

Hvernig á að meta verðmæti náttúrunnar?
Reynsla frá áætlun um vernd og orkunýtingu
landsvæða

How to evaluate the value of nature?
Experience from the Icelandic Master Plan for
Nature Protection and Energy Utilization

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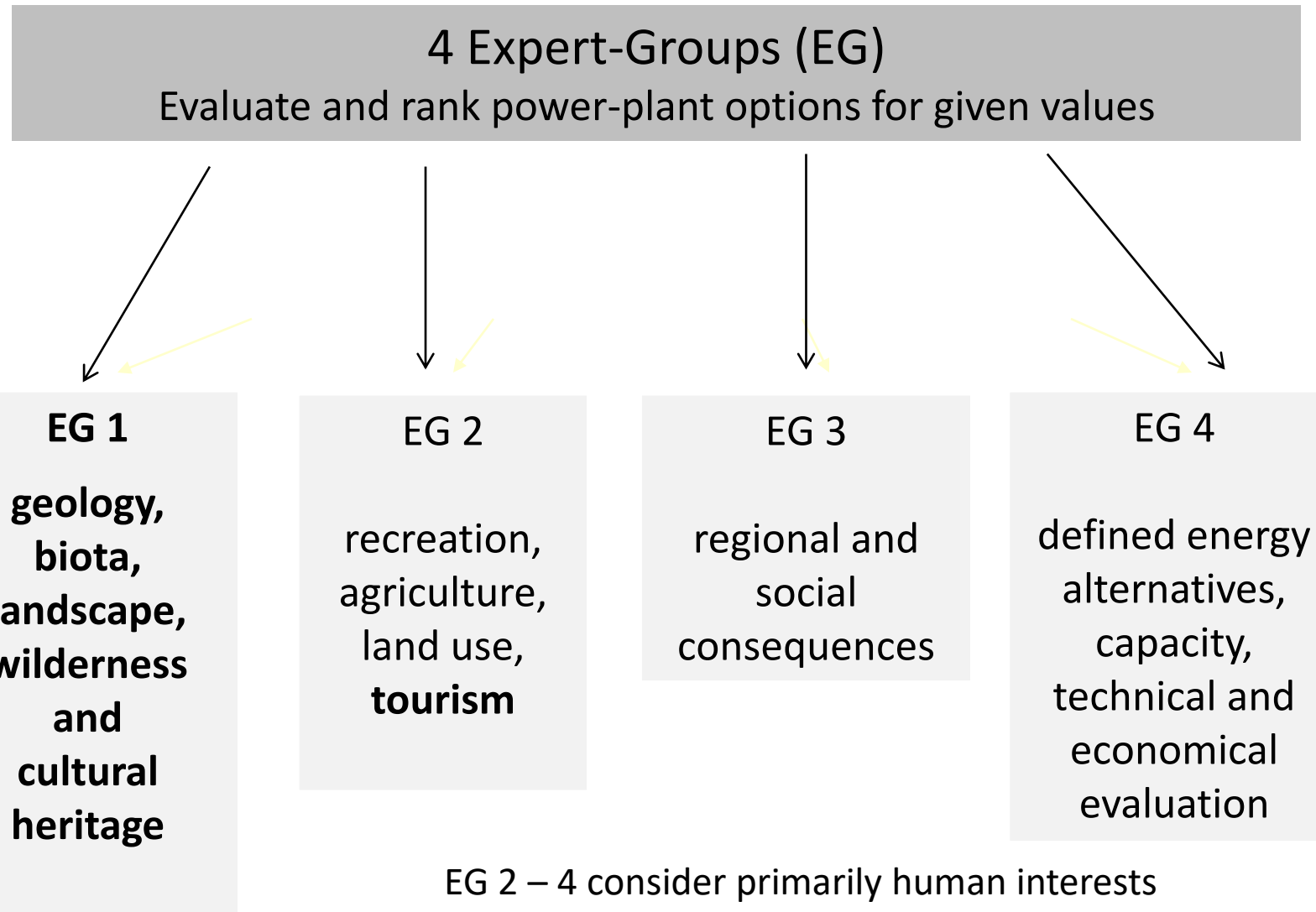
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The task we have

- We face major negative environmental impact of human activities
- Some of us want to re-organize our activities to reduce and reverse these negative processes
- Public awareness is growing; e.g. current discussion about the environment in Iceland
- Today's environmental policies strive to make progress - e.g. the Icelandic Master Plan for Nature Protection and Energy Utilization – Rammaáætlun
- **To succeed we need to be able to reliably evaluate the values at stake, which ultimately are the values of nature with humans included**

6 persons' Steering committee combines results of Expert Groups and classify areas and power plant ideas into *conserve, on hold* or *use* categories



EG 1 attempts to evaluate the basic value of an area / nature; which is used to determine the *conservation* category

The place of humans in nature

- When estimating the value of an area (of nature), past and present human disturbances become an issue – mostly dealt with in the form of general assumptions – except for cultural remains
- The problem elevates when human centred values (EG 2-4) and values of nature as a whole (EG 1) are considered in concert – it is difficult and even contradictory
- The place of humans is unclear
- This is further spiced up by the surrounding discussion where views range from strong conservation to extreme use of nature for humans
- A general problem is a weak knowledge base, combined with somewhat fragmented conceptual framework
- What is the underlying problem here?

Mechanical world view

- Strong mechanical view of the world develops in 17-20th century
 - originates during the scientific revolution; often connected with Descartes (1596-1650)
 - opposes Aristotelian – or ancient Greek - way of seeing the world
- Man is separated from nature, and nature is seen as a large machine
- Man strives to conquer and dominate nature and values center around human needs and desires
- This world view dominates human communities and influences everything, including science and environmental policy

Mechanical world view

- In particular, values that relate to our place in nature are poorly developed and even ignored completely
- **BUT** - we see changes towards more unified world views
 - in our use of ideas and concepts
 - in how we prepare policies and strategies
- We need to clarify conceptually what a unified view of nature actually means – and make it useful in practice!

How to approach this?

- Realize that the core values that can direct our activities in nature originate from the moral fact that we share everything with other natural things and depend on these connections in everything we do
- Consider that these core values are reflected in our knowledge of nature – including our observations and science
- Thus, we can develop useful theories of nature, and apply meaningful and useful concepts – such as *diversity of nature*
- And this is what is boldly attempted in Rammaáætlun (EG 1)

A core concept is DIVERSITY

- Biological diversity refers to diversity among organisms from diverse origins, including ecosystems and their combinations: this applies to diversity within species, among species and ecosystems (Rio 1992)
- Geological diversity is defined similarly; from rock forms to tectonic, volcanic and erosion processes
- Cultural diversity is emphasized in UN declarations of human development – *without diversity there are no choices*
- It's conceptual foundation lies in the concept of „difference“ – diversity suggests that something is different from something else; i.e. a relational concept (Plato)
- **Diversity is a fundamental source of value in nature: for natural selection, for ecosystem processes; for healthy societies, industries and for conservation and management plans and acts worldwide – it reflects unified nature**

The acts of rammaáætlun and conservation

- We are doing our best to develop and use tools to estimate the value of areas – i.e. nature – using measures of diversity
- This applies to Rammaáætlun and is also evident in the latest Icelandic conservation act
- But we need to attend the conceptual bases of seeing humans as a part of nature more thoroughly
- This has wide implication for assessment of the value of nature, our science and public discussions

Final remarks

- By comprehensive examination of the values in each case we can approach the best proposals and decisions (Admiral et al. 2017)
- Knowledge of nature is our practical tool – but it's quality and usefulness relies on the awareness of the core values of nature – including humans - that this knowledge is drawn from
- And here we need to get some work done
- We can use theories of relations in nature from a number scientists and philosophers
- This is not some romantic vision but

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