

The participation of tourism and outdoor recreation interests in coastal national park management in Norway – a lack of integration?

Jan Vidar Haukeland, Institute of Transport Economics - Norwegian Centre for Transport Research, Norway, jvh@toi.no

Knut Bjørn Stokke, The Faculty of Landscape and Society, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, NMBU, Norway

Problem statement

The Norwegian national parks system was established in the beginning of the 1960s with a chief aim of nature conservation, and to a lesser degree, outdoor recreation. In recent years, the protected areas' tourism and outdoor recreation functions have come more to the forefront of management strategies. A central research question is whether the outdoor recreation and tourism actors are well incorporated into the participatory planning and management processes. The paper addresses the participation of outdoor recreation and tourism stakeholders in the management of two Norwegian coastal national parks. By means of individual interviews, we aim to reveal stakeholders' roles and functions in the management systems of *Ytre Hvaler* and *Færder* national parks.

National parks and management system in Norway

Norway's Nature Diversity Act (2009) states that national parks can be designated in large areas of natural habitats that contain distinctive or representative ecosystems or landscapes, and where there is no major infrastructure development. Accordingly, the country's national parks have typically been located in rural and remote alpine regions, whereas coastal landscapes, particularly in the southern and western parts of Norway, have been underrepresented. National jurisdiction, park regulations and management plans have guaranteed free and unlimited visitor access to the parks by way of accepting the tradition of *friluftsliv* (outdoor recreation) with low levels of technical assistance. In recent years, however, the Norwegian national nature management agencies have increasingly acknowledged the various user interests in the protected areas; a branding and visitor strategy for the national parks was launched in 2015 and is now about to be implemented. These new trends are highly relevant to the coastal national parks, with larger population concentrations nearby and quite intensive user pressure from tourism and outdoor recreation activities.

Coastal national parks



Figure 1. Map of *Ytre Hvaler National Park* and *Færder National Park* in Outer Oslofjord, Norway

In 2009, the first coastal and marine national park in Norway, Ytre Hvaler National Park, was established on the eastern side of outer Oslofjord. Færder National Park, located on the opposite side of the fjord, was inaugurated in 2013 (Figure 1). Ytre Hvaler and Færder national parks are the case study areas of our research. The protected areas are similar in that they consist mostly of marine territory and relatively small terrestrial sections of the shoreline.

There is reason to believe that the coastal national park management system, with its given jurisdiction, management regulations, management plans, professional competences, financial and staff resources, etc., are not properly designed to handle the high volume of visitors or the variations in visiting patterns (Stokke & Haukeland 2017). As a response to this management deficiency, the coastal national park managers try to form professional networks amongst themselves and learn from each other's experiences and management practices (Stokke, Haukeland & Hansen 2017).

Interview data

The data for this paper is semi-structured interviews with representatives from four tourism providers in the two parks, the outdoor recreation organization for the Oslofjord (*Oslofjordens friluftsråd*), the national park centers and the business department in the municipality in Færder National Park, and the tourist destination company *Visit Fredrikstad and Hvaler*. The interviews were conducted in the period from August 2017 to February 2018.

Results and discussion

According to the interviews, the stakeholders representing outdoor recreation and tourism interests have modest roles in the management of the two national parks. Their involvement is mainly limited to participation in reference groups, which serve as a forum for local interests, and in which tourism-related issues are not always at the top of the agenda. This is in line with previous research of other Norwegian national parks, which indicates that these reference groups have, in general, very little actual influence (Hovik & Hongslo, 2016). Another limitation is that the outdoor recreation organizations and tourism industry interests in both areas are relatively weak and fragmented.

An important organization for both parks is *Oslofjordens friluftsråd*. This regional organization for outdoor recreation initiated the work, as early as in the 1930s, to safeguard public outdoor interests along the Oslofjord, and in the Færder and Ytre Hvaler areas. Thus, the organization has worked to prevent the development of second homes and other installations along the coast, which has been common in other parts of the region. This long-lasting endeavor was an important foundation for the establishment of the two national parks. However, the organization's participation in national park management is quite limited, even though it possesses key competence in coastal recreation and tourism management and was interested in participating in the boards when the two national parks were established.

An interesting distinction between the two national parks, however, is that tourism stakeholders in Færder National Park have, to a greater extent, expressed interest in the tourism potential that the protected status of the natural resources represents. The difference is probably due to historical reasons; the establishment of Færder National Park was a result of a local initiative, whereas Ytre Hvaler National Park was already part of the initial national National Park Plan. The affected municipalities in and around Færder National Park have promoted the national park as a destination for outdoor recreation and tourism, and, in many ways, bridge the gaps between tourism and outdoor recreation and national park management.

References

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