

Social Capital, Trusting Advice and the Governance of Private Forests

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The talk shared interesting points on how one of the most important natural resources in Sweden is affected by social capital of particular local contexts.

- **Trust**

Generally, we all know what trust is, we give and receive trust every single day, and in many aspects of life. Trust exists between a trustee and a trustor. When a person takes a “leap of faith” without knowing the future outcome of another person’s actions, he/she/they relies on the good faith of the other person. Without trust societies will not be able to function. Yet, it is interesting how different societies trust in diverse ways. Also, generally societies with larger well-being levels tend to have large trust in other people.



- **Social Capital.**

The second topic raised was social capital, a social concept highly related to trust. Yet, social capital is different since it includes the networks between people and how they relate to each other in trust building to explain levels of social participation and cohesion. Social capital exists in three forms bonding (in close groups with similar values, e.g. families, closed groups), bridging (that links groups that have differences) and linking (helping to reach institutions). Importantly, social capital, is per se a type of capital in society and therefore can be seen as valuable and useful.

“Forest cannot be understood, protected or managed without considering people”

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- **A case study of Social Capital in Swedish forests.**

The governance of forest in Sweden is interestingly complex. Sweden has a long tradition of forestry and its culture is remarkably linked to the utilization of forest, with many small-scale private owners owning almost 50% of the forestland. The legislation that regulates forestry has been changing throughout the years and is currently relatively deregulated, relying on forest owners to make the right decisions and balancing production and



natural values. In order to meet these goals, informative policy instruments are important, being advice one of the most used by private companies, forest owners' associations and state institution. The results of a case study in Helgeå Model Forest in Southern Sweden show that trust between advisors and forest owners is a very important component of forest governance. In particular, time spent with the forest owners and relationships built over time are key for bonding social capital, and the trust that owners have in forest advisors. Findings imply that building of trust requires local personnel with contextualised knowledge about the forest and forest owners' situations in order to gain trust (Guillén, Wallin and Brukas, 2015)

- **Trust, social capital and Governance**

The role of trust and social capital in governance seems to be currently unexplored, although we recognize that it should be a very important component of any governance structure. Building trust and social capital could provide avenues for improving rule compliance, enhancing stakeholder engagement and participation as well as leveling decision making processes and the distribution of power and resources more equally. Hence a potential area for research in Landscape governance could be to focus on the role of trust and social capital in the formation development and consolidation of governance structures. Other interesting topics to explore would be the links between social capital and innovation as well as with transformative change.

A new project on Green Infrastructure

Currently, Luis Andrés is working on a project to study the social processes behind the Green Infrastructure plans of the different regions in Sweden. The aim is to understand how the plans take into account the views of stakeholders, how the stakeholders are involved and participate and how are advisory services included in the GI plans.

References

- Guillén, Luis Andrés., Wallin, Ida., Brukas, Vilis. (2015) Social capital in small-scale forestry: A local case study in Southern Sweden. *Forest Policy and Economics*. Volume: 53, pp 21-28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2014.12.006>.