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This is the accepted version of a paper published in *Local Environment: the International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*. This paper has been peer-reviewed but does not include the final publisher proof-corrections or journal pagination.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Reimerson, E. (2016)

Sami space for agency in the management of the Laponia World Heritage site

Local Environment: the International Journal of Justice and Sustainability, 21(7):
808-826

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2015.1032230>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-106975>

Sami space for agency in the management of the Laponia World Heritage site

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This is the accepted version of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Local Environment* on 16 April 2015, available at

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13549839.2015.1032230>.

Abstract This article investigates the space for agency of the Indigenous Sami in the management of the Laponia World Heritage Site in northern Sweden. Analysing policy documents and interviews with key actors within a framework of postcolonial and discourse theory, I argue that discursive constructions of the management organisation, understandings of the relationships between the parties involved, and perceptions of challenges for the management organisation affect the Sami space for agency in the management of Laponia. Furthermore, there is a tension between the intrinsic value of Sami influence that follows an understanding of the Sami as an Indigenous people, and the more instrumental value of Sami influence following a focus on the Sami reindeer herding communities as important for the values of the World Heritage site. The positioning of the Sami in Laponia affects, and in some ways limits, the space for Sami political agency. It also connects to colonial discourses, historical and contemporary inequalities, and unequal power structures. Nevertheless, the management of Laponia is a unique example of increased Sami influence, resulting from Sami political struggle for recognition of their rights.

Keywords: UNESCO World Heritage, Indigenous peoples, Sami, protected area management, post-colonial

Introduction

Setting aside areas for protection continues to be an important part of nature conservation efforts globally (Wilshusen *et al.* 2002, Zachrisson 2009a). A major part of the world's protected areas includes lands owned or claimed by Indigenous peoples (Colchester 2004).

Although Indigenous rights have been strengthened in recent decades, Indigenous peoples around the world still struggle for influence over the management of protected areas on their traditional lands (Stevens 1997, Poirier and Ostergren 2002, Adams 2003, Colchester 2004, Riseth 2007). National and regional governments are making efforts to include Indigenous peoples in protected area management, and there is an increasing interest in how Indigenous knowledge and practices can contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (Berkes *et al.* 2000, Pickerill 2008, Robins 2009, Ayre and Mackenzie 2013). However, the possibilities for Indigenous peoples to influence the management of protected areas on their lands may be circumscribed by limiting understandings of their agency and capacity (Redford 1991, Conklin and Graham 1995, Nadasdy 2005, Reimerson 2013). In Sweden, the Sami people's possibilities to affect policy and secure influence have been limited both by the construction of the system of Sami rights and by dominant conceptions of Sami identity and the Sami as a group (Mörkenstam 1999, Lantto 2000, Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008). Furthermore, Sweden has a long history of protectionist nature conservation policies and centralised environmental management arrangements, with low levels of local influence and control and little consideration of traditional and local knowledge (Tunón 2004, Zachrisson 2009a).

Against this background, the new management model for the Laponia World Heritage Site in northern Sweden presents an interesting case for study. Laponia was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996 on the basis of both natural and cultural criteria, with the living cultural heritage of the reindeer herding Sami as a central argument for nomination and inscription (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 1992-2015). After almost 15 years of negotiation, the Sami communities in the area were able to secure significant influence and control over the management of Laponia. Sami representatives hold the majority on the board of directors of the management organisation, and efforts have been made to adapt the

management structure to traditional Sami organisational practices and knowledge. The result of the negotiations and the establishment of the new management model are unique in the Swedish context. Sami organisations have described it as a victory for Sami political struggle for land rights and influence, and as an important step in the Sami people's decolonisation process (Samiskt informationscentrum 2010, SSR 2010, Lindstrand 2012). However, even where measures are taken to include and involve Indigenous peoples in protected area management, their space for agency is often limited by historical and contemporary inequalities, unequal power relations and dominant understandings of what Indigenous peoples can and cannot do, say or be (Stevens 1997, Langton 2003, Colchester 2004, Baird 2013, Reimerson 2013). How does this play out in Lapponia?

While previous research has discussed the process leading up to the establishment of the current management of Lapponia (Torp and Vikman 1999, Beach 2001, Rådelius 2002, Nilsson Dahlström 2003, Adams 2005, Lasko 2005, Nilsson Dahlström 2008, Green 2009, Nilsson Dahlström 2009, Zachrisson 2009b, Sande 2010, Zachrisson and Beland Lindahl 2013), little research has thus far addressed the implementation and further implications of this novel arrangement (Fauchald *et al.* 2014, Revelin 2014). This article addresses this gap in the academic literature. My aim is to analyse the construction of space for Sami political agency in the management of the Lapponia World Heritage site. I investigate the positioning of Sami subjects and the negotiation of their agency in relation to other subjects and to the institutional arrangement, and discuss these processes in relation to discourses on protected area management and Indigenous rights.

Following this introduction, the article consists of four sections. The first section introduces the case and provides a brief historical and political background. The second gives an account of my analytical approach. In the third section, I present the empirical material and

develop my argument, and in the fourth and final section, I discuss the results and offer some concluding remarks.

Background

The Sami are an Indigenous people whose traditional lands – *Sápmi* – stretch over northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian Kola Peninsula. They have inhabited and used the area since time immemorial, but the emerging nation-states gradually forced them back. Today, the Sami form small minorities within the countries. The relationships between the Sami people and the nation-states have evolved in partly different ways in the Nordic states, and the recognition of Sami rights now differs between the countries (Nordisk samekonvensjon 2005, Josefsen 2007, Kuokkanen 2009, Allard 2011). Much of Swedish Sami policy has been characterised by racist and colonial notions of Sami identity, resulting in extensive restrictions of the capacity for political agency of the Sami (Mörkenstam 1999, Lantto 2000, Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008). The Sami in Sweden today have some recognition of their user rights in connection to reindeer husbandry (Allard 2006, pp. 329-332), but the Swedish state does not recognise any general Sami ownership of land. Non-reindeer herding Sami, who constitute a majority of the Sami people in Sweden, are excluded from the system of Sami rights to land. Sami reindeer herders have to compete with other land use interests – often considerably stronger in terms of resources, influence, and power (Beach 2001, Allard 2006, 2011).

While Swedish nature conservation policy has traditionally been heavily influenced by the wilderness ideal and model of strict protection (Mels 1999, Emmelin 2009), the Swedish context does present some important differences concerning access to protected areas compared to many other countries. Swedish protected areas are free for everyone to visit, and regulations generally permit activities such as collecting wild berries and mushrooms,

recreational sports, and camping (in designated areas) (Hovik *et al.* 2010). Sami land use rights in connection to reindeer herding apply, albeit with certain restrictions (notably regarding hunting rights), in most Swedish protected areas (Allard 2006, pp. 418-425). However, protected area designations, establishments of rules and regulations, and management structures remain mostly centralised, with low levels of local or Sami influence and control (Tunón 2004, Zachrisson 2009a, Hovik *et al.* 2010). The Laponia management arrangement constitutes a break from this centralised structure, and is a unique initiative in terms of Sami influence and control (Zachrisson 2009a, Hovik *et al.* 2010).

The Laponian area covers 9,400 km² and includes four national parks and two nature reserves. The Sami have lived in and used the area since prehistoric times. Through the inscription of Laponia on the World Heritage List, the continuous occupation and living cultural practices of the Sami in Laponia are protected under the World Heritage Convention for being of ‘outstanding universal value’. In the justification for inscription of the Laponian area as a World Heritage, the World Heritage Committee stresses that Laponia is one of the world’s last and best preserved examples of an area of transhumance, having been used for reindeer grazing since early stages of human development (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 1992-2015). Reindeer husbandry still takes place throughout the area, and Laponia includes lands of nine active reindeer herding communities (RHCs)¹.

It took almost 15 years to reach an agreement on the management of Laponia, and the process was drawn out and conflict ridden. After the inscription, the Sami communities made clear that they would not accept a management organisation without strong Sami influence and control, but state and municipality representatives were initially not prepared to meet that

¹ An RHC (Swe. *Sameby*, lit. ‘Sami village’) is an economic association for reindeer herders, and also refers to the geographical area in which the RHC is entitled to pursue reindeer husbandry.

demand (Mijá ednam 1999, Rådelius 2002). Negotiations broke down in 2001, when the Sami representatives left in protest as they felt that their claims and needs were not being heard or respected, and did not resume until 2005 (Rådelius 2002, pp. 45-56, Nilsson Dahlström 2003, pp. 323-346, Green 2009, pp. 101-123). In 2006, the Swedish government commissioned the Norrbotten County Administrative Board (CAB) to assemble a committee to develop a new management organisation with strong Sami influence (CAB Norrbotten 2006, Swedish Government 2006). After three years of negotiations, the committee presented a joint proposal for a new organisational structure for Laponia – a non-profit organisation, Laponiatjuottjudus,² consisting of representatives from the RHCs, the CAB, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), and the two municipalities within whose territories Laponia is situated. RHC representatives were to hold the majority of the board of directors (Laponiaprocessen 2010a, 2010b). In 2011, the Government issued a regulation allowing the CAB to transfer management of the Laponian area to Laponiatjuottjudus (Laponia Regulation 2011), and in 2012, the CAB made their formal decision to transfer management of Laponia to the new organisation for a trial period of two years. The CAB officially transferred the task of managing Laponia to Laponiatjuottjudus on 1 January, 2013.

A board of directors with nine members, appointed by their respective organisations for a period of two years, leads the work of Laponiatjuottjudus. The CAB, the SEPA, and the two municipalities each have one representative on the board, and the nine RHCs jointly appoint five representatives. The operative body of Laponiatjuottjudus has its office in Jokkmokk.

² *Tjuottjudus* is a term for management or administration in Lule Sami language.

Analytical framework

Space for agency

I depart from the assumption that agency is shaped through the discursive positioning or categorisation of different individuals or groups, and through the articulations of the contextual conditions for their agency (Davies 1991, Mouffe 1992, Smith 1998, pp. 68, 158).

I use *space for agency* as a concept to describe and analyse the effects of these positions and conditions. ‘Discourse’ is understood here as a system of rules or practices that form the meaning or identity of objects and subjects (Howarth 2000, p. 9, Foucault 2002, p. 54).

Through discourse, concrete subjects or objects are connected to specific linguistic signs, defined by their relation and difference to other signs (Howarth 2000, pp. 101-102). These connections can never be finalised or irreversible fixed, and they are always challenged – they need to be reproduced in order to maintain their stability (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, pp. 112-113). They are thereby processes of power and politics (Howarth 2000, p. 9). Discourses guide what knowledge and what political claims are seen as possible or legitimate. They also govern who can make authoritative claims to hold such knowledge or make those political claims, and on what grounds (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, p. 115, Smith 1998, pp. 55-59, Foucault 2002, pp. 55-61). Through the production of subject positions, discourses shape subjects’ space for agency by delimiting the acceptable or possible ways of talking and acting for different individuals or groups, and thereby the ways in which they can gain recognition as political agents (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, p. 115, Smith 1998, pp. 55-59, Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, pp. 17, 55).

The discourse theoretical approach, as employed here, recognises discourse as constitutive of the social world (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, pp. 107-108). The (re-) production of meaning has consequences for the organisation of society (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p. 36) – it is a political act, entangled in complex power relations. Certain subject

positions can limit the space for agency of an individual or group by limiting their ability to present their ‘truth’ as legitimate or valid, to speak with authority, or to be recognised as knowledgeable subjects within a certain topic area (cf. Mörkenstam 1999, Reimerson 2013). Conversely, other positions can work to strengthen and add legitimacy to certain claims, and thus widen the space for political agency (cf. Tennberg 2010). The discursive constructions articulated in the Laponia context govern what is possible to say and know about Laponia, Laponiatjuottjudus, and the management of the World Heritage site. They influence understandings of management objectives, of who should be involved in the management, and of how management should be organised. The discourses in focus for this study thus have very real political implications.

Using *chains of equivalence* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, pp. 127-130) as an analytical tool, I map the process through which Laponiatjuottjudus, its material and institutional conditions, and Sami subject positions as participants in the management of Laponia are given meaning. Concretely, that means investigating how these different concepts are articulated through discourse, and how they are given meaning through their relation to other concepts (Mörkenstam 1999, pp. 58-60, Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p. 50, Johansson 2008, pp. 20-21). I am then able to discuss the implications of these meanings for Sami space for agency in Laponia. By locating these articulations in a larger historical and social context, I am able to interrogate critically the power relations underlying and inherent to this process.

A post-colonial approach

Both nature conservation and heritage protection have been criticised for echoing colonial notions of Indigenous peoples and their relationship to nature. This has consequences for Indigenous peoples’ possibilities to influence the management of natural and cultural resources in their traditional territories. Furthermore, it calls for a post-colonial approach, to

enable a critical perspective in examining ‘the intersection of ideas and institutions, knowledge and power’ (Loomba 2005, p. 51).

Notions of ‘wilderness’ are still present in contemporary definitions of protected areas, and the ‘Yellowstone model’ with its ideal of strict protection of pristine and uninhabited areas still influences protected area designation and management (Stevens 1997, Poirier and Ostergren 2002, Adams 2003, Pickerill 2008). Indigenous land and resource use, knowledge, and practices have been largely ignored or suppressed, and stereotyping images have worked to restrict Indigenous peoples’ space for political agency in relation to protected areas on their traditional lands (Redford 1991, Stevens 1997, Adams 2003, Nadasdy 2005, Pickerill 2008, Dahlberg *et al.* 2010, Reimerson 2013). Indigenous and other non-Western peoples, along with scholars and heritage practitioners, have criticised both protected area management in general and World Heritage management and practice for upholding a Eurocentric, universalising discourse (Byrne 1991, Suchet 2002, Colchester 2004, Smith 2006, Waterton *et al.* 2006, Labadi 2007, Colchester *et al.* 2008). Indigenous representation in heritage and protected area management is often very limited, and management practices can reproduce colonial structures and constrain the agency of Indigenous peoples (Smith 2006, pp. 260-288, Baird 2009, pp. 250-265, 2013).

Sami political agency in Sweden is embedded in discourses shaped and influenced by colonial histories and post-colonial power relations. Assumptions of a homogeneous Sami identity have underpinned categorisations that promote certain expressions of Sami identity and make claims for influence on other grounds less likely to be accepted or perceived as possible (Mörkenstam 1999, pp. 239-242). The Sami have been denied access to relevant political arenas and subjected to paternalistic policies, further undermining their political agency (Lantto 2000, pp. 282-284). Sweden has often been reluctant to acknowledge its colonial history concerning Sápmi and the Sami people, and to acknowledge that the Sami –

as a colonised Indigenous people – have rights in accordance with international law (Lantto 2003, pp. 8-11, Mörkenstam 2005, p. 444, Johansson 2008, pp. 153-154). In contemporary political discourse and practice, the Sami are treated as a minority group rather than an Indigenous people, and any special rights granted to the Sami are based mainly on minority law, not Indigenous rights law (Johansson 2008, pp. 253-257). This can have consequences for the means by which the Sami can articulate their position and argue for, for example, land rights or the right to self-determination (Allard 2006, pp. 499-501, Johansson 2008, p. 155).

I use ‘the post-colonial’ as a tool to understand power and power relations based on race and ethnicity, focusing on the relation between power and knowledge, the production of knowledge and knowledgeable subjects, the ‘othering’ of Indigenous subjects, and the effects of the colonial historical experience of both colonising and colonised peoples (Young 1991, Hall 1996, Spivak 1999, RJC Young 2001, Loomba 2005). The ‘post-colonial’ has been criticised for being homogenising, universalising, and lacking in historical specificity (Shohat 1992), and for the indication of a terminated (historical) epoch inherent in the prefix ‘post-’ (Young 1991, Spivak 1999, Loomba 2005, p. 12). While these critical points certainly hold merit, the post-colonial approach is useful as ‘a contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism’ (Loomba 2005, p. 16). ‘The post-colonial’ can be seen a concept forcing us to re-read binary representations and break down the assumptions underpinning histories of colonialism and imperialism (Hall 1996, p. 247). Colonial discourse and post-colonial power relations still shape contemporary discourses on both nature conservation and Indigenous rights, and impact Indigenous peoples’ space for political agency (Conklin and Graham 1995, Conklin 1997, Mörkenstam 1999, Hames 2007, Johansson 2008, Reimerson 2013).

Material

The empirical material for this study includes both official documents, authored jointly or separately by the parties engaged in the management of Laponia, and interviews with key persons involved in the management organisation. The combination of different kinds of texts as the basis for analysis reflects my attempt to understand in more depth the discourses and discursive constructions in play in the Laponia management organisation (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 5, Flick 2009, p. 448-449).

The Laponia Management Plan (Laponia 2012) is the main document outlining the form and content of the management of the World Heritage site. Also central are the statutes for Laponiatjuottjudus (Laponiaprocessen 2011) and the Government Regulation allowing the CAB to transfer management of the Laponia World Heritage site to Laponiatjuottjudus (Laponia Regulation 2011). These documents have been included in the analysis to represent images and notions jointly presented by the parties, representing the official view of Laponiatjuottjudus. Previous position papers and proposals published by the parties (CAB Norrbotten 1998, Mijá ednam 1999, Rådelius 2000, CAB Norrbotten 2003) have been included in the analysis to a lesser extent, to trace certain trends in discourse or to discuss discursive shifts and challenges.

During March, April, August, and September 2013, I conducted interviews with six persons that at the time of the interviews were either serving as members of the board for one of the parties (the CAB, the SEPA, the RHCs, and one of the municipalities) or employed at the Laponiatjuottjudus office in Jokkmokk. Interviews lasted between one and a half and three hours. They took place at the interviewees' places of work except for one interview, which I conducted in the interviewee's home. The interviews were structured around a number of broad themes: the Laponia process (2006-2010), the resulting management organisation (including the distribution of power and responsibilities, internal and external factors

influencing the work and structure of management practice, unresolved conflicts, and strengths and weaknesses of the organisation), the influence of the overarching World Heritage structure, and the possible wider consequences of this management arrangement. The interviews gave insight into how persons representing the parties involved in the management of Laponia describe the organisation, and how they discuss and reflect upon, for example, the distribution of power and responsibility between parties, the discretion of representatives of the different parties, and opportunities and challenges of the new management organisation.

Texts and interview transcripts were coded through the identification of themes, both drawn from theoretical assumptions and emerging from the empirical material. I interrogated the material for descriptions of the management organisation, descriptions of groups or actors and their relationship to other groups or actors, accounts of power relations and possibilities to influence, and statements linking Laponiatjuottjudus to a wider context in terms of both external influence on the conditions for the management of the site and possible consequences on policy or practice outside of Laponia. I have translated document and interview quotes from Swedish to English, and edited quotes to improve readability (excluding pauses, repetitions, etc.).

Sami space for agency in Laponia

Sami Majority and Consensus Decision-Making

Sami majority in the governing body for Laponia was an absolute demand of the RHCs in the negotiations on the new management model (Mijá ednam 1999, pp. 68-70) and was subsequently included in the statutes for Laponiatjuottjudus (Laponiaprocessen 2011, §16). However, the statutes also prescribe that decisions are to be made through consensus (Laponiaprocessen 2011, §17). The management plan for Laponia states that “consensus

decision-making should be applied as far as possible” (Laponia 2012, p. 16). Consensus decision-making was a recurrent theme in the interviews, and was central to the interviewees’ discussions on influence and power. The interviewees described consensus decision-making as essential for the functioning of Laponiatjuottjudus.

[Consensus decision-making] takes longer, but I think it is a prerequisite with this many parties on the board of directors. When we reach a decision, all parties on the board support it. (Interview 2, Laponiatjuottjudus employee)

If you only have majority rule, it could almost be questioned... well, if one group has the majority and pushes decisions against the will of the others – that is not good in a management organisation. (...) In that case, I think it would fail. The parties would have dropped out already, I think. I think consensus is a prerequisite. (Interview 3, SEPA representative)

I think consensus made it powerful (...). Being such different parties, with such differences between us, how long would we have accepted (...) a majority-minority relationship? (Interview 1, Municipality representative)

The documents and interviews articulate a discourse where influence and power are linked to some extent to the distribution of members on the board, but more explicitly to a decision-making process focused on reaching consensus. With the focus on consensus decision-making, interviewees to some extent played down the importance of Sami board majority. Interviewees stressed that the Sami majority is symbolically important, and an important indicator of increased recognition of the Sami’s right to influence the management of Laponia. Some of the interviewees acknowledged effects in terms of more influence on the decision-making. However, the consensus decision-making model seemed to be more important than the distribution of seats on the board, and the Sami majority seemed to be less significant than what might have been the case during the long process of negotiation.

[The Sami majority] does not have any concrete consequences since we are working with consensus, but it was an absolute demand in the negotiations about Laponiatjuottjudus, that the RHCs were to hold the majority. Otherwise, they were not interested. And it is a step, in some direction, that the RHCs hold the majority in an organisation like this. It has been unthinkable before. (...) I think it does something to the distribution of power and such, a consciousness of the Sami majority even though we are working with consensus (...). And it is also a signal to the outside world, which might be equally important. (Interview 2, Laponiatjuottjudus employee)

(...) it does not mean that those who have more members on the board, the RHCs' organisation, are the ones who decide, but rather it is consensus, we discuss together. (Interview 3, SEPA representative)

By describing consensus as a Sami way of making decisions, both the documents and the interviewees frame the use of consensus decision-making as an incorporation of Sami traditional organisational knowledge. This, in itself, could be an important step to safeguard Sami culture and contribute to Sami influence.

Both the written documents and the interviewees discussed local and traditional (Sami) knowledge, as a complement or sometimes the better alternative to scientific knowledge. The statutes for Laponiatjuottjudus and the management plan for Laponia acknowledge that Sami traditional knowledge – *árbediehtu* (cf. Nordin-Jonsson 2010) – is crucial for the conservation and sustainable development of the Laponian area, and promote local and traditional knowledge and practices as an important part of the site's cultural heritage values (Laponiaprocessen 2011, §1, Laponia 2012, pp. 18, 103). Both documents frame Sami organisational knowledge and practices as the basis for management work. Key principles include *searvelatnja* (cf. Sara 2004), a common space for participation, discussion, and knowledge sharing, and *rádedibme*, forums for consultation and deliberation (Laponiaprocessen 2011, §1, Laponia 2012, pp. 21-22, 80, 84). The interviewees similarly held local and traditional knowledge, and the importance of a learning and adaptive

management organisation, to be central to the management of Laponia. They linked it both to traditional Sami organisational practices and to contemporary natural resource management theory (in terms of ‘adaptive management’, ‘local management’, ‘local influence’, etc.).

These accounts position Laponiatjuottjudus as an organisation that puts the Sami, and Sami organisational knowledge and practices, at the front and centre. Understood through a chain equating *Laponiatjuottjudus – Sami majority – Sami organisational practices*, this could mean a widened space for Sami agency compared with other instances of protected area management in Swedish Sápmi, where Sami influence has traditionally been much more limited. Sami knowledge and practices are articulated as valuable for the management of Laponia and the functioning of Laponiatjuottjudus, and Sami subjects – being holders of this knowledge – are consequently constructed as knowledgeable and authoritative in areas important to the management structure. These constructions could increase the space for Sami political agency and the legitimacy of Sami political claims. This positioning could also be argued to have significant symbolic value, as the first (and, thus far, the only) protected area management model in Swedish Sápmi with a distinctively Sami profile.

Laponiatjuottjudus is, on the other hand, also positioned as an organisation where the distribution of members on the board is of less importance, as the decision-making process is based on negotiation and reaching consensus. The possibilities to exercise the power that a majority position entails are thus conditioned by the use of consensus decision-making. Understood through a chain equating *Laponiatjuottjudus – consensus decision-making – negotiation between equal parties*, it does on the one hand put the RHCs on equal footing with the other parties involved, but on the other hand somewhat undercuts the importance of Sami majority. It relies heavily on assumptions of equal access to information and power between two distinctively different types of parties – state and municipal authorities with access to staff, official channels for influence, and other resources; and RHCs, lacking much

of these resources and representing a minority that has traditionally been marginalised and kept out of decision-making. This might leave Laponiatjuottjudus, and Sami space for agency, open to the risk of more powerful actors dominating the process.

Critics of consensus decision-making and deliberative practices point to the risk of such processes to work to suppress conflict and silence opposition (cf. IM Young 2001, Hillier 2003, Mansbridge 2003, Mouffe 2005). Interviewees acknowledged the risk of ‘thin’ or ‘shallow’ agreements, but argued that existing mechanisms for conflict resolution (focused on referring controversial issues to designated working groups in order to reach consensus) work well to achieve solutions to problems. Still, there are unresolved issues, notably concerning industrial exploitation in areas outside of but bordering to Lapponia, and hunting rights in the national parks. The time-consuming and complicated process of reaching consensus on disputed issues could work to limit the space for agency of all actors involved.

Institutionalised and Negotiated Power Relations

The Lapponia Regulation and the Lapponia Management Plan describe and regulate the distribution of responsibilities between the parties, as well as the relationships between the actors and between Laponiatjuottjudus and other state and municipal authorities. According to the Lapponia Regulation, the CAB of Norrbotten County may transfer the task of managing the national parks and nature reserves included in Lapponia in accordance with the management plan to Laponiatjuottjudus. The CAB may also transfer the execution of predator inventories, the task of spreading information about the World Heritage site, and the upkeep of buildings and trails in the area. The CAB may not to transfer tasks that entail the exercise of public authority. This includes the issuing of permits and exemptions concerning activities in the national parks and nature reserves, supervision, and predator policy – all issues with potentially significant impacts on Sami rights. The management plan prescribes that state and

municipal authorities should consult with Laponiatjuottjudus on issues that affect or may affect Laponia (Laponia 2012, pp. 83-84, 88-89), and that all activities in Laponia, including those involving the exercise of public authority, must be carried out in consultation with local actors (Laponia 2012, pp. 86, 107).

The management plan states that the parties are of ‘equal importance’ (Laponia 2012, p. 18). The interviews also reflected this view. The interviewees described the division of responsibilities concerning the exercise of public authority as being relatively unproblematic, if the mechanisms for consultation function as intended. Interviewees acknowledged that state, and to some extent municipal, authorities might have more power in ‘some sort of absolute sense, because they handle the exercise of public authority’ (Interview 1, Municipality representative), but expressed confidence in the consultation structure as a means to exert influence.

But that is also a thing having to do with power, that the CAB has decided now, and that is that we [Laponiatjuottjudus] will be a consultation body in some issues pertaining to Laponia. (...) So we also see that especially the CAB is aware of Laponia as a new party in this area and that they are actually trying to give us the space to participate. We cannot make decisions, but we get an opportunity to influence. (Interview 2, Laponiatjuottjudus employee)

But since we do not have the exercise of public authority, but all other issues that are not the exercise of public authority, I would argue that we have a decent opportunity to be equal in terms of power relations. (Interview 1, Municipality representative)

... so then we have a communication instead, closer. And we would not have had that if we had not had Laponiatjuottjudus, not in the same way. (Interview 6, RHC representative)

Until the establishment of Laponiatjuottjudus, the CAB had been responsible for the management of the protected areas in Laponia. Interviewees described the transferring of management tasks as having run smoothly, with efforts being made to avoid making

Laponiatjuottjudus a ‘new CAB’ (Interview 2, Laponiatjuottjudus employee). The board has established regulations for the distribution of responsibilities and tasks within itself and in relation to the operative body, and interviewees described them as well grounded in the management plan and in the parties’ vision for Laponiatjuottjudus.

Alongside the institutionalised power distributions and relationships, interviewees discussed access to knowledge, and different types of knowledge, as a factor for power and influence.

Well, it [what types of issues the different parties can discuss with more authority] has to do with the knowledge one has about different issues, of course. One’s knowledge base. Of course, it is connected to that, knowing what knowledge one has. (Interview 3, SEPA representative)

It cannot be avoided that, as it is today, it often feels like the state has a bit of a head start if one may put it like that, because they have worked a lot with these kinds of issues. And the municipalities are not as informed about the state system, but we are still used to handling issues of power and influence and decision-making. So, there is a risk that we become too state management-like, and then the RHCs end up some sort of... well, do not get the same influence. But now, I do not think that has been the case. Thanks to their commitment and their will to raise issues, I would almost say it is the other way around. (Interview 1, Municipality representative)

There are some of us who have been in this longer and who have been part of the process, and then there are some on the board who are completely new. And that has been noticeable to some extent, I mean with regards to how much one talks in meetings and what one’s input is, things like that. (Interview 5, CAB representative)

However, interviewees also discussed the differences in knowledge and experience as beneficial, and something that the organisation can handle through the way it is working.

I think that right now it feels like everyone contributes based on what they know and what they have knowledge about. (Interview 3, SEPA representative)

One could see it as a problem, but also as a strength. We have the opportunity to choose our approach. (Interview 1, Municipality representative)

What we are looking at, instead of working based on who has more power, we see more to what knowledge we can bring into this and how they can complement each other. (Interview 6, RHC representative)

Several of the interviewees addressed colonisation, inequalities, and marginalisation of the Sami, either referring to it as a historical context or acknowledging it as a factor for power relations and differences in influence. The RHC representatives interviewed expressed the latter view most clearly.

[Rauna Kuokkanen, Sami researcher] writes that there is a norm in society where Indigenous peoples are placed in a marginalised position. The Indigenous peoples become the Other... 'We, the majority people, know what you need'. (...) We are bearers of the majority culture's values and structures, and it affects all of us. (Interview 6, RHC representative)

The chain equating *Laponiatjuottjudus* – *consensus decision-making* – *negotiation between equal parties*, applies also in the descriptions of formal and informal power relations.

Interviewees stressed that the parties are equal in the organisation, and that all knowledge (and all types of knowledge) is to be valued equally in the discussions. The focus on knowledge is particularly interesting in this context. What is considered knowledge, and who is considered to legitimately hold knowledge, has been a central issue in colonial discourse and has worked to limit the space for agency of Indigenous peoples (Smith 1999, Loomba 2005). The interviewees talked about different types of knowledge (scientific, local, and Indigenous) as being equally important, and stressed the importance of acknowledging all participants in the management of Lapponia as knowledge holders in their own right. This resonates with the way both the documents and the interviewees describe Sami organisational knowledge and practices as central to the functioning of *Laponiatjuottjudus*, and the related

construction of Sami subjects as important knowledge holders. Although the latter part of the chain – *negotiation between equal parties* – was somewhat conditioned, with interviewees acknowledging differences in knowledge, access to resources, and official roles outside of Laponiatjuottjudus as having an impact on power and influence, all interviewees seemed confident that any issues pertaining to this can be resolved within Laponiatjuottjudus. Interviewees thus positioned Laponiatjuottjudus as an environment that works to counter unequal valuations of knowledge and constructions of knowledgeable subjects existing elsewhere in Swedish society. As such, they articulated it as part of a decolonising process that could work to increase Sami space for agency in this context compared to other instances of protected area or natural resource management on Sami lands. On the other hand, the actors might run the risk of underestimating the influence of prevailing inequalities, and making invisible the effects of unequal power relationships. This could work to limit Sami space for agency.

Rights-holders or Value-bearers?

Mijá ednam (1999), the RHCs visionary document and proposed management programme for Lapponia, establishes a long-standing and coherent Sami presence in the Lapponia area, and consistently includes wider historical, geographical, and political contexts to strengthen the arguments and claims of the RHCs. It draws on international Indigenous rights discourses (including the right to land, water, and natural resources), positioning the Sami as an Indigenous people and the Swedish state as having obligations to them according to international as well as national commitments.

The management plan for Lapponia largely uses the same, or similar, language as Mijá ednam when describing the importance of Sami reindeer herding for the cultural and natural heritage values of Lapponia. The plan stresses the historical presence and living Sami culture

as important conditions for the World Heritage listing (Laponia 2012, pp. 16-17, 19). The geographical contextualisation of Laponia and of Sami culture is also apparent, with references made to conditions for Sami culture *in* Laponia as being inseparable from conditions *outside* of Laponia (Laponia 2012, p. 20). Laponia is put forward as an impact site for a number of binding obligations for Sweden, centred on Swedish-Sami relationships and the relationship between conservation and sustainable use (Laponia 2012, pp. 14-15, 136-147). This includes acknowledgements of the Sami as an Indigenous people, and references to national and international regulations on Sami/Indigenous rights (Laponia 2012, pp. 10-13).

The management plan thus echoes the views of the RHCs put forward in their early position paper. It positions the Sami as an Indigenous people and, as such, holders of rights to land, water, and natural resources. This positioning can be understood through a chain equating *Sami – Indigenous – Indigenous rights (international law) – rights to land, water, and natural resources*. This chain connects to a positioning of the Swedish state as having obligations in relation to these rights. However, the argument for Sami influence over the management of Laponia relies more heavily on a parallel chain, linking *Laponia – Sami cultural landscape – Sami culture, knowledge, and practices – condition for World Heritage values*. This does not necessarily signify a break from the earlier argument of the RHCs – Mijá ednam states that the most important argument for a strong Sami influence in the management of Laponia is that this is necessary to safeguard the values that motivated its inscription as a World Heritage site (Mijá ednam 1999, p. 69). The management plan outlines national and international laws protecting Sami rights and acknowledges the Sami right to self-determination as an Indigenous people including the right to exercise influence over their territories and natural resources (Laponia 2012, pp. 10-13). It does not, however, specify what this means for the management of Laponia. The plan, instead, bases its arguments for Sami

influence on the Sami reindeer herders' role as bearers and guardians of World Heritage values.

In the management process, the will and needs of the Sami, who have traditionally used and are using the area, are to be given extra consideration, since the living Sami culture and reindeer herding was one of the conditions for the World Heritage inscription (Laponia 2012, p. 17).

This tendency to frame Sami claims for influence in terms of conditions for and contributions to the values of Laponia as a World Heritage site was similarly apparent in the interviews. All interviewees stressed the incorporation of Sami traditional knowledge and practices as crucial for the sustainable and efficient management of the area, and referred to UNESCO's demands for Indigenous and local participation.

Of course, it is incredibly important to carry knowledge on reindeer herding and how it is practiced into the management [of Laponia], as the World Heritage is based on traditional reindeer herding and their use of the land. (Interview 3, SEPA representative)

Interviewees made few explicit connections to discourses on Indigenous rights as an argument for Sami influence in Laponia. There was also a tendency to play down the exclusively *Sami* knowledge and influence and instead stress *local* knowledge and participation.

I do not want to say that it is just Sami knowledge; it is the knowledge of the local population. (...) It is the local knowledge, or traditional knowledge, of multiple population groups that is important for us to be able to do this. (Interview 2, Laponiatjuottjudus employee)

There is a lot of knowledge in a settler culture as well. (Interview 4, RHC representative)

In modern planning, citizens' involvement and dialogue is more and more of a thing, and what is that? It is the same way of thinking. Even if from a Sami perspective, it is an old way of thinking. (Interview 1, Municipality representative)

This could be interpreted as a challenge to, or a conditioning of, the somewhat stronger links being made to Indigenous particularity and discourses on Indigenous rights in the management plan. It could also be discussed whether this is a result of an overarching discourse that makes it harder, in Sweden, to frame Sami rights as Indigenous rights, as argued by Johansson (2008). At the same time, several of the interviewees referred to Laponiatjuottjudus as a work of decolonisation, or an example of increased Sami self-determination.

That is what they are talking about from a Sami perspective, Laponia as an example of decolonisation. And that is interesting, I think. (Interview 1, Municipality representative)

I mean, it is a process of decolonisation for this area, this situation, but decolonisation is something that is happening all over the world. It is not just here in Laponia. (Interview 6, RHC representative)

The chains of *Sami – Indigenous – Indigenous rights (international law) – rights to land, water, and natural resources* and *Laponia – Sami cultural landscape – Sami culture, knowledge, and practices – condition for World Heritage values* are thus articulated in parallel, and while they are not necessarily contradictory, they do represent a tension in the discourse. The latter chain, positioning the Sami as value-bearers, gives a more instrumental value to Sami participation (as necessary to safeguard Laponia's status as a World Heritage site) than the intrinsic value of Sami influence inherent in the former chain, positioning the Sami as rights-holders. If the positioning of the Sami as value-bearers becomes more influential in discourse, it could work to limit Sami space for agency, since it conditions Sami influence in a more far-reaching way than does the rights-bearer discourse (cf. Bluemel 2005, Johansson 2008, Reimerson 2013).

Challenges and Consequences

Interviewees positioned Laponiatjuottjudus in itself as something relatively stable. Although the risk of parties opting out was described as a potential risk, the structure and working methods of the organisation – including consensus decision-making, the equal participation of all parties, and the mechanisms for consultation – were generally described as a good way of preventing this and keeping parties interested and involved. However, interviewees also painted a picture of the organisation as being vulnerable to external factors and forces, with continuity as a central issue. They discussed political changes related to electoral outcomes as a potential issue of uncertainty for Laponiatjuottjudus.

Access to funding appeared as a major cause for concern. Laponiatjuottjudus receives its funding through SEPA and CAB government appropriations, and several of the interviewees described the lack of specifically designated or guaranteed funds as a potential problem.

We need to achieve consistency in the budgets. That is something that is not completely worked out yet. (...) We do not have any guarantees for the future yet, that there will be funding. (Interview 3, SEPA representative)

Yes, funding is always a factor of uncertainty. (...) If we do not get enough money, it will just be, like, the basics. It will not be anything other than a new form of CAB, in some way. And then the ideas about a more including way of working and more citizen dialogue will fall. (Interview 5, CAB representative)

The transfer of the management of Laponia from the CAB to Laponiatjuottjudus was originally effective until 31 December 2014 (Laponia Regulation 2011, CAB Norrbotten 2012). This trial period was extended in September 2014 to 31 December 2016 (Ministry of the Environment and Energy 2014). Thereafter, the management is to be evaluated for a possible extension. At the time of the interviews, Laponiatjuottjudus had applied for a longer

evaluation period, but no decision had been made in the matter (Interview 6, RHC representative). The interviewees described short time-frames as one of the greatest challenges for Laponiatjuottjudus. They emphasised the importance of success and described the risk of failure, or not living up to expectations, as a potential risk – both for the functioning of Laponiatjuottjudus and for the potential wider consequences of the arrangement, or the possibility to ‘export’ the management model to other contexts.

We cannot fail, because this has to be a forerunner to others, who come after us.
(Interview 6, RHC representative)

I think that if Tjuottjudus was to fail because of reasons other than the economic, if any of the parties were to say no, we do not want to be part of this anymore, we thought it was better when the CAB controlled... then I think it would take a lot to start something like this somewhere else. (Interview 5, CAB representative)

These accounts of risks or challenges link *Laponiatjuottjudus* to concepts like *vulnerability*, *instability*, and *insecurity*. The expressions of confidence in the functioning of the organisation, and its capacity to realise the visions and ideas articulated in the process and in the governing documents, significantly qualifies this chain. However, it might still work to limit the space for agency of the actors involved in the management of Laponia.

Interviewees consistently described Laponiatjuottjudus and its working methods as something unique, something new, signifying a departure from traditional Swedish nature conservation and protected area management. The positioning of Laponia as a unique situation and Laponiatjuottjudus as an extraordinary arrangement might make it difficult to use the progress made for Sami influence here as an argument for strengthened Sami influence in other contexts. It does connect to the chain equating *Laponia – Sami cultural landscape – Sami culture, knowledge, and practices – condition for World Heritage values*, and could reinforce Sami claims for influence based on that chain. In that sense, it works to

widen the space for Sami agency in the Laponia context but, perhaps, not necessarily to open up more space for agency in Swedish Sami discourse more generally.

Conclusion

The discursive construction of Laponiatjuottjudus as an organisation, and the understandings of power structures articulated in the material, affect the space for agency of the Sami RHCs in the management of the Laponia World Heritage site. Perceived challenges and notions of vulnerability, instability, and insecurity might also affect the space for agency for all actors involved in the management of Laponia.

The positioning of the Sami in relation to on the one hand their status as an Indigenous people, on the other hand their importance for the values of the World Heritage site merits some additional attention, not least in relation to the discussions on challenges to and stability of Laponiatjuottjudus. The positioning of the Sami as rights-holders gives intrinsic value to Sami participation and influence, whereas a position as value-bearers gives a more instrumental value to the influence of the Sami RHCs. The latter could leave the arrangement more vulnerable in the event of non-success or failure, changes in funding, or changes in political priorities. It connects to the positioning of Laponiatjuottjudus as unique and extraordinary, possibly making it harder to use the progress made in Laponia to argue for strengthened Sami rights and influence elsewhere.

Returning to the question posed in the introduction to this paper – against the backdrop of colonial discourse often restricting Indigenous space for agency in protected area and heritage management, how does the management of Laponia play out in terms of Sami space for agency? Although the positioning of the Sami in Laponia, and the linking of claims for influence to a position as value-bearers and guardians rather than rights-holders, could be critically discussed in terms of a limited space for Sami political agency, Laponiatjuottjudus

still represents an interesting turn of events in Swedish Sami policy and discourse. The management plan for Laponia speaks about Sami rights and Sami self-determination in a way that differs markedly from other Swedish policy documents, and this might signify a discursive shift in Swedish Sami discourse (cf. Mörkenstam 1999, Mörkenstam 2005). It does, however, echo the discursive construction of the Sami as a minority, rather than an Indigenous people, as discussed by Johansson (2008).

Laponiatjuottjudus is the first – and, thus far, the only – protected area or natural resource management model that explicitly engages with issues of Sami self-determination, links the matter of Sami influence to international Indigenous rights law, and makes an effort to incorporate Sami traditional ecological and organisational knowledge into the management structure. Opinions on whether this will have consequences for Sami rights in Sweden or natural resource management in Sápmi in general differ, but there seems to be agreement on Laponiatjuottjudus being a unique example of increased Sami influence and an important victory for the Sami political struggle for recognition of their rights.

The outcome of the Sami struggle for influence over the management of Laponia, and the establishment and design of Laponiatjuottjudus, could contribute to discussions on protected area and heritage management on Indigenous lands elsewhere. The tension between intrinsic and instrumental values is relevant also in relation to other cases of protected area management, where Indigenous peoples work to find spaces and strategies for political agency and influence (cf. Bluemel 2005). The incorporation of traditional and indigenous knowledge in nature conservation policy and practice is the subject of ongoing debates (cf. Raymond *et al.* 2010, Reimerson 2013), as is the inclusion of multiple stakeholders and the establishment of co-management or joint management structures for natural resource management (cf. Berkes 2009, Zachrisson 2009a). This study shows the importance of continuing critical discussions on how these processes, and the power structures in which they

are embedded, shape the space for agency of Indigenous peoples in relation to protected area management.

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