

# The BIOMOT project:

Basic method and one basic result  
for the Final Conference, 10-11 June 2015, Brussels

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The FP7 call: “We have these ecosystem services and their valuation. But they don’t seem to lead to swift and massive action in the EU yet ..... Are ecosystem services all there is? Might alternative ways of reasoning add to motivations for nature/biodiversity?”

Out came the BESAFE and BIOMOT projects.



BESAFE studied *arguments*, = what people say to each other to convince each other to act for nature.

BIOMOT studied *motivations*, = why people *out of themselves* act for nature. (For instance, why they invest time to argue at all.)

BIOMOT has a deep relevance for the ‘second pillar’ of biodiversity in Europe: *voluntary* action for nature, and how governments can foster these actions. (But note that voluntary, committed action takes place within politics and bureaucracies too.)



## Basic method of BIOMOT:

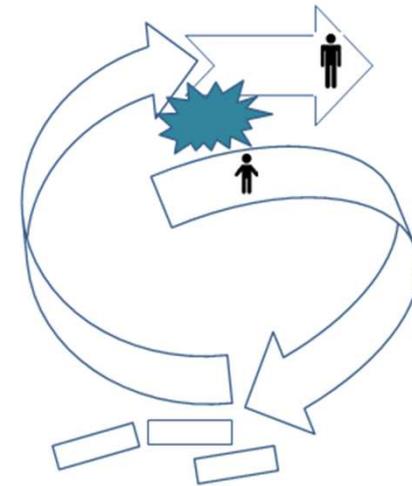
- Involve philosophers: they help innovation!
- Critical analysis and empirical survey of the discourses on ecosystem services valuation
- Life-story interviews of 213 *committed actors* in the EU: how does action for nature grow ('formation')?
- Motivations ranking and survey of same actors: what are motivations now?
- Documents and interviews within 34 *projects* working for nature in the EU: how do they work, what drives them?
- Grounded theorizing on how *society* influences all this.
- Analyses: qualitative (theory-free and theory-guided patterns) and quantitative (inductive and deductive)
- Synthesis on three levels: actors, groups, society.



## ONE BASIC RESULT (from the theory-free qualitative analysis)

In the life stories of committed actors, we often see an amazing intensity of *encounter with nature* in childhoods. In this, nature can be anything (forest, garden, urban brownfield, rural meadows, beach, ....). The *encounter* is key. Often unsupervised.

In post-childhood life, quite often there is a strong element of ‘coming home to nature’. Sometimes early, sometimes late (“the long journey home”); sometimes quite exact, sometimes on a higher level of abstraction; but often felt as epiphany.



How to interpret this? What is it that energizes and directs?

- Is it economic values, e.g. money for the actor or for society? Nothing of this is found in the interviews.
- Then, is it moral values, e.g. intrinsic value of nature? They are present in the interviews , but never in prime role.

Then what is at stake here? .... The secret ingredient? .....(it's good to have philosophers around at such a moment ....)

The child does not encounter abstract values. In the encounter with nature, *connectedness* with nature is established; nature becomes *meaningful* to the child. In the later 'coming home', this meaningfulness energizes and shapes the life of the committed actor.



Thus, what drives committed action for nature

- are not hedonic values (pleasure, economics, ....)
- are not moral values (e.g. intrinsic value of nature, ...)

Motivations first of all are ***eudemonic***, that is, *nature meaningful as part of the good, meaningful life.*

On that footing, moral values and hedonic values (e.g. pleasure in the work) can be seen to play supportive, auxiliary roles.

We see that in the groups too: on a basis of meaningfulness as prime driver, groups are supported by social pleasures and even by external incentives (no 'crowding out').



Biodiversity policies (e.g. EU Strategy 2020 and Vision 2050) build on two motives, two arguments, in a sequence :

1. Economic value!
2. and, by the way, intrinsic value too.

BESAFE suggests that a broader base of argumentation is needed, maybe reverse the sequence?

BIOMOT's conclusion here is that in order to really motivate, biodiversity policies need to build on three motives, and in a sequence:

1. Connectedness: what nature means to us all
2. and, by the way, great intrinsic value, too
3. and, by the way by the way, sometimes great economic value as well.



Thus, we need languages of connectedness with nature back in our public discourse.

One language of connectedness is the story. Another is the exemplary deed. Stories and deeds express and create meaningfulness. Formal arguments do so much less.

This is one of BIOMOT's most basic outcomes. But there's so much more, of course! You may have already seen many policy briefs, Findings For All and draft reports to sign up for. To be introduced now by Marino Bonaiuto and John O'Neill.

