

Access to Nature through Tourism. A Study of Four Perspectives on Inclusive Nature-based Tourism

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Access to Nature through Tourism. A Study of Four Perspectives on Inclusive Nature-based Tourism

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Abstract

Nature experiences and participation in nature-based activities are increasingly recognised as beneficial to public and individual health, yet in most societies, the ability for people to take advantage of opportunities to acquire these benefits is unequal. Social constructs such as gender and disability, as well as levels of income and education, influence to what extent individuals can engage with nature, and there is growing concern over the increased disconnectedness from nature in urbanised societies. Nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation is argued to have an important role to play in rekindling this relationship between humans and the natural environment. Based on this, there is a real need to examine people's access to nature through nature-based tourism. This thesis studies access to nature through the four perspectives of infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration, in order to broaden the scope of how nature-based tourism can support equal opportunities to nature experiences. The included papers employ mixed-methods research from three case study areas in Sweden, with a particular focus on the southern Jämtland mountains. The four perspectives that constitute the framework of this thesis are expressed in each of the papers. Paper I reviews research on infrastructure for touristic purposes, and lays the foundation for paper II, where I examine the role of recreational trails in handling issues of collaboration and conflicts of interests in a mountain area affected by land-use conflicts. Paper III investigates exclusion from outdoor recreation activities from a gender perspective, and paper IV researches how accessible infrastructure, intended for people with disabilities to access protected areas, can give rise to conflicts between the competing interests of nature conservation and accessibility. Together, the findings in these papers suggest that although equal access to nature is desirable, there is a need to problematize the many layers of the concept. Improved access for one group can reduce access for another, and facilitated access to natural areas can cause problems of crowding and environmental degradation. This paradox requires further highlighting. Moreover, I argue that the call for a reconnection with nature to foster environmental responsibility, and to counteract declining public health in societies is exclusive, as constructs of gender and disability give unequal prerequisites to nature engagement. Despite this, access to nature is a democratic right, so although there is a need to recognise the complexity of access, I advocate for collaborative efforts to enhance access to nature for marginalised groups, and to consider aspects of access in land-use conflict management.

Svensk sammanfattning

Naturupplevelser och deltagande i naturbaserade aktiviteter har i ökande grad erkänts som främjande för både den allmänna och den individuella hälsan, men möjligheterna att dra fördel av detta är ojämnt fördelade i dagens samhälle. Faktorer såsom genus, inkomstnivå och utbildning, etnicitet och funktionsvariationer påverkar i vilken utsträckning individer tar naturen i anspråk och det finns bekymmer kring en ökande fränkoppling från naturen i urbaniserade samhällen. Naturturism och friluftsliv har emellertid ansetts spela en viktig roll i återuppväckandet av människans relation till vår naturliga miljö, vilket manar till ett undersökande av tillgången till naturen genom naturturism. Denna avhandling avser att studera tillgång till naturen från fyra perspektiv; infrastruktur, intressekonflikter, exkludering och samarbete, i avsikt att vidga synen på hur naturbaserad turism kan stödja jämlika möjligheter till naturturism och friluftsliv. De bilagda artiklarna använder kvalitativ och kvantitativ data från tre fallstudieområden i Sverige, med särskild fokus på de södra Jämtlandsfjällen. De fyra perspektiv som utgör ramverket för denna avhandling uttrycks i de enskilda artiklarna; artikel I går igenom forskning om infrastruktur för turiständamål och lägger grunden för artikel II, där jag undersöker den roll som leder har i hanteringen av intressekonflikter i fjällområden som präglas av markanvändningskonflikter. Artikel III undersöker exkludering från friluftaktiviteter från ett genusperspektiv och artikel IV forskar på hur tillgänglig infrastruktur i skyddade områden kan vara ett ämne för konflikt mellan naturskyddsintressen och tillgänglighet, vilket exkluderar personer med funktionsvariationer. Tillsammans antyder resultaten i dessa artiklar att även om en jämställd tillgång till naturen är önskvärd, så föreligger ett behov av att överväga om detta rutinmässigt skall ses som något positivt. God tillgång till naturen för en grupp kan reducera densamma för en annan; i detta ligger tillgänglighetsparadoxen, vilken behöver vidare belysas. Vidare vill jag argumentera för att önskemålet om att återuppväcka relationen till naturen som en motvikt till miljömässigt ohållbart beteende och försämrad folkhälsa i många samhällen är exkluderande, eftersom genus och funktionsnedsättning medför ojämliga förutsättningar för naturengagemang. Jag föreslår ökat samarbete mellan intressenter för att förbättra tillgång till naturen för marginaliserade grupper och att ta med tillgänglighetsaspekten vid hantering av markanvändningskonflikter.

List of papers

Paper I. Godtman Kling, K., Fredman, P., & Wall-Reinius, S. (2017). Trails for tourism and outdoor recreation: A systematic literature review. *Tourism*, 65(4), 488-508.

Paper II. Godtman Kling, K., Dahlberg, A., & Wall-Reinius, S. (2019). Negotiating improved multifunctional landscape use: Trails as facilitators for collaboration among stakeholders. *Sustainability*, 11(13), 3511.

Paper III. Godtman Kling, K., Margaryan, L., & Fuchs, M. (2020). (In) equality in the outdoors: Gender perspective on recreation and tourism media in the Swedish mountains. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(2), 233-247.

Paper IV. Godtman Kling, K. (2021). Accessible nature-based tourism: Balancing contradictory values in protected areas. *Submitted article*.

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Kristin Godtman Kling

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Preface

This thesis is the result of two larger research projects. For the first two and a half years of my PhD, I was a team member in the research project 'Negotiating Pathways to Multifunctional Landscapes' and obtained a licentiate degree. The background to this project was that the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) funded ten research projects between 2013 and 2015 under the 'Magnificent Mountain' program, a research initiative that aimed to increase knowledge about the Swedish mountain region and contribute to future sustainable management of the mountain landscape (Storslagen fjällmiljö, 2016). Based on the combined results of three of the projects in this program, a new research project called 'Negotiating Pathways to Multifunctional Landscapes' was initiated in 2016 and ran until the end of 2017. Results from previous projects had shown that trails play an important role for many stakeholder groups in mountain regions, and the new project therefore focused on issues concerning trails, including the use and management of trails in the Swedish mountains. One of the central themes in the project was also to explore land-use conflicts and the role of trails in handling these conflicts (Storslagen fjällmiljö, 2016). The purpose was to analyse '(i) conservation and protection strategies in a multifunctional landscape; (ii) the historical and contemporary use of mountain trails; and (iii) the role of trails in mountain management and the funding of trails' (Wall-Reinius et al., 2018, p. 8). In this project, I focused on the role of trails in land-use conflict management. I defended my licentiate thesis in January 2019.

The second part of my PhD was devoted to the research project 'Accessible and inclusive nature-based tourism: good examples of universal design', which was funded by BFUF (the R&D Fund of the Swedish Tourism & Hospitality Industry). The fund aims to promote scientific research within the hospitality sector and was established jointly by the Swedish hospitality industry organisation Visita and the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union (BFUF, 2019). The project ran for two years, between 2019 and 2021, with the purpose of determining the level of accessibility to different types of Swedish recreational outdoor environments for tourists with physical disabilities. The aim was also to outline key aspects that could clarify the concept of accessible tourism strategies to enable outdoor recreation companies and public organisations to implement such strategies. One area of special interest was the identification of promising and cutting-edge practices used by private and public stakeholders seeking to provide products for tourists with disabilities.

1 Introduction

Spending time in nature and engaging in nature-based activities can have a range of positive benefits such as increased well-being, reduced stress-levels and improved physical and mental health (Bratman et al., 2012; Dean et al., 2018; Hanna et al., 2019; Mygind et al., 2019; Pasanen et al., 2014). However, a growing body of research has called attention to the increased disconnectedness from nature of individuals in Western societies. This growing distance, which is rooted in industrialisation, urbanisation and the consumer culture, leads to an abstraction of nature and the subsequent loss of embodied nature experiences (see e.g. Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). This can in turn have negative effects on the health and well-being of the general public as well as contribute to unsustainable environmental behaviour (Beery, 2020; Ives et al., 2018; Shanahan et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be argued that planners and managers of natural areas have a duty to provide a wider range of facilities and experiences even for visitors who are not as comfortable in these environments (Doick et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2017). Not being comfortable in natural areas and engaging in outdoor activities can emerge from an exclusion from nature, which is closely linked to the concept of access in the sense that certain societal structures, such as levels of income and education, gender, disabilities, and ethnicity, reduce access to nature, resulting in exclusion. Therefore, in order to address the increasingly distanced relationship between people and nature, it is vital that a larger segment of the urbanised, Western population has the opportunity to develop deeper connections with nature and experience the many benefits of being outdoors (Jay et al., 2012; Martinez-Harms et al., 2018; Menzies et al., 2021). One way this can be achieved is through nature-based tourism, as this type of tourism can offer easily accessible ways to engage in, and reconnect with, nature (e.g. through camping, hiking in peri-urban areas etc.). Hence, nature-based tourism can play an important role in the rekindling of human relationships with the natural environment and have a positive impact on the lives of the practitioners, thus making equal access to nature-based tourism essential (Buckley, 2019; Curtin & Kragh, 2014; Hassell et al., 2015).

Nature-based tourism is a form of tourism that has gained interest from the public over the last several decades, as visits to natural areas are becoming increasingly popular (Fredman & Haukeland, 2021a; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Newsome et al., 2012; Wolf et al., 2019). Definitions and conceptualisations of nature-based tourism have been provided by authors such as Fredman et al., (2009), Fredman and Tyrväinen (2010) and Margaryan (2017) who argue that

nature-based tourism occurs when people visit nature areas outside of their ordinary neighbourhood, and engage in outdoor activities. Fredman and Margaryan (2020) suggest that nature-based tourism can be viewed as an umbrella concept, thus including forms of tourism such as adventure tourism, wilderness tourism, geo-tourism, wildlife tourism and eco-tourism. Moreover, the nature-based tourism sector consists of commercial actors who meet the demand for the nature-based activities tourists request.

There is evidence that nature-based tourism can provide opportunities for people to engage with nature in ways that promote psychological, social and physical well-being and even enhance the perceived quality of life of participants (Kim et al., 2015; Puhakka et al., 2017; Willis, 2015). Nevertheless, critical understandings of tourism would argue against the idea that groups in society have equal access to such benefits. Tourism has long been criticised by social science scholars for providing opportunities for the privileged to travel to places away from their home environments and engage in leisure activities that marginalised groups in society could only dream of (Cole & Eriksson, 2010; Hall, 2010; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

Nature-based tourism is similarly exclusive, and although one can argue that the increased disconnectedness from nature described above is indeed the reality for the majority of urbanised westerners, there are great differences between groups in contemporary society when it comes to access to nature-based tourism (Burns & Graefe, 2007; Lee et al., 2001; Morris et al., 2011; Skår, 2010; Theriault & Mowatt, 2020). In this thesis, these differences between groups are manifested through the focus on stakeholder conflicts, gender, and disability, and I describe in detail below how this is framed in the context of access.

1.1 Access

'Access' is an intriguing and contradictory word; it represents both inclusion and exclusion, it promises new opportunities but can equally disappoint by being just out of reach. It is a word with physical, social and emotional meaning given the frustration, if not humiliation, of being denied access, and the joy and pride of being granted the same. Access creates societal insiders and outsiders as it separates those who have it from those who do not, making it highly political because of the inherent aspect of justice that lies in the word. According to leading dictionaries, 'access' has multiple meanings. One of the definitions in the online Cambridge dictionary is access as a right: "the right or opportunity to use or look at something" (Cambridge dictionary,

2020), which strengthens the idea that access is about equal opportunities. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines access as a) “permission, liberty, or ability to enter, approach, or pass to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing” and b) “freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something” (Merriam-Webster, 2020).

In this thesis, my starting point is that access is, in fact, about equal opportunities and rights, and that there is a need to think critically about access. Ellcessor (2016) makes an interesting point when she argues that the concept of access is often allowed to pass unexamined, and that all understandings of access are routinely positive – they are viewed as an individual benefit or a public good. Moreover, there is a tendency to talk about access as something that can be possessed, which can be argued to put too much responsibility on the individual to obtain access, when there are in fact societal structures that hinder access. These unproblematised notions of access can be harmful as they cover the core of unfair conditions between groups, and disguise and trivialise deeply rooted social injustices as only a matter of gaining access (Ellcessor, 2016). Ellcessor (2016, p. 7) states that “thinking critically about access requires consideration of it as a relational, unstable phenomenon that both grants benefits and interpolates individuals into larger social systems that may be empowering, exploitative, or both”.

I examine access to nature in this thesis by investigating four independent, yet connected, perspectives: infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration. Together these perspectives form a framework, which offers a way to better understand access to nature through the lens of nature-based tourism. The components of the framework emerged out of the empirical findings of the papers included in this thesis, and are thus rooted in different meanings, values, understandings, and uses of the landscape.

Before I go on to present the four perspectives, I want to make a quick comment on the concepts I use to position this thesis within a setting. Throughout this cover essay, I use the word ‘landscape’ to refer to the environments where the studies take place. Landscape holds elements of both nature and culture, and it is a concept that relates to spatial, social and symbolic aspects. Nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation practices happen in, and with, the landscape and its features, and the concept does not reflect whether or not the areas in question are protected for nature and/or culture conservation purposes. Landscape is thus an all-encompassing word that accommodates a multitude of activities, relations, emotions, experiences and tensions, which makes it suitable in this context.

1.1.1 Infrastructure

Infrastructure in landscapes provides access to nature for visitors and can enhance and support the nature experience. Infrastructure is thus often a prerequisite for nature-based tourism, and facilities such as campsites, trails, signs and wind shelters are highly important for tourists as well as for tourism businesses (Fredman et al., 2012; Newsome et al., 2012).

In particular, trails constitute an essential component in the infrastructure of nature-based tourism, much due to their multi-faceted characteristics and the sometimes mythical narratives that surround them, which can function as tourist attractions (Moor, 2016). Trails have helped form the basis of human mobility patterns throughout the centuries and have been essential to activities such as travel and commerce, and today, trails in natural settings and outdoor areas are one of the more important resources for tourism and recreation (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). Trails provide access to landscapes for diverse interests and are of great significance from a historical and heritage point of view as they tell stories of travel, mobility and traditions. They also reveal ideas, ambitions and tensions regarding the use of the landscape through different periods of history (Svensson et al., 2016; Timothy & Boyd, 2015). Today, trails are used by people for a number of purposes, such as exercise, self-renewal, relaxation, wildlife viewing, visiting cultural features, travel to scenic viewpoints and inspiration. Trails also function as guides in the landscape, as they allow access into nature and provide a route for visitors to follow to reduce the risk of becoming lost, confronting physical dangers or damaging sensitive places (Lekies & Whitworth, 2011; MacLeod, 2016; Newsome et al., 2012).

There is nevertheless a paradoxical side to the access to landscapes that trails provide, which should be noted. The development of trails and other infrastructural components (e.g. roads and service facilities) to make landscapes more accessible to tourists can lead to such an increase in the number of visitors, that the area risks environmental damage and losing its original, pristine attraction. There is also a risk that tourists' attitudes towards the landscape become more negative due to crowding (Sæþórsdóttir, 2013; Tverijonaite et al., 2018). It is therefore important for planners and managers of such areas to recognise this paradox in order to ensure sustainable tourism development.

The above-mentioned contradiction that lies in expanded infrastructure for nature-based tourism can be a source of conflict between different actors in the landscape, as there are opposing views on the level of access this is

'appropriate' for sustainable use of the landscape (Øian et al., 2018). This statement introduces the next perspective.

1.1.2 Conflicts of interests

Access to landscapes has positive consequences for many stakeholders, but for some, it can lead to conflicts between land-use interests. There is evidence that tourism growth through increased access to, and expanded infrastructure in, landscapes can result in land-use conflicts as tourists, tourism developers, local communities, nature conservation interests and industrial interests compete for the same space and the same natural resources (Buckley et al., 2017; Dredge, 2010; McKercher, 1992; Wall-Reinius et al., 2018). Such landscapes that encompass many different interests for different purposes are often referred to as multifunctional landscapes in academic studies (e.g. Cockburn et al., 2019; Fagerholm et al., 2020; O'Farrell & Anderson, 2010). Hölting et al. (2019, p. 128) state that "multifunctional landscapes are typically characterised by diversified land use and complex landscape structure, thereby potentially covering many, often competing interests of different stakeholder groups". However, Abrahamsson (1984) argues that land indeed can be used for different purposes at the same time without conflicts arising, but there are elements that affect harmonious land use. Relations between users can change if: (1) land users change their behaviour or activity, (2) land users increase their use in time or space, or (3) new land users appear in the area. This perspective can also be applied to land where tourism constitutes a major interest as tourism activities can change the conditions of a geographical area or landscape by allowing access to new land users that engage in new types of activities in that area. However, it is important to note that land-use conflicts in tourism settings are not only related to issues of physical access to land, but can also be a matter of goal conflicts between ideological perspectives of what nature 'should' look like, what natural areas 'should' be used for, or who 'should' have access (Donlon, 2000; Tolvanen et al., 2020).

Goal conflicts related to access are particularly relevant for remote landscapes, which Western tourism narratives present as pristine, untouched wilderness waiting to be filled with experience-seeking visitors. This representation of distant, sparsely populated areas, as 'empty spaces' (Edwards, 1996) where tourists can practice recreational activities is problematic because it excludes local residents from telling their own narrative about the meaning they attach to the landscape where they live (Saarinen, 2019; Wall-Reinius et al., 2019). Thus, increased access for visitors

and tourism operators can lead to experiences of reduced access for local residents, as their traditional involvement with the landscape risks becoming marginalised (Steinhäuser et al., 2015). This situation may result in increased tension between groups, and consequently more land-use conflicts. Similar mechanisms leading to experiences of increased and reduced access can cause conflicts between nature conservation interests, local residents and tourism interests, especially when stakeholders have different perceptions on the use of the landscape (Dahlberg, 2005). In the case of nature conservation interests, the establishment of protected areas often entails stricter regulations on access and the activities allowed. Such access restrictions can come into conflict with local residents who use the landscape for everyday activities, as well as with visitors who use it for tourist purposes and with tourism businesses (Jamal, 2019; Roca et al., 2011; Wray et al., 2010). Conflicts of interest regarding multifunctional land use where tourism constitutes a prominent concern can therefore be linked both to issues of restricted access, and to exclusion from nature-based tourism participation for certain groups.

1.1.3 Exclusion

Lack of access to tourism in today's society, where going on holiday is such an integral part of life, can contribute to social exclusion of those that for various reasons cannot take part in tourism (Bernini & Cracolici, 2016; McCabe, 2009). Sedgley et al. (2012, p. 951) argue that a lack of access to tourism "makes a contribution to social exclusion that goes far beyond the immediate experience of being denied participation in tourism activities", precisely because it means being denied access to well-being, quality of life and fitting into social norms. Inequalities in access to the closely related fields of tourism and leisure can however be somewhat difficult to illustrate due to subtle, well-incorporated structures of exclusion that hinder participation (Hall & Brown, 2006; Minnaert, 2014; Pegg & Compton, 2003). In the case of nature-based tourism, previous research has highlighted that women and people with disabilities do not have equal access to this activity compared to other members of society, and they are often excluded from full participation (e.g. Groulx et al., 2021; Raisborough, 2006; Warren et al., 2018).

Doran (2016) reviewed scientific literature on constraints that exclude women from having full access to adventure tourism, and identified three categories: personal, socio-cultural and practical. Personal constraints include elements such as fear and self-doubt in abilities, and socio-cultural constraints relate to social expectation (women are not 'supposed' to be adventurous in nature settings), lack of companions, unwanted male attention, and that

adventure tourism is portrayed as masculine and thus reinforces gender stereotypes. Examples of practical constraints include lack of time, lack of money, lack of role models, and poor promotion of benefits/opportunities for women (Doran, 2016). Due to constraints such as these, which are based on patriarchal structures in society and gender role socialisation, women have less access to activities that take place in natural settings and become outsiders in outdoor environments (Boniface, 2006; McNeil et al., 2012; Warren & Loeffler, 2006; Zink & Kane, 2015).

People with disabilities also face a number of barriers to nature-based tourism, which exclude them from full access. Although there is substantial evidence that spending time in nature and participating in nature-based activities has positive effects on health and overall well-being, people with disabilities do not engage in such activities to the same extent as abled-bodied people (Boyd et al., 2018; Burns & Graefe, 2007; Fredman et al., 2019). Barriers to full access to nature-based tourism include insufficient infrastructure in natural settings, negative social attitudes, perceived intrapersonal constraints, lack of financial resources and lack of adapted technology (Freudenberg & Arlinghaus, 2010; Kastenholz et al., 2015; Menzies et al., 2021). Such obstacles can be difficult to overcome and thus function as mechanisms of exclusion that prevent equal access to nature-based tourism for people with disabilities (McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Michopoulou et al., 2015). One way to handle issues related to lack of access and exclusion is through collaborative efforts. The inclusion of all concerned stakeholders in the process of developing, planning and managing tourism initiatives can counteract exclusive practices and promote socially sustainable tourism, where a diversity of voices is considered (Liburd et al., 2020; Nyanjom et al., 2018; Smed Olsen, 2016).

1.1.4 Collaboration

Numerous studies have identified collaborative efforts as a way to resolve conflicts of interests in matters regarding tourism in landscapes (e.g. Almeida et al., 2018; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Canavan, 2017; Zachrisson, 2009), as collaboration can assist in sharing knowledge between stakeholders on different levels and can provide a framework for interdisciplinary learning and conflict resolution (Wondolleck & Yaffe, 2000). In tourism, attempts to manage conflicts of interests using soft management approaches such as the greatly intertwined components of collaboration, communication and trust-building have proven to be successful, as such approaches are often viewed as more legitimate by stakeholders than imposed top-down decisions (Dredge, 2006; Pashkevich et al., 2016).

Using collaborative efforts to enhance access to nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation through the handling of conflicts related to land use and infrastructure, as well as goal conflicts between interests, and increased inclusion of different groups is highly complex. Such efforts require time and financial resources, as well as other resources in the form of interest group engagement, meaningful social interaction that allows for trust-building, the establishment of collaborative platforms, and effective leadership of the process (Björstig et al., 2016; McComb et al., 2017; Stern, 2008; Yates et al., 2010).

Representation of all stakeholder interests has been identified as a key component in collaborative processes in situations where conflict resolution and increased inclusion is central (e.g. Plummer et al., 2006). There is however evidence that in some situations, not all groups have equal access to the collaboration process. Nyanjom et al. (2018) studied stakeholder collaboration in the development of accessible tourism in Australia and found that people with disabilities were not sufficiently included in the collaboration process. Pashkevich (2017) found that indigenous reindeer herders in the Russian Arctic were excluded from the tourism development process, even though they were promoted as a 'tourist attraction' by governmental agencies. In the Swedish context, indigenous Sami reindeer herders experience that their participation in planning processes regarding new mines and wind parks on their traditional land makes no difference to the outcome, and the incentive to participate thus becomes low (Österlin & Raitio, 2020). These examples illustrate how unequal structures can overtake the desired democratic elements of collaboration and cooperation and prevent marginalised groups from full participation. This is problematic as a lack of access to such democratic elements risks becoming dismissed as 'they do not want to participate', instead of highlighting *why* these groups do not participate.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

In order to better understand structures that impact access and participation in the context of nature engagement, I seek to broaden the scope of access to nature to include new perspectives on how nature-based tourism can support and encourage equal opportunities to such activities. Thus, this thesis examines access to nature through the four perspectives of infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration. The aim is to analyse these in the context of nature-based tourism, and their implications for different stakeholders in society, with the objective to improve knowledge on how nature-based tourism can contribute to promoting access to nature. Therefore, I ask the following research questions:

- *How can access to nature-based tourism address social inclusion and exclusion?*
- *What is the role of stakeholder collaboration in managing different conflicts of interests related to access in nature-based tourism?*

1.3 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of four independent, but connected, scientific articles and a cover essay. The four papers address the research questions and the cover essay provides a theoretical framework, a description of the research design and the data collection process. The cover essay also discusses methodological considerations, includes an overview of the articles and summarizes the findings in a concluding discussion.

Paper I lays the foundation for understanding scientific research on recreational trails and how this research is conducted within academia. This paper is a literature review that functions as a hands-on starting point to access to nature, as it examines infrastructural issues such as the topics that trail research focuses on, and where there are research gaps.

Paper II draws from the results of the first paper to investigate recreational trails as a means for collaboration and communication in a Swedish mountain area where there are conflicts between land-use interests. It is based on several data sources and discusses important elements for handling and balancing multiple interests in a landscape characterized by multifunctionality, and how the recreational trail fits in this context.

Paper III focuses on mechanisms of exclusion from nature-based tourism activities and outdoor recreation from a gender perspective. It is a mixed-methods study that examines the potential connection between differences in the outdoor recreation activities that women and men participate in when visiting the Swedish mountains, and the portrayal of activities from a gender perspective on the websites of five major mountain destinations.

Paper IV connects the themes of the previous three papers, infrastructure, accessibility, exclusion and collaboration, and ties them together as it focuses on how to balance the political goal of 'accessible nature for all' with nature conservation objectives. This paper examines collaboration between actors as

a way to handle the conflicting goals of creating inclusive and accessible outdoor environments and preserving 'untouched' nature.

1.4 Nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation

This section discusses definitions of nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation in order to clarify the central concepts used in this thesis for the reader. Terminology regarding nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation is often used interchangeably, and although the two concepts share similar characteristics, there are features that distinguish one from the other. Simply put, nature-based tourism can be described as "human activities occurring when visiting nature areas outside the person's ordinary neighbourhood" (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010, p. 181). From this definition it follows that "the nature-based tourism industry represents the activities in different sectors that are intended to meet the demand of nature tourists" (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010, p.181). Hence, this definition suggests there is a commercial dimension to nature-based tourism, which is fundamental to its essence and separates it from outdoor recreation (see e.g. Lundmark et al., 2014; Margaryan, 2017). Outdoor recreation, on the other hand, is often described as activities taking place in the outdoors that people engage in as part of their daily or weekly routine (Bell et al., 2007), or as Moore and Driver (2005, p. 11) state: "recreation experiences that result from recreation activities that occur in and depend on the natural environment".

When discussing outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism in the Swedish context, the long Scandinavian tradition of *friluftsliv* (translated as open-air life) also requires attention. The official Swedish definition of *friluftsliv* is "being outdoors in natural or cultural landscapes for the purpose of well-being, without the need for competition" (SFS 2003:133, my translation). The Nordic *friluftsliv* is often argued to go beyond the scope of outdoor recreation as simply nature experiences, but is rather a philosophy of connecting to nature, identity and even spirituality, as well as a welfare project in terms of increased public health and ambitions of environmental education targeted at the general public. Moreover, nature conservation and *friluftsliv* are closely connected as nature areas can obtain the status of protected areas, with the intention of promoting *friluftsliv* (Emmelin et al., 2010; Fredman et al., 2014a; Wolf-Watz, 2015). Emmelin et al. (2010, p. 50) suggest that there are three questions to ask in order to determine whether an activity is nature-based tourism or outdoor recreation:

1. *Is there a transportation from the everyday environment?*

- Outdoor recreation: Not often, but it is not unusual.

- Nature-based tourism: Always, based on definitions of tourism. According to the UNWTO (n.d.), tourism can be defined as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes”.

2. *Is the operation commercial?*

- Outdoor recreation: Could be, but no more than the indirect way that our whole society is commercial.

- Nature-based tourism: Generally yes, and often very obviously.

3. *Is the activity built on, and does it encourage, an interest in nature?*

- Outdoor recreation: It is generally highlighted as a fundamental element.

- Nature-based tourism: It can occur, but is seldom the focus.

There are multiple definitions of nature-based tourism, outdoor recreation and *friluftsliv*, and the purpose of this thesis is not to distinguish them. In this thesis, I base my point of departure on the suggestion from Margaryan and Fredman, (2017, p. 85) that “*friluftsliv*, outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism all converge in an area which comprises relatively simple, straightforward and non-competitive recreational activities in nature”. Based on this, I primarily use the concept ‘nature-based tourism’ to refer to recreational activities that take place in nature areas. The reader should nevertheless keep in mind that for the purpose of this thesis, this concept also covers dimensions of what academic literature refers to as outdoor recreation as well as *friluftsliv*.

2 Access to nature

This chapter deepens the discussion on access to nature introduced in the previous section. I specifically focus on access to nature in the context of tourism, and the following sections build an interpretation of how the four perspectives infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration together contribute to understanding dimensions of access to nature.

2.1 Access and accessibility in nature settings

The ideas of access and accessibility are naturally greatly intertwined, and one could perhaps argue that it is pointless to try to separate two such closely linked concepts, as the essential meaning of them is very similar. Nevertheless, for the sake of better understanding, it can be useful to discuss the meaning of access and accessibility in the context of nature-based tourism. By definition, the difference between access and accessibility is that access is, as discussed in the introduction, a right or opportunity to approach, enter or utilise, while the focus of accessibility is on the quality or characteristics of allowing approach, entrance or utilisation (Cambridge dictionary, 2021). Levesque et al. (2013) suggest that access is central to the performance of services, and that access is constituted by the interplay between the social and physical environment surrounding an individual, and the characteristics of the service. Thus, access is the capacity to enter or gain services (“I have access to”), and accessibility is how the services are designed, how they can be used, what are the opportunities for people to use them etc. (“it is usable to me). Based on Levesque’s et al. (2013) discussion of access and accessibility, Robinson et al. (2021, p. 922) argue “where there is a mismatch between what is available and what is needed, there is a barrier to access”.

In this thesis, I view access as the possibility to identify and seek nature-based tourism services, to obtain or use services of nature-based tourism, and to actually be offered appropriate nature-based tourism services (Levesque et al., 2013), but also to feel welcome, supported and encouraged in this setting. The term ‘access’ is used to describe a matter of justice and equal opportunities applied to the setting of nature-based tourism participation. This term thus encompasses a broad spectrum of interpretations, including the four perspectives presented in the introduction. In the case of accessibility, I depart from a pragmatic view of accessibility as being about how services can be used and by whom, how they are designed, and how they support the possibility of access. This means that in this thesis accessibility has more of a hands-on meaning; it refers to the practical measures, such as improved

infrastructure or collaboration initiatives, taken to make natural areas more approachable, usable and inclusive. Accessibility can thus be viewed as an auxiliary means to examine the wider concept of access. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the two concepts are closely tied and, as an example, insufficient accessibility in natural areas can inhibit full access to the same.

2.1.1 Access to landscapes

Access to landscapes is one of the most critical variables of nature-based tourism. Access to landscapes, for example in the form of linear corridors such as roads, trails or pathways, constitutes the basis of nature experiences as it allows entrance into landscapes and facilitates outdoor recreation activities (Manning, 2011; Newsome et al., 2012). The physical access these infrastructural facilities provide is thus essential to nature-based tourism, but their responsibilities go further. Timothy and Boyd (2015) argue that there are two overarching goals associated with linear corridors: to provide access to outdoor resources, and also to ensure that those resources do not suffer from visitor overuse and negative environmental impact. Although this might seem contradictory, infrastructure in nature areas can be an important tool for nature conservation interests (Mebus et al., 2013; Newsome et al., 2012). For example, the construction of well-planned, well-designed trails will encourage most visitors to follow the trail instead of creating informal trails and risk damaging sensitive vegetation. Linear resources can therefore help to steer visitors in the natural landscape, and function as a management instrument.

Practical access to landscapes is of indisputable importance to nature-based tourism activities, but access in a social and psychological context can be argued to be equally important regarding who has the opportunity to participate in such settings (Morris & O'Brien, 2011; Winter et al., 2020). Research from around the world provides evidence that there are structural barriers in society, which hinder equal access to nature for all. The social structures that prevent full participation in nature activities, which are central to this thesis, relate to gender and disability. I elaborate further on this in section 2.3.

From the viewpoint of the supply side in nature-based tourism, access to the countryside is fundamental for many nature-based tourism operators. Sandell and Fredman (2010) argue that access can be provided in one or a combination of these three ways: (i) the tourism operator personally owns nature areas and has exclusive access to these; (ii) the tourism operator and the guest have access to publicly owned areas, such as protected areas that are

partly designated to outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism activities; and (iii) the tourism operator and the guest have access to both private and publicly owned areas, which can be used for their own activities as long as they respect traditions of suitable behaviour. The latter form of access, where the public is free to use landscapes without asking the landowner for permission (for example the Right of Public Access in Scandinavian countries), is extremely important for nature-based tourism in Sweden, which I discuss in more detail below.

2.1.2 Accessibility in landscapes

Accessibility in landscapes makes it possible for more, and more diverse, tourists to enjoy the tourism experience through amenities such as actively maintained trails, organised campsites and visitor centres (Tverijonaite et al., 2018). Remote landscapes have lately become more accessible and attract greater numbers of visitors, mostly due to developed infrastructure, for example better facilities in the area and improved roads and transportation (Hall & Saarinen, 2010; Sæþórsdóttir, 2014).

Although accessibility has been identified as an essential component of nature-based tourism, it can perhaps best be described as a double-edged sword in this context. One illustration of this contradiction is the growth of nature-based tourism in landscapes used for recreational purposes, where improved accessibility leads to an increased number of visitors (Cságoly et al., 2017; Øian et al., 2018). This, in turn, creates a need to further develop the infrastructure in the area in order to handle the environmental pressure that higher numbers of tourists entail. Tverijonaite et al. (2018) argue that enhanced accessibility and expanded infrastructure in protected areas are likely to change the natural environment in which nature-based activities take place, which can alter both visitors' experiences and the different types of tourism offered in that particular area. Moreover, the natural environments that constitute the tourist attraction risk becoming over-developed, which can result in reduced competitiveness of the nature-based destination. There is thus a need to manage access levels to landscapes carefully, so as to avoid environmental and social degradation of these areas and provide satisfying outdoor experiences.

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA, 2019) states that in order to offer citizens satisfying outdoor recreation experiences, three conditions need to be fulfilled: access, accessibility and quality. A natural area that is easy to access, provides accessible infrastructure and offers high-quality natural value thus has the best chances of encouraging nature interactions in everyday life, which can bring about positive health effects for

the general population. Although outdoor recreation takes place in areas that are close to urban environments for most people, outdoor activities in peripheral landscapes are nevertheless highly important to many individuals, as these activities offer a different type of nature engagement than activities practiced close to home. They are often practiced for a longer period of time and can provide different dimensions of nature experiences (SEPA, 2019). As many of these activities require a specific setting, such as mountains or the sea, and occasionally specific skills, there is a commercial aspect to certain recreational activities that is crucial to nature-based tourism (Margaryan & Fredman, 2017). It is possible for nature-based tourism operators to provide visitors with the necessary expertise, equipment and guidance and thus offer access to new dimensions of nature experiences. Nature-based tourism companies can therefore play an important role in the enhancement of access, accessibility and the quality of the nature experience, as suggested by SEPA (2019). However, tourism entrepreneurs in the Nordic countries are themselves often reliant on the Right of Public Access to operate their businesses (Fredman et al., 2021; Fossgard & Stensland, 2021).

2.1.3 Right of Public Access

The Right of Public Access (*allemansrätt* in Swedish) is essential to nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation activities in Sweden (Fredman et al., 2012; Margaryan, 2017). The Right of Public Access allows individuals and organised tourism groups to access almost all rural land as long as no damage is done to nature or crops, and as long as wildlife, farm animals and landowners' privacy remains undisturbed (SEPA, 2020a). The Right of Public Access thus builds on each party showing respect for nature and for each other, and there is an informal code of conduct to be careful when in nature and to use good judgement (Campion & Stephenson, 2014; Kaltenborn et al., 2001). Although the concept of the Right of Public Access did not appear in Sweden until the mid-20th century when the outdoor movement had become established within the general public, many Swedes today view it as part of their cultural heritage and it is deeply incorporated into society as a social institution (Sandell & Fredman, 2010; Stén & Sandström, 2014). Despite the strong customary position the Right of Public Access holds, its content is somewhat unclear. It is recognised as a concept in the Swedish Constitution, but it is not a formal law and there is no law that defines it precisely. However, there are laws and regulations that surround it and set the boundaries of what is allowed, but there are few legal cases that focus on the Right of Public Access (SEPA, 2020a).

The unspecified nature of the Right of Public Access in Sweden has led to debates over its role in contemporary society, as outdoor recreation activities are becoming increasingly diversified and nature-based tourism increasingly popular, which can result in land-use conflicts with different interests competing for the same space (Elgåker et al., 2012; Kaltenborn et al., 2001). This is especially obvious in the context of nature-based tourism as tourism operators are often dependent on using land they do not own for their businesses (Margaryan, 2018). The commercialisation of outdoor recreation and nature experiences through nature-based tourism thus poses new challenges for this customary right. This development has led to an ongoing discussion on whether the Right of Public Access should be formally regulated, in order to handle increased pressure on nature environments and landowners' property due to increased numbers of nature-based tourists and new types of outdoor activities, that are perhaps more stressful for nature. Sandell and Fredman (2010) emphasise the need to discuss the possibility of formalising the basic principles of the Right of Public Access in legislation, in order to ensure that rapid changes in activities and preferences do not affect the principal core of public access. Although the debate about the formalisation of the Right of Public Access is long-standing, the reason it has not yet been regulated is resistance from governmental authorities, according to Sténs and Sandström (2014). Regulation of the Right of Public Access would build a feudal legal tradition, which is not compatible with Swedish traditions of access to land as private property rights would get stronger. Moreover, as the Right of Public Access is such an integrated informal institution in society, it could be difficult to garner the necessary public support to legally regulate this customary right.

The above background is relevant to this thesis because the Right of Public Access is such a fundamental element in almost all forms of nature-based tourism in Sweden. Even more importantly, it is fundamental to providing opportunities for nature-based tourism and outdoor activities, in the sense that no landowner has the right to physically exclude others from recreation and nature experiences in rural areas. Based on the previous discussion of the difference between access and accessibility in nature areas, it should be recognised that this customary right primarily relates to the concept of accessibility. It does not automatically give equal access to nature for all, as there are issues regarding matters such as socio-economic status, disability, ethnicity and gender, which prevent full participation for many. Nevertheless the custom constitutes a prerequisite for activities in nature. The Right of Public Access is closely connected to the four central perspectives of this thesis.

Infrastructure in the form of trails and paths is central to the Right of Public Access as it facilitates activities in nature and reduces the risk of harming sensitive places. Conflicts of land-use interests is increasingly tied to the Right of Public Access, as outdoor activities become more diverse, and landowners may be concerned about commercial tourism activities taking place on their land. The Right of Public Access ensures the public of the right to use others' private property for recreation, thus guaranteeing that no one can legally be excluded from using a natural area, or excluded by entrance fees. Collaboration between stakeholders, both private and public, plays an important role in managing conflicts regarding the Right of Public Access. I discuss the four perspectives related to the Right of Public Access in further detail in chapter 6.

2.2 Objectives for enhancing access to nature

In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the heart of the Agenda lies the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aimed at ending poverty, addressing climate change and reducing inequalities worldwide (The Global Goals, 2020). The tenth goal 'reduced inequalities' specifically articulates that a truly equal society builds on the principle of equal rights and opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, disability or age. SDG 10 therefore relates to tourism in the sense that tourism is a leading economic sector and a creator of employment, and by engaging local communities and key stakeholders it can be an important tool for development and inclusion. From a demand perspective, tourism provides consumers with opportunities for leisure and relaxation, and for visiting friends and family (UNWTO, n.d.). However, it is essential that the prerequisites that enable tourism exist in order for potential tourists to be able to enjoy its many benefits. In the particular context of this thesis, SDG 10 is central as access to nature connects to the objective of reduced inequalities in the form of equal opportunities for all to participate in nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation. Nature-based tourism can contribute to the achievement of the tenth SDG by including marginalised groups, both as tourism consumers and producers, into the sphere of nature activities and thus constitute an important force for change towards an equal, inclusive and sustainable society (Dube & Nhamo, 2020; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

In the Swedish context, in 2012 the government established ten national objectives for the implementation of policies relating to outdoor recreation (*friluftsliv*). The task of developing and monitoring these objectives was

delegated to SEPA (Skr. 2012/13:51). The objectives have an overarching aim to develop and take action that improves the prerequisites for people to engage in outdoor recreation, and each objective relates to this purpose. The main goal is also to enhance peoples' opportunities to spend time in nature and participate in outdoor recreation on equal terms (SEPA, 2015). The outdoor recreation objective that most corresponds to issues related to reduced inequalities is that of 'accessible nature for all'. This objective states that access to natural- and cultural landscapes must increase, both for the population as a whole and for specific groups. The 17 SDGs established by the United Nations are also important to the Swedish outdoor recreation objectives, as the SDGs are integrated in Swedish policies to promote ecological, economical and socio-cultural sustainability (SEPA, 2019). The tenth SDG of 'reduced inequalities' together with the outdoor recreation objective of 'accessible nature for all' therefore constitute a principal point of departure for this thesis in that it aims to increase knowledge on how these objectives can be reached in the context of nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation.

2.3 Exclusion and inclusion in nature-based tourism

Issues concerning social exclusion and inclusion are perhaps not the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation. However, these issues have a great impact on the opportunity for certain groups to engage in such activities. People with good health, high levels of education and income, and good access to natural areas tend to be more engaged in outdoor activities compared to other groups in society (Faskunger, 2020). Whereas disadvantaged groups in society have less access to nature and nature-based activities, as previously mentioned, and mechanisms of exclusion often function as barriers to full participation (Morris & O'Brien, 2011; Roberts & Chitewere, 2011). This section briefly explains general understandings of social exclusion and inclusion, and then discusses these concepts in-depth from the perspectives of gender and disability in nature-based recreational activities, perspectives that are central to papers III and IV.

There are many definitions of social exclusion, but there appears to be an agreement among scholars, governmental institutions and other organisations that it is a multi-dimensional, complex concept and that a lack of participation in society is one of its most prominent features (Duffy & Mair, 2017; Levitas et al., 2007; Walsh et al., 2017). The UN (2016, p. 18) states that "social exclusion describes a state in which individuals are unable to

participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state". Social exclusion thus encompasses the lack of access to material resources and services such as income, health care, education, employment and housing, but also the lack of access to social and political spheres due to various forms of discrimination, exclusion from decision-making processes and feelings of alienation and inferiority (UN, 2016). Levitas et al. (2007, p. 117-118) developed a framework to help explain social exclusion, and categorised the identified elements of social exclusion into three major domains:

- Resources (including material/economic resources, access to public and private services and social resources)
- Participation (including economic participation, social participation, culture, education and skills, political and civic participation)
- Quality of life (including health and well-being, living environment, crime, harm and criminalization)

Concerns about social exclusion in international policy discourses have emphasised efforts to promote social inclusion as a way to counteract unequal opportunities. Although there are different definitions of social inclusion, the academic literature appears to consensually highlight three overarching principles: 1) participation, 2) connectedness and sense of belonging, and 3) citizenship and rights (Cordier et al., 2017; Scorgie & Forlin, 2019). At the level of international agreements and global partnerships, such as the UN and the World Bank, social inclusion is emphasised as being essential in order to tackle the global challenges of inequality, poverty, and unequal access to resources and participation, factors which are closely tied to the SDGs (UN, 2016). The World Bank defines social inclusion as "the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society –improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity" (World Bank Group, 2021). People can be disadvantaged based on their sex, age, ethnicity, disability or economic situation for example, and promoting social inclusion therefore means removing barriers to people's participation and actively engaging a more diverse segment of the population in societal activities. Social inclusion is both a process and a goal, and in order for a society characterised by equality and equal opportunities to become reality, it is crucial to eliminate social exclusion and promote social inclusion (UN, 2016).

2.3.1 Gender

Outdoor environments and the recreational activities performed in such domains have traditionally been attributed to men, and in academia remote

landscapes have been described as spaces primarily constructed for the male audience (e.g. Espiner et al., 2011; Fennell & Birbeck, 2019; Humberstone, 2000; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Wara & Munkejord, 2018). The notion of remote areas, especially mountainous areas that some would refer to as 'wilderness', as particularly masculine originates from Western Romantic ideals from the late 1800s of man as a conqueror of the outdoors and the domesticator of the wild, where testing oneself against the forces of nature is seen as ideal (Cronon, 1996; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994). Early discourses of such environments ascribed them the typically male attributes of risk, adventure, danger and self-accomplishment, thus effectively excluding women from this domain (Mullins et al., 2016; Tordsson, 2008). Cronon (1996) states in his famous exposé of the construction of American wilderness as essential to the nation's identity that "the mythic frontier individualist was almost always masculine in gender: here, in the wilderness, a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity" (p. 14). This quote illustrates the idea of remote areas as a hyper-masculine space; a space where macho narratives dominate and consolidate the belief that such environments are no place for a woman. In the Swedish context, Wall-Reinius (2009) argue, similar to Cronon (1996), that the first tourists who came to the remote mountain areas in northern Sweden were wealthy, highly educated men from the southern parts of the country. These men were influential in the founding of the first Swedish national parks, and thus contributed to spreading the image of the northern mountains as touristic icons, accessible only to the most hard-core enthusiasts.

However, the exclusion of women from outdoor environments and the activities that take place in them is not a phenomenon of the past. Although research on women and girls' participation in outdoor activities has highlighted the male dominance in this domain for decades and repeatedly called for change, men still constitute the majority of practitioners in many fields of outdoor recreation, and stereotyped views of women as outsiders in outdoor settings still exist (Davies et al., 2019; Gray, 2016; Stoddart, 2010; Warren, 2016; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Moreover, women face a number of constraints that prevent them from full engagement in outdoor recreation and nature-based experiences. Structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors such as gender role socialisation, family obligations, fear, lack of time and financial resources, sexual harassment, and concerns related to adequate skills and fitness are among the constraints many women must overcome to be able to participate in outdoor activities (Bialeschki, 2005; Doran et al., 2018; Warren, 1985). This theme is further examined in paper III.

Weatherby and Vidon (2018) lead an interesting discussion on how the historical male domination of the outdoors in America was both reinforced and challenged by the introduction of nature-based tourism. As society became increasingly urbanised and the mythic frontier individualist engraved in the American identity became more of a middle-aged salesman living in the suburbs of a medium-sized town, nature-based tourism offered a way to reconnect with masculine ideals, but with considerably less risk. Moreover, the dangerous, pristine wilderness areas described by the Romantics had been domesticated through the establishment of national parks and other types of nature conservation initiatives, but were still marketed as spaces where men could escape the feminisation of society and live out their primal side (Weatherby & Vidon, 2018). Although these spaces are constructed, managed and relatively safe, they still provide a sufficient element of risk and danger so that the stereotype of hyper-masculinity in outdoor settings can be upheld (Cronon, 1995).

Contradictory to the idea of nature-based tourism as a stronghold of masculine ideals, the increased popularity of nature-based tourism in remote areas has given women a path of access to these areas (Weatherby & Vidon, 2018). The domesticated nature where nature-based tourism can occur, together with the illusion of risk, allowed women to enter these spaces relatively safely and tourism thus became a stepping-stone for women to engage actively in outdoor activities. The risk component becomes important in this context, and Yang et al. (2017, p. 262) suggest “risk taking thus provides an avenue for women to (re)construct and negotiate gender identities and to resist and challenge social expectations”. Women are increasingly challenging traditional norms of the outdoors as a typically male domain by facing the same risks as male nature-based tourists, and the increased visibility of women in these settings creates opportunities for support, acceptance and empowerment for female recreationists (Weatherby & Vidon, 2018).

Despite more women participating in such activities and women becoming more visible, portrayal of women in the promotion and advertisement materials of nature-based tourism is still stereotyped and women are under-represented in outdoor recreation media (McNiel et al., 2012; Zink & Kane, 2015). Images of women engaged in outdoor activities tend to sexualise them and trivialise their skills and commitment, and the lack of female role models in the media can discourage women from seeing the relevance of participation (Carini & Weber, 2017). In fact, the media appears to reinforce notions of white male dominance over the outdoors and conveys messages that appeal to ideals of rugged individualism and machismo, thus

furthering the exclusion of women (Hirschman, 2003). Little and Wilson (2005) argue that many women who are engaged in nature-based activities struggle to identify themselves with the existing representations of women in the outdoors that media promotes.

Media representation is thus a powerful tool in the creation of outdoor environments as gendered landscapes, but also in sending messages about who is included and who is excluded in nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation participation (Burkett & Carter, 2020; Khan, 2009; Stoddart, 2010). Mitten et al. (2018) claim that the stories of men have been allowed to hegemonize the outdoor narrative for too long by silencing women's voices in history as well as in contemporary media, and now is the time to highlight women's exclusion from this domain in order to truly challenge the prevailing discourses for a more inclusive outdoors. Equal portrayals of gender in the media is therefore an essential building block in enhancing access to nature for women, which is the focus of paper III.

Women are, however, not the only group that tourism and outdoor recreation media marginalises by focusing on only one perspective. People with disabilities are invisible in tourism promotional material, which is dominated by non-disabled discourses and therefore excludes people with disabilities (Benjamin et al., 2021; Cloquet et al., 2018). The exclusion of people with disabilities from tourism advertising is merely a symptom of the exclusion of this group from tourism in general, and by extension from society as a whole, which I discuss in the following section.

2.3.2 Disability

There is no doubt that people with disabilities historically have been discriminated against and excluded from society, and even today, few would argue against the fact that this discrimination and exclusion is still on going. This is not the place to provide an extensive overview of the origins of disability studies, nor the emergence of a social theory of disability, nor even to summarise the fight for equal rights conducted by disability activists in the 20th century. However it is necessary in a section such as this to mention the social model of disability and its importance for the academic field of disability studies, and how this model is still used to explain, and counteract, discrimination and exclusion.

The social model of disability can be traced back to the 1970s, when the British disability rights activist group Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) stated that "disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from society" (UPIAS, 1976, quoted in Barnes, 2019). This statement

suggests that it is in fact society that creates barriers to full participation for people with disabilities, not the disability itself (Barnes, 2019). In 1983, disability studies pioneer Mike Oliver coined the phrase 'social model of disability', which meant a shift away from the previously prevailing medical model of disability in which the disabled body is viewed as a personal tragedy and in need of correction to fit into society's norms (Oliver & Barnes, 2012). The social model of disability distinguishes between 'impairment', which refers to a functional limitation, and 'disability', which is socially constructed through restriction and oppression of people living with an impairment in a society that is designed by, and for, able-bodied people (Harris & White, 2018).

The social model of disability can also be applied in the context of tourism, as a multitude of academic studies has shown that the exclusive design of society is also reflected in tourism. People with disabilities have little opportunity to engage in tourism due to physical, social and financial barriers, and tourism environments are constructed in such a way that they reinforce disability through barriers instead of removing the same (e.g. Darcy, 2010; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Yau et al., 2004). Kitchin (1998) argues that both urban and rural landscapes are spaces which are socially constructed and produced to exclude people with disabilities, and that "spaces are currently organised to keep disabled people 'in their place'" (p. 345). This argument can also be applied to tourism, as the tourism space is organised in such a way that people with disabilities experience that they are 'out of place' (Kitchin, 1998) in these settings, which leads to this group not participating in tourism to the same extent as their able-bodied counterparts. However, accessible tourism is increasingly emphasised as an important mechanism for also including this group in aspects of society, consequently reducing further social inequalities and discrimination and allowing people with disabilities to take part in the many benefits active tourism participation entails (Cockburn-Wooten & McIntosh, 2020; Darcy et al., 2020; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). In the light of the call for more inclusive tourism practices, UNWTO (2020) recently identified accessible tourism for people with disabilities as a sector within the tourism industry that needs to be prioritised, in order for people to have equal opportunities to participate in tourism.

By connecting the social model of disability to tourism participation, it is possible to raise awareness of the disabling environments that are present in tourism settings and that prevent full participation (Nicolaisen et al., 2011). Moreover, the social model of disability also provides a useful theoretical framework for better understanding exclusion in the context of access to nature-based tourism.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, people with disabilities do not spend the same amount of time in nature as people without disabilities, even though nature-based experiences have been proven to bring about a number of health and well-being benefits (Boyd et al., 2018; Taylor & McGruder, 1995). Given this, and the raised awareness of equal and inclusive tourism, it is therefore surprising that accessible nature-based tourism is an under-researched area within academia (Godtman Kling & Ioannides, 2019). Although research on accessible nature-based tourism appears to be lacking, there are nevertheless studies that examine the physical and social barriers to this type of tourism, and how landscapes can be used to encourage social inclusion. Tregaskis (2004) argues that the social model of disability has great potential to function as a tool for challenging structural and oppressive norms. In order for real societal change to take place, the social model of disability must be communicated to mainstream audiences in comprehensible ways, which allows for collaboration between people with disabilities and able-bodied people to remove access barriers. In the context of nature experiences, Tregaskis (2004) suggests that using the social model of disability when designing accessible natural areas is beneficial because it is a depersonalised approach that avoids blaming individuals (such as able-bodied planners and managers) for poor access, and rather highlights disabling environments. This approach thus enables fruitful partnerships for making nature accessible for all.

Burns et al. (2009) argue that in order to make natural areas fully accessible and inclusive, it is important to understand the various needs of people with disabilities and not reduce accessibility to being only about wheelchair ramps. This understanding can only be achieved by working with people with disabilities to both remove physical barriers to access to nature, as well as change socio-cultural attitudes regarding what this group requires and desires in nature settings.

Removing physical barriers and making natural areas accessible and inclusive can nevertheless be a source of conflicts of interests regarding what nature 'should' look like. Nature conservation issues and rights to accessible nature are occasionally set against each other, and one interest may take precedence over the other (Donlon, 2000; Mebus et al., 2013), which is explored in paper IV. A different perspective on tensions between interests, examined in paper II, is that of land-use conflicts in natural areas where many stakeholders are present. Conflicts can affect access to nature for the interest groups involved, especially when infrastructure is a central component of the conflicts (Hunt et al., 2009).

2.4 Conflicts of interests in access to nature

Multifunctional landscapes are arenas of land-use conflicts. Multiple stakeholders use these landscapes for various purposes, and there can therefore be strong opinions regarding what expectations and value to place on such landscapes, as well as regarding who is entitled to make decisions about the use of them, now and in the future (O'Neill & Walsh, 2000; Wall-Reinius et al., 2018). There are great challenges in balancing the complex dimensions of multifunctionality in landscapes, where different land-use interests have different interests in, claims on and access to that particular landscape. The perception of stakeholders that access to landscapes is unequal between land-use interest groups can therefore be a significant source of conflict (Plieninger, 2018; Svensson et al., 2020). In this thesis, nature-based tourism (both tourism operators and tourists), nature- and culture conservation, reindeer herding and local residents constitute the land-use interests that are central to conflicts of access to nature. These conflicts, and the management of them, are examined in paper II and paper IV.

Conflicts of interests related to access to nature are multi-dimensional and take place on many levels, (e.g. Almeida et al., 2018; Hjalager, 2020; Sæþórsdóttir, 2012) and it is therefore difficult to present a definition of such conflicts that includes all the land-use interests involved in an area but specifically highlights tourism and recreational activities as being central. Steinhäuser et al. (2015) point out that there is no established definition of land-use conflicts, but one definition that appears to attract attention among scholars (e.g. Milczarek-Andrzejewska et al., 2018; Klaus, 2020) is that provided by von der Dunk et al. (2011). They state that land-use conflicts occur “whenever land-use stakeholders (= conflict parties) have incompatible interests related to certain land-use units (= geographical component)” (p. 149). This definition thus offers both a spatial and a social component to the understanding of land-use conflicts, and focuses on conflicts between user groups, not within them. In addition to the definition suggested by von der Dunk et al. (2011), I would like to remind the reader of the temporal component of conflicts of interests in natural areas presented in the introduction chapter. Abrahamsson (1984) argued that relationships between stakeholders with land-use interests in the same natural area can deteriorate if land users increase their use in time or space. Thus besides the spatial and social components, temporality is important to consider when examining conflicts of interests in access to nature.

An example of a land-use conflict that includes both social and spatial aspects is offered by McKercher (1992), who illustrates the complexity of

increased access to a natural area, when he describes how land-use conflicts arose from commercial forestry activities in a Canadian wilderness area. The logging activities in the area were accused of destroying fish and wildlife habitats and disturbing visitors, thus resulting in conflicts between forestry workers, tourists and tourism developers. However, the construction of logging roads gave access to large numbers of visitors to come to the remote area by car, which led to problems of mass recreational use such as crowding, littering, overstressed fisheries and noise. The increased number of visitors to the area that the industrial forestry brought about thus resulted in more conflicts between land-use interests, including nature-based tourism. In Sweden, the Swedish Environmental protection Agency (SEPA) (2019) recognises that the use of motorised vehicles provides access to nature for people with disabilities, elderly people and families, and can therefore be important from a recreational perspective as a larger share of the population has the opportunity to engage in nature experiences. However, the use of motorised vehicles (e.g. snowmobiles) often entails conflicts with other land-use interests, such as with reindeer herding (Solbär et al., 2019), with other recreationists (Lindberg et al., 2009) and with private landowners and nature conservation interests (Zachrisson, 2009). Increased access for one group can therefore result in reduced satisfaction for another, which makes access to nature a sensitive matter to handle.

2.4.1 Goal interference

A procedure that is commonly used to study conflicts related to tourism and recreation is that of interpersonal or goal interference conflict, suggested by Jacob and Schreyer (1980). They state that, “for an individual, conflict is defined as goal interference attributed to another’s behaviour” (p. 369). This definition assumes that people participate in recreational activities to achieve certain outcomes – goals, meaning that conflict occurs when one group becomes dissatisfied due to another group’s behaviour, which prevents them from achieving particular goals (Jacob & Schreyer, 1980). Goal interference has been used extensively in academic studies to examine and explain conflicts between recreational activities (e.g. Miller et al., 2017; Ruddell & Gramann, 1994; Schneider, 2000; Tynon & Gómez, 2012). Although interpersonal conflicts between recreational activities are not the focus of this thesis, it is nevertheless worth noting their impact on issues related to access to nature, especially in the context of infrastructure.

Touristic and recreational infrastructure that provides access to nature for visitors is a potential source of recreation conflicts in natural areas. This is especially the case of trails and other linear resources used for recreational

purposes, as a range of activities often take place on the same trail at the same time (Beeton, 2006; Wolf et al., 2018). However, these conflicts are often 'asymmetrical', meaning that one party experiences reduced quality in their activity, while the other party's recreation experience remains unaltered (Manning, 2011; Switalski, 2018). An often-studied example of an asymmetrical recreation conflict is the one between motorized and non-motorized recreationists sharing the same trail, for example where cross-country skiers may experience conflict when noise from snowmobiles disrupts the peace and quiet of the mountains, thus lowering the cross-country skiers' experience of nature (e.g. Stewart-Patterson, 2019; Vittersø et al., 2004).

Goal interference can help in the examination of why recreational conflicts occur, but there is also a need for a broader approach to understanding conflict, one that takes social values in consideration (Watson, 2001).

2.4.2 Social values conflict

Building on Jacob and Schreyer's (1980) model, Vaske et al. (1995) provided an alternative explanation to recreation conflict: social values conflict. This theoretical approach to conflict implies that land-use conflicts centred on nature-based tourism and recreational activities stem from groups not sharing the same norms, or social values (Carothers et al., 2001; Vaske et al., 2007; Williams, 1993). Thus, conflicts can arise even though there is no actual contact between the groups. The theory of social values conflict therefore differs from the so-called interpersonal conflict, which is when two or more interests come in direct contact with each other, for example hikers and mountain bikers (Manning, 2011). Social values conflict focuses on the perceived conflicts between stakeholders' norms, as there is no direct interaction between recreationists or users (Gibson & Fix, 2014). For instance, when hikers and hunters participate in their respective recreational activity in the same natural area, conflicts are primarily associated with opinions, norms and social values, i.e. the ethical dimension of hunting. For the hikers, simply knowing that there are hunters in the area can trigger perceptions of conflicts (Vaske et al., 1995). Social values conflict is thus not limited to direct conflicts between recreational activities, but can be applied to situations where land-use interests go beyond nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation and include forestry and local communities, for example (e.g. Fix & Harrington, 2012; Hunt et al., 2009).

Conflicts between land-use interests in natural areas where tourism and recreation are prominent is of growing concern to many planners and managers of such areas, as an increasing number of activities and practitioners

compete for the same space (Arnberger et al., 2018; Manning & Valliere, 2001; Schroeder et al., 2020; Sæþórsdóttir, 2012). It is crucial for managers, planners and stakeholders to handle these conflicts of interests in order to promote a sustainable use of natural areas, and encouraging collaboration initiatives has become a well-established strategy to reduce tension and disagreement, as studied in papers II and IV.

2.5 Stakeholder collaboration to enhance access to nature

Landscapes in Europe have been exposed to constant changes in land-use throughout history, but the current changes are unparalleled in terms of speed, scale and magnitude due to technological, demographical, economic and socio-cultural developments (García-Martín et al., 2016; Verburg et al., 2006; Zscheischler et al., 2019). Nature-based tourism and recreational activities is a prominent driving force for these changes, as more people seek out the attractions of natural areas, and tourism has thus come to be a salient land-use interest (Prager 2015; Sæþórsdóttir & Saarinen, 2016). Such rapid changes are a cause of land-use conflicts as discussed in the previous section, and naturally, research has increasingly turned its attention to how these conflicts can be handled. Stakeholder engagement and collaborative efforts are approaches often presented as methods for managing complex conflicts over land-use in multifunctional landscapes; including conflicts relating to forestry, tourism, game management, agriculture, recreational activities and nature conservation, to name but a few (Davies & White, 2012; Graci, 2013; Saarikoski et al., 2013). Academic studies have taken on various perspectives to research collaboration for handling land-use conflicts in which tourism constitutes a land-use interest. Studies for instance focus on the role of leadership in collaborative processes (Almeida, 2017), the use of GIS and remote sensing to compile information on land-use interests (Sandström et al., 2003), how collaboration can be a bridge in disagreements regarding nature and culture conservation management (Österlin et al., 2020), and the challenge of developing institutions that can handle conflicts constructively (Zachrisson & Beland Lindahl, 2013). It is therefore difficult to identify characteristics of collaborative processes that are general in issues of land-use conflict management, but there appears to be fundamental features that need to be taken into consideration for the process to be successful. Such features include building trust, establishing communication and building relationships, and the inclusion of all concerned stakeholders in order for the collaboration process to be considered legitimate (Almeida et al., 2018; Curcija et al., 2019; Jamal & Getz, 1999; Thellbro et al., 2018), all of which are factors central to

paper II. Collaboration between public and private stakeholders in the management of resources can also generate positive outcomes for sustainability, especially for social sustainability (Bjärstig, 2017).

Although the above factors have been identified as highly important for successful collaboration initiatives, the process of making them work in practice is difficult and requires extensive efforts from those involved (Dredge, 2006; Jamal & Stronza, 2009; McComb et al., 2017; Schuett et al., 2001). Collaboration can be obstructed by factors such as its ineffective management, limited skills and difficulties in reaching consensus (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000). Almeida et al. (2018) argue that there are a number of barriers to collaboration regarding conflicts between tourism interests and other land-use interests. Among the most significant barriers are the stakeholders' unpreparedness for the collaboration process and their lack of negotiation and communication skills; the lack of time for stakeholders to prepare for and attend meetings; and mistrust between stakeholders due to communication problems and lack of information and knowledge. In land-use conflicts that include tourism interests, in which indigenous communities constitute one party, conflict and mistrust often have their roots in wider issues of colonisation and injustice, which can make barriers to collaboration even more difficult to overcome (Scherrer & Dohan, 2014; Jamal, 2019). For Sami stakeholders, for example, tourism-related conflicts are concerned with obvious issues such as increased numbers of visitors that disturb reindeer herding, but also with complex issues that complicate collaboration, such as identity, representation, authenticity and power (Keskitalo et al., 2021; Smed Olsen, 2016); aspects which are considered in paper II.

Such complex issues as these makes trust-building even more central to conflict management, as the degree of trust between parties determines whether one individual or group believes that the other individual or group will commit to and follow through on proposed actions. Trust is therefore crucial to the success of collaboration and conflict management processes (Hamm, 2017; Lewicki, 2006; Smith et al., 2013; Stern & Coleman, 2015). In order to build trust between actors, especially in the management of resources when there are disagreements between government agencies and local interests, it is important to focus on strategies that build informal relationships and provide opportunities for repeated interactions so that the stakeholders involved can form personal relationships (Davenport et al., 2007; Graci, 2013). Creating platforms where stakeholders can meet increases the likelihood of representatives of different interests coming together, learning about each other's perspectives, and thus taking steps in the trust-building process

(Towner, 2018). Davenport et al. (2007) discuss the importance of including knowledge and values from the local community in the management process for building personal relationships and trust, and suggest that using local experts and local businesses, for example, strengthens the relationship between the government and local communities. In contrast, the two most common explanations for a low degree of trust between government agencies and the local community identified by Stern (2008) are 1) a lack of meaningful social interaction or a 'social distance', and 2) inadequate communication.

3 Case selection

This thesis uses data from three different case study areas in Sweden, which makes for a rich empirical base of material in which different types of landscapes are represented. The cases are anchored in the four perspectives chosen to examine access to nature, and I describe the case study areas and how they relate to the articles in detail below. It should, however, be noted that the central geographic focus of this thesis is the Jämtland Härjedalen county, in particular the mountain areas and recreational destinations, so this area is of prominent significance.

The southern parts of the mountain areas in the Jämtland Härjedalen county are used by many groups with different interests, and with different expectations and perceptions of how the mountain landscape should be used. This makes the area a complex, multifunctional landscape that holds contrasting values and needs of, for example, reindeer herding, nature- and culture conservation interests, local use of the area, and nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation activities (Wall-Reinius et al., 2018). This complexity nevertheless makes the area particularly interesting to study, as it can be argued to represent a cross section of the many conflicts of interests that take place in natural areas where tourism is a major concern, both in Sweden and globally.

3.1 The Jämtland Härjedalen County

The Jämtland Härjedalen county is one of Sweden's twenty-one administrative regions, located about 500 km north-west of Stockholm (figure 2). The county is approx. 49 000 km², making it the third largest county in Sweden by size, and it constitutes 12% of the country's total area (Regionfakta, 2020). It is divided into eight municipalities and the total number of inhabitants is about 130 000 (1.5% of Sweden's total population). The only city in the county is Östersund, with a population of around 64 000 in the whole municipality (Östersunds kommun, 2020). Tourism is a major industry, and the county attracts great numbers of visitors, both in summer and winter. In 2019, the Jämtland Härjedalen county had 11.5 million guest nights, of which 3.2 million were commercial (Härebblad & Adsten, 2020). Most visitors come to the mountains in the west part of the county where there are large ski resorts along with well-developed infrastructure for hiking and other summer activities. Tourism in Jämtland Härjedalen is primarily nature-based and the most common activities practiced by visitors are downhill and cross-country skiing, hiking, mountain biking and fishing (Härebblad & Adsten, 2020). There

are 206 nature reserves, many of which are located in the mountains, and one national park in the county (Jämtland County Administrative Board, 2020).

The Jämtland Härjedalen county constitutes the setting of paper II, and is one of three selected cases for paper IV. The third article in this thesis researches recreation activities in the Swedish mountains, and three of the five major mountain destinations examined in paper III are located in Jämtland Härjedalen, which also makes the region relevant in this context.

Paper IV focuses on accessibility for people with disabilities in nature settings, and in this Jämtland Härjedalen represents a peripheral destination that offers activities that can be perceived as challenging for visitors. The southern Jämtland mountain area, which is part of the Jämtland Härjedalen county, was chosen as a suitable case study area for Paper II due to the complexity of land-use interests in the area, and the challenges such multifunctional landscapes entail. This particular area requires further explanation, and I elaborate on this below.

3.1.1 The southern Jämtland mountains

The case study area of paper II is the southern Jämtland mountains, located in the mountainous part of the two municipalities of Åre and Berg in the southwestern part of Jämtland; an area of about 2 250 square kilometres (figure 1). It is an area with varied geographical features, such as mountain peaks with glaciers, highlands, valleys, open and forested lands, lakes and rivers. The study area is sparsely populated and the people living in the nearby villages often have multiple means of income, such as combining small-scale tourism businesses with other work (Wall-Reinius et al., 2019).

Extensive reindeer herding is a dominant activity in the case study area, an activity that is distinct to the Sami people, and a marker of their cultural identity. Three Sami villages keep reindeers in the case study area, and reindeer herding is a business that largely relies on the possibility for flexibility, as the reindeers move over vast areas throughout the year to find pasture (Sametinget, 2018). One of the Sami villages, Handölsdalen, has its calving area and summer grazing land in the same location as some of the most frequented trails for recreational activities.

A large part of the study area is a nature reserve and a Nature 2000 area, and there are regulations on motorized activities, dog-sledding, hunting and fishing to protect the flora and fauna (Jämtland County Administrative Board, 2018a).

The area is a popular destination for nature-based tourists, primarily due to accessible transportation to the area (roads and railways), and the most popular activities are overnight hikes and shorter hikes in the summer (Wall-

Reinius et. al., 2015) and cross-country skiing in the winter (Jämtland County Administrative Board, 2015; Ankre & Kronenberg, 2015). The trail system in the area is well developed and there is accommodation in cabins along the trails, which makes transportation (e.g. hiking, biking, cross-country skiing) safe and encourages day-trips. In the study area, the Swedish Tourist Association (STF) is the largest tourism operator and runs ten mountain stations and cabins – some with restaurants, saunas and showers – and these are connected through the trail network (STF, n.d.).

In recent years, the southern Jämtland mountains have seen a great increase in the number of visitors coming to the area. For example, the total number of guest nights in STF's mountain cabins in 2019 was 64 103, which is a 12% increase compared to 2018 (Häreblad & Adsten, 2020), and one mountain station in the area experienced a 26% increase in the number of guest nights compared to 2018 (STF, 2019). There has also been a diversification of recreational activities in the area, and “new” types of activities, such as mountain biking, trail-running, mountaineering/alpinism, heli-skiing, river rafting, and organized sports events are becoming popular (Fredman et al, 2014; Godtman Kling, 2018; Jämtland County Administrative Board, 2016; Wall-Reinius et. al., 2015). Various types of events and competitions take place close to the smaller villages in the eastern part of the study area; for example cross-country skiing races, mountain marathons and mountain orienteering (Godtman Kling, 2018; Jämtland County Administrative Board, 2016; Vålådalen, 2018). During one of the most intensive summer weeks, the ‘mountain marathon week’, about 2000 people participate in organised running competitions (Godtman Kling, 2018).

According to the Jämtland County Administration Board, the increase in the number of visitors and new types of activities have caused land erosion, litter, conflicts between different trail-users, and disturbance to the reindeer and reindeer herding (Jämtland County Administration Board, 2018b). Figure 1 shows the southern Jämtland mountains.

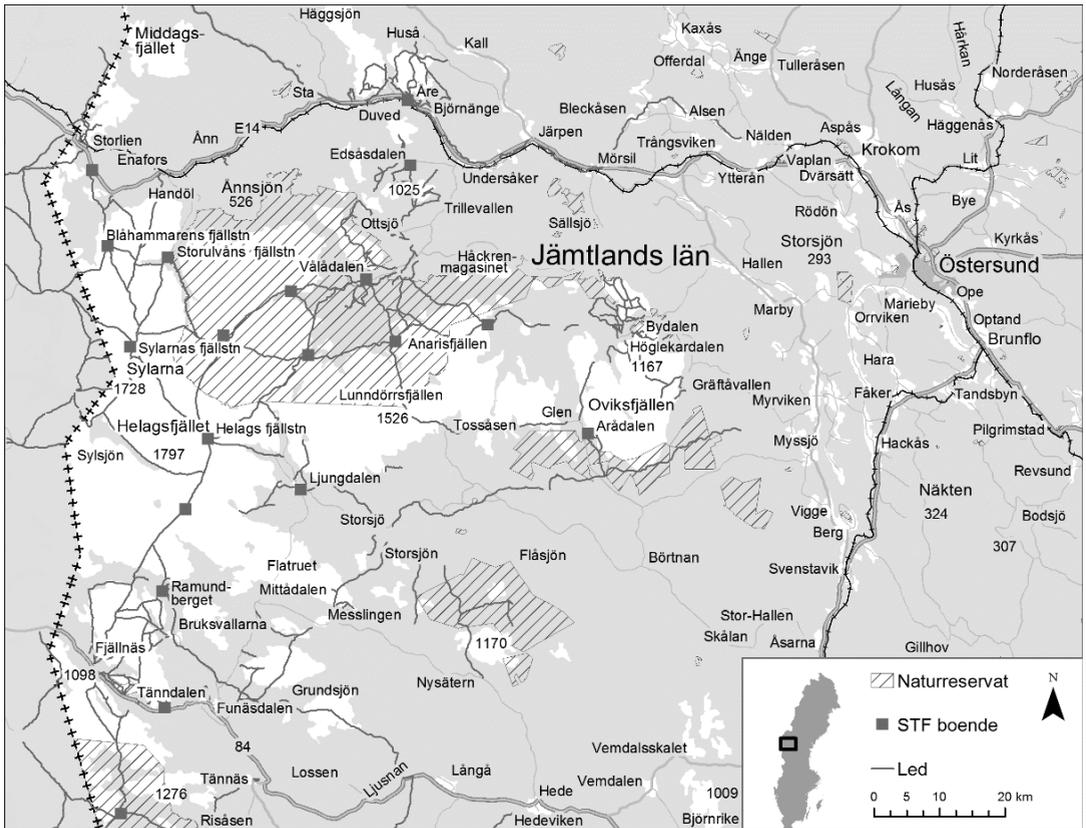


Figure 1. Map of the southern Jämtland mountains and the trails within the area. Map by Marika Wennbom.

3.2 Stockholm archipelago

The Stockholm archipelago extends about 150 km from north to south along the coast of Stockholm county, and consists of both mainland and some 30 000 islands and islets, 200 of which are inhabited (see figure 2) (Stockholm County Administrative Board, 2019). The archipelago area administratively belongs to eight municipalities in the Stockholm region, which all have their head offices on the mainland. The Archipelago Foundation, which was founded in 1959 with the purpose of preserving the natural and cultural values of the archipelago and keeping it open and accessible to all, owns and manages about 12% of the archipelago, including 40 nature reserves (The Archipelago Foundation, 2020). The rest of the area is primarily privately owned with a large share of second homes (Statistics Sweden, 2020). Tourism is an important industry in the archipelago, especially regarding

accommodation and restaurants. The majority of the visitors come to the area in the summer and engage in activities such as swimming, fishing, boating, canoeing and hiking. In Paper IV, the Stockholm archipelago represents a peri-urban area with a focus on water-based tourism activities.

3.3 The municipality of Askersund

The third case study area in Paper IV is located at the northern end of Vättern, Sweden's second largest lake, about 250 km south-west of Stockholm (see figure 2). The municipality of Askersund is small with about 11 000 inhabitants, but tourism is an important industry during the summer (Askersunds kommun, 2019). Tourism in Askersund is mostly centred around nature and culture experiences and boating on Vättern lake. There are more than 30 nature reserves in the municipality, and the national park Tiveden is located about 30 km from the city centre in the neighbouring municipality of Laxå (Visit Askersund, 2020a). The reason Askersund municipality was chosen as a case study area for Paper IV is the long-term, ongoing initiative to make the municipality as accessible as possible, which also includes accessible tourism. The international organisation Design for All Foundation has awarded Askersund, as the only municipality in the world, with the "Flag of Cities and Destinations for All" for eleven consecutive years (Visit Askersund, 2020b) for its engagement in accessibility solutions. In order to enhance accessible tourism, Askersund collaborates with the European Network for Accessible Tourism (Askersunds kommun, 2020). Actions taken to make tourism accessible include free hiring of beach wheelchairs for swimming, special solutions to facilitate walking or rolling on the cobble-stoned central square, accessible boat trips on the lake, and accessible nature reserves and cultural buildings (Visit Askersund, 2020b). The municipality has a high degree of collaboration with private businesses, interest organisations and the County Administration Board to increase accessibility.

Figure 2 shows the location of the Jämtland Härjedalen county with the southern Jämtland mountains, Stockholm archipelago and the municipality of Askersund in Sweden.



Figure 2. The case study areas

4 Research Design

I started my journey as a doctoral student by researching mountain trails. This is somewhat ironic, because what illustrates better the long and winding road towards a PhD than solitary paths in a rugged landscape that eventually deliver the traveller safe and sound at the end of the journey? Joking aside, although it is exciting the task of designing your own PhD project can sometimes also feel challenging and confusing, especially regarding the difficulty in selecting the appropriate methodology in order to answer the research questions. Finlay (2002) compares the process of engaging in the various dimensions of qualitative research and reflexivity to finding the right way to navigate a swamp. She suggests that qualitative research is similar to 'entering uncertain terrain where solid ground can all too easily give way to swamp and mire. The challenge is to negotiate a path through this complicated landscape – one that exposes the traveller to interesting discoveries while ensuring a route out the other side' (p. 212). Like me, Finlay (2002) appears to consider the trail a suitable analogy for a safe haven in a quagmire of methodologies.

My approach to finding my terra firma throughout this project has been to operate within the realm of mixed-methods research and pragmatism. In this chapter, I explain why I find this approach suitable and how it helped me navigate the swamp, as well as describe how I went about collecting data. I conclude the chapter by discussing methodological considerations and the implications my choices had on the research process.

4.1 Mixed-methods research design and pragmatism

I shall not hide the fact that I have struggled with merging two research projects and a stand-alone article into a whole that makes sense. Although testing at times, I nevertheless consider this arrangement of my PhD project a great strength in my training and development into becoming a researcher, precisely because I have had to elaborate a coherent and well-reasoned framework to express my ideas. Through the application of data from various sources, both quantitative and qualitative, together with close interaction with stakeholders in the southern Jämtland mountains study area, I have gained important insights into multiple ways of seeing and understanding the social world, which is a direct and valuable outcome of my involvement in multiple research contexts. The decision to use a mixed-methods research design in this thesis emerged quite quickly when I began my research project, and I realised

that I would need more than one mode of inquiry to try to understand stakeholders' experiences, perceptions and practices of conflicts surrounding mountain trails, which was my first case (papers I and II). The next phase of my PhD included one mixed-methods study separated from the two projects (paper III), and one qualitative study (paper IV), which further placed the thesis as a whole within the realm of mixed-methods research. Mixed-methods research has been described as a problem-centred approach, which advocates argue can lead to a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the issue that is being researched (e.g. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson et al., 2007; Leavy, 2017), an approach I found appealing when examining dimensions of access to nature-based tourism.

Tourism as a social phenomenon and as a scientific discipline is complex, fragmented, paradoxical and intangible in nature, which together with the diversity of my own studies made me consider an approach wherein the research question is central and drives the scientific study, as Tashakkori et al. (2021) suggest the mixed-method study does. Moreover, mixed-methods research in tourism studies is becoming increasingly articulated as a methodological approach in its own right, and a growing number of scholars recognise the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods as important and useful (Heimtun & Morgan, 2012; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2017; Molina-Azorín & Font, 2016; Pansiri, 2006). I join this group of scholars because I believe the most suitable approach for this thesis to capture a holistic view of different perspectives related to access to nature-based tourism is through using the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to minimise the weaknesses. As an example of this, Creswell (2015, p. 2) defines mixed-methods research as "an approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health science in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems". With this definition in mind, my ambition is to convey to the reader how I used the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data to understand and examine the research problem. As suggested by Fredman and Haukeland (2021b), the study of nature-based tourism is, due to its emergence as an anthropocentric use of natural resources, at a crossroads between the natural and social sciences. Thus, in order to understand the relationship between tourism and the natural environment there is a need for quantitative research approaches, as well as for qualitative critical approaches, which further motivates the use of mixed-methods.

In this dissertation I also take inspiration from the philosophy of pragmatism to connect the four perspectives of infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration, which are central to this thesis. While this approach enabled a focus on the practicality of my research, it also required continuous reflection on the research questions and process, which I believe facilitated the navigation through the methodological swamp, and I discuss this in the closing section of this chapter.

The practicality of a pragmatic research approach generally lies in the outcomes of the research, i.e. “what works?” or “how can this problem be solved?” (Creswell, 2013; Duram, 2010; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019), thus giving it the reputation of lacking theoretical and philosophical rigour (Biesta, 2010; Clarke & Visser, 2019). However, although pragmatism as a philosophy has lived in the shadows for some decades, it is now gaining increased scholarly attention, especially because of its close connection and applicability to mixed-methods research in social science (Baert, 2005; Maxcy, 2003; Morgan, 2007; Yardley & Bishop, 2017). This connection is also what prompted my interest in pragmatism because it contributed to the problem-driven characteristics of the mixed-methods approach and suggested that the most important question to ask is whether I, the researcher, have found out what I wanted to know (see e.g. Hanson, 2008). My concern about being able to account for my research in a way that makes sense was somewhat softened when reading Feilzer’s (2010, p. 14) declaration that “pragmatists do not “care” which methods they use as long as the methods chosen have the potential of answering what it is one wants to know”. Naturally, this statement does not mean that pragmatism is to be confused with sloppy and expedient research, but that pragmatic mixed-methods research requires a good understanding of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Feilzer, 2010). Thus, I found great inspiration in the pragmatic research approach and consider it a suitable basis for bridging the four central perspectives, so that in their entirety they constitute a broadened scope for analysing access to nature in the context of nature-based tourism, which is the aim of this thesis. I took hold of Feilzer’s statement and used it as a guiding light in the writing process, in order to describe the relationship between the methodology and the aim of this thesis.

4.2 Case study research

Case studies form the research design for papers II, III and IV in this thesis. However, I believe I already gained an understanding of what it means to conduct case studies at beginning of my PhD project, when I spent the first two years working closely with stakeholders in the southern Jämtland

mountains and began to grasp the complexity of the in-depth case study. As suggested by Yin (2018), the case study is characterised by a wish to understand complex social phenomena and real-life events, and the researcher explores a real-life bounded system, or multiple systems, in depth for a specific period of time. The case of the southern Jämtland mountains can therefore be seen as in-depth involvement with the specific features and conditions of an area characterised by competing land-use interests, and how to bring out the lessons learned regarding how such competing interests can be handled.

Similar to what I wrote about the pragmatic approach the in-depth involvement between researchers and the studied social phenomena that distinguish the case study is not limited to a specific method, mode of inquiry, or perspective (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Simons, 2014). Creswell (2013) suggests that researchers conducting case studies often take on a pragmatic framework and focus on the outcome of the research, which is also my ambition with the mixed-methods approach in the case of the southern Jämtland mountains. Thus, the mixed-methods approach, pragmatism, and the case study are in this thesis united by the aspiration to promote methodological pluralism in order to effectively answer the research questions, and to widen the perspective of what is 'good' social science (see e.g. Baert, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The case study is nevertheless subject to discussion regarding whether this type of research design is appropriate when attempting to examine or explain social phenomena. One common misunderstanding, suggested by Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 221) is that "one cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development". This misunderstanding is considered problematic for the case study, as generalisation is often viewed as ideal, even within the social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, I view the cases in this thesis similar to Yin (2018), who explains that a researcher can think of the case study as an opportunity to highlight theoretical concepts or principles, rather than as a sample, that represents a larger population. To strive for formal generalisability that requires randomised sampling in this mixed-methods thesis is thus hardly appropriate, as I aim to understand structures that influence access and participation in the context of nature engagement. It is perhaps more relevant to speak of resonance than generalisability in this context. Resonance, according to Tracy (2020), is what has a meaningful impact on the audience and inspires them to learn something about a situation, and then practice that knowledge in another context. Resonance is therefore applicable to the

discussion of generalisability of the studies in this thesis. Issues of infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration are highly pressing matters related to nature-based tourism globally, and I therefore believe that the results of these studies can resonate in contexts of, for example, balancing accessibility for visitors and other land-use interests in natural areas, as well as of issues of social justice and equality.

The following sections describe how I went about conducting my studies, and table 1 presents the data sources of the four papers included in this thesis.

Table 1. Summary of paper data sources

<i>Data</i>	<i>Paper I</i>	<i>Paper II</i>	<i>Paper III</i>	<i>Paper IV</i>
<i>Quantitative</i>	x	x	x	
<i>Qualitative</i>		x	x	x
<i>Secondary data (qualitative)</i>		x		

4.3 Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data in the form of interviews, focus group interviews and workshops, is the main source of data for Papers II and IV, and Paper III includes visual data.

4.3.1 Interviews

The primary qualitative data for paper II and paper IV came from interviews, as this approach was assessed as the most appropriate for collecting insights on conflicts and collaboration surrounding recreational trails for paper II, and for issues related to accessible nature-based tourism for paper IV. For both papers, the majority of the respondents were contacted prior to the interviews based on their roles in the organisations they represented, but I also identified respondents through snowball sampling. The interviews were audio recorded or recorded using written notes, with the consent of the respondents. The interviews lasted somewhere between half an hour and two hours and were all conducted in Swedish. They were subsequently transcribed in Swedish.

Paper II

The experience of being part of an inter-disciplinary research project as a first contact with life as a researcher is particular and requires further elaboration on how it helped shape this PhD journey.

The team for the project 'Negotiating Pathways to Multifunctional Landscapes' consisted of six researchers, one of which was me, with backgrounds in human geography, environmental history, forestry, tourism and geography, and with expertise in a number of additional topics related to sustainable landscape management. The purpose of the project and its organisation was already well established when I joined the team, and there was collaboration with a reference group and a facilitator to help the project gain legitimacy among stakeholders in the southern Jämtland mountains.

The data collection for paper II was thus an on-going process throughout the two-year duration of the project, so it is, in all honesty, difficult to argue that formal interviews were the only source of information for this article. As a member of the research team, I participated in meetings with the collaborative platform Gränsfjällen Sylarna i samverkan and presented results from the project, I visited the southern Jämtland mountains on several occasions for meetings, interviews and also informal walking interviews (e.g. King & Woodroffe, 2019) with local stakeholders, as seen in figure 3 and 4. The research team (including myself) even had the opportunity to visit one of the reindeer herding families' summer locations.



Figure 3. Informal interview during fieldwork. Photo: Sandra Wall-Reinius

Participant observation was not an expressed method in the data collection for paper II, but during the meetings, I chatted with the participants, and observed how different stakeholders interacted with each other. These examples could perhaps not be regarded as data collection, but the social components of the research project added to my insights and perceptions of the relationships and opinions of stakeholders, which likely affected my interpretations of the formal elements of the data. I discuss this more thoroughly in the final section of this chapter.



Figure 4. Researchers in conversation during fieldwork. Photo: Kristin Godtman Kling

The formal data for paper II includes in-depth interviews about trails, conflicts, management and collaboration in the case study area of the southern Jämtland mountains. In the spring of 2016, a Master's student associated with the project and I conducted 10 interviews with various stakeholders in Jämtland, and the Master's student additionally conducted five telephone interviews and shared the transcripts with me to use in paper II. The stakeholders interviewed represented the County Administrative Board, SEPA, tourism businesses, Sami villages, local landowners, and one consultant (a project leader for a mountain-bike project initiated by the County Administrative Board).

The interviews were semi-structured and allowed for follow-up questions and elaborations on the topic. The interview guide was designed by the Master's student and myself as an overview of the theme of trails, conflicts, management and collaboration, with suggested questions, thus giving respondents the opportunity to take the interview in new directions (Kvale &

Brinkmann, 2009). As suggested by Picken (2018, p. 209) “all stakeholder research seeks to understand multiple perspectives in an interdependent relationship”, and interviewing stakeholders from various interest groups thus highlights different perspectives on conflicts related to trail use, and can contribute to a deeper understanding of trail conflicts.

Paper II also includes data from in-depth qualitative interviews with 37 stakeholders in the area. These interviews were conducted for a prior research project that took place in the same area from 2014 to 2015, which my colleagues in the ‘Negotiating Pathways to Multifunctional Landscapes’ project were all part of. Respondents in this project talked about experiences of landscape use and perceptions of landscape change, conflicts of interests, and their general thoughts about the future in the southern Jämtland mountains. Although there were no specific questions about trails in these previous interviews, I thought it could be valuable and interesting to review the transcripts to investigate if the respondents touched upon the issue of trails. The respondents did indeed bring up trails in the various themes discussed during the interviews, so I highlighted all discussions relating to trails and conflicts to use in paper II. Parts of the qualitative data in paper II is thus secondary.

The use of secondary data has advantages, such as time and cost effectiveness, but can also have problems of accuracy, quality and relevance (e.g. Silver et al., 2013). The secondary data for paper II was in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the southern Jämtland mountains, but the focus was not on trails, which raise questions about the relevance of including this data in the study. Moreover, the in-depth interview is characterised by presence: the researcher needs to be open, listening, and empathetic to the complex and sensitive issues that can arise during the interview (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Only reading transcripts of such interviews, needless to say, will not reveal the nuances in the respondents’ tone, their body language or how they appear to perceive the questions, which affects the interpretation.

In the case of paper II, I decided to include secondary interview data because I considered it relevant to the study, as it added important aspects of conflicts surrounding trails to the primary data. I believe reading the transcripts offered a deepened understanding of the problem, as well as a contextual background to why there was a need to initiate a research project about mountain trails (see Preface). Another reason why it was considered appropriate to include this data was because my co-authors in paper II conducted these interviews, and I therefore had the opportunity to discuss the results and interpretations from the transcripts with them to increase validity.

Paper IV

Data collection for paper IV took place from October 2019 to August 2020, and was carried out in the three case study areas in the Jämtland Härjedalen area, Stockholm archipelago and in the municipality of Askersund. For this paper, I interviewed in depth 36 respondents representing both private and public interests, such as tourism operators, interest organisations, municipalities, non-profit organisations, and national and regional governmental authorities. The selection of the respondents was based on their professional role working with nature-based tourism, nature conservation, accessibility and planning, so the majority of the respondents represented the supply-side of nature-based tourism and management of natural areas. Interviews for this paper were semi-structured with a prepared script, and as was the case for paper II, the interview guide was thematically formulated with outlined questions, which allowed the conversation to develop on its own with follow-up questions to ensure that the areas of inquiry in the interview guide were covered (Hallin & Helin, 2018). The questions covered wider issues of accessible tourism, such as the needs and challenges of this type of tourism, and I included more specific questions regarding the respondents' perspectives on how nature can be made accessible while still maintaining other nature values, for the purpose of paper IV.

4.3.1.1 Focus group interview and workshop

Papers II and IV include qualitative data in the form of a focus group interview (paper II) and a workshop (paper IV).

The data for paper II includes a focus group interview with stakeholders in the case study area (see figure 5). The purpose of the focus group was to discuss pressing topics relating to trails in the area that stakeholders had expressed to be important in the associated survey, as well as to present the research project and to collect data. The aim to involve the stakeholders in the research process was also of great significance (see e.g. Davies & White, 2012; Hopkinson et al., 2017).

Our research team organised a lunch-to-lunch meeting, which took place in April 2016 with about 40 participants. Accommodation and meals were provided for those who wanted to stay overnight and participate in social activities.

The overarching aim of the focus group interview was to discuss current and future use and management of trails in the area, and these issues were discussed in groups of three to six people, with one researcher from the research team assigned to each group. On the first day, the focus group



Figure 5. Focus group interviews. Photo: Lennart Adsten

interview lasted about an hour, and the session on the second day lasted 45 minutes. Each group was given the same set of questions. The participants discussed topics such as the definition of a trail, the use of trails in the area, management and information of trails, conflicts associated with trails, future needs, changes in the trail system, future challenges in trail management, finance, and responsibility. The groups appointed one secretary to take notes and the moderating researcher also took notes. When the sessions had been concluded, the moderating researchers from each group presented a summary of the discussions to the whole group, which led to some issues being discussed in the larger group of all participants. The researchers compiled the notes after the focus group interview, and we shared them between ourselves.

For the data collection for paper IV, the research team organised a one-day workshop in February 2020 together with 11 accessibility experts in order to add deeper expertise on the subject to the data material. The experts represented public organisations such as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Agency for Participation and municipalities, as well as tourism entrepreneurs specialised in accessible tourism, disability rights activists, and one consultant specialised in accessible nature environments. The participants discussed issues such as supply and demand in accessible nature-based tourism, collaboration between stakeholders to increase accessibility, and opportunities and obstacles to inclusive, accessible nature-based tourism. Another theme for discussion was how to balance

values of nature conservation, accessibility, and the visitor experience in natural areas. I led the discussions throughout the day, and a project assistant took notes.

4.3.2 Image analysis

Data for paper III includes analyses of promotional images presented on the websites of Sweden's five largest mountain destinations, in order to gain insights on how destinations market outdoor recreation activities from a gender perspective. By analysing images used for marketing purposes, it is possible to study the messages destinations communicate to potential tourists, including suitable activities for visitors to engage in (Burns & Lester, 2005; Abascal et al., 2018). It is therefore of interest to examine the way gender is portrayed through promotional images on destination websites in the context of nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation, to be able to counteract potential stereotypes of what activities women 'should' engage in.

The visual data for paper III consists of 316 images from five destination websites, which I collected from March to April 2015. The pictures represented different types of outdoor activities, which the destinations marketed as appropriate for tourists to participate in. Images of children, images without any visible people, images where it was difficult to determine the gender of a person (e.g. when a helmet covered the face or if the picture was taken from great distance), and images of large groups were excluded from the picture sample.

I analysed the sampled photographs based on the principles of content analysis (Pink, 2004; Rose, 2016), but I was also inspired by the classic study of gender roles in advertisements by Goffman (1979). He argues that the portrayal of gender roles in advertisements can be sorted in to six different categories, and that promotional images can be analysed through these categories. Content analysis in visual research is based on counting the occurrence of certain pre-determined variables in a sample of images, and then analysing the frequencies of these variables (Rose, 2016). As a first step in the analysis process of this paper, I counted the number of women and men in the website pictures that engaged in various outdoor recreation activities. This was to examine if there were differences in the number of women and men portrayed on the websites, and if there were specific activities targeted at women or men. Thereafter, I used the six categories of gender role portrayal in advertisements developed by Goffman (1979), as a point of departure in the coding of promotional images on the websites of Swedish mountain destinations, and adjusted the categories to the context of outdoor recreation participation. The pictures were thus coded as: (1) the activity being engaged

in, and the gender of the person engaging in it; (2) if a woman was present in the picture, her relative size and placement; (3) the setting of the picture; (4) if a woman was present in the picture, whether her portrayal was active or passive; and (5) gender depiction in the family context. The categories then constituted the starting point for identifying themes and recurrent patterns in the pictures. Moreover, by counting the number of women and men participating in different outdoor recreation activities in the website pictures, I was able to compare the number of participants to the statistical differences in activity participation (see section 3.4.2), in order to examine any possible connection.

4.3.3 Validity, reliability and data analysis

The reader of a scientific work must be able to trust the research process and ultimately the findings. In qualitative research, the issue of validity relates to questions of credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness of the project (Killion & Fisher, 2018; Leavy, 2017). Creswell (2013) suggests that validation in qualitative research is an attempt to assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, which the researcher, together with the participants, knows best how to appreciate. However, there are many forms of validation in qualitative research and it is important for researchers to reference their validation strategies (Creswell, 2013). Reliability signifies the consistency and stability of results and methods (Ekinici, 2017) and in qualitative research, reliability 'often refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets' (Creswell, 2013 p. 253).

Different validation strategies have been used to enhance the level of credibility and trustworthiness in the three papers in this thesis that employ qualitative data. In paper II, one element was the prolonged engagement and persistent observation strategy (Creswell, 2013 p. 250), which includes building trust with participants and deciding in the field which aspects are relevant to the purpose of the study. The study included stakeholders in the case study area of the southern Jämtland mountains that have been involved in the 'Magnificent Mountain' program since its start in 2013, and the research team has therefore been able to build a long-standing relationship with stakeholders.

A second validation strategy used in papers II and IV is the triangulation technique which involves multiple methods and data sources being used for the purpose of addressing the same question and shedding light on a theme or perspective (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Leavy, 2017). For these studies, a combination of data collected through interviews, focus groups/workshops

and fieldwork provided important research insights and helped to build a strong foundation on which the data interpretation and analysis was built.

The qualitative data for paper III is website photographs, and the validation strategy is therefore the process of coding the images to give them analytical significance (Krippendorf, 2013; Rose, 2016). The codes were developed in relation to their theoretical concern (Lutz & Collins, 1993), i.e. gender representation. Thus, there was a connection between the images and the cultural context in which they were presented, which allowed for drawing on theoretical and empirical understandings of the selected photographs. The connection between code and context is how the interpretations of images can be considered valid (Krippendorf, 2013). For paper III, multiple examples of the identified codes were noted in order to establish that themes were recurrent, so as to increase validity. Moreover, evidence of the codes was built on several data sources, i.e. multiple destination websites.

Peer debriefing in the form of discussions with co-authors and colleagues, as well as external audition when presenting results to the wider academic community also enhanced the credibility of papers II, III, and IV.

Methodological reliability for papers II and IV was reached by developing interview guides, transcribing the interviews and listening to the audio tapes a second time in order to discover mistakes or mishearing (Kvale, 1996). In addition, I had regular discussions with the co-authors of paper II to talk about the data analysis process and the themes that emerged from this process to ensure reliability. I also used the constant comparative approach (Silverman, 2017) during the coding process for papers II and IV.

The data analysis process for papers II and IV started with exploring the data and reading through the transcripts from the interviews to get a general sense of the qualitative material (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2018). Recurring words and expressions were then grouped into themes, and the transcripts were searched for opinions and experiences related to how use of the landscape was linked to different types of trails, and opinions and experiences of trails that stakeholder groups share.

4.4 Quantitative data collection

The quantitative data for this thesis was collected through a systematic literature review (paper I), an online survey on trails distributed to stakeholders in the southern Jämtland mountains study area (paper II), and a national visitor survey (paper III).

4.4.1 Systematic quantitative literature review

Paper I is a systematic quantitative literature review, which serves as a starting point for identifying the research gaps in international research on trails for tourism and outdoor recreation.

This literature review followed the procedure outlined in Pickering et al. (2015) and Petticrew (2001), thus including only original research papers published in English language journals that I obtained by searching the electronic databases Academic Search Elite, Scopus and Leisure Tourism. I selected these databases in order to get a broad and extensive collection that covers a range of disciplines. The selection of the articles followed the protocol developed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review Recommendations (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009) in order for the process to be as thorough and elaborate as possible. Figure 6 displays how the selection of the articles included in the literature review was performed and the reasons for excluding certain papers. To start with, 380 papers were identified from the on-line database searches. I then screened the selected papers and excluded a number of articles identified in the initial database search, which gave me a total of 195 articles that were included in the literature review.

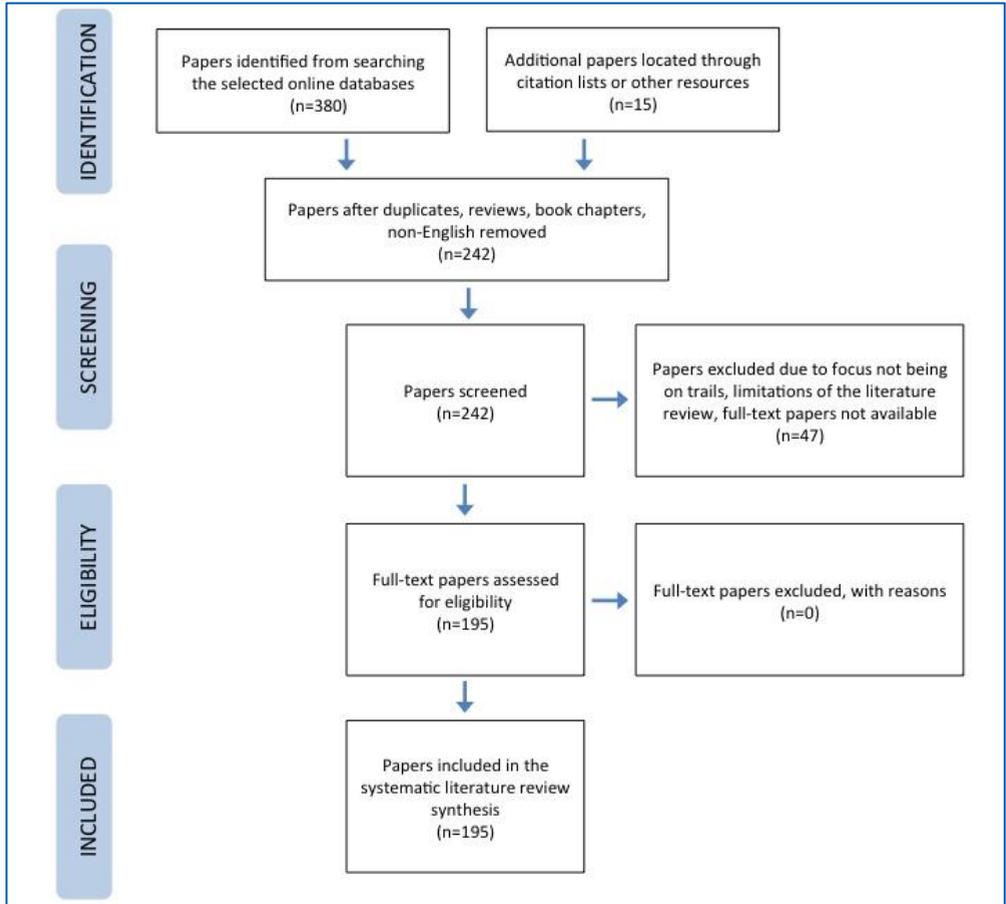


Figure 6. PRISMA chart. The chart displays the flow of information and the actions taken in the different phases of the systematic quantitative literature review. n = number of original papers.

Results from the literature reveal that studies on trails in a socio-cultural context, for example studies focusing on heritage, the financing of trails, interpretation, and conflicts relating to trails are scarce and that trail research primarily studies methods for reducing and managing the environmental impact of trail use. These results were helpful for the continuation of the project, as the insight that trails as a tool in land-use conflict management is an under-researched topic gave me further incentive to explore the role of trails as a collaborative asset. Thus, paper I identified a research gap that was the starting point for further research, as suggested by e.g. Ridley (2012), that led to the design of paper II.

4.4.2 Web-based surveys

Web-based surveys are part of the data in paper II and paper III, and surveys are in both papers combined with qualitative material.

Paper II

The purpose of the web-based survey for paper II was to examine attitudes towards, and opinions on, trails in the southern Jämtland mountains. In order to capture stakeholders' perceptions regarding trails, the survey was distributed to members of the non-profit organisation Gränsfjällen Sylarna i samverkan (*Sylarna Border Mountains in Collaboration*, my translation). This Swedish-Norwegian member organisation is a collaborative platform for stakeholders in the region, aim at ensuring sustainable, responsible, and long-term management of the mountains in Sweden and Norway. Members of the organisation are stakeholders that affect, or are affected by, the increased tourism activities in the border region, such as representatives of tourism businesses and organisations, nature conservation interests (state and regional authorities), members of the local population, local service providers, local landowners, and reindeer herders (Grensefjellen, n.d.).

The survey was designed for the target population (e.g. Tashakkori et al., 2021), consisting of stakeholders in the area, but the design and the questions included were established shortly before I joined the project, so I was not part of developing the survey. However, I was able to use the results for paper II, and was thus part of the data analysis. The survey was distributed to 107 respondents, and it was available online between April 4 and April 21 2016, and two reminders were sent out. Questions in the survey related to the role of trails in general, potential conflicts associated with trails, respondents' own use of trails in the area, etc. The survey also provided an opportunity for respondents to give detailed answers to open questions.

In total, 64 people answered the survey, giving a response rate of 60% (n = 64). Two-thirds of the respondents were from Sweden, and one-third was from Norway. Of the respondents, 59% were male and 41% were female, 48% represented public authorities, 24% represented local businesses, 17% were non-profit organisations, and 6% represented local landowners. The data analysis of the survey results included in paper II was conducted through frequency reports, as well as through analysis of the open-ended questions. A detailed description of the survey results has been published in Godtman Kling et al. (2017).

In addition to providing the research project with a valuable understanding of how stakeholders view issues related to trails, the purpose

was also to base focus-group discussions on the results of the survey (see section 3. 3. 1. 1.).

Paper III

The mixed-methods research design of paper III is the sequential explanatory design, meaning that the study is conducted in two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Creswell et al., 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006.) The quantitative part of paper III is based on a web-based national visitor survey, which was designed as a cross-sectional study and conducted in 2013 as part of the 'Magnificent Mountain' research project. Thus, I was not involved in the data collection or research design for this survey, but was able to use it to conduct analyses based on my own ideas. It is of course a limitation that I was not involved in the data collection myself, but after reviewing the material, it was clear that it was sufficient for conducting the appropriate analyses for the purpose of paper III. In addition, the data material had already been scrutinised by several researchers and analysed for different publications (e.g. Bodén, 2015; Fredman et al., 2014; Fredman et al., 2016; Sandell, 2016), a factor that I considered beneficial in achieving validity for the study.

The survey for paper III was conducted in the Swedish population with participants of between 15-70 years of age, and included questions regarding visits to the mountains, and different outdoor recreation activities that respondents participated in (Fredman et al., 2014). The Magnificent Mountain research group designed and developed the survey, but the survey company Norstat was responsible for its production and implementation. Norstat works with an internet panel of 100 000 Swedes, designed so that it corresponds to the national structure of age and sex, and the sample for the national visitor survey is drawn from that sample (Fredman et al., 2014).

In order to increase the accuracy in the measuring and to intercept differences in participation in recreational activities during seasons, the year was split into three periods. Therefore, three surveys were distributed during 2013, targeting visits during January – April, May – August, and September – December. On each of the three occasions, 4500 randomly selected people were contacted in order to reach the objective of 1000 respondents for each occasion, giving 3000 respondents in total and a response rate of ca 25%. Of those 3 000 respondents, 305 had visited the mountains and participated in various outdoor recreation activities (Fredman et al., 2014).

The results of this national visitor survey thus provided me with enough data to test for gender differences in the activities women and men participated in when visiting the Swedish mountains. The analytical

procedures included dichotomisation of the number of days respondents had participated in certain activities into 'yes/no' variables, as well as a Pearson's chi-square test, which were both implemented through IBM SPSS.

4.4.3 Validity and reliability

Validity in quantitative research refers to successfully measuring what is supposed to be measured, i.e. to what degree a scale accurately assesses the constructs being measured (Ekinici, 2017). By asking the question, 'do we really measure what we are supposed to measure?' the nature of a study's validity is targeted. It is not possible to completely prove that a measure is valid, but there are different types of validity that I attempt to achieve in this thesis in order to improve the research quality. Validity can be understood as a combination of face and content validity (amongst other types) (Ekinici, 2017; Leavy, 2017). Face validity is an assessment we make based on 'common sense', that the measure is examining what we claim it is. If someone on the street was to be asked if they understood what the measure is considering, they should be able to answer 'yes'. Content validity concerns the inclusion of all necessary aspects in the measurement, so that the construct is fully and holistically represented (Tashakkori et al., 2021).

In order to reach face validity for the papers included in this thesis, of which paper I is a systematic quantitative literature review, and papers II and III include surveys, the articles were submitted to international journals and underwent blind peer-review. In addition, the results of these studies have been presented at academic conferences and seminars and received critical questions and comments from independent academic scholars, which helped to verify the validity of the measurements used and improved the quality of the research. Content validity has been ensured through a thorough examination of best practices in conducting a literature review (for paper I) and through scrutinising scientific literature related to the topic, both state-of-the-art and older publications that have been essential for the development of the field (for paper II). For paper III, steps to reach statistical conclusion validity were taken through ensuring that there were no violated assumptions of statistical tests, and that the data analysis yielded statistical significance that made it possible to draw conclusions about the population.

Reliability in quantitative research refers to the consistency of results, i.e. if the results would be the same if the measuring were done again under the same conditions (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Hence, reliable results are stable and consistent. To increase reliability for paper I, I followed a carefully elaborated and articulated method for systematic literature reviews that is well known by scholars (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). For the survey included in paper II, the

research team tested the quantitative survey relating to the workshop on trails included in paper II prior to the e-mail distribution of the survey and we discussed the questions, thus increasing reliability.

4.5 “Moderating focus groups is hard” – reflections on the research process

Starting your PhD in an already established research project is a somewhat peculiar experience. The framework is to some extent set, but you still need to navigate the swamp (to return to the words of Finlay (2002)) and find your own solid ground, while relating your tentative search for a well-built path to the conditions of a specific structure. Attempting to build an identity as a researcher and pursuing my own interests while also trying to fulfil the research objectives of the project was somewhat of a balancing act. There are, of course, many advantages associated with doing your PhD in a project, and I consider myself privileged to have had the opportunity to benefit from the expertise and experience of my senior colleagues, as well as to gain insights on the practicalities of managing and conducting a research project.

In retrospect, there were nevertheless situations where I now realise I was out of my depth. For example, in the first few weeks after I started my PhD position the research team had planned a workshop with focus group interviews. As pointed out by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), and Dahlin-Ivanoff and Holmgren (2017), being a moderator in a focus group is quite a challenging task, as the researcher steers and manages the interview and the group dynamic, determines the structure of the interview and keeps the discussion within the purpose of the study. However, the role of the moderator/researcher is also to stay in the background and not be too involved in the conversation. Thus, when I sat at a table in my very first meeting with the stakeholders involved in the project, and tried to get them to stop talking about which is the best tractor and instead focus on discussing trails, I thought to myself “jeez this is difficult!”. Although this focus group interview was perhaps not the greatest of all, I nevertheless learned so much from that experience, and in the next focus group, I was better prepared for steering the discussion to the purpose of the study. I would most likely never have done any focus group interviews had it not been for the project, so I consider that jumping into situations like this example without really having full control a valuable lesson during my training to become a researcher, as it required flexibility and was a minor practice in leadership.

Throughout my PhD, I also had many opportunities for lessons in self-reflexivity, which in many ways relate to the project format, especially the first one. For about three years prior to my tourism studies, I was a seasonal worker in one of the mountain stations operated by the Swedish Tourism Association (STF) in the southern Jämtland mountains case study area. Therefore, I knew the area well even before I started in the research project, and I was familiar with the trails and the tensions between stakeholders in the area. Moreover, I had already met several of the stakeholders involved in the project, and a few of them were my personal friends. Although self-reflexivity in qualitative tourism research is always desirable (e.g. Hall, 2004), this particular situation definitely required contemplation over how my personal connection to the case study area and the stakeholders involved affected the research process. Self-reflexivity, according to Tracy (2020), is about sincerity; that the researcher is aware of their role and impact in the research scene, and that she or he is honest about strengths and shortcomings, and is transparent about positionality and practices.

Academic literature encourages practicing self-reflexivity through suggesting the researcher keeps a reflexive journal, or at least takes notes during fieldwork or data collection to increase awareness of their own role in social processes (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Killion & Fisher, 2018). Going back to my notes from the first two and a half years of my studies, I realise that I occasionally brought up my experiences of working for STF in the case study area, both in the formal interviews and in social, informal situations. I do not know why I did this; I suppose it was to gain some sort of legitimacy with stakeholders, perhaps as if to say, "I am not only a researcher, I also have contact with the real world and I also know this particular area". At the time, I did not think of how this could be perceived, which I now consider a shortcoming in my research approach. Perhaps I was seen as a representative of the tourism organisation that is a part of many land-use conflicts in the area, or perhaps the respondents thought I would take STF's side if they voiced their opinion of the organisation's role in land-use conflicts. However, my personal connection to the area was probably also an advantage, as it gave me access to informal information that was not expressed in the interviews that helped me better understand the relations and circumstances.

I cannot know how the above affected the results of paper II, or whether the fact that I am an able-bodied person affected the results of paper IV. Although the focus of paper IV is on the supply-side of accessible nature-based tourism and accessibility in protected areas, I imagine the interviews would have been different had I been a person with disabilities. I do believe,

however, that being part of a research project is beneficial for self-reflexivity, sincerity and transparency. In both of the projects, there were on-going discussions about methods, interpretations of data, research quality, planning for research activities etc., which I, as a novel researcher, found immensely helpful and enlightening. This gave me the opportunity to not only discuss the results with my supervisors, but also to air my concerns with others, which I believe improved the overall quality of my research.

A project-based PhD is challenging at times, as one is not completely free in decision-making about research topics and design, but looking back, I am pleased with the experiences and knowledge I gained from the projects. I think I have managed to navigate the swamp with relatively dry feet and built an identity as a researcher, as well as putting my own touch to the work I have published.

5 Paper summaries

5.1 Paper I. Trails for Tourism and Outdoor Recreation: A Systematic Literature Review

Authors: Kristin Godtman Kling, Peter Fredman and Sandra Wall-Reinius

Journal: Tourism

Status: Published

Paper I is a systematic quantitative literature review of the status of academic research on trails for tourism and outdoor recreation in non-urban settings. The paper is a review of 195 articles published in academic, peer-reviewed journals in order to gain knowledge on where there is research on recreational trails and how this research is undertaken, which topics related to recreational trails are explored and the trail-based activities that scientific scholars examine. The purpose of this paper is also to identify research gaps indicating where more research is needed. As recreational trails are such an important element of infrastructure in non-urban settings and provide access for tourists to natural areas, paper I lays the foundation for beginning to explore what access to nature means.

Findings from paper I reveal that scientific articles are primarily from English-speaking Western countries, and that there appears to be an increased interest in research on recreational trails over time. The majority of the studies used quantitative data to examine environmental impacts and managerial issues related to trail-use. The most studied trail-based recreational activity was hiking, but there was an increase in the number of academic papers researching multiple-use trails over time. An important finding in paper I is that scientific articles researching socio-cultural perspectives of trails using qualitative methods is underrepresented in academia. Topics such as trails in the context of heritage, public health and interpretation, for example, were few and paper I therefore identifies a research gap. Moreover, research on conflicts associated with recreational trails was scarce, in terms of both conflicts between trail-based recreational activities and conflicts between recreational trail-users and other land-use interests. It could be expected that as research on multiple-use trails has increased over time, so also would studies on conflicts between different recreational activities, but this does not appear to be the case. Paper I also identifies that there is a lack of any clear

definition of what constitutes a trail used for touristic and recreational purposes. Trails are highly important for tourism and outdoor recreation as they provide access to natural areas and give benefits such as safety, education and nature protection. There is therefore a need to further examine the role of recreational and touristic trails in a socio-cultural context, and broaden the view of trails in order to obtain a more holistic and inclusive approach to the significance of trails as agents for tourism mobility in the natural landscape. Such knowledge can be valuable to planners, managers, educators and nature conservationists.

5.2 Paper II. Negotiating Improved Multifunctional Landscape Use: Trails as Facilitators for Collaboration Among Stakeholders

Authors: Kristin Godtman Kling, Annika Dahlberg and Sandra Wall-Reinius

Journal: Sustainability (Special Issue *Tourist Routes and Trails*)

Status: Published

Paper II continues to examine the role of trails for tourism and outdoor recreation, and does so in a multifunctional mountain landscape where different land-use interests are present. Findings from paper I identified a research gap in research on conflicts related to trail-based recreational activities and other land-use interests. Paper II is set in the southern Jämtland mountains, where an increased number of tourists and new types of recreational activities together with historic conflicts between reindeer herders, governmental agencies, local residents and tourist organisations has led to intractable conflicts over land-use between stakeholders. Paper II explores trails as an applied example in which stakeholders collaborate and negotiate around the multifunctional use of space to handle conflicts of interests. The purpose of the paper is to discuss the handling of multiple land-use interests by viewing trails as a resource that can facilitate collaboration and communication between actors in the mountain landscape.

Data collection for the study includes in-depth interviews with stakeholders, focus group interviews and workshops, field studies and a web-based survey. The authors worked closely with stakeholders

Results from paper II reveal that trails are central to the current conflicts in this area, both as a source of conflict but also as a potential facilitator to handle these conflicts. The common denominator between stakeholder groups in the

area is that all use the trails and consider them important, which provides advantageous pre-requisites for using trails in the conflict management process. Land-use conflicts in the area relate to access in the sense that different groups have too much, or too little, access to the mountain landscape and the trails in it. For example, reindeer herders experience reduced access to their traditional land due to increased accessibility in the areas for tourists, which pushes the reindeer husbandry out. One main argument in the paper is that resources in the landscape, such as trails, can be used as a valuable asset for handling land-use conflicts. Communication and collaboration around a resource that is significant for the involved stakeholders can help build trust and function as a third-party facilitator. However, it is likely that external facilitation is needed for the conflict management process to move forward, and that governmental agencies plan for the process to continue for a long time and therefore allocate sufficient resources. Moreover, a finding from paper II is that researchers involved in a project including multiple stakeholders can have an important communicative role to play, as they can serve as a link between the local community and the public sector.

5.3 Paper III. (In)equality in the outdoors: A gender perspective on recreation and tourism media in the Swedish mountains

Authors: Kristin Godtman Kling, Lusine Margaryan and Matthias Fuchs

Journal: Current Issues in Tourism

Status: Published

Paper III explores access to nature from the perspective of social exclusion. The paper is a mixed-methods study that examines gender differences in the activities women and men participate in when visiting a mountain destination in Sweden, and the way pictures on mountain destination websites portray gender, and whether there is any connection between the two. Findings show that there are statistical gender differences in some of the activities examined with men participating more than women, and women and men being portrayed differently in website pictures. Men are presented while engaging in action-filled activities such as mountain biking and rafting, whilst women are portrayed in calmer environments, for example when hiking or going to the spa. The study identifies connections between participation and representation in activities such as mountain biking, trail running and fishing,

with more men than women participating and more men than women being represented when engaging in these activities on the website pictures.

Findings suggest that women do not have the same access to outdoor recreation activities as men because of gender stereotypes in the portrayal of these activities. Thus, social norms exclude women from fully taking part in all aspects of society and the message conveyed is that women are outsiders in this environment. The study also raises concerns that 'new' outdoor recreation activities, such as mountain biking or trail running, favour traditional masculine modes of engagement with nature instead of contributing to increased gender equality.

5.4 Paper IV. Accessible nature-based tourism: Balancing contradictory values in protected areas.

Author: Kristin Godtman Kling

Status: Submitted

Paper IV addresses the issue of access to nature by examining value conflicts between accessible nature environments for people with disabilities, nature conservation and the visitor experience. The article aims to research how private and public stakeholders representing nature conservation, nature-based tourism and disability rights interests view and practice the balancing and negotiation between accessible natural areas and perceptions of 'untouched' nature. Spending time in nature and participating in outdoor activities is associated with a number of benefits, such as increased health and well-being, social inclusion and environmental awareness, and nature-based tourism has the potential to offer these benefits to a larger segment of the population. However, it is of concern that although Sweden has established political objectives for 'accessible nature for all', people with disabilities are often excluded from natural areas due physical and social barriers. The focal point of paper IV is therefore justice and democracy perspectives in the context of access to nature, and how values are prioritised. The data for this paper is qualitative, semi-structured interviews and one focus group interview. Results from the study reveal that values of nature conservation appear to take precedence over values of accessibility, as many respondents representing nature conservation interests argue that too many adjustments to the natural environment may ruin the visitor experience and harm sensitive vegetation. Planners and managers of protected areas therefore carefully

select areas where accessibility efforts are suitable, as it is neither possible nor desirable to make all protected areas accessible to people with disabilities. Respondents argue that accommodating all interests and expectations of visitors is a highly complex issue as all human presence is a form of intrusion in nature, and the question of how much accessibility is “too much” is subjective.

Moreover, findings show that infrastructure intended to increase accessibility can be perceived as exclusive for people with disabilities, as such efforts, if wrongfully constructed, can distance users from the surrounding environment. It is therefore of the utmost importance that people with disabilities are included from start to end in the process of making protected areas accessible.

This study raises concerns over social inclusion and social sustainability issues, and the moral dilemma the negotiation of different values entails. The idea that nature can be ‘ruined’ by efforts to include diverse groups of visitors suggests that the ideal of pristine nature corresponds to able-bodied narratives of nature as reserved for a certain strata of society. There are therefore incentives to start re-thinking measures of accessibility as negative for the nature experience so that more people can benefit from outdoor activities, and nature-based tourism can become fully inclusive. Increased collaboration between stakeholders is necessary to identify new insights into how to balance values of accessibility, nature conservation and the visitor experience, as well as to increase knowledge of the connection between accessible nature and social inclusion.

Table 2 displays a summary of the four articles and the results.

Table 2. Summary of individual papers.

<p>Articles</p>	<p>I. Trails for tourism and outdoor recreation: A systematic literature review (Godtman Kling, Fredman & Wall-Reinius, 2017).</p>	<p>II. Negotiating improved multifunctional landscape use: trails as facilitators for collaboration between stakeholders (Godtman Kling, Dahlberg & Wall-Reinius, 2019).</p>	<p>III. (In) equality in the outdoors: a gender perspective on recreation and tourism media in the Swedish mountains (Godtman Kling, Margaryan & Fuchs, 2018).</p>	<p>IV. Accessible nature-based tourism: Balancing contradictory values in protected areas. (Godtman Kling, 2021).</p>
<p>Question(s)</p>	<p>What is the status of academic research on trails intended for tourism and outdoor recreation in non-urban settings?</p>	<p>What are the perceived conflicts surrounding trail use and the management of trails among various stakeholders, be they local, regional or national? How can trails be used as a means to handle multiple and sometimes conflicting interests and thus further the sustainable development of mountain landscapes?</p>	<p>Are there gender differences in outdoor recreation participation in the Swedish mountain region? Are there gender differences in the representations of outdoor recreation on the websites of Sweden's five largest mountain destinations? Is there a connection between gender differences in outdoor recreation participation and the gender representations of outdoor recreation activities on destinations' websites?</p>	<p>How do private and public stakeholders balance and negotiate values of accessibility, nature conservation, and visitor experiences in nature-based tourism?</p>
<p>Data</p>	<p>Review of 195 research papers published in peer-reviewed academic journals.</p>	<p>Interviews, focus group interviews and online survey.</p>	<p>Online visitor survey and qualitative image analysis.</p>	<p>36 interviews and workshop.</p>
<p>Findings</p>	<p>International trail research has mainly focused on environmental and managerial aspects of trails, and less on trails from a social science perspective. Research is also concentrated to Western, English-speaking countries and hiking is the most researched trail activity.</p>	<p>Conflicts between land-use interests surround trails in the mountain landscape on many levels, but trails can be used as a resource to enhance collaboration and communication between stakeholders. Creating collaborative platforms wherein stakeholders can meet and discuss issues regarding trails builds trust and increases understanding of different perspectives, thus forming the basis of reducing conflicts of interests in the mountain landscape.</p>	<p>There are gender differences in the outdoor recreation activities women and men choose to participate in when visiting the Swedish mountains, and Swedish mountain destinations portray outdoor recreation activities in a stereotyped way from a gender perspective. Men are more often portrayed when participating in action-filled activities, and women are more often portrayed when engaging in calmer activities. There is a connection between the activities women and men participate in when visiting the Swedish mountains and gender representation on destination websites.</p>	<p>Nature conservation generally takes precedence over accessibility in protected areas, and there is an understanding with managers of such areas that accessibility efforts can ruin nature. This understanding represents able-bodied narratives of pristine nature as ideal. People with disabilities should be included in the planning process of protected areas in order to increase social inclusion, and collaboration between private and public stakeholders is necessary to challenge the assumption that accessibility, nature conservation and the visitor experience are incompatible interests.</p>

6 Discussion

This thesis studies access to nature based on a framework of four perspectives: infrastructure, conflicts of interests, exclusion and collaboration. I analyse these, and their implications for different stakeholders in society, in the context of nature-based tourism, with the purpose of improving knowledge on how nature-based tourism can contribute to promoting access to nature.

Access to nature is a phenomenon of high complexity and is almost illusive in essence, it is both tangible and intangible, and exists within a sphere that contains issues relating to justice, democracy and equality, as well as elements that are more pragmatic for instance those related to the Right of Public Access and policy objectives. This discussion section connects the framework of the four perspectives with the research questions “how can access to nature-based tourism address social inclusion and exclusion?” and “what is the role of stakeholder collaboration in managing different conflicts of interests related to access in nature-based tourism?”

The structure of this chapter revolves around three themes connected to the research questions; themes that have their origin in the empirical studies and demonstrate the tension between the four perspectives central to this thesis.

6.1 Access and accessibility in nature-based tourism

Access and accessibility are fundamental concepts in nature-based tourism, as this form of tourism often takes place in remote areas that require some sort of adjustments to the landscape, in order to be reached and utilised for recreational purposes (Newsome et al., 2012; Sæþórsdóttir, 2013; Tverijonaite et al., 2018). Improved accessibility through adjustments to the landscape can have many benefits, as diverse groups of tourists have the opportunity to visit these areas. Such adjustments nevertheless raise questions of how measures to increase accessibility affect different land-use interests, for example, the local community, nature conservation interests and touristic and recreational interests, both from the supply- and demand side. Access and accessibility in nature-based tourism are clearly concepts that are surrounded by contradictions and tensions, much due to substantial increases in demand for nature experiences in remote landscapes, which has expedited the development of access to such areas (Hall & Page, 2014; Saarinen, 2019). Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed green spaces into new

living rooms for many people; spaces where we socialise, find recovery, or even work, thus adding to the demand for accessible landscapes.

Even before the pandemic, nature-based tourism was often described as one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry (Bell et al., 2007; Fennell & Cooper, 2020; Haukeland et al., 2021), but it is difficult to argue against the fact that access to this fast-growing segment is uneven among societal groups. In this thesis, I corroborate this argument and display how different groups have different access to nature in the context of tourism, and that access has very different meanings for stakeholders. As shown in the four papers of this thesis, access to nature-based tourism relates to physical infrastructure such as trails, but also to social elements of inclusion and collaboration. In order to discuss how nature-based tourism can contribute to supporting access to nature and address social inclusion and exclusion, I would like to argue that the contradictory nature of access is too often neglected, and that this contradiction needs to be recognised and highlighted. The many layers of access constitute an essential aspect of justice and equality, as it comes down to a continual negotiation of who benefits from access, and which societal groups should be granted, in this case, access to nature.

In the introduction chapter to this thesis, I referred to Ellcessor (2016), who argues that access as a concept is often allowed to pass unexamined, and that all understandings of access are routinely positive. The generally unproblematised idea of access as beneficial for everyone thus hides social injustices related to access (Ellcessor, 2016). I consider this argument to be essential when discussing the paradox of access to nature, and the results of this thesis support the idea that the tensions access brings to landscapes cannot be ignored. This tension is particularly apparent in relation to the Right of Public Access, a customary right that is becoming increasingly contested due to the growing demand for nature-based tourism products, and a diversification of recreationists and activities that put a strain on natural environments (Elgåker et al., 2012; Mortazavi, 1997). Øian et al. (2018) suggest that the Right of Public Access represents a paradox in relation to objectives of sustainable development, as it simultaneously makes large-scale visits to landscapes possible and contributes to political, ideological and cultural conflicts. This problematic duality becomes obvious in paper II, where the Right of Public Access gives visitors unrestricted access to the mountain landscape, even though Sami reindeer herders and the local population perceive the access negatively. The Right of Public Access is widely believed to contribute to social equality, welfare and public health (Øian et al., 2018), and although this is perhaps true in many cases, the results from paper II

show that this customary right also needs to be scrutinised through a critical lens. The Right of Public Access makes instruments that are commonly used in other countries to restrict access (e.g. entrance fees) difficult to apply in Sweden (Kaltenborn et al., 2001; Sandell & Svenning, 2011), which calls for innovative actions and ideas of how to address the dilemma of access through soft management approaches. Such an approach is including recreational trails in the planning and management process to a greater extent, and to expand the view of trails as simply a way to get from point A to point B.

Although trails and paths constitute a fundamental resource in nature-based tourism, the role of trails related to social conditions is overlooked by academia, as shown in paper I and elaborated on further in paper II. Few scientific studies specifically focus on trails from a sociocultural perspective and how they can be used in planning and management of natural areas, even though Svensson et al. (2021, p. 2) argue that “trails are defined and come into being through sociocultural processes”. According to Timothy and Boyd (2015), there is a dearth of conceptual thinking on linear resources, which supports my suggestion that the recreational trail itself is an under-used resource, and that its potential as a management instrument requires attention.

Trails help shape the visitor experience in natural landscapes and contributes to an embodied, experiential engagement with place (Lekies & Whitworth, 2011; MacLeod, 2017), as well as constituting a link to the past (Fagence, 2017; Svensson et al., 2021). To illustrate the multi-layered role of the recreational trail, Moor (2016, p. 3) states: “the soul of a trail – its *trail-ness* – is not bound up in dirt and rocks; it is immaterial, evanescent, as fluid as air. The essence lies in its function: how it continuously evolves to serve the needs of its users”. This quote invites all users of infrastructure in natural areas to reconsider trails as simply infrastructure, and instead view trails in a wider context. As shown in paper II, trails can be an important tool as a facilitator in the management of land-use conflicts, thus serving the needs of users (Moor, 2016). There is therefore reason to assume that trails hold yet unexplored potential to serve the needs of its users in multiple ways, including how to address the paradox of access.

The dilemma of access related to nature-based tourism and outdoor activities becomes prominent in paper IV, where results show the close connection between access to nature, social inclusion and exclusion, and justice. Kafer (2017) questions why measures to improve access to, and accessibility in, natural landscapes, such as trails, bridges, wind shelters and signage, are reserved for able-bodied people. When such measures are taken to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, on the other hand, the

infrastructure is often considered 'unnatural' and out of place in natural environments (Kafer, 2017). This example illustrates the ableist discourse of what natural areas 'should' look like, which corresponds to the results of paper IV, but this view also denies other groups access: elderly people, families with small children in pushchairs, and inexperienced visitors, for example. Part of the definition of nature-based tourism, provided by Fredman and Tyrväinen (2010, p. 81) is "the nature-based tourism industry represents the activities in different sectors that are intended to meet the demand of nature tourists". However, meeting the demand of adjusted infrastructure and activities for diverse groups of nature tourists appears to be surrounded by controversy, as well as by rigid perspectives of what constitutes a high-quality nature experience. As suggested by Sedgley et al. (2012), lack of access to tourism reinforces social exclusion because it means being denied access to well-being, quality of life and fitting into social norms. This argument can be applied also to nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic that has moved many activities outdoors.

Access and accessibility in nature-based tourism are concepts of high complexity, and I wish this dissertation had the exact answers of how to handle the paradox that is access. Although I cannot provide such answers, my hope is to open up to discussions about different ways to view access, and to further recognise access as existing within a sphere of contradictions. Understanding access as a sum of multiple variables can hopefully inspire insights on the importance of studying access through different perspectives, although these perhaps not seem compatible at a first glance.

6.2 Reconnecting to nature, access and social exclusion

The relationship between humans and the natural world is a topic that has been analysed since the early days of civilisation. In 1983, Williams (p. 221) famously stated that "nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language", and in this thesis, I make no attempts at trying to define nature or at providing an extensive overview of the age-old discussion of the nature-culture dichotomy in Western thought (see Castree, 2013; Katz, 2000; Lorimer, 2012). However, in order to reflect on my findings, I recognise this dichotomous view of nature and culture, which appears to be difficult to abandon (Brunson, 2000), and use it as a point of departure for discussing access to nature and social inclusion/exclusion.

In recent years, scholars have proposed that the anthropogenic global environmental crisis rooted in the extensively unsustainable behaviour of Western societies, together with increasing levels of physical and mental

illness in this population, stem largely from ‘the disconnection from nature’ (Fletcher, 2017; Folke et al., 2011; Grimwood et al., 2018; Louv, 2009; Ives et al., 2018; Soga & Gaston, 2016). It can be argued that this statement provides a simplified explanation for a highly complex problem, but voices are now increasingly being raised for members of urbanised societies to ‘reconnect to nature’. Reconnecting to nature is occasionally presented as a treatment for unsustainable environmental actions (Dorninger et al., 2017; Klaniecki et al., 2018), and therefore, there is a need to promote and educate for a connectedness to nature in order to foster environmentally responsible behaviours (Hanna et al., 2019; Zylstra et al., 2014). Nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation is every so often argued to constitute the remedy for the problematic disconnection from nature, and tourists indeed claim one major reason for visiting natural and cultural landscapes is to reconnect to nature and each other (Burlingame, 2020; Puhakka et al., 2017).

I consider it important to discuss and problematize the idea that reconnecting to nature through nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation leads to increased environmental awareness and improved well-being, and thus provides a powerful weapon in the fight against unsustainable practices and unhealthy lifestyles. This idea is commendable, and perhaps accurate, but it is also (at least in its present state) reserved for the privileged, due to the inequalities in who has access to this powerful weapon of reconnecting to nature. These inequalities are examined in papers III and IV of this thesis, where results show that social norms as well as physical infrastructure prevent women and people with disabilities from full participation in nature activities and experiences. Moreover, although not the focus of this thesis, nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation is primarily an activity for people who have the financial and socio-cultural resources and abilities to participate, and ethnic minorities in Western societies are often under-represented with regards to engaging in nature-based activities (Boman et al., 2013; Jay et al., 2012; Lamborn et al., 2017; Winter et al., 2020). These results are in line with the viewpoint that tourism itself is exclusive and elitist, and join the choir of voices calling for inclusive, equal, sustainable tourism development (see e.g. Jamal, 2019; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

Continuing on the notion that tourism is exclusive in nature, I would like to draw parallels between this trend of reconnecting to nature to foster and encourage sustainable lifestyles, and the Romantic ideals of conquering nature. Both of these phenomena can be argued to stem from a desire to recapture what has become lost and to ‘get back to nature’, but with different

agendas, and they can almost be viewed as popular movements reflecting the contemporary view of nature. If the keywords for the adventurous Romantics were 'masculinity', 'conquest' and 'individualism', the words of today's nature-based tourists are perhaps softer, and relate to issues of 'well-being', 'sustainability' and 'experience'. Both these movements are nevertheless exclusive, but the exclusive practices of today much more subtle.

In the late 1800s/early 1900s in Sweden, you were hardly allowed into the circle of outdoor recreation enthusiasts if you were not male, well educated, and from the upper class (Sandell & Sörlin; 2008), which is not so different from the practitioners of today, except for the gender variable (Faskunger, 2020; Fredman et al., 2019). Although gender equality has increased immensely in terms of participation in outdoor activities, nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation activities are still presented as a way for men to reconnect to masculine ideals of mastering the forces of nature that exclude women from this domain (Weatherby & Vidon, 2018), which was also apparent in the results of paper III.

The current movement of reconnecting with nature is subtly exclusive as it appears to build on idealistic beliefs of equal access to participation in nature activities for all societal groups, when the reality is the opposite (Boyd et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2001; Shanahan et al., 2014). The three domains of social exclusion that relate to resources, participation and quality of life, as suggested by Levitas et al. (2007) (see section 2.3) should therefore be highlighted in the context of access to nature, in order to call attention to the political, cultural and economic structures that contribute to the marginalisation of social groups in this setting. Access to nature is not equal, and neither is the opportunity to reconnect with nature through nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation. Thus, the idea of people reconnecting to nature in order to support sustainable development and public health is, albeit important, exclusive and is not anchored in the daily life of many.

Sörlin and Sandell (2008) suggest that the increased levels of diversification in outdoor recreation in Sweden risks bringing new injustices and inequalities related to accessibility in nature, as more people are excluded due to expensive equipment, lack of knowledge, and housing and school environments that in no way encourage interactions with nature. I therefore argue that access to nature cannot be reduced to depending on the capacities of the individual. The fact that marginalised groups are excluded from nature-based environments and activities must be addressed on a collective, societal level in order to reach political outdoor recreation objectives such as 'accessible nature for all'. An essential element in this process is reflecting on

representation in promotional material, both for public and private organisations. Media representation is a powerful instrument in shaping perceptions of who is 'in place' or 'out of place' in particular settings (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011; Mellinger, 1994; Wijesinghe et al., 2020), and it is therefore imperative to consider the messages conveyed through images. The representation of marginalised groups, together with increased awareness of bias and stereotypes in visual material, can contribute to social inclusion and marketers and photo editors should be encouraged to include diverse groups of people in the pictures they select. This is one feasible way to support collective responsibility; another is to direct specific actions and resources towards inclusion. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), which is the responsible authority for the outdoor recreation objectives, states that the majority of the municipalities in Sweden organise different forms of nature-based activities to reach different social groups (SEPA, 2020b), so it appears that collaborative efforts are already under way. Many initiatives aimed at promoting nature-based activities nevertheless need support, for example in the form of financial contributions, knowledge and expertise, and administrative support, and it is thus necessary for the collective society to contribute such resources.

An underlying premise of this thesis is that access is a matter of equal opportunities, and I argue that access to nature is a joint effort that comes out of collaboration between actors to increase social inclusion and to challenge oppressive and stereotyped norms. Objectives for enhancing social inclusion and promoting collaboration are therefore important assets in policy efforts to provide equal opportunities for all.

6.3 Stakeholder collaboration and access to nature

Nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation are interests that are increasingly prominent in conflicts surrounding land-use in multifunctional landscapes, as well as in conflicts of interests that take place in protected areas. In the previous sections, I have somewhat contradictorily discussed how expanded access in landscapes can cause conflicts of interests, but simultaneously advocated for collective efforts to improve access to nature for all. This illustrates the complexity of access, and how it operates on different levels. The question of how to handle this complexity in order for the future use of landscapes to be sustainable is thus equally difficult and urgent. Stakeholder collaboration is often presented as the go-to approach when it comes to handling complex conflicts of interests and to strengthen sustainability in tourism (Alonso & Nyanjom, 2017; Graci, 2013; Stoddart et

al., 2020), but the challenges of stakeholder collaboration should in no way be under-estimated. Successful collaborative initiatives require substantial amounts of patience, will, endurance, effort, resources and time (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Thellbro et al., 2018; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000; Zscheischler et al., 2019), so those that actually triumph are rightfully entitled to admiration and applause. However, although fruitful, long-term stakeholder collaboration is the ultimate objective for initiatives aiming to handle conflicts of interests in which tourism is a major concern; there are numerous examples of collaborative efforts that have failed due to these difficulties (e.g. Canavan, 2017; Della Corte & Aria, 2014; Frost & Laing, 2018; Wondirad et al., 2020). The examples of stakeholder collaboration aiming to handle conflicts of interests related to access to nature included in this thesis (implicitly examined in paper I, and directly in papers II and IV), can perhaps not be described as absolute failures, but neither are they unconditional success stories.

Paper II is based on a mountain area, where conflicts between land-use interests have long tainted the relationships between stakeholders, but the conflicts have recently intensified, much due to the high accessibility to, but also in, the area. Trails in the southern Jämtland mountains provide access, and it is from the duality of this access that much of the conflicts originate. Paper II thus examines how this complex duality can be used in novel, and hopefully rewarding, ways, and focus on trails as a resource around which stakeholders collaborate to handle conflicts of interests. As seen in paper I, the use of infrastructure as a collaborative resource in conflict management is an under-researched topic, but the results of paper II show that collaboration and communication around physical elements that are important to all stakeholders can function as facilitators in the conflict management process. In this particular case, there is already a sense of “shared ownership” (Bryan, 2004, p. 882) among the stakeholders surrounding the trails, which is an advantageous point of departure in collaborative processes. This can be viewed as an important contribution to research on land-use conflict management in itself, but the findings that communication, collaboration and compromises are essential to handle conflicts of interests are hardly ground-breaking. It is perhaps more interesting to discuss the results of paper II in relation to those of paper IV, where stakeholder collaboration was clearly absent, but the issue of access equally central.

The inherent tension that lies within the concept of access becomes even more obvious when placing the results of papers II and IV side by side. In paper II, conflicts have escalated due to almost unrestricted access for tourists

visiting the mountain area, but in paper IV, the prevailing view among managers of protected areas is that accessible infrastructure for people with disabilities risks ruining nature and the nature experience. One could therefore ask, although put rather provocatively for the sake of argumentation, why are able-bodied people allowed to cause conflicts through (to some) inappropriate and excessive use of infrastructure, but when people with disabilities wish to access that same natural area, they are accused of “ruining” the nature experience? These examples reflect value conflicts related to access to nature that clearly take place on different levels, but the strategies to handle such conflicts reveal the marginalisation and exclusion of people with disabilities. In terms of collaboration, the conflicts are handled in opposite ways. There is a plethora of scientific studies that examine the benefits of stakeholder collaboration in land-use conflicts where tourism is a concern (e.g. Almeida et al., 2018; Leahy & Anderson, 2013; Saarikosi et al., 2013; Schuett et al., 2001; Selman & Barker, 1989; Smith et al., 2013; Stern & Coleman, 2015), and this knowledge was recognised as an essential cornerstone in the southern Jämtland mountains research project. However, although previous research (Corazon et al., 2019; Sica et al., 2021; Sisto et al., 2021, UNWTO, 2021) has emphasised the importance of participatory approaches in designing and developing conditions for accessible nature-based tourism, none of the respondents representing governmental authorities that manage protected areas interviewed for paper IV could mention ongoing collaboration initiatives between themselves and interest organisations for people with disabilities. Knowledge about issues related to collaboration around access to nature thus appears to be unequal, perhaps because accessibility in tourism has only recently become an interest for research (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011; Darcy et al., 2020; Patterson et al., 2012). It nevertheless signals that collaboration on accessible nature for people with disabilities is under prioritised. This is problematic on a practical level, as the accessible infrastructure, if not properly constructed, risks being unusable to the target group (Burns et al., 2009; Tregaskis, 2004). However the idea that accessible infrastructure risks “ruining” nature represents an ableist discourse in which interests of nature conservation often take precedence over improved accessibility for people with disabilities in protected areas. As argued by Groulx et al. (2021), there is limited knowledge about management practices regarding accessibility in natural, protected areas, and this lack of knowledge is manifested in the results of paper IV.

In order to address this knowledge gap, it may be favourable to use infrastructure as a collaborative resource, as was the case in the southern

Jämtland mountains. The circumstances for the studies of papers II and IV are not comparable, but there may nevertheless be synergies between them. It is clear that if the political objective of 'accessible nature for all' is to become a reality, there is a need to reconsider the view of accessible infrastructure as something that "ruins" nature and instead embrace it as a good that brings benefits to diverse segments of the population. Collaboration around infrastructure can thus be an effective means to handle conflicts of interests and reduce exclusion, also in the case of accessibility in landscapes. Gillovic and McIntosh (2020, p. 10) suggest that "with regard to disability, the predominant constraint to achieving inclusive tourism is arguably the dominant ableist discourse", which also appears to be the case in nature-based tourism. Initiatives that aim to improve accessibility in landscapes for people with disabilities can benefit from the lessons learnt in collaboration projects involving multiple stakeholders, as such efforts promote knowledge building and encourage new perspectives to come forward (Bjärstig, 2017; Cole, 2006; Towner, 2018; Wall-Reinius et al., 2018).

7 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the four perspectives of infrastructure, conflicts of interest, exclusion and collaboration in relation to nature-based tourism, and their implications for different stakeholders in society with the objective to improve knowledge on how nature-based tourism can contribute to promoting access to nature. The collective findings of the studies included in this thesis show that access to nature is just as much about inequitable social structures, as it is about physical constructions in the landscape.

Physical constructions, such as recreational trails, are fundamental resources for nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation, but their full potential in the management of multifunctional landscapes is not acknowledged in academic literature. Although scientific interest in recreational trails is increasing, research is limited primarily to aspects of environmental protection and management in Western countries. Moreover, the lack of a definition of what constitutes a trail in academic literature is problematic, as trails can have different meanings in different cultures and contexts. This is important because the different, and occasionally contradictory, meanings of the trail may have implications on sustainable practices in the management of landscapes. Broadening the view of recreational trails to include more functions than only providing a safe passage from point A to point B, can thus enable a more holistic and inclusive approach. Such an approach extends the trail concept and recognises different aspects of trails as key agents in tourism mobility, which is significant for improved knowledge of the role of infrastructure in access to nature.

The multi-faceted nature of the recreational trail also becomes apparent in the context of conflicts of interests, wherein trails can be a source of conflict, but also a resource to resolve the same. The paradox of access is highly visible in landscapes where tourism constitutes a major concern, as tensions between interests often intensify when new groups gain access to the area. Landscapes are increasingly becoming arenas where recreational, commercial and traditional interests compete for the same space, and there is therefore a pressing need to handle conflicts of interests related to land use. Utilising a resource in the landscape that all stakeholders find important can constitute a communicative starting point for the management of land-use conflicts, and the trail can thus function as a facilitator for collaboration. This approach is under-explored in the context of collaboration, and even though external facilitation is likely needed for the conflict management process to progress, it nevertheless proposes innovative ways to researchers, governmental

authorities and local communities for addressing land-use conflicts in multifunctional landscapes.

Multifunctional landscapes are arenas for participation in different outdoor recreation activities, but participation in such activities is not equal for women and men. Images of femininity and masculinity in the context of outdoor recreation reinforce traditional hetero-normative stereotypes of the activities that are suitable for visitors to Swedish mountain destinations, which is reflected in the activities women and men actually participate in. Visual representations of the mountain landscape as a place for Romantic ideals of nature conquest and adventure are targeted at a male audience, whilst images of hedonistic consumption and calm activities are meant to appeal to the female audience. The visual representations of the activities that women and men 'should' participate in normalise certain activities as either female or male, thus excluding one gender from entering that domain. This exclusion in the context of outdoor recreation activities is most problematic for women, as gender role socialisation gives men better tools to participate and feel more comfortable in such settings. In contrast, women fit into fewer role models in outdoor recreation, and are therefore more likely to feel limited and avoid participation.

Mechanisms of exclusion from nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation are not limited to issues of gender; people with disabilities are often excluded from visiting protected natural areas due to inaccessible infrastructure to, but also in, these areas. Although Swedish policies have established access to nature as a democratic right, it is most often able-bodied representatives of governmental authorities who have the prerogative of assessing the type of nature to which people with disabilities should have access. Accessible infrastructure is typically not constructed in protected areas that are deemed highly sensitive by nature conservation interests, as such efforts are considered a risk to vegetation. Accessibility efforts must therefore be directed at specific areas where nature values are generally low but resistant. Moreover, there is a concern among many representatives working with nature conservation that accessibility initiatives may ruin the nature experience. The conflicting values of accessibility, nature conservation and perceptions of 'untouched' nature therefore raises concerns regarding equality and justice in the context of access to nature. The idea that accessible infrastructure ruins the nature experience is exclusive and represents able-bodied narratives, and there is a need to challenge the view that accessibility equals ruin. People with disabilities need to be included in the collaborative

process of making protected areas accessible, as the current level of collaboration between stakeholders in this matter is low.

7.1 Implications for policy and management

Improved understanding of how access to nature and accessibility in nature relates to issues of social inclusion and exclusion in society could help managers and planners of natural areas as well as nature-based tourism businesses to provide inclusive outdoor arenas and activities. In the case of accessible nature-based tourism, many businesses find it difficult to make their products accessible, as well as to reach the consumer group, simply because they do not know how. Even so, the companies consider the accessible nature-based tourism market important and would like support on how to cater to the needs of a diversity of customers (Godtman Kling & Wall-Reinius, 2021). This implies the need for public authorities and industry organisations to work together with, for example, interest organisations for people with disabilities to improve their knowledge on this topic to be able to offer companies the appropriate assistance.

Shared knowledge has, through the articles included in this thesis, proven essential when it comes to handling conflicts of interests and raising awareness of excluding structures and practices in nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation. Although collaboration and the making of synergies between interests is a most demanding task, it is a necessary means to challenge oppressive norms that exist even in our informed society, as well as to include marginalised groups in decision-making processes. Identifying assets where there is already a sense of shared ownership among stakeholders could help designing more productive and efficient collaborative initiatives to handle conflicts of interests. Lessons from collaborative efforts to improve access to nature are, however, not limited to this particular field, but can extend to dimensions of culture, sport, and education, just to name a few.

It is reasonable to assume that the demand for outdoor activities and nature experiences will continue to grow, which put strain on natural areas as well as on those who manage these areas. Issues of access and accessibility can therefore become even more prominent in the future, and demand substantial action. Considering access through different perspectives can constitute a support in the decision-making process of such actions, and contribute to novel and innovative ways of understanding and managing aspects of access.

7.2 Limitations and future research

The findings of this dissertation have to be seen in light of some limitations. I have already discussed some of what I consider shortcomings in the research process in chapter 4, but additional limitations need to be addressed.

An issue related to the use of secondary data is that of it being up-to-date (Silver et al., 2013). The quantitative data in paper III was collected in 2013, which is a limitation as trends in outdoor recreation change quickly and new activities emerge and the interest in others fade (Haukeland et al., 2021; Monz & Kulmatiski, 2016; Newsome & Huges, 2018). The Swedish mountains has seen a tremendous increase in the number of visitors following the covid-19 pandemic (Sveriges Radio, 2021; SVT Nyheter, 2021), and it would be surprising if this has not brought about changes in the activities visitors to the mountains participate in. A further research could therefore focus on a longitudinal study of outdoor recreation activities in the mountains, to examine if the pandemic has indeed entailed implications in terms of types of activities practiced, and to what extent different activities are practiced. This could help to understand better changing recreation patterns and the diversification of activities. Such a study could be valuable to a number of stakeholders, for example, destination managers, governmental authorities working with nature- and culture conservation in the mountain landscape, and tourism businesses. Moreover, the newly awakened interest in nature and nature experiences many people have gained during the pandemic is an important field of study, as the significance of spending time in nature to promote public health and well-being has been exceptionally highlighted in the past two years. Future research could therefore in-depth investigate how different groups in society engage with nature, and how they make sense of nature (e.g. Gentin et al., 2019). Findings from papers III and IV indicate that different groups have different needs and demands to participate in nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation, and it is therefore of interests to identify and cater to these needs in order to increase access to nature for all.

Findings from paper III also suggest that there are gender differences in the way women and men are portrayed on the websites of Swedish mountain destinations, which can hinder full access to outdoor recreation activities as it reinforces stereotypes of who is 'in place' in such settings. Research on how other groups are pictured in promotional material of nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation in Sweden is therefore important, as previous international studies have shown that, for example, elderly people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are underrepresented in touristic marketing material (Benjamin et al., 2021; Cloquet et al., 2018; Kloek et al.,

2017; Zink & Kane, 2015). Feeling represented and identifying with images of who is 'allowed' in the outdoors can have a major impact on individuals' tendency to participate in various outdoor activities (Stanley, 2020), so displaying a variety of mountain visitors that reflect the diversity of the general population is therefore crucial.

The results of the four papers included in this thesis reveal that dimensions of power are central to access to nature through tourism. Tourism can be argued to constitute a continuous struggle over individuals' right to acquire space and mobility, meaning that it must be understood through a lens of subordination and superiority (Dahlstedt, 2011). Applying a power perspective to the research of access to nature can therefore provide an important contribution to better understanding how power relations, historical as well as present, influence how different groups view and engage with nature.

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