

Abstract for session WS10 Landscape dynamics and sustainable resource use

Whose landscape is it anyway? A multidisciplinary study on the concept of landscapes, and its potential to bridge the gap between social and ecological systems.

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The aim of the paper is to explore, within a multidisciplinary context, in which way the relation between indigenous people and protected nature, such as national parks, are interpreted from the perspective of different theories with a holistic approach:

- Is there a consistent theory that can explain the post-modern role of indigenous people within nature and landscape?
- In which way can theories within different disciplines be combined in order to do multi-disciplinary research?
- Which methods shall be used in order to achieve results?

The researchers come from the disciplines of history, political science and law. Our case is the Sámi within the reindeer herding area of Norway, Sweden and Finland.

From an historical perspective much of the winning from natural resources around the world is the result of the former colonial systems and Western dominion. In that way, the dynamics of landscapes is part of a global power system that is remote from the indigenous people, who lived in that landscape with their own perceptions of nature and natural resource management at the time when the colonists came to dominate. With the de-colonisation of power relations after the Second World War, the role of indigenous populations within nature has been reinterpreted, acknowledging social as well as cultural aspects of indigenous traditions and customary rights. In the same time the concept of “nature” has shifted to “landscape” and the concept of “wilderness” has changed to the more cultivated and urban notion of “park” for leisure activities (Hägerstrand 1991; Mels 1999; Svensson 2000; Saltzman 2001; Wramner&Nygård 2010). These changes comprise not only biophysical elements of nature, but also human (socio-cultural) elements including land uses and infrastructures, but also aesthetic values such as scenic beauty. One recent example of policy shift is the adoption of the European Landscape Convention from 2000 negotiated within the Council of Europe. In Sweden it enters into force in May 2011. It will form yet another tool for protecting nature and cultural areas, defined as “landscapes”, touching upon judicial issues such as the rights to land and landscapes but also around political ideas on what type of activity that should be preserved or prioritized in the management of the landscape. In relation to this policy shift there is a vivid debate on how landscapes could be managed e.g. through partnerships between national and local level actors to better accommodate local resource uses.

The negotiation between different agents and groups, on the utilisation of natural resources and landscapes, is complex. To grasp this complexity different theories must be used in research, and also the encounter of different disciplines (Grgas&Larsen 1994; Harvey 1996; Hornborg&Pálsson 2000; Gunderson & Holling 2002; Berkhout et.al 2003; Sörlin&Warde 2009). In order to investigate the area of northern Fennoscandinavia these theories of land use must be combined with theories about ethnicity and indigenous rights, since the Sámi has a specific legal status. However, the exact status

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and protection of the Sámi differs among the three countries. The understanding of their traditional land rights also differs, but in principle their customarily based rights are recognized, i.e. rights that are established by long-time possession and use. Concerning policy implementation related to resource uses in primarily remote areas, the legal rules comprise of a complex set of instruments regarding different aspects of nature conservation, physical planning and the Sámi traditional land use. This overlap consists on several levels; regionally, nationally and internationally. The EU law may be regarded as a part of national law since directives are implemented through national provisions and measures (Bengtsson 2004; Allard 2006). This is complicated even further by the fact that legislation and case law related to the Sámi vary in Norway, Sweden and Finland, thus also the connection between indigenous rights and the utilization of nature in a broad meaning (Sandell 2000; Beach 2000; Nyssönen 2004; Elenius 2006; Sandström 2008; Sande 2009). In this northern context a sustainable use of nature must also be connected to human rights values inscribed in a post-colonial discourse (Engerman&Metzer 2004; Igoe 2004; Elenius 2009).

The paper is part of the multi-disciplinary Formas project "Indigenous rights and nature conservation in Fennoscandinavia" carried out 2010-2013 (Luleå University of Technology, Umeå University, Tromsø University). In the project three senior researchers (history, political science, law) and two doctoral candidates (history, political science) is investigating the parallel discourses of indigenous rights and nature conservation within the reindeer herding area of Norway, Sweden and Finland.

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