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## Perspectives

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Hans Farjon, Ed Dammers, and Henk van Zeijts

### **Nature in the Plural: Finding Common Ground for Nature Policies in Europe<sup>1</sup>**

The recognition of the cultural value of nature—including, among other things, the way it functions as a site of memory—is important. The challenge for policymakers is to negotiate a nature’s cultural value along with the other values it might have, such as ecological, recreational, and economic value. In our contribution, we explore work done in the Nature Outlook study by PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency on the various narratives of nature and nature policies by outlining the method we used to construct a multi-perspective approach for nature policies, and reflect on the policy messages that can be derived from the different stakeholder narratives.

#### **Challenges for Nature Policies in Europe**

European landscapes contain a rich natural diversity that is cherished by many citizens. People have a broad notion of nature, considering “nature” to constitute landscapes, ecosystems, and biodiversity. Protection of this diversity is laid down in policy strategies on European and national levels. Although successes have been achieved in biodiversity conservation, a recent review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy showed that additional efforts are needed to achieve the 2020 targets. Even more effort is required to realize the 2050 vision—which is to protect, value, and restore EU biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides. Recent reviews and trend analyses have shown there to be three overall challenges for the coming decades with respect to nature conservation: ensuring sufficient space and favorable conditions for nature, improving the visibility of nature in economic sectors, and encouraging people’s engagement in nature-related efforts. A closer connection between nature policy and the ways in which people experience and value nature may enhance their engagement in nature-related efforts.

1 In March 2017, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency launched the results of the Nature Outlook study: H. Van Zeijts, A.G. Prins, E. Dammers, M. Vonk, I. Bouwma, H. Farjon, and R. Pouwels (2017). *European Nature in the Plural: Finding Common Ground for a Next Policy Agenda*, (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency: The Hague, 2017). The aim of the study was to provide inspiration for current strategic discussions on EU policies on nature beyond 2020.

### Position of the main elements of the Nature Outlook

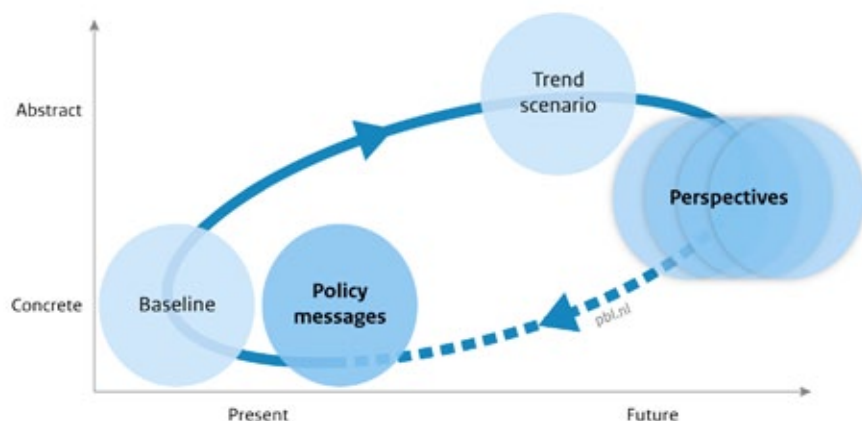


Figure 1:  
The main components  
of the Nature Outlook  
method. Source: PBL

### The Nature Outlook Method

The Nature Outlook method consists of a baseline, a trend scenario, four perspectives, and several policy messages (see figure 1). These components have been constructed not only from literature review, but also by using the results from a survey of citizens' images and values of nature, a philosophical dialogue on the relationships between people and nature in Europe<sup>2</sup> and several stakeholder dialogues on the future of nature.

The baseline was created by analyzing past and current debates on nature conservation and development in the European Union. To identify different views of nature, we conducted a literature review of scientific articles. The articles, however, pay little attention to policies and practices in eastern and southern EU member states, and so we interviewed scientists from these member states to redress the balance. The descriptions of the different views were substantiated by a survey of citizens' images and valuations of nature in nine EU Member States.<sup>3</sup>

2 H. Mommaas, B. Latour, R. Scruton, W. Schmid, A. Mol, M. Schouters, E. Dammers, M. Slob, and H. Muilwijk, *Nature in Modern Society - Now and in the Future* (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, The Hague, 2017).

3 H. Farjon, A. De Blaeij, T. De Boer, F. Langers, J. Vader, and A. Buijs, *Citizens' Images and Values of Nature in Europe: A Survey in Nine EU Member States* (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency: The Hague, 2016).

The debates on nature conservation and development can be summarized in four different framings—views—of nature that define four different challenges for nature policy and other related policies. According to the “nature for itself” view, the main policy challenge is to stop the decrease in areas of unspoiled nature. In the “nature despite people” view, the impacts of human activities on natural habitats should be limited, and action taken to enhance their resilience. “Nature for people” emphasizes that the utility value of nature should be integrated into business and nature management without depleting natural resources. And “people and nature” stresses the importance of the connection between people with nature, and calls for this to be recognized in policy.

The trend scenario was also based on a literature review, mainly including other outlook studies exploring trends with impacts on nature, and scientific publications providing insight into the impacts of these trends on nature. The scenario includes not only quantitative trends, such as population development, but also qualitative trends, for example, shifting values, and nonquantifiable challenges, for instance, strengthening citizens’ connection with nature.<sup>4</sup>

For the Nature Outlook, we explored four perspectives on nature in 2050, with the aim to inform a future agenda for nature policies beyond 2020. Each perspective describes and visualizes an alternative storyline about a desirable future state of nature in the EU, and a possible pathway towards realizing that desired state of nature. The perspectives are normative scenarios and should not be considered as blueprints.

The perspectives were constructed through dialogues with stakeholders, interviewing experts, a literature review, and by combining different visualization methods. The dialogues were set up to establish a series of informal discussions in which experts involved in nature policy and related policies developed the outlines of the components of the Nature Outlook study. In these informal discussions, experts from various organizations and sectors met, face to face, to exchange values, views, and insights, to challenge one another, and to develop new ways of thinking. Three stakeholder dialogues were organized. During the first dialogue, participants drafted the four perspectives. These drafts subsequently were structured and elaborated in storylines by

4 Detailed information on quantifiable challenges, such as halting biodiversity loss, can be found in A. G. Prins, R. Pouwels, J. Clement, M. Hendriks, B. De Knegt, K. Petz, A. Beusen, H. Farjon, A. Van Hinsbergen, J. Janse, B. Knol, P. Van Puijenbroek, M. J. Schelhaar, and S. Van Tol, *Perspectives on the Future of Nature: Impacts and Combinations* (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency: The Hague, 2017).

the scenario team, and discussed further in the second dialogue. During the third dialogue, participants used the perspectives to discuss a range of societal issues related to nature.

The four perspectives on nature cover a range of guiding values about nature protection and describe what people perceive nature to be:

- In *Strengthening Cultural Identity*, people feel connected with nature and landscape, and consider this an integral part of their local and regional communities and essential to a fulfilling life.
- In *Allowing Nature to Find Its Way*, people feel strongly about the great intrinsic value of natural processes and species; they define nature by its dynamic processes and believe it should be left to its own devices.
- In *Going with the Economic Flow*, nature must suit people's lifestyles, and businesses and individual citizens take the initiative in nature development.
- In *Working with Nature*, people try to work with natural processes and strive for an optimal, long-term delivery of ecosystem services, for the benefit of both society and the economy.

The storyline of each perspective presents a set of principles (why), a desired state of nature that may be realized in 2050 by applying the principles (what), and a pathway that could be followed to reach that state of nature by 2050 (how). The principles consist of the values guiding the perspective and the major policy challenges the perspective responds to. The description of the desired state of nature includes a narrative of the general state of nature in the EU and also of the states of nature in nature, river, rural, and urban areas. Parts of the principles can be translated into spatial terms, which can result in land-use changes or changes in the forms and structures of the landscapes. The pathway comprises the circumstances and coalitions that may cause changes to nature policy in the years up to 2050, the mode of governance that may be applied to realize the state of nature in 2050, and the measures that may be taken by nature policy and related policies. Each storyline is illustrated by maps, a set of artist impressions (see figure 2), and a short video.<sup>5</sup>

5 The video can be found here: <http://themasites.pbl.nl/natureoutlook/2016/news-2/what-is-your-perspective-on-nature-watch-the-videos> (last accessed 3 September 2018). For the full description and visualization of the storylines, see E. Dammers, K. Ludwig, P. Van Puijenbroek, A. Tisma, S. Van Tol, M. Vonk, I. Bouwma, H. Farjon, A. Gerritsen, B. Pedroli, and T. van der Sluis, *Perspectives on the Future of Nature in Europe: Storylines and Visualisations* (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency: The Hague, 2017).



Figure 2.:  
Examples of : a nature  
area, a river area, a  
rural area, and an ur-  
ban area according to  
artists' impressions in  
line with *Strengthen-  
ing Cultural Identity*.  
Images: AENF Visuals

Deriving policy messages starts with creating stimulating conditions by organizing a series of informal dialogues that precede or run parallel to formal decision-making processes. Key to the success of such dialogues is arranging unexpected encounters, creating shared understanding, and building joint visions. Building a joint vision can be considered as a design activity that, to a large extent, is characterized by “bricolage” (improvisation). There are four ways of practicing bricolage, which can be summarized as follows:

- a) Making a pastiche refers to the choosing of a single perspective as a source of inspiration for building a joint vision.
- b) Constructing a palette refers to combining elements from various perspectives into one joint vision by allocating different types of land use to distinct sub-areas that are not interrelated.
- c) Fashioning a collage refers to combining elements from various perspectives into one joint vision by allocating different types of land use to adjacent sub-areas.
- d) Creating an assemblage refers to combining elements from various perspectives into one joint vision by allocating the different types of land use to the same sub-area.

### **Policy Messages**

#### *Formulating a Multifaceted Vision for European Nature*

It is clear that reaching the policy vision for 2050 is a challenging undertaking. A policy vision that explicitly takes the multiplicity of perspectives on nature as its point of departure, as shown here with our Nature Outlook model, could stimulate voluntary efforts that go beyond regulation, and lead to new coalitions being formed of citizens, businesses, and authorities.

#### *Tackling Policy Challenges Using Approaches from a Range of Perspectives*

We need to discuss what such a vision would mean for dealing with the three policy challenges:

- The necessity of a shared agenda for nature areas. An agenda that is shared by all stakeholders would help to ensure sufficient space and favorable conditions for nature in protected nature areas. Such an agenda would contain the ecological objectives, supplemented with external economic and societal aspirations and targets, for each protected nature area and its surroundings. The main point for discussion would be how to balance ways of earning money with protecting the biodiversity of each site.
- Furthermore, the impacts of climate change are expected to increase, requiring substantial efforts to protect all species. In addition to stringent measures to mitigate climate change, it may be appropriate to discuss the focus of conservation targets, which could range from preserving current ecosystems to supporting species and ecosystems, in their response to the changing climate.
- Increasing nature's relevance for the sustainable future of various economic sectors. Embedding or mainstreaming nature considerations in sectors such as agribusiness and the renewable energy sector is more likely to succeed if the core values and individual challenges of each sector are acknowledged and understood. This also could mean, however, that "nature" will need to be defined differently than it is in current biodiversity policy documents, and these differences in definition will be a subject for debate.
- Strengthening the connection between people and nature. A multifaceted vision acknowledges that there are many different opinions about what constitutes "desirable nature." Recognition of this might encourage individuals and groups to get involved in nature conservation. Addressing nature in such a way that it fosters a sense of place, yielding a broad range of ecological and societal benefits, would be a promising start in making policy that meets the needs of a challenging future.

## Conclusion

Many contributors to this volume have called for policymakers to recognize the multiplicity of narratives around disaster sites. The research summarized in this essay shows the importance of involving people in nature protection and the necessity of integrating multiple perspectives into environmental policymaking in order to meet European goals of sustaining our much-valued ecosystem into the future.