

The moral landscapes of Dovrefjell – Exploring relationships between morality and landscape in the struggles over a highly valued mountain area in Norway

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This paper explores the relationships between morality and landscape in the struggles over use and management of the Dovrefjell area. Dovrefjell is a mountain area in Norway with strong natural, cultural, symbolic and economic values and meanings. Dovrefjell has both high recreational value and it is an area of great environmental significance – in particular as a vital habitat for wild reindeer. In a trans-disciplinary study, the relations between the requirements of wild reindeer, people's recreation patterns and rural development based on Dovrefjell's resources, have been examined. The present paper is based on interviews with stakeholders and document analyses from this study. Grounded in past and present re- and devaluations of the landscapes of Dovrefjell, different stakeholders mobilise different moralities regarding landscape and nature.

Throughout history the landscapes of Dovrefjell has served many different purposes, and the area's resources have continuously been re- and devaluated. While *reevaluation* means assessing the value of something once again, *devaluation* is to reduce the worth or importance of something. Both these processes have been taking place at Dovrefjell, regarding environmental, cultural, economic as well as symbolic values. How different groups of people have valued, and seen the purpose of, Dovrefjell has changed along with wider changes in society. There are traces of human activity at Dovrefjell dating back 9000 years. Historically, the area has been a vital arterial road, but also a barrier, between north and south, and east and west. Because of its central location and majestic mountains, Dovrefjell has also become a national symbol for Norway, and its symbolic meaning was solemnly manifested when the Constitution of Norway was adopted in 1814, and the Constituent Assembly, after finishing the negotiations over the Constitution, stated that they would remain "in agreement and faithful until Dovre[fjell] falls" ("*evige og troe til Dovre faller*").

Since the late 1880s, Dovrefjell has also been valued as an area for outdoor recreation. During the 20th century The Norwegian Trekking Organisation (DNT) established several tourist cabins at Dovrefjell, and one of them was Snøheim. In the post 2nd World War period the national firing range, established at Dovrefjell in 1923, expanded and in 1959 Snøheim was taken over by the military, (shortly after being erected). After a long process fuelled both by the military's need for more space and environmental protection concerns, the firing range was closed down and relocated in 2005. The area that used to be a firing range was then decided incorporated with the protected surrounding area, and at present a massive renaturation project is taking place, removing all traces of military activity. The Snøheim tourist cabin has now been taken over by DNT and reopened. The military built several roads in the area, among

them the 14 km road into Snøheim – *Snøheimvegen*. It was originally decided that this road should be part of the renaturation project, but whether or not *Snøheimvegen* actually will, or should be, removed has been highly debated.

Dovrefjell has a rich flora and fauna, and certain species have been protected for many decades. In 2002 Dovrefjell and Sunndalsfjella National Park was founded, replacing the smaller Dovrefjell National Park, founded in 1974. Surrounding the National Park are several other protected areas. Currently, there are discussions and tensions along different dimensions regarding how Dovrefjell should be managed. Daugstad et al. (2006), point at a "three-dimensional complexity" in these discussions, highlighting use-protection, nature-culture and local-central (management) as three different axes on which the stakeholders dynamically place themselves in complex ways.

The concept of moral landscapes addresses the inter-relationships between moral assessments and landscapes. It concerns how landscapes both shape and reflect moral values, and how moral boundaries are naturalised in and through landscapes (Setten and Brown, 2009). Setten and Brown highlight four approaches to studies of moral landscapes. In the present paper, these four approaches are used and adjusted in order to form an analytical framework to demonstrate how morality and landscape at Dovrefjell are entangled. (1) *Conduct in place* is what Setten and Brown terms the approach where landscape forms a stage upon which the moral judgements of people and practices are made. What is appropriate behaviour in a certain landscape? In the interviews there are for example statements about what kinds of tourists are "wanted" at Dovrefjell – namely "mountain people" with backpacks rather than car drivers with suitcases in the boot. (2) *Moral practice and landscape* refers to the assumption that people's relationships to their surroundings are expressed through practice, and that these practices also shape landscapes. Practices and landscapes are co-constituted in a process involving moral judgements and assessments. These processes have been obvious in the continuous re- and devaluation processes at Dovrefjell. For example, revised moral valuations were drivers both when the firing range was established and when it was closed down, causing landscape changes which in turn caused changed practices. (3) *Landscape as polity* is the expression of law, justice and culture through landscape – landscape as an organised entity developed in the interrelationship between the physical landscape, formal institutions, custom and tradition. One can look at Dovrefjell as polity in terms of how various managerial bodies have taken into account community, culture, law, morality and custom in their management of the landscape. (4) *Landscape and social justice* addresses the claim that landscape can produce and reproduce

power relations and social identities. At Dovrefjell there is a struggle over which “truths” count, with contenders in this struggle different users and interest organisations as well as management bodies and researchers. Dovrefjell as a national symbol might also contribute to maintain existing power geometries.

The present paper demonstrates that the landscapes of Dovrefjell both shape and reflect different moralities, and that these relationships play a profound role in different stakeholders’ assessments of environmental values and impacts.