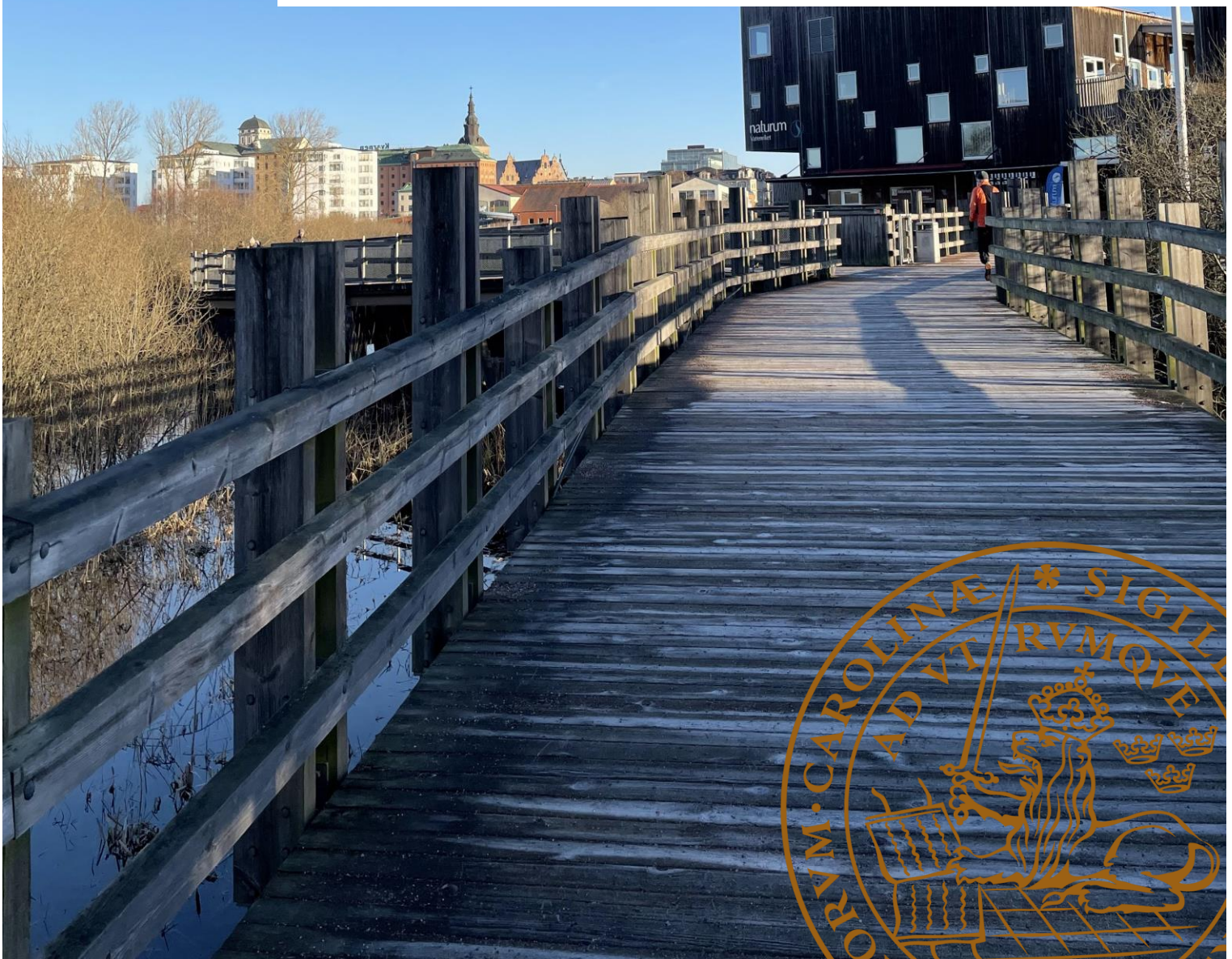


# The evolution of wetland restoration policy – A case study of Kristianstad Vattenrike

ALEXANDER PALMÉR 2023  
MVEM31 EXAMENSARBETE FÖR MASTEREXAMEN 30 HP  
MILJÖVETENSKAP | LUNDS UNIVERSITET



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A case study of Kristianstad Vattenrike

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2023



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# Abstract

Wetlands are vital for biodiversity, socio-ecological systems, and carbon sequestration, but they present a complex challenge in crafting effective conservation policies. This study investigates a successful case of wetland conservation policy, focusing on the notable achievements of Kristianstad Vattenrike. Utilizing a comprehensive research approach, encompassing semi-structured interviews, surveys, and document analysis, the study explores the multifaceted factors influencing and fostering the participation of private actors in wetland restoration efforts. Emphasizing the significance of policy attributes and social norms as facilitators for collective action, the research delves into the intricacies of stakeholder attitudes. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore the role of agenda-setting and coalition magnets in the creation of wetland policy instruments. In doing so, this study seeks to understand the contextual adaptation of policy instruments, recognizing the unique characteristics of wetland restoration, offering insights into the development of wetland policies. By unraveling the success of Kristianstad Vattenrike with the unique approach of *policy emergence* and *policy development*, this research contributes valuable knowledge to the interplay of ecological, economic, and social factors in wetland conservation, offering a foundation for future studies on the design of policies that not only protect but also enhance the resilience of these vital ecosystems.



# Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Våtmarker är en egen kategori av naturens egna superhjältar. Våtmarker av olika slag erbjuder ökad biologisk mångfald, naturnära besöksplatser med unik flora och fauna samt möjligheter att lagra koldioxid i jorden. Men att hantera och skydda dessa områden är en utmaning, framförallt när det gäller att skapa en smart naturvårdspolitik. Denna studie ger oss en närmare titt på ett framgångsrikt exempel där man har anlagt, vårdat och återställt våtmarker – Kristianstad Vattenrike.

Studien tillämpar en blandad metod där intervjuer, enkäter och dokumentanalys används för att förstå vad som får privata markägare att vara med och återställa våtmarker. Studien gör en djupdykning i olika teoretiska ramverk, så som agenda-setting, policy design och sociala normer för att se hur man kan få folk att samarbeta och dra åt samma håll.

Studien kastar också ljus på hur man medvetet kan sätta agendan och bygga upp stöd för olika åtgärder för att främja våtmarker. Målet är att förstå vad som gör styrmedel och politiska verktyg effektiva.

Genom att titta närmare på framgången i Kristianstad Vattenrike, där man inte bara har skyddat utan även stärkt dessa viktiga ekosystem, erbjuder studien en nyckel till att förstå hur ekologiska, ekonomiska och sociala faktorer samverkar inom våtmarksbevarande. Det öppnar dörren för framtida studier om hur vi kan skapa politiska verktyg som inte bara värnar om dessa områden utan också ökar deras motståndskraft mot förändringar.



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# 1. Introduction

*This initial section of the study will introduce the reader to the problem this paper sets out to explore, being policy evolution for wetland restoration and creation, examined through the case of Vattenriket in Kristianstad and its neighboring municipalities. Following a brief history of wetlands and wetland restoration in Sweden, as well as a look into the current state of policy on the subject, this section also accounts for previous research on subjects of interest to this study. This section looks towards the theory of social ecological systems, collective action, policy attributes and agenda setting to present the reader with at a set of significant theories for this thesis. Building on the abovementioned theories, a theoretical framework for policy evolution in collective action is developed. Finally, the purpose and research question of the study will be presented.*

## 1.1 Problem definition and scope

Wetlands are crucial hubs for biodiversity conservation, complex socio-ecological systems, and carbon sequestration (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). Recognizing their significance adds urgency to their preservation, creation and restoration, particularly given their role as carbon sinks. However, developing effective policy instruments for wetland conservation and restoration is a formidable challenge, often hindered by the complex interplay of ecological, economic, and social factors (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). In this thesis, the case of wetland conservation policy will be examined by looking at policy evolution and identifying factors behind the success of Kristianstad Vattenrike. Understanding how environmental conservation policy has emerged and further developed into a successful case of wetland conservation, creation and restoration in Kristianstad Vattenrike can inform future policy designers on facilitating factors for successful wetland preservation. Thus, this study aims to bridge the gap between policy theory and real-world environmental conservation, contributing to the development of policies that can effectively protect and restore vital wetland ecosystems.

This thesis responds to two trends in environmental governance. First, environmental challenges such as degradation of wetlands increasingly call for market-based policy instruments, but their implementation requires careful design. In Sweden, the participation rate for private actors (landowners) enrolling in wetland restoration

is still low. As an example, only 16 % of the allocated government funds for wetland restoration in privately owned forest lands, so called *återvättningsavtal* (re-wetting agreements) with Swedish Forest Agency were used between the start 2021 and 2022 (Miljödepartementet 2020, 2021, 2022; email correspondence with the Swedish Forest Agency). Further, at the time of writing, no such policy instruments exist targeting wetland restoration on privately owned peatlands used in agriculture (Naturvårdsverket, 2023). This raises the question of participation and the factors that promote or undermine participation.

Recent studies on climate change adaptation policy (Coleman et al., 2023) found that the attributes of policy instruments are crucial to how it is received and ultimately its adoption. Such attributes can be levels of payments, distributional justice, and length of the contract (Coleman et al., 2023). However, little is known about policy attributes in other policy domains, such as instruments for nature conservation where private actors constitute a part of the stakeholders. While Coleman et al. (2023) studied attitudes towards national policy, an increased knowledge on how policy attributes influence stakeholder-attitudes towards policy instruments is indeed required, as many policy instruments are directly targeting certain groups of people and not the population at large. Further, the relationship between policy attributes and collective action problems needs to be explored further, as climate change related issues often constitute collective action problems. This thesis responds to the abovementioned gaps by looking at whether and how policy attributes matter for wetland restoration policy targeting private landowners through examining stakeholder experiences and attitudes towards Kristianstad Vattenrike. This is done by focusing on the importance of social norms in collective action and how they relate to policy success in collective action.

Second, it is being increasingly recognized that responding to environmental challenges requires policy instruments that are fit for a specific context. In other words, the restoration and conservation of wetlands are issues which carry unique characteristics, and as such the policy responses must be tailored to particular circumstances (Oberlack et al., 2023). However, responding to environmental problems such as wetland degradation and the issues related to it, is not just about applying solutions and new policy instruments; it's also about adapting a decision-making process that allows for a successful wetland restoration. This is critical because there are a number of institutional barriers and vested interest that block change. Thus, it is of interest to understand the process through which Kristianstad Vattenrike has emerged as a case of successful wetland restoration. This thesis responds to this need by looking at the process through which Kristianstad Vattenrike emerged, and how barriers to and trade-offs in wetland restoration were navigated and. In other words, this thesis sets out to examine how Kristianstad Vattenrike became a successful recipe for environmental protection policy. By turning to theories of agenda-setting and coalition magnets, policy emergence will be studied using interview with officials at Kristianstad municipality, and through analyzing policy documents.

### 1.1.2 Purpose and research questions

Based on the abovementioned, this study seeks to explore and critically analyse the policy evolution and underlying factors (agenda drivers, policy attributes and social norms) that have contributed to the success of Kristianstad Vattenrike as a nature conservation policy, and how they can inform policy design for wetland conservation and restoration in Sweden in general. As such, the study aims to contribute to the larger research bodies on policy design in collective action and nature conservation, bridging the gap between concrete wetland restoration success and policy theory.

By identifying and analyzing the underlying factors that have contributed to the success of Kristianstad Vattenrike and linking them to previous research on policy attributes, social ecological systems, collective action problems and agenda setting, this study aims to enrich our understanding of policy design in the context of wetland conservation in Sweden. Through its purpose, this study aims to contribute to both the scientific understanding of policy and wetland conservation as well as to the toolkit of policy instruments that aim to protect and restore wetlands.

#### Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose outlined above, this research paper begs the answer to two questions:

**Q1** *How did Kristianstad Vattenrike evolve as a successful policy instrument for wetland creation and restoration?*

**Q2** *Can policy evolution in collective action be studied and understood as a two-step process of emergence and development?*

The second question refers to the attempt of this study to bridge the gap between the theories explaining *policy emergence*, or policy from the perspective of policymakers, and *policy development*, or policy from the perspective of stakeholders. In other words, the second questions allude to the experimental and theory developing research design of the study by asking if the framework presented in section 2.4 is viable in policy research.

## 1.3 Kristianstad Vattenrike



**Figure 1. Naturum Vattenriket**

Naturum is the main visitor center for Vattenriket, situated next to the center of Kristianstad

Kristianstad Vattenrike, situated in and around the municipality of Kristianstad on the east coast in southern Sweden, stands as an example of successful wetland creation and conservation. Kristianstad is, with its proximity to the Baltic Sea, abundance of rivers and lakes, and its low altitude, an area which historically has been rich in wetlands. However, as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, draining of wetlands and lakes in the area begun in order to create more agricultural land (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstads Vattenrike, n.d a). This trend continued during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, resulting in a drastically changed landscape. At one time, the lake Nosabysjön was drained, creating a new land area in Kristianstad, which today in home to Sweden's lowest point, at 2,3 meters below the sea level (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstads Vattenrike, n.d a). To no surprise, the alterations done to the landscape in and around Kristianstad eventually lead to notable negative environmental effects. Further, as the city of Kristianstad grew, pollution from industries and sewer systems continued to have negative effects on the area. Biodiversity in the area was affected negatively as some of the unique

habitats in the area where changed, eutrophication in the nearby lakes and in the Baltic Sea became an issue (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstad Vattenrike, n.d b).

During the 1980s a change in attitude towards the abundance of water began to take shape in Kristianstad (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstad Vattenrike, nd. b). With support from different NGOs and state agencies, wetlands in the area began to be restored during the 1990s. In 2005, Vattenriket was appointed as a Unesco Biosfärområde, and in 2010 the visitation center Naturum Vattenriket was opened (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstad Vattenrike, n.d b). Since then, as a part of the work of Kristianstad municipality, Vattenriket has continued to grow and today a total of approximately 150 hectares of wetland have been restored or created in agricultural or forest land (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstad Vattenrike, n.d c). Today, the wetlands of Vattenriket provide a variety of eco-system services to the area, including improved biodiversity, wildlife, nutrient retention from adjacent agriculture, places for recreation and outdoor activities.

The conservation of wetlands within the scope of Kristianstad Vattenrike are partly on municipal land, partly on private land. Moreover, some of the wetlands are in nature reserves. During the last decade, an increasing number of wetlands have been created or restored on private land, though contracts with landowners. Today there are over 80 contracts signed, according to official documentation of contracts. According to one official at the Biosphere office of Kristianstad Vattenrike, funding for the construction or restoration mainly come from LONA (see more below) or various NGOs (personal correspondence). It is worth noting that landowners receive no economic compensation when entering into a contract with the municipality. This means that all landowners signing contracts are doing so voluntarily. While many wetlands have been constructed or restored, there are still a lot of drained peatlands in the region, as there has not been as much restoration of drained wetlands with organic soils, which remains as a future potential for Vattenriket. The majority of the wetlands created or restored as a part of Vattenriket has been created in order to strengthen resilience, increase biodiversity, and manage nutrient retention from agriculture.

One central aspect of Vattenriket has been to serve as a place for strengthening local commitment and spreading education on nature conservation, biodiversity, and the benefits of wetlands. Naturum Vattenriket states as one of its purposes to initiate a transformative journey for sustainable attitudes through captivating experiences in nature (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstad Vattenrike, n.d d). To achieve this, there are currently 21 accessible sites, excluding Naturum itself, aiming to spread knowledge about its natural and cultural history, fostering interest in conservation. Further, the biosphere office works towards attitudinal shifts for sustainable development through communication and education, collaborating with academic institutions to promote research and education on biodiversity and sustainability, hosting annual biosphere camps for children and training of “biosphere ambassadors” (Biosfärkontoret Kristianstad Vattenrike, n.d. d).



**Figure 2. Helge å**  
Helge å runs through Kristianstad, and is connected to many of the wetlands in Vattenriket.



**Figure 3. Information posts for visitors of Vattenriket**  
Information posts are common among the many visitation spots in Vattenriket

### 1.3 Wetlands and wetland restoration policy in Sweden

The ecological significance of wetlands in Sweden is profound, as they stand as among the most species-rich environments, playing a crucial role in biodiversity and providing essential ecosystem services such as water purification (Naturvårdsverket, n.d b). Wetlands serve multiple functions in the landscape, purifying water, offering protection against droughts and floods, and standing as one of the most diverse natural environments (Naturvårdsverket, n.d b). In general, wetlands are essential for animals and plants, contributing to water and shoreline environments, enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure, and fortifying landscapes against climate change. The strategic placement of wetlands in the landscape and how the surrounding land is used play a significant role in their contributions. Wetlands with peat formation, like extensive marshes, actively sequester carbon in their vegetation. Wetlands with open water surfaces in agricultural landscapes positively impact various species and irrigation while purifying water from sediment or nutrients. Open wetlands are also crucial for locally balancing water levels during rainy and dry periods. Given the above, wetlands are a pivotal measure for Sweden's climate efforts.

Wetlands can be categorized based on their water source (hydrology), dominant vegetation (biotope), or water characteristics (biochemistry) (Naturvårdsverket, n.d c). Given their dependence on water, the hydrological classification is particularly useful for wetland restoration. Wetlands may receive water from groundwater, surface water (e.g., streams or lake water), or rainwater. Peatlands, especially, rely on groundwater or rainwater, constituting the largest wetland type in Sweden. Surface water-dependent wetlands include floodplains or swamp forests along lake or river edges. Currently, Sweden's vast wetland area is estimated to be close to 90,000 square kilometers (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). An analysis in 2019 reveals that approximately 20 percent of wetland types in Sweden maintain a favorable conservation status, while around 80 percent of inventoried wetlands have been influenced over the last two centuries (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). Regional disparities are notable, with variations between northern and southern Sweden and among different wetland types. Notably, while the majority of wetland types in the alpine region exhibit a favorable status, most wetland types in the rest of the country are deemed unsatisfactory.

Despite being one of the countries boasting the highest wetland coverage globally, Sweden is confronted with the urgent need to restore, rehabilitate, and recreate vast expanses of wetlands. Over the last century, nearly one quarter of Sweden's original wetland area has vanished, primarily due to drainage, the straightening of watercourses, and land use for agriculture or forestry (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). Further, in specific regions, such as Mälardalen and Skåne, up to 90 percent of the original wetland area has disappeared (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). Despite ongoing conservation efforts, including restoration, mowing, and protection, the status of several wetland types is at risk due to factors like ongoing



reversion driven by drainage, water regulation, reduced grazing, or mowing, increased nutrients, and climate change. Additionally, wetlands have been impacted by urban development, infrastructure projects, and peat extraction. Presently, these vital ecosystems are losing their original functions due to overgrowth caused by nitrogen deposition, old ditches, and reduced grazing activities, resulting in decreased maintenance.

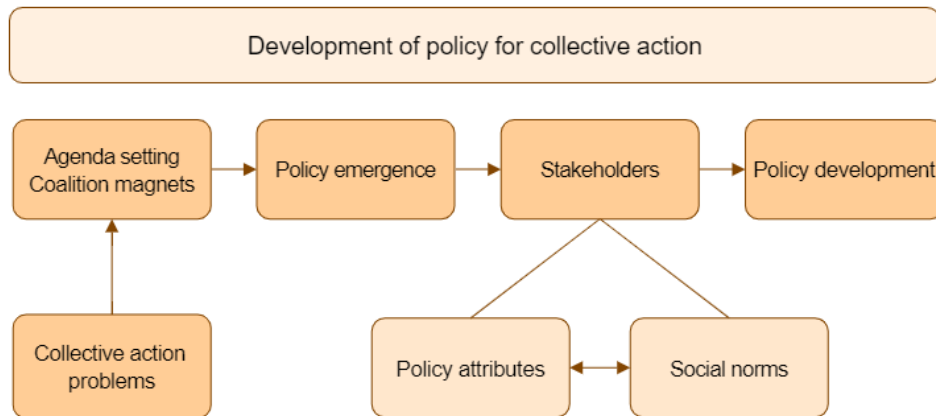
Despite the state of wetlands in Sweden, recent years have witnessed broad efforts to restore and rehydrate these vital ecosystems (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a). Notably, between 2010 and 2021, approximately 127 square kilometers of wetlands have been either established or restored. Efforts to address challenges and negative impacts include hydrological restoration measures such as filling excavated ditches, recreating natural water flows, and clearing vegetation. Particularly noteworthy is hydrogeological restoration, lifting the water table to keep peat wet and retain greenhouse gases in the soil, aligning with climate goals (Naturvårdsverket, n.d a).

To support the creation of new wetlands or the restoration of existing ones, various grants are available from entities such as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, county administrative boards, the Swedish Forest Agency, and the Swedish Board of Agriculture. The wetland initiative through the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) encompasses a total budget of 300 million SEK for 2023. While funding for wetland restoration exists in the shape of public funding, funding from the EU and funding from NGOs, LONA is the most extensive national initiative to date aimed at increasing local initiatives in local nature conservation efforts (Naturvårdsverket, n.d d). The Swedish EPA is the authority responsible for disbursing grants within the framework of LONA-wetlands. Municipalities can apply for LONA grants, and various local entities, such as interest organizations, can initiate projects. These projects are either conducted by the municipality or a local entity that has an agreement with the municipality. However, there is no available data on the initiators, or the proportion of the grant paid out for wetland rehydration or establishment projects on private land.

The municipality is responsible from application to final reporting, but private landowners can initiate projects through the municipality on their land. Eligible wetland projects include restoration or establishment projects that strengthen the landscape's ability to manage water flows, increase groundwater replenishment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from drained peatlands, enhance biodiversity, and adapt to climate change. Funding levels can cover up to 90% of eligible costs, and all types of land can receive support. Various actions, such as vegetation removal, ditch infilling/damming, construction of ponds/small waters/wetlands, creation of two-stage ditches, floodplain restoration, meandering, and knowledge-building, are eligible for support.

## 2. Theoretical framework

*This section presents the theoretical framework on which the thesis is based, introducing the reader to the research fields which are of relevance for the study as a whole. Building on previous findings within the fields of policy studies (policy attributes), social-ecological systems (SES), and the depth of literature covering collective action and agenda setting, this section outlines a frame through which the results can be analyzed, and through which interview guides can be created. First, through an overview of collective action problems, we establish a foundational understanding of the complex landscape within which wetlands restoration and creation can be understood. Secondly, a theoretical exploration on the evolution (emergence and development) of policy and collective action will be presented in two phases. In the first phase, focus is turned to how policies come into being through agenda-setting and coalition magnets (emergence). Shifting to the second stage, the roles social norms and policy attributes play in shaping and sustaining these policies will be examined (development). This step-by-step exploration helps unravel the process of developing environmental protection policies and their impact on local communities and collective action.*



**Figure 4. Theoretical framework on evolution of policy for collective action**

This figure illustrates the conceptual framework of how *policy emergence* and *policy development* contribute to the evolution of policy in different stages.

## 2.1 Collective action

Collective action refers to groups acting with the aim of pursuing a common goal. Collective action can be found in various levels of governance and in several types of markets (economic, political, private, public) (Shughart, 2004). For example, collective action can be found in labor unions, companies, political organizations, and other groups where joint action is encouraged for some reason. Successful collective action, however, build upon the presumption that actors will act in the interest of the group, which has many times been refuted by scholars, claiming that rational individuals will, more often than not, act in line with their own self-interest (Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 2000; Shughart, 2004). This “free-rider problem” give rise to collective action problems.

Collective action problems refer to such situations, in which individuals, by acting with their own self-interest at hand, undermine the well-being of a group or a common good, or in other words; it represents a scenario where solutions to a problem (of a public or common nature) are hindered by a conflict between the interests of individuals and the interests of the public (Olson, 1965). The theory of collective action problems builds upon the abovementioned idea first presented by Olson in 1965, that has come to be known as the “zero-contribution thesis” (Olson, 1965); the idea that individuals, given they are rational and keen to their own self-interest, will in most cases *not* pursue the common interest of a larger group and instead pursue their own interests. The zero-contribution thesis supports a common narrative in policy

theory and idea in public policy that rules and regulations need to be externally enforced in order to protect the common interest of groups (Ostrom, 2000).

For the sake of this thesis, it becomes important to highlight that collective action problems often occur in social-ecological systems. Social-ecological systems are complex systems that arise when social and ecological systems interact. Such systems often arise from human activities impacting the environment. Social-ecological systems can be entailed by environmental problem; take as an example the social-ecological systems related to forestry (deforestation, invasive species), agriculture (drainage of wetlands, eutrophication) and expansion of infrastructure (pollution, resource depletion). It has been recognized by scholars that many social-ecological problems can be perceived as collective action problems, as environmental problems tend to concern shared resources or shared space (Bodin, 2017). Therefore, in the case of collective action problems in social-ecological systems, the dilemmas faced by individuals when deciding whether to contribute to collective efforts or pursue their own interests, will influence the collective governance of social-ecological systems.

While previous research on social-ecological systems has fallen short in developing social-ecological frameworks due to a lack of interdisciplinary approaches, well tested analytical models and complications with gathering of reliable ecological and social data (Sullivan & York, 2021), recent studies have made progress in applying the theoretical framework of social-ecological systems to collective action. Doss and Meinzen-Dick (2015) found two reoccurring factors that tend to affect collective action in social-ecological systems, being individuals' reliance and dependence on natural resources within the system. Further, Sullivan and York (2021) found similar evidence, adding risk perceptions, and spatial as well as temporal dynamics to the mix. However, there still exist a variance in the results of driving factors of collective action in social-ecological systems, complicating generalization (Sullivan and York, 2021). Yet, the abovementioned findings build on the evidence that social and ecological variables as well as spatial and temporal dynamics carry a significant role in collective governance of social-ecological systems.

This is of relevance for this thesis for two reasons. First, wetlands in Sweden constitute a social-ecological system in the sense that many drained wetlands today constitute agricultural land and production forests, and as such, similar factors driving collective action might exist; and secondly, this offers an opportunity to theoretically bridge the gap between the understanding of collective action in social-ecological systems and policy, through looking at the relation between social norms and to policy attributes. Finally, as is argued by Jagers et. al. (2020), large-scale collective action needs a supportive coordinating third-party actor. While large-scale studies often shifts attention to national or international scenes, it is worth pointing out that collective action usually considers smaller groups. As the case of Kristianstad Vattenrike concerns a large variety of actors and landowners, spanning across multiple municipalities borders, it is argued that it constitutes a case of large-scale collective

action. This assumption further emphasizes the role of policy in relation to collective action.

## 2.2 Policy emergence – Agenda-setting and coalition magnets

### 2.2.1 Agenda-setting

The theoretical framework of agenda-setting offers insights into the evolution of policy and political issues on the political agenda. Agenda-setting theory seeks to explain the process of how a subject or an issue receives the attention of government officials (Dannevig et. al., 2013). John Kingdon (1995) defines the political agenda as “the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people around them, pay serious attention” (Kingdon, 1995). Through the lens of agenda-setting theory, the evolution of policy and political issues can be understood as starting with the recognition of a specific problem or goal which is, or rather becomes, considered as important by policymakers (Dannevig et. al., 2013).

While most agenda-setting research focus on national or even international agenda-setting, some scholars have focused on agenda-setting on the local level, examining how agendas are shaped in local governments. It is important to consider the discrepancy between factors driving local agenda-setting and those driving national agenda-setting. In a study of local agenda-setting in Norwegian municipalities, Dannevig et. al. (2013) argued that local agenda-setting research needs to consider alternative models of understanding political agendas to those of national agenda-setting. For example, in the context of national agenda-setting, the media and public discourse are presented to carry a significant role (Pralle, 2009). This holds true even in the context of environmental agenda-setting.

While media and public discourse is indeed likely to influence local agendas as well, scholars have identified the role of institutions and individuals as salient (Dannevig et. al., 2013). Further, to deal with the lack of frameworks on what drives agendas in local, or urban, context, Dannevig et. al. (2013) compiled a set of categories on local drivers of political agenda. Building on conventional agenda-setting theory, they nuanced the understanding of how agendas forms and develop in municipalities by providing empirical insights from their research. These categories represent a framework which can be used to understand how environmental issues emerge on the local political scene. As such, they are fit for this thesis, presenting a lens through which the emergence of environmental policy in the case of Kristianstad Vattenrike can be examined. Below, in Table 1, four categories are presented, building on the categories developed by Dannevig et. al. (2013). It is important to note that this table

constitutes an attempt to condense the insights and learnings from the study of Dannevig et. al. (2013) to a general framework. As such, insights from other agenda-setting scholars, such as Kingdon (1984), Birkland (1998), Penning-Rowsell et. al. (2006), Hughes and Romero-Lankao (2014), van der Heijden (2019) and Hildingsson (2014) are used to highlight certain aspects of the different categories.

### 2.2.2 Coalition Magnets

Yet another way to perceive how the political agenda can be shaped and formed is through *coalition magnets*. Coalition magnets is a term describing the power of ideas through the process in which ideas, when manipulated in the correct way, can have a substantial effect on the construction of political coalition (Béland & Cox, 2016). As such, coalition magnets can be understood as a toolset for agenda-setters such as engaged officials or *policy entrepreneurs* (Kingdon, 1995). According to Béland and Cox (2016) ideas that function as coalition magnets are often “novel constructions, unfamiliar to the actors in a policy debate; or they are being used in a new or unfamiliar way.” As such, coalition magnets should be understood as comprising a level of surprise, offering a new way of seeing a certain issue and having the ability to create hot topics. Central to coalition magnets is the understanding of ideas, and how ideas inform decision making. A vital component of ideas is their ability to spread values and worldviews. Ideas, furthermore, also carry a close relationship to power (Béland & Cox, 2016). The process through which ideas influence power can be viewed as the creation of coalition magnets. First, an idea that has the ability to appeal to people is manipulated, shedding light on an issue; second, ideas are spread to policy makers, granting it legitimacy; third, the ideas, at this point well spread, brings together actors resonating with the idea (Béland & Cox, 2016). Note that the last step can accumulate actors with historically differing views and values.

Coalition magnets are of interest for this thesis due to the notion that ideas form and shape the outcome of power (Béland & Cox, 2016). This not only broadens the opportunity to study and unveil factors driving the agenda in the case of Kristianstad Vattenrike. It further suggests that the ideas behind Kristianstad Vattenrike might have functioned as a coalition magnet, playing a role in the emergence of wetlands as an issue of special interest in Kristianstad municipality. Together with the abovementioned theoretical framework on agenda-setting in local governments, coalition magnets can aid in the understanding of how wetland protection emerged as a policy in the municipality of Kristianstad, and what ideas were central to its emergence. Testing the notion that ideas are of importance further offers insights into how Kristianstad Vattenrike evolved into the steady pillar of local policy it is today in Kristianstad municipality.

**Table 1. Categories informing agenda-setting in local governments.**

Conceptual framework of categories informing agenda-setting in local governments based on Dannevig et al., 2013.

Category	Description	Potential values (in wetland restoration)
<i>Engaged officials</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Driven by personal values to reshape policies.</li> <li>- Play a pivotal role in agenda-setting.</li> <li>- Initiate projects and involve municipalities in research.</li> <li>- Impact varies based on role, budgets, and administrative capacities.</li> </ul>	Municipal officials; environmental advisors, planners
<i>Focus events</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sudden, harmful incidents shaping the political agenda.</li> <li>- Prompt policy changes and increase stakeholder involvement.</li> <li>- Create windows of opportunity.</li> <li>- Local examples include events like floods driving political engagement.</li> </ul>	Floods, droughts, eutrophication
<i>Real world indicators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data on society, nature, and politically significant subjects.</li> <li>- Influence agendas independently of media coverage.</li> <li>- Wetland indicators may include peatland area or biological inventory data.</li> <li>- Extend beyond commonly shared mass media statistics.</li> </ul>	Biodiversity, CO <sup>2</sup> emissions
<i>External expertise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Import issues to the political agenda through research projects.</li> <li>- Engagement with experts influences agendas.</li> <li>- Crucial for urban climate change policy.</li> <li>- Fosters learning processes.</li> </ul>	Research programs

## 2.3 Policy development - Policy attributes and social norms

While agenda-setting theory and findings from previous research on coalition magnets offer a framework through which the emergence of an issue on the political agenda can be examined, they fall short in accounting for what happens next. This section explores the development and evolutionary aspects of policies, i.e., what happens once they are on the agenda, once the ideas have gathered a coalition. As this thesis studies a case of policy evolution within the lines of a collective action problem, it becomes natural to shift focus to social norms. Still, it is important to note that research on

collective action have identified a multitude of facilitators for collective action, such as local institutions, power dynamics, technology, and reciprocity (Jagers et. al., 2020).

However, the focus in this thesis will be on the role social norms play, as they have been given the most focus and attention as influencing policy. Still, as social norms concern governance of collective action within the group, an additional framework will be applied to bridge the gap between policy design and social norms – policy attributes. Jagers et. al. (2020) argue that collective action in larger scales need support in the form of interventions from a third party, such as state actors. Here a potential lies for policy attributes to take collective action and social norms into the consideration of policy design. The research on policy attributes for environmental policy is rather young, and previous studies mostly concerned national policy and policy agreeability (Coleman et. al., 2023). By gathering insights from collective action governance, an attempt is made to build a solid theoretical point of departure for how to understand how policy instruments and their attributes shape collective action from a stakeholder's perspective.

### **2.3.1 Social Norms**

The development of social norms has been proposed as one way in which groups deal with collective action problems (Ostrom, 2000). While it is indeed true that collective action problems stem from individuals acting in their self-interest, and that there is plenty of evidence of individuals putting their own self-interest before the interest of the group (take for example the case of traffic in cities; many people still take their car to work, even though a greater use of public transportation it would inevitably lead to less traffic jams, less pollution and an overall better city environment), Ostrom (2000) presents findings of a tendency of social norms to develop within groups, aiding in the solution of collective action problems. Historically, investing in monitoring and sanctioning through social norms has been common among “self-organized resource governance regimes” that have been successful (Ostrom, 2000). In other words, social norms have proven to play a role in successful cases of collective action governance. Furthermore, assuming that rational individuals are indeed prone to cooperation and joint problem solving rather than acting in line with the “zero contribution thesis”, leads to a different type of approach in policy analysis (Ostrom, 1999).

If collective action is indeed likely to have positive effects on the common interests of a group, the development of social norms within groups, Ostrom proposes, explains an evolutionary benefit in groups with successful collective action (Ostrom, 2000). Following this logic, voluntarily engaging in common interests, organizing for mutual protection, and creating protocols to protect important resources should improve a group's longevity. While Ostrom originally developed the theoretical framework on social norms and collective action as processes occurring within smaller groups, the idea and understanding of social norms has been widened



during the last two decades. Already at the turn of the millennium, calls were made identifying the need for increased development in the intersection between social norms and public policy development (Ostrom, 2000). Today, research on social norms also considers how large-scale collective action problems, such as greenhouse gas mitigation, can be dealt with using social norms, and consequently, how social norms behave in larger groups (Constantino et. al., 2022).

Social norms can be understood as both concrete (rules and regulations) and abstract (self-imposed feelings of guilt or pride). In either way, a common ground for social norms is that they can be conceived of simply as general ideas of dos and don'ts (Ostrom, 2000). Naturally, the degree of conformity of social norms then depends on how individuals value norm conformity (Constantino et. al., 2022). As stated above, social norms can take on the function of rules. Sanctioning individuals for behaviors that break those rules, or in other words, introducing punishments by shunning or ostracizing individuals, can be a way of strongly influencing the actions of individuals (Ostrom, 1999).

However, this can be understood also in the opposite direction – that rather than fear of repercussions for not abiding to a norm, a sort of pride can be associated with acting according to known rules and norms within a group, or even society. Supporting this, Jagers et. al. (2020) state that individuals are likely to cooperate if it is believed to benefit their reputations. Constantino et. al. (2022) even state that social norms, whether they exist on the foundation of existing values or are brining about new attitudes, “have important policy implications.”. The way social norms can influence policy carries a relevance for the study of Kristianstad Vattenrike, as wetland construction and restoration concern environmental issues, which tend to be strongly associated with notions of guilt, shame or pride (consider for example *shame* in the environmental context; statements such as “You should fly/drive/shop/consume read meat less!”) as well as conflict (for example environmental activists versus economic interests in industry, agriculture and forestry).

Factors that have been shown to influence the proliferation of social norms concern both the “proportion of participants who are well known in a community” (Ostrom, 1999), as well as “central nodes in a network” which can be an “important and effective source of broader social change because their statements and actions are visible to many people.” (Constantino, et. al., 2022). Further, reference groups to which individuals evaluate their personal stance on social norms is subject of change depending on the topic and context of the norm (Constantino et. al., 2022). This is another way of trying to understand the fluent dynamics of “groups” in which social norms function, seeing as not only the common interest of a group might influence norms. Setting the idea of social norms in modern policy analysis, Constantino et. al. (2022) argues that social-norms can encourage sustainable behavior by “highlighting the prevalence of sustainable norms”. Such social norms carry the power to introduce brand new ideas into the common interests of a group, by “encouraging people to adapt their behaviours simply by highlighting existing social norms” (Constantino et.

al., 2022). Such norms can, according to Constantino et. al. (2022), be particularly effective in the case of sustainable norms which have yet to become commonly known. This supports the claim that knowledge distribution as a policy element can be particularly effective.

### **2.3.2 Policy Attributes**

Adding to the framework of policy development, focus is turned to policy attributes. Policy attributes are elements in policies that can affect stakeholders and the public's opinions about the policy. Policy attributes are argued to play an important role in policy adaptation and support (Coleman et. al., 2023). However, they are believed to be subject to great heterogeneity (Coleman et. al., 2023), leading to varying policy effectiveness depending on policy preference. In a study on policy attributes and environmental policy, Coleman et. al. (2023) examined how public opinions were affected by policy attributes and how individual policy support was generated. A central point of departure was previous findings indicating that perceived policy fairness is associated with both who are targeted by a policy, and whether or not that policy can change group behavior.

In their study, Coleman et. al. (2023) question how people evaluate policies with regards to the abovementioned; fairness of who is targeted and effectiveness in generating a certain behavior. The attributes of policies considered in the study were targets of policies, types of policies, policy funding and administration, and policy compliance (Coleman et. al., 2023). While Coleman et. al. study public policy support, these attributes can also be of interest when studying stakeholder policy support. As is established above, social norms are central to understanding policy in relation to collective action. I argue that the attributes of a policy instrument are important for understanding the formation of social norms and collective action. In table 2, the relationship between policy attributes and social norms is mapped out.

While social norms can influence collective action directly, policy attributes pertain to what aspects of policy is perceived as enabling to stakeholders, generating support. In this sense, policies with attributes that echoes and build on social norms could inform policymakers in the processes of policy design. Likewise, policy attributes can also develop social norms, in situations where it is generally perceived as positive within a group to support policies from certain actors. Therefore, policy attributes, and how they can be understood in relation to social norms in collective action, can be valuable in policy evaluation. For example, policies which include attributes of voluntary engagement can echo with social norms of reciprocity, leading to sensations of pride among individuals.

**Table 2. Suggested interplay between policy attributes and social norms**

This table provides an overview of how the relation between policy attributes and social norms can be understood. Policy attributes can be conceptualized as a translation of stakeholder preferences, decided by social norms in collective action.

Category of policy attributes	Policy implications and attributes	Related social norms
<i>Policy target</i>	Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Individuals</i></li> <li>- <i>Groups</i></li> <li>- <i>Specific actors</i></li> </ul> Policy goal / purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Nature conservation</i></li> <li>- <i>Public health</i></li> <li>- <i>Taxation</i></li> </ul>	Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Sustainability</i></li> </ul> Percived fairness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>
<i>Nature of policy instrument</i>	Economic policy instrumets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Subsidies</i></li> <li>- <i>Sanctions</i></li> </ul> Laws and regulations Information provision Levels of coherisiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Voluntary</i></li> <li>- <i>Mandatory</i></li> </ul>	Norm conformity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Voluntary action</i></li> <li>- <i>Norm sharing</i></li> </ul> Percived costs and benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Personal interests</i></li> <li>- <i>Group interests</i></li> </ul>
<i>Policy actors and enforcers</i>	Policy funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Public sector (municipal budgets, national budgets)</i></li> <li>- <i>Private sector (organizations)</i></li> <li>- <i>EU</i></li> <li>- <i>Stakeholders</i></li> </ul> Policymaker (and policy supervision) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Local governments</i></li> <li>- <i>National governments</i></li> <li>- <i>International governmental bodies (the EU, UN)</i></li> </ul>	Institutional trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Shared costs</i></li> </ul>
<i>Policy compliance</i>	Importance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Urgency</i></li> <li>- <i>Benefits</i></li> </ul> Benevolence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Altruistic action</i></li> </ul>	Self-imposed feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Pride</i></li> <li>- <i>Shame</i></li> </ul> Percived costs and benefits

Supporting these claims, a study of drivers of collective action in a community found important factors which carry similarities to policy attributes. Sullivan and York (2021) analyzed community members efforts to manage a rapid spread of an invasive species in community forests in Chitwan, Nepal. The study found several categories that influence community members efforts and engagement in mitigating the spread of the invasive species, such as risk perceptions, reliance on forest resources, perceptions of forest safety and the extent of the spread (Sullivan & York, 2021). The study also found spatial factors which influenced the other factors and the efforts themselves, such as distance to the outbreak of the invasive species (Sullivan & York, 2021). These findings suggest that social and biophysical factors can play a similar role to that of policy attributes when designing effective policies for local nature conservation (Sullivan & York, 2021). Particularly, this is true for cases of collective action; the findings can inform policymakers of important factors (or attributes) affecting policy agreeability where individual interests and efforts affect the interest of the group. If this is true, then policy attributes in local environmental protection policy can be understood in part as factors enabling or stalling collective action.

## 2.4 A combined theoretical framework for wetland policy evolution

This section has strived towards bridging the theoretical gaps between the emergence and development of policy, and the interplay between policy and collective action by looking at agenda-setting, coalition magnets, social norms and policy attributes. Presenting a two-phased theoretical approach to policy evolution, and how policy can be understood in relation to wide-scale collective action is not a mundane task. However, stretching existing theories to their limits in order to test their claims in new arenas is the purpose of theory developing studies. Further, setting the scene of the case studied in this thesis, Kristianstad Vattenrike constitutes a well-suited case to test this two-phased approach, as its existence is largely a result of successful implementation of policy concerning collective action. It is important to stress that Kristianstad Vattenrike is here considered as a long-running policy in itself. In short, this approach states that the evolution of policy (i.e. policy emergence and policy development) can be studied on a case-study level, using different methods of data gathering and theoretical frameworks to explain different stages of policy evolution.

Following this approach, two sets of theoretical frameworks are applied in two stages of data gathering. The framework of agenda-setting and coalition magnets are used when approaching the initial parts of policy evolution, asking questions such as how Vattenriket emerged as a policy and how wetland conservation became a topic on the municipal agenda. Further, these frameworks will aid in understanding how

new issues related to wetland conservation emerges over time. On the other hand, the understanding of social norms and policy attributes and how they can influence policy are applied when studying the proliferation and development of Vattenriket as a policy for wetland conservation, placing the focus on how stakeholders and recipients of the policy perceive it. Here, the assumption tested is whether, and how, social norms among landowners can function as policy facilitators, by linking them to policy attributes. By applying a two-phased approach, this thesis further tests whether collective action policy evolution can be studied as a complex process linking policy makers and stakeholders, and whether the gaps between the abovementioned theories can be bridged.

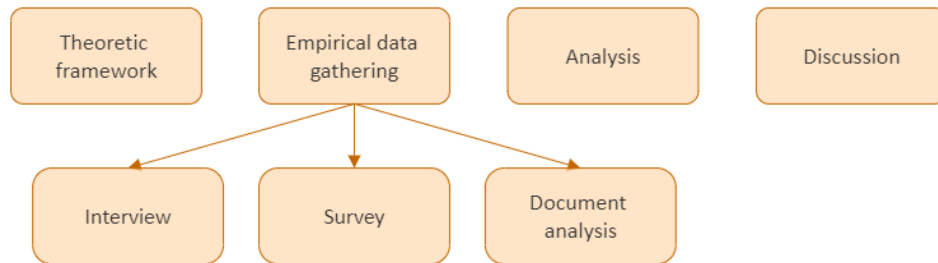
## 3. Methodology

*This section initially sets out to outline the research design of this paper, accounting for the case of Kristianstad Vattenrike. Second, an operationalization of the theoretical framework is presented. Further, the mixed-methodology for gathering empirical data will be explored; interviews and a survey, completed by document analysis. Finally, the ethical questions encountered in the study will be accounted for.*

### 3.1 Research design

This thesis is carried out as a cross-sectional single case study of policy evolution in Kristianstad Vattenrike. As a case study, it seeks to examine the case of policy evolution in Kristianstad Vattenrike within its natural setting (Priya, 2021). In order to study policy evolution in Kristianstad Vattenrike, this thesis takes a theory testing, or theory developing, research approach. Building on previous research, it sets out to test a rigid theoretical framework in a deductive, or *explanatory*, way. As such, empirical data is gathered and analyzed in order to test if and how the presented theory can explain the observed reality.

In this study, a mixed-method approach is applied, using various methods of data gathering in order to study various stages of policy evolution in Kristianstad Vattenrike. As case studies tend to be in-depth studies, it usually calls for, or even benefits, from a mixed-method approach to data gathering (Priya, 2021). Semi-structured interviews with officials in Kristianstad municipality and survey for landowners (stakeholders of the policy) will be completed by document analysis of official document. The results of the empirical data collection will be analyzed with the help of the theoretical framework presented in 1.4.4.



**Figure 5. Research design**

### 3.2 Operationalization

Operationalization is a central process in all research. In theory developing studies, operationalization accounts for how the theoretical concepts studied are translated into variables that can be measured and quantified. Due to this, a clear operationalization is essential to theory developing studies, as otherwise, there would be no way to measure and study the abstract concepts of the theory. Further, inadequate operationalization is a key challenge to generalization of results and reproducibility of a study. Operationalizations are also important in methodological design, as they inform interview guides and frameworks for document analysis. Therefore, in order to test the concepts and theories presented in section 1.4, the concepts need to be operationalized.

Starting off, for agenda-setting the definitions provided in table 3 will be used as an operationalization. These variables are fairly easy to operationalize, due to their concrete nature. For the concept of coalition magnets, two sets or variables are to be operationalized: ideas and power. The theory states that ideas should be new and spread by public or political channels to decision makers. As such, the variable of ideas focus on creation of *new* ideas, that are *spread* by *specific actors*. Power is condition on the spread of ideas and the central theoretical concept of power are the outcomes of said ideas and will be operationalized as the impacts and outcomes of innovative ideas being spread. The variables and their operational definitions as stated in table 3 will be used when constructing the interview guide used when interviewing officials and for the document analysis.

**Table 3. Operationalization of theory on policy emergence**

Operationalization of the two main concepts (agenda-setting and coalition magnets), divided by the various variables presented for each concept.

Concept	Variables	Operational definitions
<i>Agenda-setting</i>	Engaged officials	Occurrence of individuals and/or officials that played an important role in the emergence of Vattenriket
	Focusing events	Events identified to have impacted the agenda.
	Real world indicators	Indicators that were found to influence the emergence of Vattenriket.
<i>Coalition magnets</i>	External expertise	Research projects related to Vattenriket.
	Ideas	Wetland conservation and creation as a new idea in the political context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Specific actors introducing the idea.</li><li>- Spreading of the idea through political and public channels.</li></ul>
	Power	Impacts and outcomes of the spread of the idea of wetland conservation and creation.

Operationalizing social norms, however, is more complicated. According to Schulman et al. (2017), the concept of social norms has been operationalized in an abundance of ways, making it difficult to draw conclusions from social norm research. As the operational definitions of concepts and variables inform how they are measured, it is not hard to understand why this problem occurs – measuring social norms is not an easy task. However, social norms within the scope of this thesis are not the subject to questions of what and how much. Rather, this study asks *if* social norms have played a part in policy development and *how* they relate to policy attributes. As such, it allows for a wider interpretation of social norms. Subject to more scrutiny is how policy attributes are operationalized in relation to social norms. Thus, a joint operationalization of social norms and policy attributes will be done. Building on table 4, policy attributes will be examined by their relation to social norms. As such, empirical data will be gathered on social norms, and extrapolated to policy attributes as presented below in table 4.



**Table 4. Operationalization of social norms and policy attributes**

This table contains the operationalization of social norms, presenting the related policy attributes to which they relate. As such, the operational definitions can be understood to relate to both social norms and policy attributes from a stakeholder point-of-view.

Social norm(s)	Operational definition	Related policy attribute
<i>Norm conformity</i>	Knowledge of other landowners that constructed wetlands Informing other landowners about wetlands	Stakeholders, level of cohesiveness
<i>Shared values</i>	Values presented as important to the landowner with regards to wetlands	Policy goal
<i>Perceived fairness</i>	Attitudes related to other land owners with and without wetlands	Policy compliance
<i>Self-imposed feelings</i>	Feelings of pride or shame related to wetlands	Policy framing, benevolence
<i>Perceived costs and benefits</i>	Percived benefits and costs related to wetland construction	Policy funding, policy compliance
<i>Institutional trust</i>	Attitudes towards Kristianstad municipality	Policy maker

### 3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews of a semi-structured nature are used as one of two methods for data collection in this study, accounting for data gathering from municipal officials. In depth interviews are beneficial when studying individuals' subjective interpretation of the world, as they are allowed to share personal views and experiences in their own words (Knott et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which the researcher follows a guide, while allowing to stray away from the guide to focus on pertinent subjects that arrive. As such, semi-structured interviews are well suited for exploratory research, when the research goal is to develop and test theories (Esaiasson et al., 2012).

However, as with any research methodology, semi-structured interviews have limitations. One of the crucial challenges is how to design interview guides and what questions are asked. Interview guides must be designed in a way so that the questions asked allows relevant answers. For this study, the interview guides need to take into consideration the operationalization of the theoretical concepts tested. For this thesis, an interview guide was created for interviews with municipal officials, building on the operationalization of the theories of agenda-setting and coalition magnets. However, the results of the interviews will also be used to test the presence of policy attributes, used in the analysis of social norms. As such, questions about the policy and process of wetland conservation is also included in the interview guides. Methodological literature on interviews suggest that a use of academic language can affect the quality of answers, and that questions should be clear and easily interpreted (Teorell &

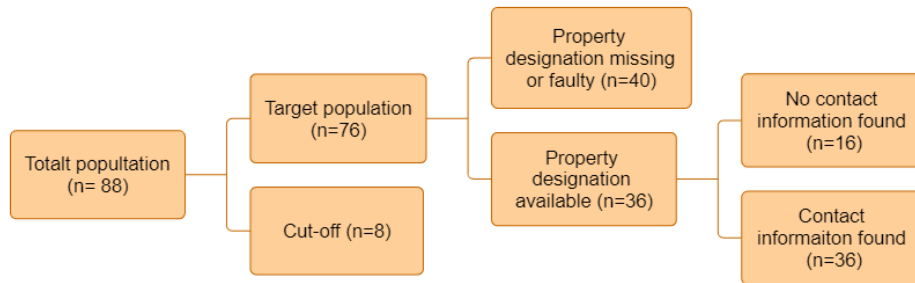
Svensson, 2007). It is therefore important to construct the interview guide using a language fit for the respondents. As the respondents are officials working with the issues, a professional language was adopted in terms of wetlands. The interview guide used is presented in Appendix I.

Another challenge when conducting interviews is how to identify respondents, how to contact respondents and how to settle on a benchmark for how many respondents are needed. The group of interest for this thesis is clearly cut-off: officials who work, or have worked, with Vattenriket. Identifying respondents for the interviews was done by contacting officials working at Biosfärkontoret at Kristianstad municipality via email and asking them if they would participate in an interview. From one initial interview, further interviewees were identified, and contacted, using a snowball method. In total, three ( $n=3$ ) interviews were conducted with officials working at Kristianstad Municipality. All of the respondents had positions where they worked in some way with the creation or restoration of wetlands within the borders of Vattenriket. The work life experience of the respondents varied, however, in order to protect anonymity, the exact work life experience of the respondents will not be presented. The respondents were initially asked several questions on the history of Vattenriket, followed by questions on the goals and operational aspects of the work with wetland restoration.

### 3.4 Survey

The second method for empirical data gathering was a survey. Using a survey was motivated by their time efficiency when gathering data from a medium-to-large sample group, as well as the lack of reliable contact information. Using a survey allows for respondents to answer in their own time, as opposed to interviews, which would have to be scheduled. Furthermore, surveys offer the author simple means of compiling data, which will aid in the presentation and analysis of the results. The survey was built in Sunnet Survey, a web-based tool which can be used by students at Lunds university. The survey consisted of a total of 11 questions, building on the operationalization of social norms and policy attributes, and was purposely designed to be quick to answer. As previous research on self-administered surveys suggests, the design of the instrument is important in generating answers with good quality (Crawford et al. 2001), 2000). Particularly, the survey must provide the respondent with enough information for them to answer correctly.

When using surveys as a method for data collection, it is important to consider the quality of the sampling frame (Tourangeau et al., 2013). A good sampling frame should meet three conditions: a good coverage of the target population, low rates of duplication and valid contact information. These conditions constitute challenges to everyone using surveys for data collection (Tourangeau et al., 2013).



**Figure 6. Target population and sample size.**

From a target population of 76, contact information could be found to 36 landowners, giving a sample size of 36. Some properties were owned by multiple individuals, in which case each owner was considered as a possible respondent.

### 3.4.1 Good coverage of the target population

The target population in this thesis are the landowners who have created or restored wetlands within Kristianstad Vattenrike. As such, there is a clear target population. Further, this population is easily defined as everyone who signed contracts with Kristianstad Municipality for wetland projects. Theoretically, the target population could be covered in total, however, for various reasons this was not possible. In total, 88 contracts between the municipality and landowners were signed. The earliest projects were finished in year 2014, indicating that contracts can be up to 10 years or older. However, no limitations or cut-offs were made with consideration to when the contracts were signed. A cut-off was set to municipalities which were not direct neighbors to Kristianstad municipality. Only seven of the wetlands were situated in a municipality which is not a direct neighbor of Kristianstad (cut-off), being Osby. The remaining 76 wetlands were situated in Hässleholm (14), Kristianstad (37), Östra Göinge (9) and Bromölla (8). Seven of the contracts lacked information on municipal location, however most of these also lacked property designation, which was needed in order to gather contact information. For a total of 19 projects, property designations were missing, and for 21 the property designations were faulty. A total of 36 contracts had valid property designations, to which 52 owners could be identified. In total, contact information to 36 owners could finally be identified. Worth noting is that eight of the projects were on properties owned by the same individual. The owners were contacted via text messages, email or facebook messenger, depending on what information could be found. In total, the sample of this thesis covers circa 40 percent of the total group.

### **3.4.2 Duplication**

The risk of duplication is fairly low. The surveys were sent out once, with a reminder sent out the day before the survey closed. However, in cases where two or more people are owners of the land, everyone have been sent the survey.

### **3.4.3 Up-to-date information for contact**

The third challenge when sending surveys via digital channels is to have contact information that is up-to-date. Unfortunately, there was no viable way to test this without it being too time consuming. Further, contacting landowners proved to be difficult, due to the process required to obtain contact information to landowners. In order to obtain contact information, searches were made in various public databases, and results were of varying quality. From the contracts signed between landowners and Kristianstad municipality, property designations could be found, which in turn could be used in searches through web-based services at Lantmäteriets web page, which would provide names and address to the owners. These names and addresses were then used to find contact information, using other publicly available services. Limiting factors were the access to public information, and what information could be found. Further, there was no way to know if the current landowners were the same individuals that initially signed the contract with the municipality.

## **3.5 Document analysis**

Document analysis is commonly utilized in qualitative case studies, particularly when the aim is to provide detailed descriptions of a phenomenon, event, organization, or program (Bowen, 2009). This method involves the examination of non-technical literature, such as reports, notes, correspondence, and other documents which can serve as a valuable source of empirical data. Document analysis is a tool that is particularly compatible with qualitative case-studies, such as this one (Yin, 1994). Previous studies on document analysis has emphasized the need for triangulation with other study methods, such as observations and interviews, to validate and corroborate data uncovered from the document analysis (Bowen, 2009). As such, the document analysis in this thesis is meant to complement the interviews with municipal officials of Kristianstad municipality.

It is important to note that the success of document analysis depends on robust data collection. Further, it is important that the researcher reflects on the nature of the documents analyzed. When looking at a document, factors such as why it was written, if the document is official, who wrote it and for what reason. The documents used in

this thesis are action programs (handlingsprogram) for the Vattenriket Biosphere area. The main focus of the document analysis are early documents, as the rise and spread of Vattenriket as a policy is of special interest. Yet, all available action programs will be included. These include all action programs released between 1998 and 2021, except for 2014-2015.

The documents were received from the municipality, as they are public documents. Action plans are public and official documents outlining specific tasks, responsibilities, timelines and strategies used to reach the official goals and purposes of a municipal body or organization. Action plans are documents decided upon by elected officials, usually running for a period of 2 or more years. Further, taking the role as a roadmap, they will provide a good overlook into the development of Vattenriket, providing useful information on the driving ideas, goals and decisions in the emergence process of Vattenriket. A list of the documents included in the analysis can be found in Table 5.

Bowen (2009) outlines the process for different approaches of document analysis. The process of analyzing documents usually starts with skimming through the documents, identifying passages of interest. It is also important to identify what data is being analyzed. The second step is to conduct a first content analysis, categorizing information and identified passages of interest. The categorization is done by coding the content of the documents based on the operationalization of the theoretical concepts (agenda-setting and coalition magnets). To ensure consistency, the codes should be predefined and used as in the other methods. For this thesis, the operational definition will be used as codes. After the documents have been coded, the results can be analyzed.

**Tabel 5. Documents used in document analysis**

The documents used were obtained from Kristianstad municipality, by emailing their archivist. The case numbers are unique for each official document in a municipality.

Document	Case number
<i>Naturvård i Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 1998 – 2000</i>	KS 1997/182 dpl 839
<i>Naturvård i Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 2001 – 2003</i>	KS 2000/702 dpl 830
<i>Naturvård i Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 2004–2006</i>	KS 2003/1205 dpl 830
<i>Biosfärområde Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 2007–2009</i>	KS 2007/371 dpl 20
<i>Biosfärområde Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 2010–2013</i>	Case number missing
<i>Biosfärområde Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 2016–2020</i>	KS 2016/1066
<i>Biosfärområde Kristianstads Vattenrike Handlingsprogram 2021–2025</i>	KS 2020/1317

### 3.6 Ethical reflection

This study faces no ethical dilemmas or conflicts. However, the utilization of surveys, interviews, and document analysis as research methodologies raises ethical considerations that warrant thoughtful reflection. The survey component involves obtaining data from respondents, necessitating careful attention to informed consent, confidentiality, and the protection of sensitive information. All participation in this study was done on a voluntary basis. Ensuring that participants are fully aware of the purpose of their involvement is paramount. Interviews involve direct interaction, emphasizing the importance of establishing trust, respecting autonomy, and maintaining confidentiality. When conducting the interviews, an open communication about the nature of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw is crucial for upholding ethical standards. Document analysis, while involving pre-existing materials, requires ethical scrutiny concerning the use of proprietary or confidential documents. In this study, all documents are public documents. Yet, these documents contain personal information regarding current and

former officials, such as their name and email address. Lastly, ensuring transparency in document selection are essential considerations.

## 4 Result

*In this section, the results of the empirical data collection will be presented and analyzed. The presentation of the results and the analysis will be separated in two main sections, policy emergence and policy development. The result*

### 4.1 Policy emergence

#### 4.1.1 Agenda-setting

##### *Engaged officials*

The interviews shed light on the role of engaged officials in shaping and implementing wetland conservation policies in Kristianstad. When asked about the emergence of Vattenriket as a project of municipal interest, one respondent gave credit to a former official in the municipality, who back in 1989 was central to the creation of what would become Kristianstad Vattenrike, effectively playing a central part of setting the topic of wetland conservation on the agenda.

It was 1989 that the project was started, and it was [name of former official], and he called it “ecomuseum Kristianstad vattenrike”.

Respondent 1

Further, early on the initiative of Vattenriket witnessed active participation from politicians and one official at the county administration board (Länsstyrelsen).

Together with [name of official], who at the time worked at the county administration board, they started restoring, reshaping, the natural beach meadows that exist in Vattenriket.

Respondent 1



Engaged officials have also been central in shaping the processes in which wetland conservation has been expanded by playing a vital role in developing the processes to contact landowners and informing them about the benefits of wetlands and seeking funding for the projects. All respondents mention that they had a good personal relationship to landowners, which functioned a central aspect of the success of their work. One respondent described the process as follows:

So, once I've found a location, had coffee with the concerned party, presented some sketches, and so on, we might reach a point where I can inquire whether the landowner can set aside a certain number of hectares because I want to establish a wetland here.

Respondent 2

In many cases, private landowners who owns land of interest (or land deemed as suitable for wetland creation or restoration) are contacted by the officials, who provide information on the benefits of wetlands. One respondent emphasized the importance of establishing robust dialogues, cultivating positive relationships with landowners and being patient with the landowner, allowing the process to be done on their terms.

What we rely on is the good relationship with the landowner. If we jeopardize that, I don't know how we're going to proceed. [...] One has to keep in mind all the time that landowners are the key individuals in all of this.

Respondent 2

The abovementioned findings are in line with the theoretical claim that engaged officials and individual efforts were central to the emergence and, further, the proliferation of Vattenriket as a project for wetland conservation in the municipality.

#### *Focusing events*

Further, there were indications that focusing events play a continual role in setting new challenges on the agenda, which further strengthens the grounds for wetland conservation. In the action program for years 2016-2020, there are mentions of the positive effects on resilience, mainly flooding, that wetland conservation has, describing the significant role of the beach meadows along Helge Å. While it can be argued whether or not this can be classified as a focusing event, it is clear that the presence of the possibility of floodings and draughts has given new light to the benefits and relevance of wetland conservation. In a similar fashion, one future challenge was pointed out by one respondent as being irrigation challenges posed by droughts and

lower groundwater levels, which could be resolved by creating wetlands used for irrigation.

Then the farmers themselves realize, 'what do we do now?'. So, you can use your drainage water as a supplement for irrigation. It creates a cycle for water and plant nutrients. What would have been discharged through the drainage water ends up in your irrigation pond, and then it is spread back onto the field.

Respondent 2

The decision to make Vattenriket a UNESCO Biosphere area in year 2005 can also be seen as a focusing event, further cementing the role of wetland conservation on the municipal agenda. With this, a greater focus on wetlands and the role they play in the environment gained a larger focus. One official mention this as a crucial step in creating a positive and enforcing image of Vattenriket.

When working as a biosphere area, one leverages the 'power of good examples'. The aim is to serve as a model for sustainable community development and inspire others.

Respondent 1

#### *Real-world indicators*

While not abundant, there were some indications that real world indicators have played a small role in bringing the question of wetland conservation on the municipal agenda, strengthening the role of Kristianstads Vattenrike. As an example, all respondents mentioned the ground water in the area, biodiversity and nutrient retention (causing eutrophication in Helge Å and the Baltic Sea) as early targets of Vattenriket.

Historically, biological diversity and nutrient retention have been the focus. We have created wetlands for nutrient retention and, as a bonus, obtained biological diversity.

Respondent 2

#### *External expertise*

Some mentions of external expertise were made in the interviews. While not explicitly central to the initial emergence of Vattenriket as a municipal project, support from universities and counseling from the county administration were important in cementing the need for wetland conservation in the municipal agenda and among

landowners. One such project was called “greppa näringen” (understand fertilization) and was used as a tool in the process of contacting and informing landowners of the benefits of wetland conservation. In a later stage, Vattenriket has been the subject of academic studies from various universities, which has given legitimacy and strengthened Vattenriket on the agenda.

One of the significant aspects of our work is to focus on information and communication. While 'campaigns' might not be the exact term, we have, for instance, worked on themes like ecosystem services. In this context, we created films illustrating how to utilize the benefits in various landscapes.

Respondent 1

#### 4.1.2 Coalition magnets

The findings in this study suggest that there is a solid base for the statement that Vattenriket constitutes an idea in the sense of coalition magnets. The idea of Vattenriket is attributed to one significant individual, taking the role as an engaged official or policy entrepreneur, both in interviews and in the documents. Presenting the idea of Vattenriket was groundbreaking, as the quality of wetlands and Helge å had been decreasing during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The idea further proved to be influential and gained traction within the municipality. As an example of this, one respondent mentioned that the idea to make Vattenriket into a UNESCO Biosphere area was present from the beginning. The decision to make Vattenriket a UNESCO Biosphere area is a clear outcome of the spread of the idea of Vattenriket, corroborating the role of Vattenriket as a coalition magnet.

All ready then he [the official<sup>1</sup>] had thoughts that it would become a biosphere area and that a wetland-centrer was to be created.

Respondent 1

Another indication supporting the claim that the idea of Vattenriket constitute a coalition magnet is how it has brought actors together. Early on in the emergence of Vattenriket, officials from the county administration board where included. The first three action programs (1998-2000, 2001-2003 and 2004-2006) were written as a cooperation between the county administration board and Kristianstad municipality. Further strengthening this claim are mentions in the interviews that Vattenriket has had strong political support from the local government.

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<sup>1</sup> Authors addition within brackets

Regardless of political leadership, we have felt that we have strong support.

Respondent 1

The decision to get Vattenriket classed as an UNESCO Biosphere area 2005 was a process involving many actors, showcasing a significant spread of the idea of Vattenriket in political channels. Not only did this play a significant role in spreading knowledge about Vattenriket and wetland conservation, it is also a witness to the *power* of the idea, cementing the hypothetical claim that Vattenriket has functioned as a coalition magnet. In the action program for 2004-2006, the process of making Vattenriket an UNESCO Biosphere area is described accordingly:

Several municipal administrations are involved in the work, as well as other actors at the local, regional, and central levels. [...] The work on the formation of the biosphere area is supported both financially and in other ways by Region Skåne, the County Administrative Board in Skåne County, and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

Action program 2004-2006, page 4

Further, the construction and opening of Naturum Vattenriket in 2010, which functions as a hub for visitors and strengthens the role of Vattenriket as an institution in Kristianstad Municipality, is also an impact of the idea of Vattenriket. Marketing and developing Naturum was an important work area in the action program for 2010-2013. The construction of a large building with the sole purpose of functioning as a hub for activities and events related to Vattenriket, is a clear sign of legitimacy and an indication that Vattenriket functioned as a coalition magnet. This confirms the claim that the use of coalition magnets can play a supportive role in the emergence of wetland restoration policy of similar nature to Vattenriket.

## 4.2 Policy development

### 4.2.1 Social norms and policy attributes

In total, the survey was sent out to 36 respondents, of which only six responded, accounting for a 16 per cent response rate. The low response rate can be attributed to the means of contacting landowners, which was predominantly done via text messages, and the quality of contact information. While the response rate is inadequate to provide results which allow for generalizable conclusions, the results can still be used provide indications for future studies.

### *Perceived fairness / Policy compliance*

The respondents had a total of 7,6 hectares of wetlands on their lands, with a mean size of 2,5 hectares. All but one of the respondents had only one wetland on their property, while one respondent had two. The majority of the respondents had wetlands on grazing land. Further, from the original data on the contracts (which contained information on the areal of all wetlands), the sizes and number of wetlands varied greatly, indicating that landowners either lack the information of other landowners wetlands or that the sizes and counts of other wetlands has no effect on their own decisions. This is logical, as these contracts are entered into voluntarily, which consequently indicates a strong level of policy compliance among the landowners who signed contracts with the municipality. If it is true that fairness is of little to no importance for landowners in the decision of signing contracts with the municipality, this also indicates that landowners have neutral or positive attitudes other landowners with wetlands. This can be interpreted as corroborating the relation between policy compliance and perceived fairness.

Further, four of the respondents answered that they would be willing to create further wetlands if they were to be economically compensated. However, there was no clear indication on how the value of economic compensation were to be decided (based on land value, lost income or other means). This is interesting because, as mentioned previously, all wetland projects are voluntary. Yet, this is a hint that policy compliance could be higher if stakeholders are economically compensated. While the results of this study fail to provide enough data to make any conclusion, it is possible to assume that perceived fairness plays a greater role when payment for ecological/ecosystem services are considered.

### *Shared values / Policy goals*

Among the reasons behind the decision to create or restore wetlands on their properties were increased biodiversity (4), hunting (2), recreation (2), nutrient retention/water purification (4), water in nature (1). In one of the cases one reason stated was that the land could not be cultivated. This indicates that there are social norms in the form of shared values among the respondents, notably caring about biodiversity and water purification. Further, these are among the purposes of wetland conservation, and as such, part of the policy goal of Kristianstads Vattenrike. While this too hints towards a relation between social norms (shared values) and policy attributes (policy goals), there is not enough to confidently claim that the shared values are a result of social norms. Rather, this could be explained by the focus of sharing information about benefits of wetlands which is a part of the process of officials at Kristianstad municipality when contacting landowners. In order to make confident claims about the presence and effect of social norms, a larger data set and comparative

cases are required. Yet, this is a good foundation for further studies into the interplay of social norms and policy design.

#### *Institutional trust / Policy maker*

All of the respondents indicated good relations to the municipality (>4 on a scale of 1-5, with five being that working with the municipality was a great experience), stating that the cooperation with the municipality was fruitful. This supports the statements in interviews with officials, claiming to have good relations with the landowners. Further, despite the low response rate and small sample, the overwhelmingly positive responses indicate a strong institutional trust among landowner who signed contracts with the municipality, corroborating the importance of who is the policy maker when designing policies. Yet, again, the results are unable to confidently state the presence of a social norm between landowners.

#### *Norm conformity / Stakeholders*

There were no data of how the respondents received the information about the possibility of making a wetland. In all cases, the respondents answered “other” to the question of how they received information about the possibility to create or restore wetlands on their property, the other options being 1) via the municipality; 2) by friends/acquaintances; 3) on social media. Further, only two out of the six respondents knew others who had created wetlands within Vattenriket. However, an additional two (not the same respondents) stated they had informed others on the possibility of creating wetlands. While the latter indicates a certain level of norm conformity, the results are once again inadequate for any conclusions to be confidently drawn.

#### *Perceived costs and benefits / Policy funding and policy compliance*

When asked about the perceived benefit of the wetland on their land (scale 1-5, with 1 being no benefits and 5 being high benefits), two respondents indicated a high benefit (>4). Two respondents reported a low level of benefit (2) and two reported a medium level of benefit (3). The mean value for the perceived benefit was 3,1. Interestingly, when asked about the perceived cost (or sacrifice) associated with their wetlands (scale 1-5, with 1 being a high sacrifice/cost and 5 being no cost/sacrifice), four respondents reported little to no perceived cost (>4). The remaining two respondents reported a value of 3, leading to a mean value of 4. This indicates that perceived levels of benefits matter less than perceived levels of cost. A possible interpretation of this is that as long as costs or sacrifices are perceived as low, the perceived benefits are not as important. This would, if true, support that policy

compliance is affected by the stakeholders perceived costs to a greater extent than their perceived benefits.

*Self-imposed feelings / Policy framing*

All the respondents reported a feeling of pride related to their wetlands, with a mean value of 4,6 (on a scale on 1 to 5, with 1 being no pride and 5 being a lot of pride). No respondent reported lesser than 4 on the 1-5 scale. This relates to the social norm of self-imposed feelings, where the theoretical framework suggest that feelings of pride or shame can be associated with individual action. The fact that all respondents indicated a high feeling of pride related to their wetlands is interesting, despite the low response rate. This indicate a shared perceptions that participating to wetland conservation is something good. This can further be related to how wetland conservation is framed as a policy, indicating that policy framing as a policy attribute can be important in creating positive or negative self-imposed feelings in individuals depending on their actions.

## 5. Discussion

*In this section, the result of the study will be discussed and evaluated against the theoretical framework, attempting to answer the research questions of the study. Further, this section includes a critical evaluation of the methodological choices and data collection, stating the limitations with the study. Finally, the implications of the study, as well as suggestions for future research, will be presented.*

### 5.1 Discussion of the result

#### 5.1.1 Policy emergence

Particularly, the role of engaged officials is clear to have had an important impact on the initial stages of the emergence of Vattenriket. The engagement of a key municipal official played a pivotal role in initiating the project, setting the agenda for wetland conservation. This aligns with the theoretical framework on agenda-setting, emphasizing the influence of individual efforts on policy emergence. However, while engaged officials proved to have played an pivotal role, it is essential to acknowledge that the engagement of officials alone may not be sufficient, as evidenced by the collaborative efforts involving politicians and the county administration board. Furthermore, the study supports the idea of Vattenriket as a coalition magnet, which is also important to consider. While individuals can be central to coalition magnets, it is important to keep in mind that coalition magnets, by their nature, arise from joint action and cooperation.

Real-world indicators were also shown to play a part in the emergence of wetlands conservation on the agenda in Kristianstad municipality. Particularly, the state of groundwater levels, decreasing biodiversity, and eutrophication were important concerns to which wetland conservation offered a solution. However, it is important to note that such indicators continue to be important in the work with wetlands in Vattenriket, showcasing how real-world indicators can function as goals, with the aim to improve them even more. That is to say that real-world indicators should be understood as drivers of agenda not only in an alarming way.

Further, the results show that focusing events have played a significant role in keeping and strengthening wetland conservation on the political *and* public agenda,



through events such as designating Kristianstads Vattenrike as a UNESCO Biosphere area and constructing a Naturum for Vattenriket. External expertise did seem to have played a similar role in broadening the understanding of the importance and benefits of wetland conservation, however, there was little to no support that external expertise played a significant part in the emergence of Vattenriket. One possible explanation of this is that expertise often exists as a resource *within* organizations as municipalities and county administration boards. Nevertheless, the county administration board played a pivotal role in the initial stages of emergence of Vattenriket, however, this could be ascribed to the occurrence of engaged officials, as nature conservation is one of the work areas of the county administration boards.

External expertise could not be proven to play the role of explicitly driving the initial emergence of Vattenriket. However, it seemed to play a role in solidifying the importance of wetland conservation on the municipal agenda. Support from universities and counseling from the county administration contributed to legitimizing and strengthening Vattenriket and wetland conservation as a prominent issue on the agenda. This suggests that external expertise can function as a reinforcing factor in policy development, contributing to the overall success of wetland conservation initiatives.

Finally, the results from the interviews and document analysis show that Vattenriket can, and should, be understood as a coalition magnet. The idea spread and gained traction within the municipality, bringing together various actors, including officials from the county administration board. The decision to designate Vattenriket as a UNESCO Biosphere area and the construction of Naturum Vattenriket further support the idea of coalition magnets, emphasizing the collaborative efforts that contributed to the success of wetland conservation policies. Vattenriket constitutes a prime example of an idea that has had and tremendous impact of tremendous over time, showcasing the potential of the idea of wetland conservation in the right setting.

### **5.1.2 Policy development**

The survey results, despite their limited scope due to a low response rate, provide some insights into policy compliance among landowners who voluntarily entered into contracts with the municipality. However, caution is warranted, as the findings might not be universally applicable due to the constrained sample size. The identified factors influencing policy compliance, such as perceived fairness, shared values, and institutional trust, should be interpreted with a degree of skepticism, considering the limitations inherent in the data.

Furthermore, keeping in mind the scarce survey results, attempts to connect them with findings from the interviews still reveal some patterns related to policy attributes. The positive experiences reported by landowners in their interactions with the municipality align with the procedural aspects emphasized by municipal officials,

suggesting a level of institutional trust. However, drawing definitive conclusions from this alignment requires a more comprehensive understanding of the broader context and potential influencing factors.

The exploration of social norms and policy attributes, as indicated by shared values and policy goals, hints at a potential relationship. The study identifies a focus on biodiversity and water purification among landowners, seemingly in alignment with the policy goals of Kristianstad Vattenrike. Yet, the cautionary note remains pertinent—the study's foundational insights into the interplay between social norms and policy design remains flawed due to the need for a more extensive dataset and comparative analyses. Further, there are no control groups in the study, impairing the claim that social norms are present at all. One possibility is that what is perceived as social norms within the group of landowners is the result of the broader outreach that is a part of Vattenrikets work process. The broader applicability of these findings is, therefore, subject to further scrutiny and investigation.

### 5.1.3 Answering research questions

This study set out to answer two research questions with the purpose of examining the factors of success behind Kristianstad Vattenrike. The questions were:

*Q1: How did Kristianstad Vattenrike evolve as a successful policy instrument for wetland creation and restoration?*

*Q2: Can policy evolution in collective action be understood as a two-step process of emergence and development?*

The result of the study shows that the emergence of wetland conservation policy in Kristianstad can be understood through the theoretical frameworks of agenda-setting and coalition magnets. Findings in this study suggest that the role Vattenriket has played as a coalition magnet, as well as the presence of several agenda driving factors, have contributed to the evolution of Vattenriket as a successful case of wetland conservation policy. This partly answers the first question. However, it would be arrogant to assume that the entire success of Kristianstad Vattenrike could be explained by setting and keeping wetlands conservation on the agenda, especially when other policy instruments for wetland conservation have proven to be less successful.

While struggling with inadequate results, there were some indications that social norms and the policy attributes of Vattenriket might have contributed to the success of wetland conservation in Kristianstad Vattenrike. While the study of social norms and policy attributes struggle with a low survey participation rate, leading to scarce material for analysis, the result still begs the reader not to discard them completely. Thus, in answering the first question, this study confidently states that the role of local

factors of agenda-setting and coalition magnets explain the emergence of, and continual relevance, of wetland restoration policy in Kristianstad, while failing to confidently ascribe the policy's attributes and their relation to social norms among stakeholders as strengthening the success of Vattenriket.

When answering the second question, there seems to be some evidence that while policy emergence, driven by factors that have the possibility to influence agendas, can be understood as one crucial element of policy evolution, policy attributes can play towards the occurrence of social norms. Put differently, there is, however small, some indications that there exists a relationship between social norms and the success of attributes used in policy design. While this study fails to provide strong evidence of such a claim, the results open up for a continued exploration into this relationship.

## 5.2 Methodological discussion

While taking on an experimental research design, the operationalization process presents challenges, particularly regarding the abstract nature of social norms. The joint operationalization of social norms and policy attributes, while attempting to bridge the conceptual gap, may inadvertently introduce subjectivity and interpretation challenges. The reliance on theoretical concepts, such as agenda-setting and coalition magnets, for guiding interviews could potentially narrow the scope of inquiry and overlook nuanced aspects of policy evolution.

While surveys are time efficient, one of the main limitations with this study is the sample size and low response rate of the survey. These challenges of the sample, such as incomplete contact information, introduce uncertainties in the representativeness of the surveyed landowners. Additionally, the absence of a pilot test for the survey instrument raises concerns about its validity and reliability. Limitations in time might suggest that the study would produce a better result if only one or two methods were used.

Finally, document analysis, while a valuable qualitative method, is dependent on the quality of data collection. The study acknowledges the need for triangulation with other methods, but the rationale for selecting specific documents and the potential biases introduced by the choice of action programs are not thoroughly discussed. The lack of differentiation between early and later documents, despite the focus on policy emergence, raises questions about the temporal sensitivity of the analysis.

### 5.3 Future research

While the results may suffer, taking on an experimental research design generates many opportunities for future research. This study provides a good starting point for future studies that wish to examine how policy in collective action can be effectively designed. Building on the theoretical framework presented in this study, future research further examining the interplay between social norms and stakeholder policy preferences can play a pivotal role in broadening the understanding of policy development in collective action.



## Conclusion

This study set out to examine the factors behind the successful wetland conservation of Kristianstads Vattenrike. It explores the complexity of policy emergence and development in the wetland conservation initiatives of Kristianstad Vattenrike. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of agenda-setting, this study finds evidence of the presence of engaged officials, collaborative efforts, and real-world indicators as pivotal in the emergence process. The study further shows that Vattenriket can be understood as a coalition magnet, exemplified by its UNESCO Biosphere designation and Naturum construction, showcasing the impact of collective action. Further, despite severe limitation in the data gathering process, a potential link between social norms and policy attributes are recognized, possibly aiding in the development of Vattenriket as a policy instrument. However, this calls for further exploration. Overall, the study confidently attributes the emergence of a successful wetland restoration policy in Kristianstad partly to local drivers of the agenda, while acknowledging the need for future research to unravel the interplay of social norms and policy attributes in shaping policy evolution.



# Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all the respondents who participated with their valuable insights to this study. A special thanks is directed to the officials at Biosfärkontoret and Kristianstad municipality, who have devoted their time to guide me and always answered my questions with great haste.

A special thank you is directed to my fantastic supervisor, Jesper Svensson, who has continuously cheered me on and provided me with valuable insights, guiding and support. It has been a pleasure.





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# Appendix

## Appendix I – Interview guide

### **Introductory Questions:**

How long have you been working at Vattenriket?

How would you describe your professional role?

### **Questions about Vattenriket:**

When did Vattenriket first become an idea that garnered municipal interest?

How did it come to the municipal level and on which platform?

Were there any particularly influential actors?

For what reason did the work on Vattenriket begin? What values does the municipality associate with Vattenriket today?

Is there any specific resource or other factor that has been necessary for Vattenriket to become possible?

### **Questions about Policy:**

How does the political support from the municipality look? How has it been in the past?

What policy instruments do you use when dealing with private landowners? How is the communication structured? What attributes are present in the policy instruments?

Vattenriket has several nature reserves. How come, in some cases, the decision was made to establish nature reserves?

What challenges do you encounter in the work of creating new wetlands in Vattenriket?

Finally, can you think of anyone else working or who has worked with Vattenriket that might be interesting to interview for the study?

## Appendix II – Survey

Hej!

Jag heter Alexander Palmér och är masterstudent på Lunds universitet. Mitt examensarbete är en fallstudie av Kristianstad Vattenrike, där jag undersöker framgångsfaktorerna bakom det lyckade naturvårdsarbete som gjorts inom ramarna för Vattenriket. Jag är främst intresserad av hur arbetet med vattenriket vuxit fram, och vad som varit viktigt för markägare i beslutet att anlägga/återställa våtmark på deras mark.

Deltagande i studien är helt anonymt. Enkäten består av 11 frågor och tar ca 5 minuter att svara. Enkäten är öppen för svar till och med den 27 december.

Har ni frågor om studien eller ert deltagande, tveka inte att höra av er!

Epost: alexanderpalmeer@gmail.com

Tel. nr. 0733749750

Tack för ert deltagande!

Jag godkänner att mina svar används i forskningssyfte.

- Ja  
 Nej

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Inledande frågor

1. På vilken typ av mark är våtmarken anlagd / återställd?

2. Hur många våtmarker är anlagda på din mark?

3. Hur stor är den totala arealen av våtmarken på din mark? Ange svar i hektar.

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Fördjupningsfrågor

4. Vilka är de främsta anledningarna att du valde att anlägga / återställa våtmark på din mark? Ange upp till tre anledningar.

5. Hur upplever du att det var att samarbeta med kommunen i våtmarksprojektet?

1 = Inte alls bra

5 = Jättebra

- 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5

6. Hur fick du information om möjligheten att anlägga våtmark?



7. Känner du andra som anlagt våtmark inom vattenriket?

- Ja  
 Nej

8. Har du tipsat andra om att anlägga våtmark inom vattenriket?

- Ja  
 Nej

9. Hade du valt att anlägga/återställa fler våtmarker om du fick en ekonomisk ersättning?

- Ja  
 Nej

10. Om du svarade ja på fråga 9, hade du velat ha en ersättning baserad på:

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Här följer några frågor om hur du känner inför din våtmark

11. Stolthet:

1 = Jag är inte alls stolt över min våtmark

5 = Jag är mycket stolt över min våtmark

- 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5

12. Nyttä:

1 = Jag får inte ut någon nytta av min våtmark

5 = Jag har mycket nytta av min våtmark

- 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5

13. Kostnad:

1 = Jag upplever att min våtmark har varit en uppoffring

5 = Jag upplever att min våtmark inte har varit någon uppoffring

- 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5

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Tack för ditt deltagande!

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Skicka nu