It is also interesting to note that since the early 2000's, the SFA have even been bound by the Aarhus Convention and the European Landscape Convention both of which provide provision for the inclusion of members of the public and non-government organisations to actively participate in decision-making processes about the environment. As previously stated, the Aarhus Convention allows the inclusion of NGO's as representatives for the public in decision-making processes and this is no different for the processes owned by the SFA. Connected to this requirement to include participation is the fact that the communication skills of the people who work with participatory processes has been expected to change quite profoundly over recent years, moving over from having an supervisory role to being a facilitator in participatory dialogue processes (Cox, 2013). It is therefore very relevant to investigate just how the SFA work with participatory processes as this signals a need to move away from the traditional supervisory role and embrace a new way of communicating and working.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

It quickly became clear, when I first took contact with the SFA, that the participatory processes they do develop are based purely on experience and not on any sort of communicative strategy or specific method of participation. This fact alone gave me an interesting entry point for my research both from a theoretical point of view as well as the possibility to offer the SFA some practical advice when it comes to communication and participation within decision making. I was especially interested to see if this was really the case and if so explore how working without a communication strategy has effected how these participatory processes are created and carried out and what problems they have experienced along the way.

The main aim of this study is therefore to investigate how the people working with participatory processes make sense of participation from their role at the SFA.

The SFA have many different participatory processes related to different aspects of their work and these include processes connected to action groups, regional councils and advisory groups that include representatives from different forest companies and organisations. So in order to give focus to my research I decided to focus on the two that the SFA are working most extensively with at present, namely; the participatory processes connected to the project OGEP and the participatory processes connected to Forest Company Visits (FCV) that are carried out with the aim of improving forest practice. By doing so, I also hope to be able to draw comparisons between the two in my conclusion. In order to achieve my above mentioned aim I will explore the following research questions:

- How is communication discussed?
- How is the development and planning of a communication strategy and the method of participation discussed?
- How are roles and mandate discussed?

2 Background

2.1 The Modern Society

The concept of '*modernity*' or the idea of our society being modern, developed with the period of enlightenment and is based on the ideas of rationality, science and capitalism. Before this religion and theology held all the knowledge and told people what to do but this was quickly replaced by science, which claimed to offer progress into the future and an improved way of life (Elling, 2008). According to (Lakoff, 2010) a situation developed where human-beings put themselves at top of the tree and '*enframed*' nature and the environment in a way which made it into an object or resource that could be exploited for their own benefit, '*one of the negative results of modernity was that nature was made into an object for exploration, production and consumption*' (Elling, 2008). Natural resources were seen as being in infinite supply and by placing themselves in the centre, human beings also gave themselves a priority over every other creature on the planet (Elling, 2008). By promising a better future, science dominated the decision making arena and this resulted in decision making processes being based around using the economic model of cost-benefit analysis (Smith, 2003) and in terms of forestry, decision makers focussed mainly on how to grow trees to maximise profits (Kangas, 1994). However, over recent years this hope that science offered has withered away as it has been seen that '*the attempt of science to control nature and exploit it to create a drive forward has turned out to be difficult*' (Elling, 2008). The fact is that environmental problems are not going away and these problems are, in fact, less concrete than they were before and more connected to other problems seen in society, which cannot be measured and solved by using science and technology alone (Elling, 2008). Further, the use of science has even been shown to have been used by politicians as tool to strengthen their own arguments, instead of for objective and meaningful research and this has had the effect of creating an awareness in the general public that science is in fact associated with uncertainties and risk (Elling, 2008). Both in the form of whether or not scientific advancement has, in fact positive or negative consequences for the environment and in the form contradictions as many scientists have in fact been shown to say different things about the same topic, '*the belief in science and technological development as a source of progress and human liberation has been replaced by doubt*' (Elling, 2008).

2.2 The Role of Scientific Knowledge in Decision Making in Forestry

The use of scientific knowledge as the foundation for decision making is seen clearly in the way that the SFA have worked in the past. By traditionally having a supervisory role when it comes to forestry in Sweden, their work basically involved the giving of information

either by telling people what they could or couldn't do according to the law or by telling people to do something in a certain way because that is what they deemed to be best practice. Due to the nature of this work the SFA have had an expert role within forestry and dominated any decisions that were made on forest policy and on how forests should be managed. According to Lawrence (2009), this expertise within forestry is acquired '*through technical knowledge, knowledge of the context, and experience*' and forestry experts have traditionally been dominant and gone unchallenged in much of Europe, including Sweden. Foresters have over the years developed certain power structures and created an almost incontestable nature to the knowledge that they hold therefore still dominating decision-making processes (Lawrence, 2009). Although recent changes in people's attitudes to the environment have led to this role being challenged, it can still be seen that the word expertise is still based on education and law and that practitioners have actually started to defend this notion of expertise in order to preserve their own integrity (Lawrence, 2009). This idea that experts have dominated decision making processes is also taken up by Predmore et al (2011). Here, Predmore et al (2011) refer to how the United States Forest Service is today required to include the public in decision making processes and that this is governed by the National Environmental Policy Act. Here the guidelines state that only '*substantive*' or '*significant*' statements that come from the public should be considered and not statements that contain emotion or other values. This has had the effect that the public has been framed in such a way that the majority of the public is seen to be silent and the ones that do give comment are seen to be extremists. The result being that '*US Forest Service sometimes favours scientific, technical or legally-based public input over comments that explicitly express the values or preferences of the public*' (Predmore et al, 2011). In recent times however, there has been an emergence in the belief that forests are more than just a stand of timber and therefore a new way of making decisions is required, which allows the inclusion of different values and types of knowledge.

2.3 The Inclusion of Participation in Decision Making

So how do these new understandings fit into present day decision making processes? It took until the late 1960s before the idea of participation began to be incorporated into the political sphere (Pateman, 1976). It was during this time that Jürgen Habermas, working out of the Frankfurt School, acknowledged the problems associated with rational thinking and modernity but instead choose to focus on the positive aspects. Habermas (1984) in his '*Theory of Communicative Action*' moved these ideas forward and distinguished a new concept called '*communicative rationality*' which is opposed to '*strategic rationality*', where people act '*with a final aim that is determined in advance and controlled by definite interest*' (Elling, 2008). Habermas (1984) argues that there is also a rationality based on communication, which has its roots in an arena which offers free and open discussion and rational arguments. Here Habermas discusses language to be a method of communication, which is based on reaching a common understanding through dialogue and thus is devoid of the problems associated with power struggles and ulterior motives. The problem is of course, how can we create a dialogue situation that promotes this communicative rationality where people are free to communicate and discuss and at the same time take into account other people views and perspectives? By reintroducing the nineteenth century concepts of the public sphere and the citizen, Habermas emphasised the need for greater citizen participation within the political decision-making process.

Arnstein (1969) followed after and explained how citizen participation can be found in different forms and that this is linked to the amount of power that the citizens are actually given to influence the decisions that are made. Arnstein (1969) developed a ladder in which every rung stands for varying degrees of citizen participation and this can be used to

indicate whether the citizens are actually just included as a token gesture (tokenism) without any form of influence or are they given the mandate to actually impact on the decisions that are made (Arnstein, 1969)? The ladder is as relevant today as it was in 1969 and Arnstein makes it clear that *'there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process'* and *'participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless'* Arnstein (1969). By highlighting the fact that participation can be practiced in different ways, Arnstein (1969) also put forward the idea that we can't talk about participation and democracy as being the same thing. A result of this was that two dominant ideas on public participation in democracy were put forward: participative democracy and deliberative democracy (Pateman, 2000). The idea of participative democracy was based on trying to get as many citizens as possible to participate in politics and therefore used the current electoral system to base the decision making process on (Pateman, 2000). On the other hand, deliberative democracy, rather than using the electoral system, put forward the idea that decision making should instead be based on citizen deliberation. *'The deliberative model of democracy rests on a general belief in reasoned argument as the best way of resolving moral conflicts'* (Lövsbrand et al, 2010). In order to develop this more legitimate type of decision-making process, deliberate democracy proposes that two conditions need to be achieved; inclusiveness and unconstrained dialogue (Smith, 2003). Inclusiveness in this context refers to the right that that all citizens have the right to participate and that they also have the right to bring up concerns of their own and challenge any claims made by others. Whatever forms these deliberations take it is paramount that they are *'non-coercive and are orientated towards broadening the understanding and perspectives of participants'* (Smith, 2003). A protection of human rights is required and the most important thing is that participation should be through free and open debate between all parties (Smith, 2003). Smith (2003) argues that the aim should be to achieve a mutual understanding and an acceptance for the political result and deliberative democracy therefore offers an alternative to what Habermas referred to as *'strategic rationality'*.

Further, another problem associated with today's political system is that the values of the system (the government, political parties, interest groups and the media) are put on the citizens instead of the other way round (Smith, 2003). This together with privatisation and individualism has seen an erosion of the commons to such an extent that we have lost sight of what we have in common. Deliberate democracy offers a new way of recognising the common good and within the deliberation process it is hoped that participants will identify what they have in common rather than what separates them (Smith, 2003). It also offers an arena to discuss alternative solutions as opposed to just focussing on economic and scientific alternatives and also a forum for discussing and dealing with risk and uncertainty (Smith, 2003). Unfortunately as Mouffe (1999) discusses, no decision making process will be devoid from conflicts and peoples own interests and the processes of deliberation needs to be protected from *'strategic'* power if this is even possible. With regards to natural resource management (NRM), the dominance of natural science within decision making has been particularly strong and therefore any decision making process that attempts to include participation is likely to continue to have these power struggles. We are also not in a position to just change the whole democratic system overnight, so the problem is also how to combine the social values with political ones in the present democratic system?

2.4 The Present Role of Participation in Natural Resource Management

It can be seen that many of the ideas as discussed above, with regards to deliberate democracy are in some form being adapted into the present democratic system and within NRM and more specifically forestry, participation has become a buzzword in recent years as this is seen as a way to include social values. Senecah (2004) discusses how dialogue in the form of public participation is now mainstream in decision making processes to do with environmental law and policy making. The reason for this is the widely held belief that involving the public creates more faith in the democratic system and by giving the citizens more knowledge and increased power leads to better environmental decision-making (Appelstrand, 2002). Brulle (2010) reiterates this fact by stating *'theoretical and empirical research on the role of the public sphere, civil society and social movements shows that democratic civic engagement is core to successful social change efforts'* and Bäckstrand (2003) goes on to bring the role of experts in decision making process into question and states that *'the participatory turn to scientific expert advice can be interpreted as a resistance to the perceived scientization of politics, which implies that political and social issues are better resolved through technical expertise than democratic deliberation'*. Brulle (2010), also points out if you have a *'communications process that centers on elite led one way communications, which fails to allow for any form of civic engagement and public dialogue then this undermines the creation of a democratic process of change and reinforces the professionalization of political discourse'*.

With regards to the SFA and forestry in Sweden it appears that they have gone through a large change over the last 20-25 years with regards to the way they communicate as it appears that they now include other participants in the decision making process. Of special concern to this research project is to see whether or not they have actually moved away from the traditional supervisory role or whether this is still employed but now in the guise of a participatory process. Above all, by using participatory processes has the mandate actually shifted or are the SFA still making all the decisions? As Arnstein (1969) makes clear, is public participation just a token gesture or does it really give citizens the power to influence?

3 Methods

A qualitative approach was used in this research project as this gave me a suitable method to collect the data relevant to achieving my aim. To provide a framework, I view reality from a social constructionist perspective and in doing so I believe that '*individuals seek to develop subjective meaning of their experiences – meanings directed towards certain objects or things*' (Creswell, 2014) and '*that facts are socially constructed in particular contexts*' (Silverman, 2013). I therefore plan to focus on how the participants construct their own meaning by looking at how they themselves describe the situation and so the method chosen for this research project was therefore that of interviews. Within qualitative research the methodology of using interviews involves using open-ended questions in order to give the participant the opportunity to express themselves in as much depth as possible (Creswell, 2014). The interviews carried out were also semi-structured in nature so as to make sure the information I received was relevant to my research topic. Open-ended interviews are often done with a small sample group who are referred to as key informants and these are specially chosen as they are presumed to hold the information required in order to answer the research questions. Employees within the SFA, who work with participatory processes, were asked if they would like to take part and this resulted in interviews being conducted with six people, three who work with OGEP, two who work with FCV and one who was part of a prestudy into how Sweden could develop a National Forest Program. The interviews took place during the spring of 2016 and three were carried out one-on-one at the SFAs district office in Uppsala while the other three were carried out using the computer program skype. Each interview was carried out in Swedish and took around one hour to complete. Each participant was asked to firstly describe their educational and working background before being asked to describe very openly how they work with participatory processes. Follow up questions were asked were more detail or explanation was required. For confidentiality reasons, the participants are referred to as interviewee 1-6 (See Appendix 1).

3.1 Data Analysis

At the same time as carrying out the interviews, audio recordings were also made, which were later transcribed and then translated into English. The transcriptions formed the data for this research project. Key terms connected to the ideas of communication and participation were chosen to categorise the data and these were also linked to answering my research questions. These key terms included firstly, how they discuss communication secondly, how they discuss communication strategies and methods of participation and finally how they discuss issues related roles and who has mandate during the process. In order to analyse the data, it was discussed in relation to relevant theories and concepts about communication and participation from literature.

4 Theory

4.1 Communication

By taking a social constructionist stand point I believe that communication is key to creating social reality and it is through the act of communicating that concepts and ideas are produced and used in order to make sense of the world (Burr, 2003). Thus, the environment that we talk about and affect is very much a product of the way in which we communicate about it and communication therefore affects how we define what something is and how it should be regarded. It determines what we see as being a problem, it affects how we discuss that problem and also affects what the actions to take to solve it (Cox, 2013).

Communication therefore defines the choices that are made and the subsequent policies that are created with regards to the environment (Cox, 2013) and therefore forms an important theoretical basis for this thesis.

4.1.1 *Transmission Based*

The traditional concept of communication is the most common in western culture and refers to communication as the transmitting or sending of information to a recipient. This rational way of looking at communication is linked to modernity by the fact that scholars likened the movement of information to the movement of people and commodities. This view on communication came from '*the desire to increase the speed and effect of messages as they travel in space*' (Craig et al, 2007) and has and still is a very popular way of viewing communication. It fitted into a more mathematical or technological way of thinking about communication, as Shannon and Weavers (1949) model of mass communication so simply expressed; input => output. My criticism is that you can't just give people information and expect them to change or learn anything. This is what people have done in the past with regards environmental issues and the fact that environmental problems are not going away. In my opinion this one-way view of communication is very controlling and comes back to the idea that the expert has the power and has the right to tell people what to do because they know what is best. Linked to this is what Habermas (1984) refers to as '*Strategic rationality*' which is grounded in the motivation of the speaker to achieve predetermined goals. It can still be seen however, that this way of thinking about communication is still very popular and transmission is still readily used as a way of getting people to change their attitudes (Craig et al, 2007).

4.1.2 *Dialogue Based*

The dialogue based concept of communication, which Craig et al (2007) refer to as being the ritual view of communication, is instead linked with words such as '*sharing*', '*participation*' and '*the possession of a common faith*' (Craig et al, 2007). It is concerned with the maintenance of society through shared beliefs rather than the transmission of

messages (Craig et al, 2007). As previously mentioned, Habermas (1984) discusses the concept of ‘*communicative rationality*’ and this is based on the idea of making rational decisions through communication and dialogue. Instead of participants communicating with a predetermined aim in mind they are open to the process of discussion in order to jointly come to the best decisions. Further, since social constructionism views the social world as a product of social processes, this requires something more than just one-way communication. Social constructionism views language as a pre-condition for thought and that the categories and concepts that people use are constructed by the language they use when they are communicating and socially interacting with each other. When we communicate with each other we use symbols to construct the world around us and by viewing communication as symbolic action then communication can be seen as more than just a transferring of information. In fact, communication actually shapes the way we act (Cox, 2013) and so social constructionism says that knowledge and action go hand in hand (Burr, 2003) and this idea is highly relevant within NRM in that how people communicate about the environment goes a long way to determining how they act towards it (Cox, 2013).

4.2 Participation

By stating that communication shapes the way we act and that it is a shared process that involves social interaction then it is highly relevant to investigate how the SFA firstly view communication and then how they make sense of participation. Here it is very interesting to again refer back to Arnstein (1969), which highlights very clearly the fact that participation can actually be viewed and practiced in many different ways. Senecah (2004) also points to the fact that you cannot just involve the public in any way and expect good results and states that traditional methods of involving the public are not actually that affective. Although the public is required to participate there are of course good and bad ways of involving them in dialogue processes.

This acknowledgement has resulted in numerous recommendations as to how participatory processes should be created and what needs to be included. A specific communication strategy is often described as something that is required from the outset and Senecah (2004) offers ‘*The Trinity of Voice*’ which can be used to structure the process and this is based on three components of access, standing and influence, which all should be addressed when creating the communication strategy. Senecah (2004) also believes that the degree to which a participatory process is successful is based on the level of trust the public has in the process. As Linell (1995) also states, trust is both necessary and a strict requirement when we enter a communicate situation. Senecah (2004) also views effectiveness in the dialogue process as key and if suitable public participation is not structured properly this will often result in conflict between parties who have differing perspectives. Further, Craig et al (2007) discuss how human beings act based on the fact that they consciously understand what they are doing and this comes from interpreting the meaning of both how they themselves act and how others act. This Craig et al (2007) refer to as ‘*everyday communication*’ and the consequence of not having a specific strategy communication strategy in place will often be that people refer to back to their ‘*everyday communication*’ and this will have direct implications for how they act.

Innes et al (2004) describe that when public participation has been carried out successfully it is when the public had been empowered in such a way so that they have an equal voice, they could engage in authentic dialogue, they all had access to the relevant information, they listened and were listened too and they are all worked towards a common goal that they were all interested in (Innes et al, 2004). Only if all these things are

considered then other peoples '*perspectives be considered and new ideas be brought forward through joint action*' (Innes et al, 2004). Brulle (2010) reiterates these comments and states that in order '*To mobilize broad-based support for social change, citizens cannot be treated as objects for manipulation. Rather, they should be treated as citizens involved in a mutual dialog*' before discussing about how there is a need to move away from one-way communication to a situation that promotes dialogue through civic engagement (Brulle, 2010). Firstly through providing access to information and then being included in the process of tackling the problem, people are more willing to become involved and take action. Rather than just consult people about proposed policies and decisions regarding environmental issues, processes are required that involve them directly from stage one (Brulle, 2010).

Finally, with specific reference to participation in forest programs, Cantiani (2012) discusses certain considerations which should always be made before designing a participatory process and these include: the process should be based on good faith and honesty, the rights of the public need to be recognized in a legal framework, specific roles need to be made transparent and regulations are required that are made clear to everyone, respect and a willingness to listen is required by all and the process must be based on inclusiveness so that all interests are taken into account. Saarikoski et al (2010), follows this way of thinking and includes that the process should be inclusive for all that want to take part, it should be based on dialogue between all parties over a longer period of time, it should be fair in that everyone has the right to express their views and ask for evidence or clarity on certain issues, knowledge should be made available to everyone and everyone should have the opportunity to affect the outcome (Saarikoski et al, 2010).

4.3 The Ability to Act

In order to investigate how the interviewees' role within the SFA effects how they view communication and participatory processes then it is worth mentioning here about what influences human beings possibility to act from a social constructionist point of view. As well as a persons '*everyday communication*' as discussed by Craig et al (2007), by viewing communication as a social interaction then it can be understood that since there are many different interactions going on in the world then this creates just as many social realities. This, in turn creates a situation where human-beings have the potential to understand and therefore act in many different ways. Further, if people act in the same way over a continued period of time then this in turn creates patterns of social behaviour and action that are bound up in power relations. These patterns, which if repeated for long enough, can become structures which, without us thinking about, actually go a long way to determining how we act. '*Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives*' (Creswell, 2014). This means that as well as constructing meaning through social interaction, humans are also brought up in a world that already contains meaning that our culture provides for us as structures. Thus it can be said that an individuals' ability to make decisions is based on the dualism of agency and structure. Agency is seen as the amount of freedom individuals have to act for themselves and structure refers to these patterns that have been created by society, which restricts the decisions that can be made. With particular reference to the people who are designing and leading participatory processes at the SFA then this idea of structure and agency is very relevant in that it will go a long way to determining how they can act both when creating participatory processes and when they are participating in them.

With specific regards to agency then the '*Theory of Rational Choice*' refers to the individuals' ability to act rationally in a way that means that they do so on purpose because

they think that, rationally it's the best choice to make. As Scott (2000) states '*the idea is that all action is fundamentally 'rational' in character and that people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do*'. If people at the SFA have indeed 100% freedom to make their own choices then the repercussions of this could mean that they decide to make all the decisions themselves and could result in a continuation with the traditional one-way communication. On the other hand it could mean that they embrace participation to its fullest, give the power to the people and allow them to make all the decisions. In opposition to this is the '*Theory of Social Structure*', which refers to the fact that there are structures in place that give the individual a defined role which they must follow. According to Blau (1977) '*The structures of objective social positions among which people are distributed exert more fundamental influences on social life than do cultural values and norms*'. For example the role of working for the SFA, goes a long way to determining the decisions that the person can make with regards to designing participatory processes and participating in them. If people at the SFA are 100% bound by structures then they will have no freedom at all to design the participatory processes because the role that they have within the SFA will define exactly what they can and cannot do.

5 Results and Analysis

5.1 Description of the Case Studies

With regards to OGEP, Interviewee 2 explains that around 2006 it was difficult to work with environmental issues in the forest because the forest industry and the SFA appeared to have very different ideas about what constituted an environmental issue and how it should be addressed. In fact, when the SFA carried out an evaluation into how the forest industry worked with environmental issues they found that on many occasions Forest Law wasn't even being followed. Interviewee 5 goes on to explain that the biggest problem was actually that the forest industry themselves thought they were good at dealing with environmental issues and this in turn resulted in a situation where most of the discussions revolved around the way in which both sides carried out inventories and evaluations instead of actually discussing the issues at hand. Interviewee 5 explains how in 2010 the Swedish Government commissioned work to be carried out to develop a knowledge platform connected precisely with what constitutes an environmental issue and how these should be worked with in the forest. Interviewee 5 explains how this process started with a broad discussion between the SFA and representatives from the forest industry before a realisation developed that, before they went any further, there was a need to create a common understanding. Thus, a decision was made to focus instead on creating a common picture about what the environmental issues were and how they should be addressed practically out in the forest. In connection with this realisation, the SFA developed a new working method which took the form of participatory processes which were to include both the forest industry and other environmental organisations in order to achieve the goals of OGEP. The main idea was that by creating a common understanding then this would result in better practice out in the forest. Interviewee 2 moves on to say that work with developing this common understanding started in 2011 and has since developed into a large project that now even aims to create a common method for carrying out forest inventories in the future.

With regards to FCV, Interviewee 1 discusses that around the year 2000, public demand brought about a need for the SFA to use a new method instead of the more traditional advice, giving one-way type of communication that they had used before with regards to getting forest companies to adhere to good forest practice. Interviewee 6 states that the overall goal was still to make sure that the forests are managed in the best possible way but they decided to conduct participatory processes instead of just telling people what to do. The SFA had realised themselves that this method wasn't working very well. Interviewee 1 discusses that traditionally, the SFA had made good use of natural science because it contained a lot of practical tools that were very useful to them, for example statistics and a lot of clear correlations that are very practical within forestry and useful when giving advice. However, Interviewee 1 states that the SFA had problems, especially with regards to things such as; why people choose some things over others and how people can look at

things in different ways and perceive them differently? The tools to do this come from completely different disciplines like social science, philosophy and sociology and this is where the SFA had gaps in their understanding and therefore the biggest problems when it came to developing participatory processes. Interviewee 4 moves on to discuss how the SFA had already begun to work with developing participatory processes in other areas but these focussed more on participants from different forest companies meeting together at the same time. However, there was a problem in that many participants were unwilling to discuss their problems in front of their competitors and therefore the SFA identified a need to meet with just one company at a time. A new participatory process was thus developed for FCV that follows a very systematic approach as the SFA are required to generate statistics and carry out comparisons when they report to the Swedish Government. FCV participatory processes started in 2014 and in the first year they held meetings with around 80 different forest companies.

5.2 Results for Objectives for Good Environmental Practice

Interviewee 5 explains that within OGEP there is an action group of which includes a chairman from the SFA and seven others from different forest companies, organisations and other environmental organisations. Together they are responsible for running the whole OGEP project and give support and guidance to a number of working groups who work independently from each other on environmental issues concerned with a specific theme. The action group meet, in general, every second month to discuss how things are going and also bring up any new issues that need to be addressed. Once a year they also develop a yearly action plan which the individual working groups will work with during the year. This includes any new environmental issues that they want to bring up or any existing ones that they have worked with in the past but need to be updated.

With specific regards then to the working groups, Interviewee 5 explains how each group has a leader from within the SFA and it is their job to keep the group together and keep it functioning towards its purpose. Interviewee 5 explains that they send out an open invitation to be part of the working group and everyone who is interested has so far been included. Interviewee 5 goes on to state that once each working group is formed they begin with having an open discussion about the issue at hand with the goal to reach a common understanding. This should be carried out in a participatory manner, the process should not be a negotiation from the SFA and the separate working groups can decide themselves how they reach this goal. Interviewee 5 explains that the leader for each working group is often at meetings with the action group and they all work closely together and share experiences, so in actual fact the way each working group carry out the participatory processes is, according to Interviewee 5 very similar. If the group has difficulty arriving at a common understanding (which hasn't happened yet) then they should pass this on to the action group who then try to come up with a different way of tackling it. Interviewee 2 then describes how it is everyone in the group that gets to be part of deciding both how the process should develop, what is to be discussed and the final decision. This sentiment is reiterated by Interviewee 3 and interviewee 5 who state that each participant is to be given an equal standing and everyone should be able to have their voice heard and be part of making the decisions. Interviewee 5 also states that the other participants are there to represent their company/organisation, they are expected to take information back to their company/organisation and distribute it internally and push for change where it is required.

In terms of using evaluation, Interviewee 2 states that within their working group they work all the time on the things that work well and things that don't. In 2017 it is planned that the SFA will carry out a large evaluation into how the processes work and whether or

not new things need to be discussed or brought up. Interviewee 5 mentions that the leaders of the working groups are always in contact with the action group and they share experience and feedback in order to make the processes better.

5.3 Results for Forest Company Visits

Interviewee 4 discusses how they have a very strict and systematic way of carrying out the participatory process and that this is required so that the results can be analysed and comparisons drawn. The process is therefore the same every time and they begin by creating an agenda which include questions about certain topics that are related to problem areas that the SFA have identified out in forest. These topics are always discussed in advance with a national action group that consists of representatives from forest companies and other organisations. Interviewee 4 explains how it is the SFA that runs the participatory process, the SFA who decides who is going to be secretary during the meeting and that it is normally the district boss from SFA that is the chairman. They also make sure that one of the participants from the SFA has responsibility for each topic area and that person is then responsible making sure they know everything about it beforehand and can ask specific questions to the forest company. Interviewee 6 reiterates these points and also mentions how having the correct platform to work from is important. Before each meeting they create and send over an agenda together with all the relevant information to the forest company that they will meet. Interviewee 6 then explains that they try to spend some time at the beginning of every meeting going over how the meeting will be, how that it is an open discussion and that whatever is said will be treated with respect.

Interviewee 1 moves on to discuss how they always ask the company three questions and these are worded in a certain way so as to get the representatives of the company to think for themselves. The three questions are: we believe there is a problem do you have the same understanding? What do you think that you can do about the situation? If you would like our help, how can we be of assistance? Interviewee 1 also explains how the SFA always asks if the company themselves have any questions or anything they want to bring up. Interviewee 4 moves on to discuss that it is the SFA that asks the and then it is then up to forest company themselves to do the talking. It is the forest company that should discuss the problem, it is the forest company that needs to reflect on that problem and the forest company that should come up with ways of addressing it. After this the SFA can make practical suggestions and ask 'have you tried this?' as well as also asking what they can do to help the forest company. Instead of meeting the forest company and telling them how to fix the problem, it is the forest company themselves that come up with how they will tackle the problem. After each meeting the SFA write up the minutes and present a report to the forest company to get a confirmation that everything has been written down and understood correctly.

Interviewee 4 states that an important aspect is to be able to understand the other participants' needs and requirements. Interviewee 6 moves on to explain how it is also important that all parties have the same understanding as to what participation is before the meeting starts and that everyone should have access to the same information at the same time so that everyone is on the same knowledge level. Interviewee 6 also explains that it is important that everyone should have the same understanding as to the level of ambition, no one should hold the right answer and no one should judge anyone else and what they say. The SFA should be curious and ask questions instead of telling people what to do and they should be open and honest themselves as this then helps the other participants to do the same thing. Trust is important and in order to create trust they need to listen to each other and believe that each other is being honest. Sometimes it actually takes a few meetings

before there is enough trust between the participants so that they can begin to discuss things together. Interviewee 6 talks a lot about the value of building a good relation with the other party *'we can't be too technical in our description and instead focus on how to build up a good relationship and from that carry out a good meeting'* (Interviewee 6). In order to build trust we need to talk often with the other participants and work on building a good relationship so that when they actually have the meeting then the trust for each other is there. Interestingly, Interviewee 4 mentions that in fact all sectors of the government are moving towards working together with other organisations under the banner *'governance instead of government'*.

Interviewee 4 states that evaluation is used all the time because they have a need to be able to carry these out meetings systematically. For example to start with they held meetings with two separate parts of the same forest company; the leaders group and a group with more hands on, practical working tasks and basically asked the same questions. After a while they realised that as well as being too much work, which generated too much information, they also found that they couldn't ask the same questions to both these groups of people. So for 2016 they are splitting it up, with the leaders group they will discuss more questions regarding policy, guidelines and strategy and with the other group more practical implications. They have decided also to be systematic with their meetings with the leaders group and have the same structure for these. The same agenda will be used along with the same questions so that they can analyse and draw conclusions. With regards to the other group, the SFA's local offices will deal with these and it will up to them to decide on agenda and questions as the results from these will not be analysed.

5.4 Comparisons Between the Case Studies

OGEP is an open participatory process which is within the framework of the law and so there is a large scope for the participants to influence how the process develops and the decisions that are made. Further, the environmental issues that are discussed are also something that are decided upon after discussion with representatives from different forest companies and organisations. One of the main issues is the fact that since it was the SFA who decided to work in this way it is the SFA who have the responsibility to make sure that something happens. Further, since all information needs to be made public according to *'offentlighetsprincipen'* (the principle of public transparency is central to the Swedish legal system. It means that the public, and representatives of the media, have a right to transparency and access to information about state and municipal operations) then there is a quality issue which has more often than not resulted in the representative from the SFA carrying out most of the work. Here it can be seen that the people in charge of OGEP, who form the action group give a lot of freedom to the leaders of each working group. There are very few guidelines to follow and in actual fact it is the working groups themselves that decide how the process should develop. Of course, the forest companies and organisations are not bound by law to change and work towards the results of OGEP but they have seen that the ones who have been part of the process have started to incorporate the results into their own guidelines and policies. The SFA themselves have said that they will work according to the results and the bosses for the biggest forest companies and SFA have just recently shaken hands that they will together work on these out in the forest.

With regards to FCV then it is a different story, here it seems very structured and organised. However, it is the SFA who designed the process, it is the SFA who set the goal and aim of the meeting, it is the SFA who set the agenda and how the meeting shall be run and it is the SFA who take the minutes and record what has been decided upon. Here it is most definitely the SFA's process just carried out just in a different way than before.

Instead of telling people what to do they now ask them how they think they can make the situation better and this is where the participants have most influence during the process. As long as the participants have the same understanding as to what the problem is then it becomes a free and open discussion as to how tackle the problem. Most of the things that get taken up on the agenda, the forest companies are not expected by law to work with, so in the past when they have gone out and talked to the company and said this is how you should do it, the forest company has had the choice to say no. Now when they instead ask questions then the forest company has to answer and reflect themselves on how they work and how they can solve the problem and this method, according to Interviewee 4 works much better. Interviewee 4 discusses how asking questions is a powerful tool as it is both a way of being supportive and a way of getting the companies to work in a certain direction. Here it can be seen that the people who are in charge of deciding how these participatory processes should be carried out have been given a lot of freedom to do this in the way that they feel is best. They are constrained by the fact that there is a requirement from the government to carry these out in a systematic way so that statistics can be generated but apart from that it has been very open. However, the people who are then responsible for carrying out the participatory processes together with the forest companies are controlled very strictly by the guidelines that they are given. Here their ability to act is almost entirely dictated by these guidelines so that accurate statistics can be made.

6 Theoretical Analysis

6.1 How is Communication Discussed?

Many of the interviewees state that communication can mean different things and that the traditional way for the SFA to work with communication was either face to face out in the forest giving advice or telling people what to do or by having a reference group to give opinions on certain policies that SFA themselves had drawn up. These ideas fit in well with the transmission based view of communication as described by Craig et al (2007) and this way of working, as Interviewee 6 explains is not a participatory process as the other participants do not actually participate. Now the SFA want to involve people in the discussion part and let them influence the proceedings and Interviewee 1 moves on to explain that communication is more than just one-way information giving. According to Interviewee 2, a participatory process, in comparison to one-way communication, is about listening, not judging the other participants and showing everyone respect. Interviewee 5 extends this idea to include openness, trust and that everyone should feel safe with each other. Interviewee 4 states how it is important to be curious, ask questions, listen to the others and be supportive and they also talks about how creating a good atmosphere in the room is essential as well as knowing what questions to ask next. Interviewee 4 explains that within FCV they now ask a question instead of telling and Interviewee 2 discusses that within OGEP the other participants also have a decision making role and can dictate how things should proceed. This is how the SFA are trying to work today and many of the adjectives described above fit in with the more dialogue based view of communication as described by (Craig et al, 2007).

The fact that everyone should feel safe and trust each other is taken up by both Senecah (2004) and Linell (1995). Cantiani (2012) speaks about the importance of listening and respecting everyone that participates. Here it is interesting to note that even though the SFA appear to understand that communication can mean different things and that the participatory based type of communication, that Craig et al (2007) discuss, is something more than just giving information, I believe they are having some problems putting this into practice. For example, Interviewee 1 also talks about how their role has changed for giving advice to being a facilitator at meetings but they then follow on to say how they find it difficult to keep their mouth shut sometimes and let others decide but that's just the way it is nowadays. This small comment reflects a misunderstanding as to what participation is about for the simple reason that everyone should be able to participate and influence the final decisions that are made no matter what their role is. That all roles are defined and made transparent within the process is very important according to Cantiani (2012) and this will be expanded upon in the next sections.

6.2 How is the Development and Planning of a Communication Strategy and Method of Participation Discussed?

With regards to OGEP, the leaders received no guidelines or methods as to how they should carry out participatory processes and so the process was free to develop in whatever way the working group decided. Interviewee 2 explains that the leaders for the working groups received very little help and direction and the only instructions they were given were that the working group should reach a common understanding through participation. With regards to FCV a similar pattern emerges. Interviewee 1 explains how they have used experience to develop how the participatory processes should be carried out as they had to develop the tools on their own. Interviewee 4 mentions how they had some help from a couple of consultants in 2014 who gave them some characteristics of what a good participatory process should look like but otherwise they have worked together with Interviewee 1 in developing the process. Interviewee 6 adds that the leaders group at the SFA went on a course at the beginning about general things to think about when carrying out a participatory process and also describes also how they uses their own experience to guide how they approaches the meetings. Interviewee 6 also receives help from Interviewee 1 and 4 and states that there is good internal information sharing within the SFA. Interestingly, Interviewee 5 explains the fact that the leaders of the each working group were not given any help at the beginning is just a reflection of how the SFA generally works when they start up something new *'now we are going to do this, good luck!'* (Interviewee 5). It is interesting to note that this appears to be the normal situation within the SFA and structures that have developed over time have created this situation. The fact that the people working with participatory processes were given no guidelines or instructions is not strange to them and is nothing that specifically reflects these participatory processes.

In actual fact, by not having any communication strategy in place from the beginning goes against a lot of what the literature recommends as good practice. Senecah (2004) talks about the importance of structuring the process and specifically talks about how the effectiveness of the dialogue process is key and this is only achieved through careful planning. For OGEP there is also no particular structure or method to the participatory processes they carry out and by letting each one develop in their own way means there is little control being made to insure the things that are discussed above actually become included in the process. Does everyone actually receive an equal standing? Does everyone actually have their voice heard? Is everyone actually included in the final decision? Referring back to Arnstein (1969) and how there are many different ways to practice participation, having a communication strategy would have made sure that methods were in place for making sure people are included in the right way being brought up and taken care of at the very beginning.

Both Senecah (2004) and Linell (1995) discuss the need for trust in the process but it must be hard to trust a process that doesn't appear to have structure and where the leader is unsure as to how to carry it out. Interviewee 3 describes how the people at the SFA that were given the task of carrying out these dialogue processes were people who had shown most interest in it and Interviewee 5 states that they were not picked at the start due to their communication skills. In actual fact none of the people who were picked have a background in communication and were instead picked because they were experts in their field and this reflects back to the traditional idea of the SFA being supervisors. Interviewee 5 admits that the SFA are under-developed when it comes to communication and participatory processes and that they are unsure as to what to do about it. Being one of the leaders expected to carry out the dialogue processes, Interviewee 2 explained that working with participatory processes was a completely new working method and something completely different to how they had previously worked. One of the Interviewees even goes on to mention how

they had great difficulty in the beginning and was under a lot of stress because they had never worked in this way before and didn't know what to do. They had no instructions to follow, no education to fall back on, had a great difficulty defending this way of working for their colleagues and in my understanding was put in a very stressful and difficult position by the SFA. Interviewee 4 reiterates how at the beginning the purpose of using participatory processes was very unclear and therefore a big challenge. Having a specific communication strategy in place before proceeding with the project would have eased these problems and Interviewee 5 goes on to talk about how today things are done a bit differently from how it was when the project started. They are working on increasing knowledge and competence and now provide internal education and more instructions for people to follow when it comes to carrying out participatory processes. There are even external courses available today that discuss how participatory processes work and Interviewee 2 has in fact taken such a course since they started with the OGEP project.

Interviewee 4 also mentions that it took a long time before it became really clear to them what the purpose of participatory processes was but now they think they're starting to understand it all. Interviewee 2 is quoted as saying '*from the beginning it was so different that I thought "oh how will this go" but now I don't know how you can work without dialogue*' (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 6 even reflects that if they were to do this again and start from the beginning then they think it would have been best if the SFA sat down with all participants and decided together how the process should be. Interviewee 6 also reflects that when the SFA started with OGEP they got lots of criticism because the process was very unclear and no one knew what the purpose was and neither did they! It was after this that all the leaders, who have responsibility for participatory processes at the SFA, went on a course so that they could understand themselves what they were doing. These are interesting points when you consider, as previously mentioned, there is a lot of literature around that take up the issue of how to carry out a participatory process and so it therefore becomes relevant to ask the question as to why the SFA did not make use of this? Why create new tools and methods on your own when people before have already tried and tested different methods? Here it is appropriate to note that each of the interviewees had a background in natural science, not in communication and I believe the one answer to be that they did not have the relevant education within communication from the beginning. The leaders, especially in OGEP, have been given a free hand to work as they please and so much of what they do is based on trial and error.

Interviewee 6 reflects on how the development of competence has come about after the processes started instead of developing it beforehand. Interviewee 6 then moves on to say that they should have sat down before and asked the questions, what knowledge do we need? How do we carry out this type of work? How do we include others in the process? Further, Interviewee 6 also reflects upon a problem that is the same throughout the whole of the forest industry and that they all have a natural science background. They see biological connections but how they then talk together about it is very difficult for them '*we should actually sit down together and talk about how we talk*' (interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 also believes that the SFA need to bring in people who are more expert in this area of carrying out participatory processes and that they need to educate the people who already work at SFA. According to Interviewee 6, they are very good at the natural science part but they forget that they work with people out in the forest. Since we don't have any of their own forest. '*I hereby say that we don't work in the forestry industry, we work in the confidence industry (förtroendeindustrin)*' (Interviewee 6).

Another implication for not having a specific communication strategy is that everybody has their own everyday understanding of what communication is and this is called '*everyday communication*' as previously discussed by Craig et al (2007). By not having a

specific communication strategy to work with this *'everyday communication'* will then influence how they view communication and thus form the theory that they then use to work with when developing and running participatory processes. With regards to the traditional way in which the SFA have viewed communication, as already stated this has been the one way, transmission type, it is therefore highly likely that they will continue to use this even though they are not consciously aware of it themselves. This has strong implications for the way in which these participatory processes are developed and having previously had a supervisory role then there is a risk that this will continue just under the guise of a participatory process in the form of *'tokenism'* on Arnsteins (1969) *'Ladder of Citizen Participation'*.

6.3 How are Roles and Mandate Discussed?

The problem with who has mandate to make decisions in a participatory process is discussed by many of the interviewees. Interviewee 2 states that the good thing about having no guidelines to work from within OGEP is that it is then up to group and not one individual to decide how to go forward and that not one person has the final say. Interviewee 2, also mentions that by having strict guidelines means someone has to take charge and the SFA want to move away from this and give equal mandate to everyone in the group. The SFA do not see themselves as the expert in this situation as long as the law is abided by and all this is seen by interviewee 2 as a method to put everyone on an equal power level. However, this is more likely to have the effect of leaving the process open to participants who are more skilled at getting what they want and therefore allowing the more powerful participants to dominate. Participation is not the same as having no leadership at all as this opens up the field for even more power issues and the domination of the strategic form of rationality that Habermas (1984) discusses. Further, Cantiani (2012) makes a point of saying that when developing a participatory process it is important that specific roles need to be made transparent and that it should be clear who is in charge and who has the mandate to make changes. Of course someone will be sitting with more power and Interviewee 6 states that, *'they (the SFA) have more power whatever way you look at it'* (Interviewee 6). This doesn't have to be a negative thing however and as long as everyone is aware of who is in charge and who does have the mandate to decide then this can still be an aspect of a good, open participatory process. Further, by also connecting back to Arnstein (1969), how can you be sure where you are on that ladder of participation when you have a process where no one is in charge, or when the one who is obviously in charge (the SFA) just state that everybody should be equal? Without actually working actively with this issue creates a serious risk that the participatory process is again, no more than just *'tokenism'*.

However, it is interesting to note that, as previously mentioned, each working group within OGEP has a leader from the SFA and it is their job to keep the group together and keep it functioning towards its purpose and this follows more along the lines of what Cantiani (2012) discusses. However, Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 5, although both working with OGEP appear to have different ideas as to the role of the leader in the process and this problem could have been addressed through the development of a communication strategy. Further, it is also not surprising that the leader from the SFA is unsure both about how to give everyone equal power and what their actual role in the process is when you consider that each leader was picked primarily for their expertise in a certain field. Further, the fact that they have previously worked with a more transmission based type of communication, links back to idea of *'everyday communication'* and the risk is that they will revert back to using this form of communication again. In fact, the results imply that

the SFA are having difficulties moving away from this supervisory role and this is brought up in some examples given during the Interviews. Interviewee 5 discusses how they have a problem in that the results from the working groups are often perceived by the forest industry as being the SFA's results only. Although these results are developed and described jointly within a participatory process, the whole project was developed by the SFA from the start and it is them that drive the process forward and organise it. It is the SFA who publish the finished documents and they are found on the SFA's website and it is even the SFA's own logo on these documents. Further, Interviewee 5 also discusses how the SFA need to be better at sharing the workload as it is often the leader from the SFA that do most of the work and that is generally because they need to be sure the quality is at the right level because everything recorded will be made public. With regards to one of the working groups, they started by sharing the responsibility but found that the quality of writing that came in wasn't good enough so the leader from the SFA had to improve it anyway. Now they just write the first draft themselves and then ask for comments from the others.

A similar situation is also seen with FCV and here it is even more clear that it is the SFA who have decided to work in this way, the SFA who create the agenda (although this and the questions are discussed with the National Action Group beforehand) and the SFA who provide the secretary and the chairman. Further, the SFA also have the goal to get the forest company to discuss how they will tackle the problem and so the forest company has to agree that there is a problem. If they don't agree then, according to interviewee 4 more 'persuasion' is required from the SFA. So, even though the structure is present, it goes against many of the things identified as being desirable in a participatory process. Literature on the subject of participation highlights the need for things such as equal distribution of power, building trust, understanding the other participant's perspectives, access to information and all participants being able to influence the proceedings but it appears that the SFA don't know how to incorporate them into the process. Interviewee 6 describes how there was a big problem at the start and they have had to work hard to explain that these meetings are something that they do together. *'Another problem that we have is that there is still a feeling that since the SFA organise the meeting and suggest points to put on the agenda that it is the SFA's meeting, it is the teacher arranging a meeting with a student'* (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 4 and Interviewee 6 also state that they really want the forest companies to come up with their own discussion points to put in the agenda but so far this hasn't happened very much. By considering all of this it is not strange that everything is seen as the SFA's own work according to Interviewee 5. Further, this problem is not surprising given the history of the SFA as advice-givers and supervisors, as it must be difficult for both themselves and others to see the SFA as anything else. Further, as Brulle (2010) discusses, people need to be involved from stage one as you only feel ownership and responsible for something that you have been involved with from the very beginning, a situation that has not occurred here.

Finally, another problem related to mandate is discussed by Interviewee 3 and is with regards to how the SFA do not offer any form of compensation for people who want to be a part of the OGEP project and this has created a situation in which some organisations are not represented. There is therefore a serious risk that just the biggest most dominating companies and organisations are present and Interviewee 5 stresses how it is these larger companies and organisations that have the time, resources and money to be part of it whereas the smaller ones do not. Interviewee 5 then mentions how it is a problem that the people and organisations who have not been part of the process do not understand the results or even what the project is about. They can be very sceptical and they also don't have the resources to implement the results in their own organisations or carry out any internal education that may be required. Interviewee 5 does go on to say that this issue about compensation will be brought up for discussion within the SFA in the near future but

in actual fact since the big companies and organisations cover most of the forest area in Sweden then this may not be as big a problem as it seems. Here Interviewee 5 also suggests that if the majority of forest cover is being managed in the correct way then maybe this is good enough? From a participation point of view then this goes strongly against the ideas that the process should be inclusive for everyone and that they all should have equal standing. The serious risk here is that the process is dominated by the most powerful forest companies and that they also get to make all the decisions at the expense of the smaller companies who are then expected to follow the results that they have not been part of deciding.

7 Conclusion

As this research project shows, the SFA are moving towards the use of participatory processes as one of the main tools at their disposal. The participatory methods they use are different depending on the goal of the process with a large variation being seen just when comparing OGEP and FCV. As interviewee 4 states, using participatory processes is a new approach for all government agencies but with specific regards to the SFA, participation is going to be their new hallmark. Up until now the SFA has stood for knowledge, information and clear answers but now they are taking a step back and instead will stand for being supportive and giving the necessary help if asked for. In order to do this they need to make sure they have the right knowledge, enough personal and the right guidelines throughout their organisation in the future. Interviewee 6 reflects that this way of working is becoming more and more accepted in the SFA and in fact they have received a request from the leaders group that participatory processes should not just be a short term thing. The SFA should be characterised by their use of dialogue and mutual understanding.

The SFA have traditionally had the transmission view of communication and a history of using this within their role as supervisors. However, the way in which the interviewees discuss communication shows a desire and a knowledge that they want to move away from the traditional one-way type of communication and many of the ways they use to describe how a participatory process should be carried out mirrors that what the literature recommends. These views, however seem rather empty to some extent since they have to "invent" every process by themselves and at times they mention things that show that they misunderstood what a participatory processes is about. On the other hand there are definitely signs that they are starting to change their perceptions and the SFA seem to be in an interesting phase of development at the moment. Developing the tools necessary to carry out participatory processes, the SFA are having to deal with their history of being supervisors, their own structures and ideals from within the SFA, the new participatory trends, the public demand of not wanting to be told what to do, their natural science education and the realisation that they do not know everything about social science that they would need to know and this research catches them in the practice of dealing with all these contradictions. Further, it is interesting to see that while they have been carrying out this "trial and error" work they have begun to realise some basic characteristics about good participation and these new insights are beginning to impact in a positive way.

When the SFA decided to carry out participatory processes this signalled a change of direction internally along with the need for a new way of working. Unfortunately they decided to do this before even knowing why they were doing it and how these processes should be carried out. A communication strategy is important both to organise how they are planning to work but also something to fall back and reflect upon. The participants reflect themselves about a lot of the problems they have encountered along the way and much of this could have been minimised if a clear strategy had been in place from the beginning. I

believe that the knowledge gaps could have been filled up, the purpose and working method could have been discussed and relayed to everyone, how they were planning to work could have been resolved, the idea that all the work is meant to be a collaboration and not just the SFA's work could have been addressed, the roles of all the participants could have been discussed and the risk that the leaders use their 'everyday communication' could have been reduced.

A recurring restriction to the participatory processes is that the forest companies are worried about the fact that all government material needs to be made public in accordance with 'offentlighetsprincipen'. The SFA have noticed that people are often worried to say things just in case they end up being made available to the public. However, as interviewee 4 explains, there are many things that don't have to be '*put on record*' and these things can be written down instead in an informal manner. It is therefore the SFA's task to explain how this process works so that everyone is on the same knowledge level. Another restriction is that the SFA have to make sure that everything is done to the law and that people abide by the law and that this supervisory role will always be part of their job. Interviewee 1 feels that participatory processes is the way forward but there is always a limit as to how much the other participants can decide themselves due to the fact that there are laws that need to be adhered to. However saying that, many of the participatory processes are carried out within the framework of the law so this should not be a problem.

In conclusion it appears that the SFA will continue to have many different participatory processes in the future and these will have different levels of participation, as discussed by Arnstein (1969), depending on the goal of the process. Many processes, like OGEP will be very open and so can be much more flexible with more influence given to all the participants. Other participatory processes, like FCV which are developed with the aim to make sure forest companies carry out good forest practice, will be much more structured and rigid. However, I believe that even though these processes will develop in different ways there are some general recommendations from literature that the SFA could use in combination with their experience when designing participatory processes in the future. Here I refer specifically to Cantiani (2012) because his paper '*illustrates a methodological proposal for integrating public participation in forest planning*' (Cantiani, 2012) but I believe that any of the other literature on participation, that I have referred to in this research project, would also be relevant.

Cantiani (2012) begins stating that '*the good outcome of the process depends for the most part on the attitude of the initiators or the persons responsible for the process itself*'. So having a clear leader who is responsible for the participatory process is essential and this is the first essential element. Moving on, Cantiani (2012) reiterates what I have stated before, that a clear strategy is required before you even start and whoever the Leader of the participatory process is must consider certain things right before the process even starts. Those that I believe are most relevant to the SFA include:

- Participation needs to be grounded in very exact rules and regulations and these need to be known and accepted by all participants. The SFA needs to be clear what these rules and regulations are themselves right from the start.
- The role of each participant needs to be known along with how much influence they have on the result. The SFA needs to be very clear with this issue especially with regards to how much influence the participants have and who is actually leading the process.
- An understanding that participation is a combination of scientific knowledge and the knowledge of the participants is required and planning how to do this is essential. The SFA needs to be make sure that all relevant information is in a

form that all participants understand and that both scientific knowledge and the knowledge the participants have is equally valuable.

- An understanding that participation is about taking into account all perspectives on the specific subject is required. This means that even the representative from the SFA has a say.
- The method of participation needs to be known to everyone. Here Cantiani (2012) discusses different methods of participation that can be used and these have different tools associated with them which can be used to increase the chances of success. Since the SFA will continue to have different participatory processes with different aims this point becomes a very important part of the process for them.

Finally, I firmly believe the SFA to be on the right track and by combining the knowledge they have generated together with some recommendations from literature then I believe they will have every chance of being successful in the future. To support this conclusion, Interviewee 6 states they have already received good feedback from the forest companies that they have met. The forest companies like the fact that they can discuss things with the SFA in a relaxed manner and this, they say is a very positive thing which shows that the SFA are working in the right direction, *'I have even heard that from different sources that this is the best thing that the SFA have ever done and that is pretty awesome!'* (Interviewee 6)

7.1 Future Research

By looking at the perspective of the participants who work at the SFA then I am limiting this research to one angle. In order to gain a more holistic picture the other participants who have been included in the participatory processes could also be investigated. This would allow a more detailed investigation to be carried out and give more depth to the research. Further, I also believe that my research would be made richer by combining the interview data with observation data generated from an ethnographical study.

This research project investigated participatory processes acting within the present legal system. A pre-study was carried out in Sweden in 2013 into how Sweden could develop and carry out a National Forest Program, which has its roots in an international concept for forestry that has been developed as a means of handling forest policy. As interviewee 3 states *'this national forest program is designed to allow people to be able to influence forest policy and by doing so will hopefully make it attractive for people to want to be part of the processes'*. A very interesting extension to this research would be look at how participation is viewed by the people working with these participatory processes that actually aim to give other participants the ability to influence forest policy.

Finally, according to interviewee 4, the SFA have noticed that there is a problem with gender at the meetings. Almost 75% of the people from the SFA that go to these meetings are men and over 90% from the forest companies and this could also form the foundation of a future research project into gender issues.

7.2 Reflection

Communication about the environment is a very hot topic and the ideas of public involvement and participation in decision making processes is very much gaining momentum. Like I have previously stated, there are many different ways of carrying out

participatory processes and therefore any investigation into how these are carried out in practice can only add to the knowledge in this field, especially when the participants included work for a government agency. Further, as Silverman (2013) states, '*the research methods allow rich descriptions of everyday practice*' and this, he goes on to say, allows the participants '*to make evaluative judgments about their own practices and experiment with the adoption of new approaches*'. So even without giving the SFA direct advice, just the process of getting the interviewees to reflect and make judgements about what they do will result in them evaluating and possibly improving how they do things. A process which in itself is very worthwhile and generally gives positive effects.

7.3 Reliability

Reliability normally refers to whether the research could be carried out again with similar results and this is more connected to quantitative approaches (Silverman, 2013). Being a qualitative study and based on a constructionist model, the conclusions were never intended to report actual facts and so the question arises how this type of research can be thought of as reliable? Moisander et al (2006) offer two means of achieving reliability in qualitative research both of which I believe to have achieved in this research project and therefore making it reliable. Namely; making the process transparent by describing in detail the strategy used and methods of analysing the data and by making my theoretical stance transparent and explaining how this is just one way of interpreting the results.

In research it is common to use triangulation to increase the validity of your results (Silverman, 2013) and this generally involves using either different kinds of data and/or different methods in order to tackle the research question. Triangulation, however generally implies that there is a '*truth*' out there that we can capture via the use of different approaches and is very realist in its approach (Bryman 2010). Silverman (2013) then moves on to say that with regards to '*certain kinds of social research particularly that based on a constructionist model it is simply not useful to conceive of an overarching reality*'. However, even though I take a constructionist worldview I believe that the use of triangulation can offer depth and more validity to my research and by interviewing people who work with two different types of participatory processes, this gives a triangulation of the interview data.

Considering the above I therefore believe that my research is relevant both in the academic world and for the participants from the SFA who I hope will also have use of my findings.

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Appendix 1- List of Interviewees

Interviewee	Educational Background	Number of years working at the SFA	Number of years working specifically with participation
1	Forestry	More than 20	3-5
2	Forestry/Biology	10-15	3-5
3	Forestry/History	10-15	3-5
4	Forestry	15-20	3-5
5	Forestry and Landscape Architecture	5-10	3-5
6	Environmental/Behavioural Science	10-15	3-5