Values, beliefs and elite decision-making – The case of the Markbygden wind power development

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Abstract
The outputs of political processes, i.e. policy, reflect rational cost-benefit calculations and power relationships, but are also shaped by the values and beliefs of policy actors, i.e. sovereigns, involved in the decision-making process. Values and beliefs affect how rational analyses and power relationships are understood and valued by sovereigns. This article suggests that understanding sovereigns’ values and beliefs is, however, necessary but insufficient for understanding concrete policy outputs, particularly in complex policy processes characterized by conflicting interests and values. In such cases, sovereigns are forced to prioritize among their values and beliefs. This article proposes a framework for studying how sovereigns prioritize among their values and beliefs. This framework is then used to study a complex policy process ridden with conflicts of interest and value-conflicts, which highlights the value and necessity of studying sovereigns, their values and beliefs, as well as the prioritizations they make among those values and beliefs.

Keywords: public policy; values; beliefs; Advocacy Coalition Framework; wind power
1. Introduction

The outputs of political processes—policy—are commonly believed to be shaped by the values and beliefs of policy actors engaged in decision-making processes within which there is competition and deliberation over which values and beliefs should be translated into public policy (e.g. Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 2007, Birkland 2005, Matti 2009, Stewart 2009). Therefore, in order to fully understand why policy change occurs, analyses of rational cost-benefit calculations, power relations, and windows of opportunity must be complemented with a careful analysis of the values and beliefs permeating policy decisions. In complex and contested policy issues in particular, there is a growing recognition that policy actors’ values and beliefs are decisive in shaping policy outputs (e.g. Weible 2006). Although most current literature within the policy studies field acknowledges the significance of values and beliefs, they tend not to be analyzed explicitly as explanatory factors for policy outputs. Rather, they are incorporated in broader analyses of coalition behavior, policy content and institutional design (cf. Stewart 2009). Furthermore, values and beliefs are frequently viewed as an attribute bringing coalitions together and are therefore conceived of as the common property of a range of actors with different organizational affiliations, as opposed to focusing on values and beliefs as governing the actions of the actual decision-makers who are directly involved in the policymaking process. By studying the values and beliefs of decision makers directly and explicitly, the process by which policy outputs are created can be elucidated and the policy process as a whole understood better.

The study of political decision makers is a study of elites, a research field with a rich history in political science (cf. Putnam 1976). The beliefs of elites have also long been recognized as an important factor in explaining the policy process (Sabatier and Hunter 1989). According to the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), “decisions by sovereigns” (subject to agency resources and general policy orientations) lead to policy outputs (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993:18). “Sovereigns” in a given subsystem include anyone who has decision-making authority for a given policy question and could include bureaucrats, politicians or judges, i.e. elites. While ACF research has typically focused on the beliefs of coalitions (Weible et al 2011), doing so has minimized the question of whether some actors’ (i.e. elites/sovereigns) beliefs matter more or in different ways than other actors’ beliefs in determining policy impacts and outcomes. Therefore, better understanding the beliefs of sovereigns related to their political decisions, and consequent policy outputs, is critical to understanding the policy process as a whole, particularly in cases where complex value-conflicts exist yet concrete political decisions must be made. The aim of this article is to understand the process by which the values and beliefs of sovereigns lead to political decisions, which lead to concrete policy outputs. In order to do this, we will start by reviewing previous research on the values and beliefs of decision makers and then construct an analytical framework that will guide the subsequent empirical analysis of a case of a political decision by sovereigns to develop wind power in Markbygden, Sweden. The results of this analysis will be used to illuminate how the values and beliefs of sovereigns affect their decisions. This will contribute to the broader understanding of values and beliefs in the policy
process, as well as deepening the understanding of the mechanisms by which the policy process, according to the ACF, actually works.

The Necessity of Value Trade-offs: the Markbygden Wind Power Development

Some policymaking processes, such as those in land-use planning, require decision makers to weigh and make trade-offs between alternative potential and existing land uses, such as housing, farming, forestry, recreation, or natural beauty. Such policy processes can be termed complex because they present decisions makers with value-conflicts, i.e. a given policy output may be in line with some of their values, but may conflict with others. In such cases, one may ask which values and beliefs drive political decisions? One way to approach this question is to empirically study the process by which decision makers translate their values and beliefs into political decisions within policy processes where political decisions force decision makers to make trade-offs between conflicting values and beliefs. This study will therefore examine the values and beliefs of decision makers in a case of complex policy making.

The case studied focuses on the expansion of on-shore wind power in northern Sweden and involves a range of values and interests. As with most propositions for large-scale land use, economic and socio-cultural interests compete with or impact other land uses, such as grazing lands for reindeer, areas for tourism and recreational uses, as well as nature conservation. The proposed wind-park development is located in the Markbygden area of the Piteå Municipality in Sweden. Due to its geographical setting in the Swedish north, as well as its physical traits, a number of value-driven conflicts of interest have been reported in the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment conducted by the wind power company (e.g. Svevind, 2008a; Svevind 2008b), in considerations expressed by local authorities, and in public media debates.

When fully developed, the wind park will be a vast industrial project comprising over 1000 turbines of up to 200 meters height each, producing in total 8-10 TWh/year (Svevind, 2008a), making it one of the largest onshore wind farms in the world and accounting for almost 50 percent of the Swedish national planning goal for renewables (Swedish Government, 2009). The area of Markbygden is well suited for wind-power development, being endowed with good wind resources and nearby power grids that can transport the electricity generated. The area has been extensively exploited by the forestry industry and there are few environmentally protected areas. Still, a scheme as large as the one planned would dominate the landscape in the entire area and would unavoidably affect local flora and fauna. Concerns regarding negative impacts on migratory birds, as well as on the sensitive Golden eagle, in particular, have been raised. In this sense, there is a conflict of interests within the environmental domain, as the global need for renewables is placed in opposition to local conservation interests. This conflict is also evident in policy as wind power development elucidates intricate conflicts between different Swedish National Environmental Quality Objectives. For example, “a reduced climate impact” may diminish the possibilities for “a magnificent mountain landscape.”
Apart from these conservationist concerns, other conflicts surround the proposed wind park. Although Markbygden is sparsely populated, it is heavily used for recreational purposes (e.g. hunting, fishing, berry picking, hiking, snowmobiling), with a number of houses built for those purposes in the area. Both permanent residents and visitors have opposed the planned wind park, arguing that it will disrupt recreational activities, change the experience of visiting the area, and reduce the monetary value of their properties. These concerns further highlight the global-local conflict-of-interests spawned by the development of renewable energy sources, and highlight the debate about what geographic areas (along with which residents and land users) should bear the responsibility for remedying the global problem of climate change.

Lastly, the development of a wind park in Markbygden will significantly infringe on the economy and culture of an indigenous minority-group, thus adding an ethical and ethno-political dimension to the issue. Almost the entire area planned for the wind park is located within the reindeer herding pastures used by the Eastern Kikkejaure Sámi village. Once fully developed, the park, along with necessary roads and infrastructure, would affect approximately 26% of the Sámi village’s winter grazing areas and would thus have a major impact on the Sámi village’s ability to pursue their traditional reindeer herding (Svevind, 2008b). Simultaneously, the fact that some institutional arrangements (e.g. SFS 1974:152; SFS 1971:437) are already in place to ensure minority-specific rights related to resource management has previously given rise to conflicts between the Sámi and the local community related to both the local economy and access to the land, particularly as reindeer husbandry is not only a significant cultural marker but also constitutes the main source of income for the Sámi community.

These negative aspects notwithstanding, officials from the Municipality and the County have suggested that the wind park will provide large economic benefits to an area, which, over the past decades, has seen a diminishing population and loss of job opportunities. The potential positive impact on local and regional economic development would primarily result from an increase in employment opportunities during the many years of preparatory and construction work, an increased demand for local industries to deliver both construction materials and transport services, and from a range of indirect positive effects on the local commercial and trade sector. These facts highlight the conflict between the local economic impacts of the wind park and its conservationist, socio-cultural, and ethical impacts.

In 2007, the Municipal Council—the government body responsible for designating areas for the building of wind parks—approved a “Comprehensive Plan for Rural Areas” in which the Markbygden area was designated for exploring the development of wind power, provided that county and state approvals could be secured. In 2011, a final permit was granted for building the first phase of the Markbygden wind park, including 314 wind turbines. Since then, construction on the first phase has continued and preparations for the second phase have been made. Since the project’s planning and construction began, 148 companies have been involved, with 62% being local to the region (Strömsunds kommun 2015). In terms of employment generated by the project’s construction, 300 work-years of labor were needed, with 42% of the labor force being sourced regionally, 6% from other areas of Sweden, and
52% from outside Sweden (Ibid). It is expected that 10 work-years will be needed each year over a 25-year period of time for operations and maintenance (Ibid). Svevind and Enercon, the companies owning the project, have offered compensation, in the form of contracts specifying a portion of revenues earmarked for local development and administered by local representatives, to the villages and Sámi groups directly impacted by the wind park. These funds, together with additional regional tax revenues generated by the project and decreased social costs from unemployment are estimated at—on a per-wind-turbine basis for the life of the project—approximately 250,000 USD during the building phase and 780,000 USD during the operation phase (Ibid). None of these estimates, however, account for what the economic impact would have been had the project not been built. For all the reasons outlined, the case of wind power development in Markbygden offers an interesting case of conflicting values and interests within a policy process where decision makers must weigh and then prioritize among values and beliefs when making political decisions with concrete policy impacts. The question remains, though, how do decision makers weigh and then decide which values and beliefs deserve priority? The answer to this question will help to understand not only the case of wind power development in Markbygden Piteå, but potentially other policy processes where values come into conflict, such as in natural resource management and resource extraction, infrastructure projects, and land use planning generally.

2. Theory

As we are interested in how decision makers, a.k.a. “sovereigns,” prioritize among their values and beliefs when making concrete political decisions, we need to further conceptualize values and beliefs.

The Values and Beliefs of Policy Actors

That values and beliefs are drivers of individuals’ formation of political preferences is well established in the literature (Tetlock, Peterson & Lerner 1996, Tetlock 1986, Converse 1964). It is therefore not surprising that cognitive factors figure prominently in most theories about the policy processes. This is true of basic conceptions of politics, such as Easton’s (1953) “authoritative allocation of values”, or Lasswell’s (1936) struggle over “who gets what, when and how,” as well as in the theories of Vickers (1968), and in Dror’s (1973) normative-optimum model for decision-making. Consistent with their function as defined in psychology, these theories primarily conceptualize values as influencing goal formation by guiding actors’ perception of what is important or desirable. In a general sense, values are seen as the ultimate end of public policy.

Values also permeate policy goals, as well as theories about how to reach them, either explicitly, where the goals themselves express a set of prioritized values, or implicitly, where policy goals function as instruments for reaching more fundamental values (cf. Thatcher and Rein 2004; Amara 1972). When value-conflicts arise, i.e. when actors must prioritize values, previous research has indicated that strategies range from “balancing” among conflicting values, alternating emphasis between values, assigning responsibility for
each value to different institutional structures, and gathering and consulting a “taxonomy of specific cases where similar conflicts arose” (Thatcher and Rein 2004).

On the individual level, previous research demonstrates how individuals from time-to-time are unavoidably faced with situations where two personally held values come into direct conflict and where value trade-offs therefore become necessary (cf. Hadari, 1988; Tetlock, Peterson and Lerner, 1996). This is, for example, evident in the classic conflict between freedom and security, as well as in the conflict between (local) environmental conservation and (global) production of renewable energy. In such conflict-situations, a person’s hierarchical ordering of values is believed to be important, as it will serve as a guide to how trade-offs are made (Rokeach, 1968; Schwartz, 1996; Rossteucher, 2004).

According to Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993; and see notes therein for examples of empirical studies), the connection between the values and beliefs held by policy actors and how they subsequently position themselves in political decisions has been verified in a range of studies. Even, or perhaps especially, when actors account for the costs and benefits of policy alternatives, values and beliefs matter because values and beliefs affect what actors believe and understand about costs and benefits and how they subjectively value certain costs and benefits over others. Thus, values and beliefs serve as a filter that explains why certain costs and benefits—whatever their monetary value—are prioritized over others in actual political decisions. Values and beliefs similarly affect power structures, with more powerful actors being subject to their understanding of what their power should be for, i.e. the exercise of power presupposes an actor who has one or more objectives or goals, which must be, in turn, determined and prioritized according to the values and beliefs of the actor.

The relationship of values and beliefs to political decisions is not, however, straightforward. Most policy domains are more often than not characterized by incorporating a range of incompatible values and interests. Indeed, according to Weible (2006), there is a growing recognition that the major conflicts surrounding contemporary public policy processes can be attributed to actors entering the policy process holding diverging values and, thus, diverging political goals. As different policies and policy outputs typically generate different outcomes, an important aspect of the policymaking process is concerned with the selection and prioritizing of those basic values toward which the outlined political strategies should aim. Determining which goals should be pursued therefore requires negotiating, making trade-offs, or in other ways dealing with value-conflicts throughout the processes.

In political research, these value-conflicts are sometimes conceptualized as conflicts among diverging ideologies. Similar to other broad concepts, such as belief-systems (e.g. Tetlock et al, 1996; Sabatier, 1988) or policy frames (e.g. Rein and Schön, 1993), every distinct ideology is made up of a coherent structure of basic value priorities and empirically oriented beliefs. This indicates that ideologies, at least implicitly, also contain prescriptions for those goals public policy ultimately should aim at obtaining, as well as the political strategies for doing so (cf. Grafton and Permaloff, 2005a & 2005b; Caprara et. al, 2006; Feldman, 1998 & 2003; Goren, 2005; North, 1990; Milbrath, 1986). This is why Kingdon (1995), for instance, argues that ideology comes in handy for structuring the analysis of public policy. In a broader perspective, Parsons (1995; see also Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999;
Hall and McGinty 1997; Rein and Schön, 1993; Heclo, 1978) notes that the policy process should therefore be viewed as a constant competition for power between coalitions of actors holding different sets of basic values and political goals. Therefore, simply knowing what the values and beliefs relevant to a given policy subsystem are does not, in and of itself, tell us much about policy formation; rather, it is important to understand how those values and beliefs are prioritized relative to each other. And concerning the part of the policy process known as “political decisions,” and “policy outputs,” specifically, it is important to understand, not only how values and beliefs are prioritized, but how decision makers—i.e. those responsible for making political decisions—prioritize their own values and beliefs related to specific political decisions and their consequent policy outputs.

Research Questions

The aim of this article is to understand the process by which the values and beliefs of sovereigns are translated into political decisions. To achieve this aim, two research questions are posed, which were used to guide the analysis of the decision-making process of sovereigns leading to the decision by the Piteå Municipal Council to approve the Markbygden area for wind power development. These questions could similarly be used to analyze the decision-making process of sovereigns in other complex policy making processes, i.e. those with deep value-conflicts.

Q1: How do sovereigns prioritize among values and beliefs when making concrete political decisions?

Q2: How do sovereigns rationalize the prioritizations of values and beliefs that they make when making concrete political decisions?

Question 1 is designed to shed light on the process by which sovereigns prioritize among values and beliefs when they must make decisions. It is possible that sovereigns might support multiple values and beliefs in the abstract, but when making a concrete decision, especially in a complex policy process, some values and beliefs must be prioritized above others. Question 2 is design to elicit the reasoning behind why sovereigns make the prioritizations they do when making political decisions. Question 2 will hopefully deepen the understanding of the answers to Question 1. Together, the questions will help to understand the relationship of values and beliefs to political decisions.

Values, Beliefs and the Advocacy Coalition Framework

An empirical analysis cannot be reliably conducted without some sort of framework guiding the inquiry and determining what is important and what can be ignored (cf. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). In order to provide more structure to the analysis of data on sovereigns’ values and beliefs, and to be able to identify prioritizations when they are present, the concepts of values and beliefs must be further specified. To construct our analytical
categories, we depart from the model of the individual’s cognitive system as a hierarchical ordering of beliefs, outlined both in social (e.g. Rokeach, 1973; Rohan, 2000) and political psychology/public opinion research (e.g. Peffley and Hurwitz, 1985; Putnam, 1976; Converse, 1964). According to these models, a person’s system of beliefs is arranged in a three-tiered structure in which basic, cross-contextual values inform more situational-specific beliefs and attitudes in a causal chain leading up to the formation of behavioral choices and opinions (e.g. Stern et al, 1999). To further distinguish between the different levels of abstraction in the personal belief-system, we follow the tripartite structure outlined in the ACF (e.g. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). The ACF is helpful in deepening the analysis of values and beliefs because the types of values and beliefs that policy actors have has consequences for policy change, in this case in the form of political decisions by sovereigns.

At the highest level of abstraction, deep core beliefs consist of basic views on human nature; the priority of ultimate values (e.g. freedom, security, power); the basic criteria of distributive justice and the person’s socio-cultural identity (e.g. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). The deep core consists of beliefs that are deep-seated, highly resistant to change, and applicable to all types of issues or questions. This is consistent with the function of core values, broadly defined as abstract and general conceptions of “the desirable” that serve as the individual’s stable and enduring trans-situational guide and underpin the understanding that one end-state of existence, goal or mode of conduct is more preferable than others. (e.g. Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Sniderman et al, 1991). Being of a broad and trans-situational nature, values function as a guide to both evaluation and attitude formation in all aspects of the individual’s life, and their significance for attitudes, preferences and choices pertaining to political issues and even specific public policies has been well-researched (e.g. Caprara et al, 2006; Jacoby, 2006; Altemeyer, 1998; Barnea and Schwartz, 1998; Rohan and Zanna, 1996; van Deth and Scarbourough, 1995; Mitchell et al, 1993; Zaller 1992; Rasinski, 1987). According to these lines of research, values expressing general desirable goals are causally linked to policy-specific attitudes and perceptions. Most people understand political issues in terms of values and base their political choices and policy preferences on the connections they draw between the issue and their personal value-priorities. Through their relative stability, values thereby make it possible for the individual to organize political evaluations and judgments in a relatively consistent manner, both over longer periods of time and in relation to a range of diverse issues (cf. Goren, 2005; Feldman, 2003 & 1988; Alvarez and Brehm, 2002; van Deth and Scarbourough, 1995; Sniderman et al, 1991; Brewer and Gross, 2005; Schwartz, 1994; Feldman, 1988; Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987; Jacoby, 2006).

A set of more specific and empirically oriented beliefs defined as “worldviews,” “conceptions of reality” (Gilbert et al, 1999; Rohan, 2000) or “policy core beliefs” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999), serve to link core values with situationally specific attitudes and opinions by determining how values are interpreted, bestowed meaning, and activated in relation to a specific area of the person’s life. In contrast to the cross-contextual nature of core values, the more empirically oriented beliefs are directed toward a specific policy-domain and therefore represent an accumulation of understanding about the basic causes of the problem in question, its seriousness, and the appropriate strategies for achieving core values within the
domain. The latter includes beliefs on the proper role of government, the balance of market and governmental activity, preferences for different types of policy instruments, and the preferred modes of participation by the public, experts and elected officials in amending the problem (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). These empirical beliefs are also less resistant to change than core values, and can be affected and altered through, for example, processes of learning (Zafonte and Sabatier, 2004; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

Lastly, both values and empirically oriented beliefs inform a wide range of attitudinal positions. Defined as affective or emotional evaluations of specific entities, expressing personal likes and dislikes, as well as representing a person’s behavioral predispositions (Rohan, 2000; Glynn et al, 1999), the scope of attitudes is significantly narrower than for values and beliefs, focusing for the most part on specific aspects of a specific issue. Attitudinal positions concern, for example, the seriousness of specific aspects of the problem in specific locales and views on technical aspects of an issue, such as administrative rules and the performance of specific programs or institutions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Attitudes are both shallow and volatile, and will therefore be reconsidered when actors face new information. In fact, these attitudinal positions are consistently sacrificed before the person acknowledges weaknesses in his or her values or empirically oriented beliefs (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier, 1998). Their volatility also signals that a challenge of one’s attitudes does not, as a rule, lead to a change in one’s values or beliefs. But it is within the realm of attitudes that policy learning is most likely. Policy learning, through communication and feedback from policy outputs, can change the attitudes (also known as secondary beliefs) of actors and cause them to shift or collaborate in new ways, thereby affecting policy outputs (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993:19).

While all actors within a given policy subsystem have their values, beliefs and attitudes, making the political decisions that lead to policy outputs presents a unique situation for two reasons. First, political decisions are not the purview of all subsystem actors, but are the responsibility of sovereigns specifically. Second, in policy processes ridden with conflicting values and interests, when making political decisions, sovereigns do not always have the luxury of perfectly representing all of their or their constituents’ values, beliefs and attitudes. Rather, they must prioritize between different values, beliefs and attitudes, all of which the sovereigns may value. The process of translating abstract ideas into concrete political decisions forces this prioritization and constitutes a unique focal point in the policy process worthy of studying. Political decisions are not, however, the same thing as policy outputs. Sovereigns may decide whether they will vote for or support a specific policy goal, but the policy outputs themselves are removed one step from such decisions and, in democratic processes at least, involve some form of aggregating the political decisions of sovereigns, as well as constraints on resources, etc. From the ACF and other models, however, we depart from the assumption that there is a link between the values, beliefs and attitudes of sovereigns to the political decisions they make, and then to policy outputs themselves, based on whichever group of sovereigns represents the “winning” majority.

3. Data Collection and Methods
In order to study the case of the decision to approve the Markbygden area for wind power development, it is necessary to identify the values, beliefs and attitudes of the sovereigns with authority to determine the relevant policy outputs, in this case, permitting the development to proceed. Markbygden is an empirically interesting case because it is such a large development with a significant impact on the area in question, but also because it is similar to other policy processes with large impacts and consequent value-conflicts. The lessons learned from studying this case are therefore also likely to apply in other complex policy processes.

In the case of the approval of wind power development in Markbygden, sovereigns are those that have jurisdiction over wind power planning and authority to approve areas for wind power exploration and development. In Sweden, this includes the Representatives of the elected Municipal Council, who vote on such plans, as well as municipal and county bureaucrats who are involved in the planning process and consult with project developers. To study the values, beliefs and attitudes of sovereigns, a mix of qualitative (media and document analysis) and quantitative (survey) methods were used.

In order to assess the values, beliefs and attitudes of sovereigns regarding the Markbygden wind power project, the three major newspapers in the region were searched for articles dealing with the project and in which sovereigns had made statements. Thirty-four such articles were found. The time span covered was from the first article mentioning the project up until the decision was made by the Municipal Council to approve the Comprehensive Plan for Rural Areas. The media articles were complemented with official documents of meetings held and reports generated and used by the Municipal Council Representatives to evaluate, plan for and decide on the Markbygden project. The document containing the most relevant information was the report to the Municipal Council on the statements and opinions (dealing with problems and reservations about the project) raised by individuals and groups in relation to the then-proposed Comprehensive Plan for Rural Areas. This report included the official responses/comments of the Municipal Council to the opinions and statements made.

The media articles and documents were analyzed using qualitative idea- (sometimes referred to as ideology-) analysis. Idea-analysis is predominantly used for identifying the values, ideologies and belief-systems of an actor, in a policy area or in a debate, and has previously been applied in tracing ideas in political debates as well as in mapping and analyzing ideological development among groups of actors (Bergström and Boréus, 2005; Esaiasson et al, 2004). Idea-analysis is also qualitative in character since it aims at exploring the ideas, values or beliefs in, for instance, written texts, and not to quantify the use of language itself. We agree with Devine’s (2002:207) conclusion that the qualitative methods’ advantages “are clear where the goal of a piece of research is to explore people’s experiences, practices, values and attitudes in depth and to establish their meaning for those concerned.” All quotes from articles and documents are translations from Swedish by the article’s authors and are selections that are illustrative of the values and beliefs expressed generally.

To further assess and validate the values and beliefs of sovereigns observed in the media statements and documents, a survey was sent to 63 Municipal Council Representatives
and Substitutes. 18 filled out the survey for a response rate of 28.6%. Prior to doing this, and in order to determine what specific concerns were at stake in approving the Markbygden area for wind power development, other studies and documents were consulted, and two pilot interviews with Representatives of the Municipal Council from different political blocks were conducted. The interviews also served as a means of validating the results of the survey. The survey asked the respondents questions about how important various issues related to wind power development were to them. The following is the list of issues:

1. Creating economic growth
2. Creating jobs
3. Protecting the natural environment
4. Protecting wild animals and plants
5. Preserving a peaceful and undisturbed environment for residents

Respondents were asked to rank how important they felt these issues were on a scale from Very Unimportant, Somewhat Unimportant, Neither Important Nor Unimportant, Somewhat Important to Very Important. The questions were posed according to how important the respondents felt about them generally (i.e. in terms of values/deep core beliefs), in terms of what municipalities, in general, should have as policies (i.e. beliefs/policy core beliefs), and in terms of how they felt about them in regard to the Markbygden project specifically (i.e. attitudes/secondary beliefs). The following questions were used to assess values, beliefs and attitudes:

VALUES: How important are the following [issues] for you? E.g. creating economic growth.

BELIEFS: How important is it that INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPALITIES do the following? E.g. create a favorable environment for economic growth in the municipality.

ATTITUDES: How important were the following factors in your decision to be “for” or “against” (in the Comprehensive Plan for Rural Areas) designating Markbygden as an appropriate geographic area for wind power development? E.g. that the Municipality should create a favorable environment for economic growth in the Municipality.

Respondents were also asked whether they were for or against, in the Comprehensive Plan, demarcating the Markbygden area for wind power development. In addition, sovereigns were asked about their attitudes toward developing wind power in the municipality in general, as well as in the Markbygden project specifically, both before the Markbygden issue was raised and after the vote. They were also asked if their attitudes toward the project changed in the run-up to the vote on the project.
The use of media statements, official documents and the survey enabled the values, beliefs and attitudes of sovereigns to be triangulated, as well as allowing the results of each dataset to be cross-validated. Thus, a more accurate picture of the relevant values, beliefs and attitudes emerged than would have been possible if relying on only one source of data.

4. Results

As an initial question in the survey tapping overall attitudes towards the wind-power development project, municipal representatives were asked to state how they felt about whether Piteå Municipality should develop wind power generally, both before the Markbygden issue was first raised and after the vote on the Comprehensive Plan.

Table 1. General policy beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should Piteå municipality activity work to develop wind power?</th>
<th>Before Markbygden issue</th>
<th>After Markbygden decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>72.20%</td>
<td>77.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>11.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results, displayed in Table 1, it is evident that there was little change in the beliefs of sovereigns during this period. It appears that the only net change was that some “don’t knows” decided to be for wind power development in the Municipality during the policy process. This result is to be expected, given the assumptions in the ACF about resistance to change in policy core beliefs.

Regarding the attitude of sovereigns to the Markbygden wind project specifically, of those surveyed, 88.9% agreed with the decision to designate the area for wind power development while 11.1% did not agree. Because so few of those surveyed were against the decision on Markbygden, and because there were no clear trends among those who were against it, their results were not separated out from those who agreed with the decision.

Table 2 displays the results from the question of if sovereigns’ attitudes to the Markbygden project changed over the course of the debate on whether to approve the project.

Table 2. Change in policy beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did your attitude to developing wind power in Markbygden change during the period between when the Municipal Council began discussing the issue and when the Comprehensive Plan was approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The results indicate somewhat more change in attitudes (22.2%) than in beliefs. According to the ACF, attitudes (i.e. secondary beliefs) are more malleable than beliefs (i.e. policy core beliefs) and so more change would be expected. However, almost 80% of respondents said they did not change their attitude toward the Markbygden development, indicating that much of the support for some sort of development similar to the Markbygden project was already in place prior to the possibility of the project being raised; i.e. the prospect of the Markbygden project did not conflict with sovereigns’ existing attitudes.

The Prioritization of Values, Beliefs and Attitudes

Having reviewed the general questions about the support of Municipal Representatives for the project and for wind power development in the Municipality generally, attention will now be turned to the data on how the different values, beliefs and attitudes of sovereigns were prioritized.

Beginning with sovereigns’ media statements, notably, almost all of the sovereigns were positive about the project for various reasons. The county Governor, after learning of the potential project said: *We are going to be the new oil sheiks* (Kuriren 1)... *An expansion of wind power is important for Norrbotten and for Sweden. It contributes to sustainable development. There is also growth potential for wind power as an industry* (Kuriren 2).

Municipal officials hailed the project as: *A great chance for many new jobs, good economic development and a good environment* (PT 1)... *For the municipality, it is like discovering a gold mine. If this becomes a reality, it will be like winning the lottery for Piteå and the whole region* (PT 2)... *[The Markbygden project] constitutes an important part of realizing the country’s energy transformation* (Kuriren 3).

Municipal Council Representatives were similarly enthusiastic: *For the Piteå countryside, many needed jobs will result and interest in creating new businesses will increase. Access to environmentally friendly energy will greatly impact increased economic development in all of Norrbotten* (PT 3)... *[This development]...will lead to more electrical energy and put more pressure on prices, but mostly will produce electricity in an environmentally friendly way. As the cherry-on-top, jobs will be created for a period of time* (PT 5).

The optimism expressed by these sovereigns prioritizes the effects the project would have on local economic development and jobs, but also, interestingly, climate change and Sweden’s energy policy, issues which arguably do not presently directly affect, or cannot be significantly affected by, the Municipality. These statements primarily reflect sovereigns’ beliefs about the importance of wind power, economic development, etc., as well as, in some cases, their values, such as “sustainable development.” Less was said about the specific impact of the project itself, i.e. sovereigns’ attitudes, beyond the fact that they were generally supportive of it.
The only sovereign who was covered in a news article who was not optimistic was a Municipal Council Representative, who raised several concerns:

“The negatives associated with wind power projects weigh heavily, if you look closely. I suggest that the reference group [studying the project] starts their work over and presents the downsides of wind power and not just put everything in a positive light. As things are now, it looks as if we are digging a large hole in Markbygden’s future that will become its grave with the wind power park. House prices will fall and fewer people will move in. Who wants to live in an area with a wind power park that is both noisy and that ruins the environment and hunting? Don’t be naive and think that there will be many more jobs. The wind power company will bring in their own people, who cost less. The local or regional workforce will not be employed because they lack the competence and experience.” (PT 6).

This statement clearly prioritizes the beliefs of protecting the (local) environment and the impact the project will have on local residents, while being skeptical to whether the project would positively impact the local economy and jobs, reflecting the sovereign’s attitudes.

Table 3 displays the results of the survey of the Municipal Council Representatives and Substitutes, which reveal a similar trend to the media statements. The five issues are listed horizontally across the top. The left-hand column displays how each issue was ranked within the context of values, beliefs and attitudes. The issues were scored from 1-5, from 1 being Very Unimportant to 5 being Very Important.

Table 3. Issue-Priorities of Municipal Council Representatives and Substitutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief Types:</th>
<th>Creating economic growth</th>
<th>Creating jobs</th>
<th>Protecting the natural environment</th>
<th>Protecting wild animals and plants</th>
<th>Preserving a peaceful and undisturbed environment for residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values (overall guiding principles)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs (concerning municipalities in general)</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes (concerning Markbygden in particular)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In regard to values, while all issues are viewed as important to some extent, economic growth and jobs are prioritized higher than all other issues. This is also true concerning the priorities for municipalities (i.e. at the policy level/beliefs). When it comes to attitudes (i.e. concerning the Markbygden wind project specifically), the trend is the same, with economic growth and jobs coming first, prioritized ahead of protecting the environment, protecting animals and plants, and preserving the environment for residents. The results concerning attitudes are particularly interesting because this is where one might expect local environmental issues to be most prominent, either because of the NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) phenomenon or simply because of concrete, competing interests. Yet, it is at the level of attitudes that environmental concerns are least pronounced compared to beliefs and values. The conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that, in this case, while all issues were at least somewhat important, municipal officials prioritized economic growth and jobs over issues of the local environment and the impact on local residents in shaping the deciding to designate Markbygden for wind power development.

The Rationalization of Value, Belief and Attitude Priorities

While it was clear that most sovereigns were in favor of the Markbygden wind park development, citing values and beliefs corresponding to local economic growth and jobs, they nonetheless recognized the values and beliefs related to local impacts on the environment, plant and wildlife and residents, however, these were prioritized lower than the economic, job, climate change and national policy issues. The rationalizations sovereigns used to explain the prioritization of some values and beliefs over others is evident in both media statements and official documents. For example, the Mayor of Piteå said: There are downsides to everything, if you are naive. Tourism is, for example, an important industry for us. But I don’t see any conflicts between tourism and the wind park plans that are being discussed today (PT 1).

Regarding owners of cabins in the area planned for the project—who had appealed the decision to approve the project—the Mayor said that he did not view them as a big problem and that one possibility would be to offer them new lots and move certain cabins from the area: We have addressed their concerns and increased the setback distance [for the wind turbines] (Kuriren 4) and another Piteå official said: Of course we should respect individuals’ interests, but by appealing at multiple steps and instances, the process is being prolonged too much (PT 7). Here, the issues of the impacts on local residents were being viewed and dealt with by sovereigns at the level of attitudes, rather than beliefs or values.

The treating of local impacts on the environment, plants/animals and local residents at the level of attitudes, which could easily be adjusted, as opposed to at the level of beliefs or values, was also evident in the Municipality’s official response to concerns raised during the period when the Comprehensive Plan was displayed for public comment:
“The municipality has adjusted the [wind power] exploration area...so that the distance between the buildings and the exploration area will be between 1200-1500 meters. Through the now increased distance between the buildings and the planned wind power park, it is judged that no disturbances in the form of noise, shadows, or reflections will occur. Generally, it can be said that all forms of wind power construction affect the landscape. The Municipality is aware that there are different opinions on whether this change in the landscape is good or bad. The Municipality has taken into account a number of the pros and cons of a large project such as this. The project, if it is implemented to the extent planned, will contribute to increasing the supply of renewable energy in the country significantly. The project will create new jobs...In this case the municipality judges that the area should be used for wind power because this land use works well when combined with forestry. The project will be implemented in phases and in coordination with the implementation of the respective stages of the project, the environmental impact of those stages will be assessed...The project will be done in such a way that waterways will not be affected and so that the effects on plants and animal life will be minimized...The Municipality judges that the wind power project, if it is implemented, will affect property values positively” (Piteå Kommun 2007).

It seems clear here that the issue is never if the wind park should be built, but rather, how it should be implemented at the technical level; in other words, concerns are dealt with as matters of secondary beliefs/attitudes, as opposed to belief or values.

Another method of rationalization, which sovereigns used, was appealing to concerns, such as climate change, that are arguably outside the policy realm of land use planning at the local level. Concerning climate change, the effects on individual municipalities, as well as the ability of individual municipalities to affect climate change is hard to pinpoint and is very diffuse. In other words, the benefits and costs are abstract. For this reason, the fact that municipal officials would appeal to values and beliefs related to climate change in order to rationalize the wind power development and the Markbygden project specifically is quite interesting.

Municipal Council Representatives said: Of course, it will be an adjustment. But the pros outweigh the cons. The world needs environmentally friendly energy and Markbyden needs development, something that the project will further... I will learn to accept wind power...[I don’t] see any dangers for wildlife. Neither people nor animals were bothered by it (PT 9). Another said: The climate threat is global, but emissions are local... How do you think we are going to address the temperature increases in the atmosphere? (PT 4)

The County Governor said: Many believe that [wind power] ruins the landscape and that it isn’t beautiful from an environmental perspective. We should, of course, respect that. But I also believe that we should learn to think “wind power.” Norrbotten has a responsibility to think about the global environment. We can all see the effects of climate change (PT 8)...You need to weight different national interests against each other and then make a decision...We are unused to wind power in Norrbotten. Many say that it ruins the landscape. Once upon a time there was a debate about forbidding highways (Kuriren 1).
In rationalizing their prioritization of values and beliefs, sovereigns employed two strategies. First, when sovereigns did recognize the impacts the project would have on the local environment, plants/animals and local residents, most relegated these issues to the status of technical concerns (i.e. attitudes or secondary beliefs) that could be dealt with by making technical adjustments without changing the more fundamental, existing beliefs or values concerning the project as a whole. Second, the impacts of the project on the local environment, plants/animals and residents were described as less important by most sovereigns than the issues economic growth, jobs, as well as issues arguably external to the policy subsystem, such as climate change and renewable energy development. When weighing these concerns, some sovereigns went so far as to express the primary importance of addressing climate change over local concerns generally. Others spoke mostly of the economic benefits and jobs they believed the project would create, and others viewed the project as a win-win situation for climate change/Sweden’s renewable energy policy and local economic growth/jobs.

As an aside, an interesting fact evident when searching for media statements by sovereigns was that there was not a lack of vocal opposition to the project in the Municipality. Hunter groups, local residents and others were opposed and/or were skeptical to the project. However, these values and beliefs were evidently shared by only a small minority of sovereigns. This fact emphasizes the importance of studying the values and beliefs of sovereigns in particular, compared to the beliefs of policy subsystem actors in general.

5. Discussion

The aim of this article is to understand the process by which the values and beliefs of sovereigns are “translated” into concrete political decisions. To achieve this aim, two research questions were posed, which were used to guide the analysis of the decision making process of sovereigns leading to the decision by the Piteå Municipal Council to approve the Markbygden area for wind power development. The first question focused on the results of sovereigns’ value trade-offs when making concrete political decisions. In the case of the Markbygden wind power development, we noted how sovereigns prioritized the issue of local economic growth and job over the issues of the local environment, plant life and animals, and impacts on local residents. These two categories represent two apparent value-clusters, with the local economy cluster being favored over the local environmental cluster. The prioritization of values appeared to be consistent across values, beliefs and attitudes, something that confirms the assumptions of the ACF and other cognitive policy making models.

The second research question tapped the sovereigns’ rationalizations of their value priorities. Sovereigns in the Markbygden case rationalized their value and belief prioritizations using two strategies. First was emphasizing the favored values and beliefs and deemphasizing those less favored. The issues of local economic growth and jobs were, of course, emphasized, but appeals were also made to values and beliefs external to the policy sphere of the land use policy subsystem in question, i.e. climate change and renewable energy
development. The second rationalizing strategy that sovereigns used was, when dealing with the value-conflicts presented by the expected negative impacts on the local environment, plants/animals and residents, they did not ignore them, but rather relegated these concerns to the level of secondary beliefs/attitudes, which merely required technical adjustments, as opposed to rethinking the deeper values and beliefs undergirding the decision regarding the project as a whole. Upon reflection, this strategy is also consistent with the assumptions from the ACF regarding how policy actors will make concessions in their attitudes well before changing their beliefs or values.

It seems evident that the decision to designate the Markbygden area for wind power development represented the values, beliefs and attitudes of the “winning group” of sovereigns, who comprised the vast majority of sovereigns in question. While all of the issues asked about were seen as important to some extent by sovereigns, when it came time to make a political decision, the values and beliefs that were prioritized were economic growth and jobs over impacts on the local environment, plants and animals and local residents. Also, interestingly, very few sovereigns shared the values and beliefs of the groups most opposed to the project.

6. Conclusions

This article has contributed to understanding the process by which the values and beliefs of sovereigns are “translated” into concrete political decisions by developing a framework, based on the ACF and cognitive models of policy making, which suggests that sovereigns prioritize values and beliefs when making concrete political decisions. The results of applying this framework to studying the case of wind power development in Markbygden, Sweden, indicate that sovereigns do this by favoring some clusters of values and beliefs over others, and rationalize so doing by emphasizing the favored values and beliefs, and by dealing with value-conflicts by relegating less favored values and beliefs to the level of secondary beliefs/attitudes, where they can be dealt with in terms of technical, rather than fundamental, adjustments.

The results also support the notion that sovereigns’ values, beliefs and attitudes play an important role in the policy process, compared to other policy actors’ values, beliefs and attitudes because sovereigns’ political decisions have unique influence over policy outputs. It was evident in the case of the Markbygden project, for example, that while there were some actors strongly opposed to the development, because these actors were not well-represented among sovereigns, their concerns were mostly dealt with at the level of technical adjustments. In some senses, this is what the ACF would expect because genuine changes in beliefs and values are few and far between. This study indicates a need to further explore the particular role of sovereigns in the policy process, e.g. how they and their values, beliefs and attitudes differ from policy actors and coalitions in policy subsystems more generally. Furthermore, the results indicating the prioritization of values and beliefs concerning issues arguably external to the given policy subsystem—i.e. beliefs about the need to address climate change and develop renewable energy—are particularly interesting. Why sovereigns would prioritize
such values and beliefs over values and beliefs dealing with issues more salient to their own policy subsystem domain is certainly worth investigating further.
7. References


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