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The forest as a taskscape: seeing through the good forest owner's eyes

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ABSTRACT

This article is a reanalysis of interviews conducted in 2006 and 2009 with forest owners and their families. It gives a complementary interpretation of the forest owners' decisions to replant spruce despite strong criticism from the public and from experts. The interviewees' visual conception of the forest landscape and how they relate to it through their forestry practices is analysed. The results show that the forest owners prefer landscapes that are clean and tidy, showing characteristics indicative of forestry skills. At the same time they remain sensitive to the existence of other value systems among the public. The forest owners' way of looking at the forest was characterized by the fact that they worked with the landscape; for them the forest is not only a symbolic project linked to identity, but also a taskscape, an imprint of performed work. In the discussion, the forest owners' aesthetic value system is discussed and a supplementary answer is given to why forest owners refused to heed warnings about the replanting of spruce, a question that earlier studies generally attributed to forest owners' wish to avoid short-term economic risks.

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Forest owners; aesthetic evaluation; forestry economics; forestry practices; economic risk

Introduction

This article discusses what a group of Swedish forest owners in the southern county of Småland see as an attractive and well-managed forest, and how their ideas can be understood with the help of sociological theories. As issues of the landscape's appearance have come increasingly into policy focus, studies of aesthetic preferences have shown that preferred landscapes are generally those that are thought natural, verdant, and forested. It has also been found that people tend to value traditional cultural landscapes that are half-open, contain water, and have a mix of order and disorder (Van den Berg et al. 1998; Brush et al. 2000; Hagerhall 2001; Nohl 2001; Kaltenborn & Bjerke 2002). What the public seem to prefer in terms of visual appearance of landscapes is the more traditional small-scale farming landscapes (Karjalainen & Komulainen 1998; Scott 2002; Daugstad et al. 2006).

However, people who themselves farm in industrial agricultural landscapes seem to differ in their aesthetic preferences, preferring the industrial agricultural landscapes that among the wider public are described as the aesthetically most unattractive landscapes (Nohl 2001). There seems to be a clear divide between the public and those who work with landscapes in terms of how such landscapes are evaluated (Setten 2003). While for the public a forest is scenery that people tour (Buzard 1993), for those working with it, nature is a taskscape. Farmers seem to use other criteria when evaluating the landscape, and specifically when looking at how their performed work is visible in the landscape. Therefore, farmed land becomes a display of the farmers' knowledge and their values and work ethic, thus making tidy landscapes particularly desirable (Rogge et al. 2007).

Lindkvist et al. (2009) have investigated the views of forest owners and the general public about Swedish forests in general and intensive forestry practices in particular, finding that the public tended to view forest primarily as a recreational resource, with intensive farmed forest areas limiting the experience of the natural landscape, being harmful to the environment and bad for forest diversity. The contrast in perspectives led Scott et al. (2009) to conclude that multiple publics are rarely discussed or given sufficient attention in policy or research. The cognitive background to forest owners' visual appreciation of forest can be related to Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1998), which shows such visual evaluations to be decoding operations, in the course of which forest owners have to use their cultural capital – a set of generic transposable characteristics, dispositions, skills, sensibilities, and embodied knowledge about the forest landscape (Holt 1997; Burton 2012).

Ingold (2000) uses the concepts of globes and spheres to distinguish two different ways of conceiving of the environment. With globes, nature is perceived from outside, while spheres signify how nature is experienced and engaged with from within. Following Ingold, we see a move from spherical to global imagery that is part of the larger processes by which the world, as we are taught it exists, is drawn ever further from the matrix of our lived experience (Ingold 2000). This is similar to what Urry (2000) describes as the visual objectification of landscape, which is a result of particular modes of travel where environments become landscapes. This tourist gaze means that people's appreciation of the scenery has become more and more integral to various outdoors experiences.

The aim of this article is to analyse how forest owners conceive of and relate to the forest landscape and forestry

practices, and how this in turn relates to the general public's appreciation of the forest. The article is a reanalysis of interview data originally collected with the aim of mapping the forest owners' plans after Storm Gudrun in 2005 (Linné 2011; Sellerberg 2011). Reanalyses are often a fruitful strategy (Wästerfors et al. 2014) when there is a sense that the empirical material points to additional questions than those already discussed. More specifically, the article focuses on the following research questions:

- What do the forest owners see as an attractive and well-tended forest?
- What characterizes the forest owners' ways of looking at the forest and their visual appreciation of the landscape?
- How do the forest owners' views on the forest compare to the general public's?

Materials and methods

The article is based upon two sets of interviews with forest owners and their families in the county of Småland in southern Sweden. The interviews were held at various locations in the Kronoberg area in the south of the county. The first interviews were held between June and October 2006, the second batch in May 2009. The first round consisted of 20 interviews with a total of 42 individuals, all taken from forest-owning families; the second round of interviews consisted of 8 interviews with 14 individuals, all of whom again belonged to forest-owning families. The first round of interviews began with two pilot interviews with interviewees selected from the researchers' personal networks. Subsequent interviewees were selected using a snowball sampling method (Gobo 2004), starting from the two initial interviewees and their suggestions as to possible interviewees. The sample was limited to individuals who had been affected by Storm Gudrun and whose holdings had seen extensive afforestation since 2005. The interviewees were all private forest owners who derived all or a significant proportion of their income from forestry. All of them lived close to the forest they owned, and a majority were men. They often owned the forest together with their wives, who in such cases were also interviewed.

The timing of the interviews reflected the goal of obtaining a picture of the forest owners' view of the future forest, for many of them had either recently finished replanting after the storm or were in the process of finalizing their plans. According to several forest owners, the spring of 2009 was the first occasion since the storm when it was possible to spend at least some time on managing the forest for the future, and not only on dealing with the consequences of the storm.

The interviews were designed to be open and thematically structured. Each began with relatively broad questions about the respondents and their backgrounds, before the interviewer asked about the central themes concerning the forest. All the interviews, which lasted between one and two hours, were recorded in their entirety and then transcribed verbatim by both researchers – a process that was beneficial to the analysis, as it allowed for a detailed re-examination of the conversations.

Once transcribed, the interview data were reviewed and analysed by both researchers. The analysis required successive phases of extensive reading and note-taking, seeking patterns in the transcripts, coding with the help of keywords, and identifying concepts in the interview data that could be developed into different themes and connected to theoretical perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015). Consistency in the coding was ensured by continuous discussions between the coders in the course of the analysis, a process that also saw both researchers work with all the interviews, comparing themes and categories. All interviews have been anonymized and all names are fictitious.

Results

In terms of how forest owners conceive of the forest landscape and relate to forestry practices, and how this in turn relates to the general public's appreciation of the forest, four main characteristics were found in the analysis of the interview material. These characteristics are summarized under the following headings:

- Clean and tidy
- An even forest without gaps
- Detailed and continuous observation
- The future forest – symbolic project and taskscape

Clean and tidy

The interviewees shared the general public's "scenic" view of the forest, but their perceptions and ways of looking were different, for they seemed to have a preference for landscapes that were neat and ordered. In their view, the quality of the landscape was gauged by features that are thought indicative of forestry skills. The forest owners talked about their visual impressions after the storm in 2005 and describe how they experienced an untidy forest. Kjell stressed that he did not tidy up his forest for economic reasons, but because a forest in this state was painful to look at.

Kjell: By and large it's hardly worth clearing up. But then again you're a farmer, so you go about and do some clearing up (giggle) It's not really economical but you don't want it lying around either.

The forest owners noted other forest owners who had not cleared up and used this as an indicator of colleagues' agroforestry skills. Fredrik and Karin had noticed which forest owners had not cleaned up in their forests, and tried to explain why certain owners had not done so. An untidy forest calls for an explanation:

Fredrik: Yes, they only closed their eyes.

Interviewer: Alright, how are you reasoning here then? If you just let it lie?

Karin: Then you're a bit nuts. Or not coping, not willing.

This shows that there was an observance between the forest owners concerning tidiness. Different explanations for any untidiness were given, and different ways of clearing up in careful or careless ways were identified:

Axel: It does matter how it has been cleared up too, how well they did it, in many places you can see tall stumps and many of the uprooted trees still there. That makes it look a lot more ugly.

Instead of seeing an orderly forest landscape as the worst aspect of the modern forestry industry, the farmers saw victory over nature, and farming skills behind the many tasks needed for successful commercial forestry.

An even forest without gaps

The forest owners said they knew that people who are not forest owners themselves take a critical view of their planting spruce, worried by reduced biological diversity and fewer possibilities for recreation. Ove emphasized the beauty of “a healthy, young forest of roof height”, something that, as he himself pointed out, is not a good forest from a recreational perspective. He was well aware that there are other ways of looking at the forest.

Ove: I can appreciate a young forest as much as an old forest. Surely it can be nicer to walk in a pillared hall than in a thick plantation where you don't see anything. But if I drive down my forest road and I look out I might as well look at fresh, fine young forest.

Ove phrased it as “unfortunately” having planted spruce on most of his land after the storm. He knew that his way of looking at his forest is questioned by non-forest owners, and in a way he distances himself from his own value system.

Interviewer: Yes, we are a little interested in this thing about replanting. What have you planted?

Ove: Well unfortunately it is, you know, traditionally we plant a lot of spruce. We do. We have fine spruce soil oftentimes and spruce thrives here so it gives a good production.

He continued by saying that he viewed the forest as scenery, acknowledging the importance of the forest's immediately apparent beauty.

Ove: Well it does get very dark. It does. But of course we think, like close up to roads and where people live mostly we try to see to it that we have more broadleaves there and that is nice, a bit lighter. The darkest Småland, that's what they say, Danes say that when they come to their holiday cottages. So it has come to be spruce for the most part.

A non-symmetrical forest with gaps is considered ugly, and the visual impression it gives is disheartening for the forest owners. David spoke of the distribution of trees of different ages almost as one would of a human population. Some generations were now missing:

David: It is hard to put that stuff into figures. Like I said before, the forest in this group, it might be between 35 and 60 years old, that forest has disappeared now. There is now a huge gap. That forest isn't there anymore so you can't get those earnings evenly distributed, so now it's all totally twisted the age distribution of the forest.

According to the interviewees, the forest after the storm was not only unattractive, they also pointed out how emotionally hard it was to look at it. Some of the interviewees even claimed that the visual impression could lead to people becoming depressed:

Erik: So far you can only walk around and pick up broken, hanging and damaged trees. And then afterwards it's still not good because you still got gaps there. So I guess that's the hard part. Then again I suppose you have to realize that there won't be gaps as big once it has grown up again. It's still a bit, it's hard to go and look at it now.

Other interviewees describe how they had to limit their visual impressions:

Felix: Like I said in the beginning, I couldn't go and see everything. Many were asking how much has blown down for you, have you looked at it. No, I said, I haven't gone around all real estates, but we are working now with these hectares and try to sort it out. That's the way you have to go about it, I guess, otherwise you almost break down.

Detailed and continuous observation

The interviewees paid close attention to the changes to nature and the details of the landscape – the depth and linearity of the furrows, for example, plant heights, variations in colour, and so on, all of which are observable in individual spaces. For the forest owners, the landscape was not fixed. Rather they depended on knowing what it should look like at all times of year. The forest owners observed these ephemeral cues in details such as the direction of the prevailing wind, the slope of the ground, and the quality of the soil. Ove reported planning ahead and worrying that the big companies' felling would make the forests more vulnerable to storm damage in the future, claiming that the large concerns' clear-cutting opened up for the wind and thus brought a greater risk of storm damage.

Ove: Most often the wind blows from the south-west. I have always been thinking south-westerly when I've been working with the forest. (...) So, when you do the thinning it matters, sort of. You shouldn't let the trees grow too high, so they become too lanky. That they stand too close and then do the thinning, 'cause then they become lankier. (...) If you go in earlier and thin when the tree isn't so high, then you can build up the root system.

The forest owners reported keeping an eye on individual trees, observing the vegetation, and how the tree was exposed to the wind.

Ulf: It's important that you can go and look, you know, so that there's nothing slashing on when the wind is moving. So then you can clear just around the spruce plant.

In this, the forest owners made use their familiarity with the forests and the trees, giving them a very detailed view.

Ove: So you have to work your way into it as a forest owner and know where these different kinds of plants are best suited. And I think a lot about that. Is it a bit frosty in that lowland? Is there a hill? A long hill?

The forest owners described how they continuously look for similarities and dissimilarities in the forest. Ove described this as a jigsaw – ‘a bit of a puzzle’ – and admitted that he did not follow the general recommendations about how the forest should be taken care of, but instead relied on more subtle impressions.

Ove: You get a finer in the branches and denser stands and as soon as the light comes in you get the roofs of the crowns higher. If you let too much light in on the lower part you get branches further down. So you've got to have a bit of knowledge.

The forest owners, with their connection to a landscape they work with daily, develop a proximity and detailed view of the forest that is denied to more distant viewers.

The future forest – symbolic project and taskscape

The forest owners' decisions regarding their forests, not only at the time of planting but also in connection with thinning on different occasions, are something they have to live with for years to come, and speculation about what the forest would look like in a number of years was common in the interviews. Their decisions are based on how the plants, trees, and forest will appear in the future. Ove talked about how decisive the first years are for a forest.

Ove: You can affect your forest a lot in its youth. Then the older it gets it gets harder to shape because then you have already chosen a way and you can't sort of jump into a side-track. But during its youth you can, if you have a spruce plantation and you get all these sorts of broadleaf sprouts coming up. Then you can prioritize the tree that you, that choice of stem you do when you're clearing. So you can actually do that in those first years.

The forest owners need to factor a great many things into their calculations when planning for the future forest, and it is not always the case that a forest that is well kept is more economic. An untidy forest can also be very profitable:

Leif: Then I guess there are those who never went out with a clearing saw or will ever go out with a clearing saw for that matter. It will be seen clearly. There are many farms where they won't be going out at all, so that the self-rejuvenation will have to take care of it all.

Interviewer: Then how will that forest differ?

Leif: Well, it's going to be very thick and then, the trees that take over will get big. We do get the same amount out of it volume-wise in handling it that way, like you do if you're thinning. 'Cause if you're thinning you do get all that volume at the benefit of those who remain. You get one big instead of ten small. So volume-wise you get the same amount whether you're thinning or not.

Having an untidy forest, however, might mean that the owner is seen as a lazy or poor manager, although it might not mean that they are lazy in an economic sense. The damage after the storm in January 2005 led forest owners to reflect on whether they should replant the damaged forest, and if so, with what. They pondered the future in a long perspective, thinking about what the forest is going to look like decades from now and what generations to come will see. A forest that has matured in 40 years time shows that somebody once planted it and took care of it.

For the forest owners, the way replanting is done becomes a sign of commitment on the part of someone who cared for the forest, giving replanting a symbolic meaning. With a new plantation they could start afresh. Richard, who did replant, described how the forest gave him an identity, how it became a way of life, and even a way to live on after he died.

Rickard: Perhaps somebody might remember that it was that man, he did that, why he did it. If you work in an office or in industry or wherever it might be, then there's nobody that remembers you the next day. Then there's a new bloke or old lady sitting there. But when you plant forest you are somebody.

The forest owners' attitudes towards their forest are complex. They spoke of working with it as if it were a symbolic project linked to their own identity, a way to show significant others (mainly other forest owners) their commitment to the forest. That is why it meant so much to see forest growing again after the storm.

Ove: You're getting back on your feet again like when you replanted and most of the areas are ready and some little forest are coming up and you see it here. And it doesn't look as bad any longer, for now you can see some green sprouting up and then it feels a little easier right away I think.

The interviewees described their duty to tend the forest. It meant a lot of work to plant the new forest, and the symbolic values seemed to act as a driving force for the forest owners. There were some among them who can be described as "cultivation happy" – theirs was a visible enjoyment. Mats talked about the start of the growing season.

Mats: It's rather pleasant to go round and look now that the first you've planted, when it starts growing and sprouting. That makes you feel happy.

The forest owner Arne and his wife Tora spoke of their depth of feeling when they saw the forest starting to grow again.

Tora: So you go and watch it, your plants, see how it grows ...

Arne: I went to look at Tomas's plants; they were nice! Yeah, we're nuts, I guess we should all be taken in and mentally examined, all forest owners (laughter).

The interviewees regarded the cultural landscape as a process resulting from their work and the forest as a mark of work well done. For them the forest is a taskscape, and they in their work had a vision of what a good forest should look like. This also sets the conditions for a unique value system within the group, an intra-group evaluation that seems to exist within the particular group of forest owners studied here. Arne emphasized how deep the drive to farm goes – to tend the forest, to plant, and see stock from different years grow.

Arne: Economically speaking it's ... It's like my cousins in America say: planting forest that you can't fell in 80 years, that's crazy! They cannot get that you're so stupid.

Tora: But that's not the way one thinks!

Arne talked about how "insane" it is to plant forest that cannot be expected to yield anything for almost a century. This is the kernel of what he emphatically described as a special evaluation system that outsiders do not understand.

Discussion

What does a well-tended and attractive forest look like? The interviewees had a preference for landscapes that were neat and orderly. This is similar to other studies of farmers' landscape preferences (Brush et al. 2000; Burton 2004) where views on the quality of the landscape are found to be linked to features that are perceived as indicative of agricultural skills, such as the consistency of colour and regularity of crop height and crop density. The stated preference for neat forests is similar to what Setten (2004) describes when

claiming that ordering nature is a key component both in farming and for the public planning and regulatory bodies in the agricultural sector.

For the forest owners, forests were symbolic environments where the social value of forest production, the ordering of nature, is evidently a key component in what it means for them to be forest owners in today's society. Similarly, Beilin (2005) points out that farmers construct their view of the landscape from their cultural understanding of what it means to be managers and farmers in contemporary society. This perception of the forest as a symbolic environment, for example in terms of tidiness, is akin to what Burton (2004) notes about farmers and their use of the general tidiness of farms as an indicator of the skill of their colleagues. The forest owners rate other forests owners and their commitment to forestry by a visual evaluation of their forests. Laziness, in the sense of not keeping a forest neat and tidy, is interpreted as something there is no use for (Nassauer 1997; Burgess et al. 2000; Egoz et al. 2001; Burton 2004).

In discussing farmers' views on agrarian landscapes, Burton (2004) notes that the public sees regular landscapes as symbolizing the worst excesses of the modern agricultural industry. Likewise, the forest owners believe that the public views their neatly planted spruce forests with distaste, for they are aware that the public has a different value system for appreciating the aesthetics of the forest. Forestry is not a work that is hidden: a forest stands in plain sight, and how it is taken care of is evident to the surrounding community, from different perspectives. A question for future research is whether the forest owners' knowledge of the critical eye with which the public views their work will lead to changes in the way they plan for and work with the forest. They may own the forest, but they also know that their ownership is not only a private concern – to borrow from Vail and Hultkrantz (2000), the forest constitutes a quasi-open-access space. The public can use it for recreation, but at the same time the decisions about the forest as a space cannot be taken solely with this in mind, since it is also the forest owners' livelihood.

Another finding regarding the forest owners' way of looking at the forest concerned the level of detail in their perception. Landscape research tends to emphasize large-scale features such as mountains, forests, valleys, and settlements (Ode et al. 2010), neglecting the ephemeral nature of the landscape. Burton and Paragahawewa (2011) stresses the farmers' detailed inspections and how closely they observe nature's changes. In a similar vein, Brady (2006) claims that the farmers' way of looking at the agricultural landscape has more to do with how it changes with the seasons than with enjoying grand views from a distance, the latter being the way people often look at natural scenery. For farmers, the agricultural landscape is not a fixed landscape. The forest owners who necessarily live in proximity to their spruce forest observe its most subtle fluctuations, and use this kind of familiarity in their decision-making (Lundgren & Sundqvist 1996).

The forest owners' detailed observations have a quality that is not visible to the public. Describing how forest owners' notions of aesthetics are connected to a worked landscape, Winkler (2005) uses the concept of an aesthetics of

proximity – local people, through their direct connection that comes from working the landscape, develop an aesthetic appreciation that differs from what Winkler calls bourgeois distant viewers. Burton also stresses this difference concerning the closeness and variety in detail between the farmers' and the public's ways of observing, and how farmers see the beauty of the work rather than the beauty of the land (Burton & Paragahawewa 2011). This idea of the farmers' detailed view is based on what Molander (1996) has referred to as a practical knowledge tradition.

The ways the forest owners look at the forest – what characterizes their visual appreciation of it – can with the help of Bourdieu's theories (1998) be analysed as connected to their views of both themselves and others. For decades there have been government regulations that set down how forest should be tended and what its appearance should be. To be a forest owner has long been thought a national responsibility. Forest owners' views of forestry are also based on historical socioeconomic values, and see them shouldering responsibility for more than just themselves, reflecting the fact that for over a century Sweden's forest legislation has set out to educate forest owners to care for the forest in the best way possible for the benefit of the national economy as much as for themselves (Blennow 2008). Törnqvist (1995) describes this as a learning process whereby forest owners were persuaded to feel responsible for the forest because of its substantial socioeconomic worth. According to Törnqvist, organizations such as Skogssällskapet (the Forest Assembly) actively worked in the early twentieth century to persuade the forest owners not only to care for the forest for their own sakes, but as a duty to society. To own and farm forest was seen as a social, cultural, and lifestyle enterprise, not just an economic undertaking. To view the forest as a taskscape, something that they have a responsibility for, is thus plainly deeply embedded in the forest owners' approach.

It is possible the forest owners' appreciation is attributable to the forest's cultural or symbolic importance. Take Bourdieu (1984), who describes aesthetic appreciation as a decoding operation, an implementation of a certain cultural code: visually appreciating landscape would be more than an aesthetic process, it would also be a social process that is dependent on possessing the appropriate cultural resources, gained either through experience or education (Wacquant 2008). Thus, where landscapes contain cultural symbols that are significant for a given social field, aesthetic appreciation becomes closely (inadvertently and subconsciously) linked to the processes of social judgement, so determining the cultural position of the owner of the display (Burton 2012). The results of the present study indicate that appreciating landscape is, as Bourdieu's theories would suggest, a matter of possessing the cultural capital (meaning the embodied knowledge of practices) required to understand the specialized symbolic code behind landscape forms and colours. The connection between the forest owners and their approach to forestry runs far deeper than simple economic advantage or aesthetic preference; much like the farmers who Burton (2004) studied, it arises from historical identities, a sense of place, displays of nurturing abilities, or from a spiritual connection between forest owners and their ability to produce good forests.

In conclusion, two areas of inquiry can be identified in the findings of the study. One concerns demographic change among the forest owners, and raises the question of how Sweden's forests might be handled in the future, especially given any changes in the forest owners' value systems. With a new generation of private, small-scale forest owners, will the older forest owners change their values, or will demographic changes in the owner group lead to changes in values? One line of research holds the farmers' value system to be their habitus – described by Bourdieu (1998) as a socialized and structured body, which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world, and which serves to structure both perceptions of that world and actions within that world. Socialization gives a strong historical aspect, with habitus being passed through families from generation to generation (Setten 2005).

Changes in the Swedish forest, and thus possibly in the visual evaluation systems as they apply to forest, can instead to be expected to stem from demographic changes in the forest-owning group. Many forest owners used to be older men living in the countryside, but now some predict that the forest owners of the future will be very different. Urbanization has brought substantial change to the group, as forest owners are getting younger and fewer live close to their forest. Some do not farm the forest themselves, but see it as an investment and let others take care of the practical work. Such a development is likely to have an impact on perceptions of the future of forestry, for example in terms of how the forest is either perceived from outside (Ingold's globes) or engaged with from within (spheres).

The proportion of private, small-scale forest owners who do not live in proximity to their forest properties has increased in recent decades. When attitudes towards the forest are seen to change, this is usually attributed to generational shifts, increased concerns for the environment, and urbanization (Lindkvist et al. 2009). The interviewed forest owners lived on their forest property, and the proportion of forest owners who do that is falling, eroding the group of people who are part of that social context, with its similar cultural capital and habitus in Bourdieu's sense of the word.

The other area of inquiry concerns moral geography and the criticism that forest owners faced in the aftermath of Storm Gudrun in January 2005 – the worst hurricane ever to hit Sweden (for the storm and its aftermath, see Eriksson 2009; Guldåker 2009; Linné 2011; Sellerberg 2011; Svensson et al. 2011; Lidskog & Sjödin 2014). Having cleared the storm damage, the forest owners started to replant, whereupon they were criticized for replanting spruce. One opinion poll found widespread criticism of the forest owners for clear-cutting (Lidskog & Sjödin 2014), and by extension large-scale felling, prompted by concerns for animals and plants. The Swedish Forest Agency was critical too, recommending that forest owners start planning for a shorter rotation, increased regeneration felling, earlier thinning, and replanting with broadleaf species (Lidskog & Sjödin 2014). Ultimately, the forest owners were roundly condemned by government agencies and the general public. Despite this, they mostly replanted spruce. Lidskog and Sjödin (2014) note the experts' criticism, and conclude that the forest

owners' replanting of spruce, despite the Forest Agency's warnings, was based on short-term economic reasoning, an understanding of storms as natural, and uncertainty in the fact of alternative forest management practices. The present study offers an additional perspective to complement this strictly economic interpretation: the cultural meanings of nature shaped by individuals and groups are necessarily contested, because inherent in shaping the meanings of nature are moral judgements about who is "right" or "wrong", what is "good" and "bad", and what is "natural" or "unnatural".

Assumptions about right and wrong are often based on what is customarily judged to be morally defensible, and this is the theme of the brand of research known as moral geography – the interrelationship between moral and geographical arguments (Setten 2004). Assumptions about the relationship between people and their environment may both reflect and produce moral judgements, and elucidate the relationship between morality, landscape, and environmental practice. It shows how the culture–nature dichotomy reflects and produces moral judgements, and how the production and meaning of a lived landscape becomes a moral landscape.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the Swedish forest owners' ways of relating to the forest – the understandings on which they base their decisions when planning for future forests – are far more complex than just the maximization of profits. Rather, the forest owners' relationship to the landscape is that of a taskscape, of identity and of morality.

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