

# Parks for whom?

## A Norwegian policy dilemma: recreation vs indigenous interests

Jan Å. Riseth

**Abstract** — As most countries, Norway has adopted the Yellowstone model for nature protection; limiting humans' role to be guests in nature. The country established its first national park in 1962. In 2008, 14.3 % of the mainland is formally protected; including 29 national parks, many established newly. Recent decades' growing concern of the insufficiency of this protection model includes the lack of seeing conservation as a social issue, not only a biological one, was confirmed by the Vth World Park Conference in 2003. The same year the Norwegian government advanced a new policy for increased use of national parks for commercial tourism, named the "*Mountain Text*". The fact not addressed is that 18 of 29 parks are situated in Sámi reindeer pasture areas. The contemporary policy has revealed an unexpected conflict of objectives. Whereas the *Mountain Text* strengthen the goal of recreation, affected Sámi herders fear that parks instead of protection for them will mean increased disturbance of vulnerable animals and areas and accordingly have changed their basic attitudes from being positive to becoming ambiguous towards new parks and park extensions. This is a problem both in equity as well as efficiency perspective and also a source of new conflicts. Norway currently reforms its conservation legislation to reinforce biodiversity protection. Though indigenous interests have not so far become a core issue in this process; this process and the international process under the Convention on Biological Diversity together create a window of opportunities for reconciling conflicting objectives. One of the relevant instruments is the IUCN Category VI, available from 1994, which juxtaposes biodiversity protection and sustainable use.

**Index Terms** — Commercial tourism, convention on biological diversity, indigenous interests, IUCN category VI Yellowstone model

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1 INTRODUCTION

Long-term protection of nature for maintenance of biodiversity and as material basis for indigenous culture, have much in common. In line with this the establishment of the first generation of Norwegian national parks in the 1960s and 1970s did not create conspicuous conflicts with the Sámi reindeer industry though 10

of 13 parks were set up within the Area of Sámi Reindeer Management Entitlement.

Nevertheless, nature philosophies and management models differ much. Indigenous relations to nature are based on unity between use and protection; i.e. humans are necessary for effective protection. In contrast, the western tradition of protection of natural areas, with a history back to the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park in USA in 1872, is based on separation of nature and culture. Whereas millions of tourists and city dwellers have enjoyed the park outdoors; three tribes were made outlaws in their own lands [1]. In more than a century the Yellowstone model has been

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J.Å.Riseth is with the Norut-Northern research institute P.O. Box 250, N-8504 Narvik, Norway. E-mail: janar@norut.no.

replicated across the globe: While tourists are encouraged to enjoy national parks as visitors indigenous peoples are marginalised and dispossessed and their role as resource managers devalued or rendered invisible [2].

The apparent harmony in Norway which seem to have lasted at up to the 1980s can probably to a large extent be explained by a combination of relatively large outfield areas per inhabitant and modest promotion of parks as recreation areas, but the Sámi people's low societal position may also have caused under communication of their interests earlier.

Technological change within reindeer management, including use of all-terrain-vehicles (ATVs), created elements of tension between officials and reindeer herders in some parks from the 1980s [3]. During the implementation of a second generation national park plan from the mid-1990s on, and still going on, several cases of scepticism and resistance from Reindeer Pasture Districts (RPDs), other Sámi interests, and also the Sámi Parliament have emerged and developed [4]. While one protection process was stopped due to local Sámi resistance; the Sámi of one region boycotted the inauguration of two parks and the board of one of them [5]. A survey answered by 23 RPD leaders, affected by six parks, reveals that reindeer herding Sámi have become ambiguous towards the protection effect of parks for their interests [6].

The objectives of this paper are (1) to explore the reasons for the emerging conflict between the Norwegian park policy and Sámi reindeer management interests and (2) to point to possible solutions.

## 2 FACTORS OF CHANGE

The obvious common interests between nature conservation and the reindeer industry seem to have been dominant from the 1960s on. As tensions and conflicts have emerged we need to inquire a how a bundle of factors have changed.

### 2.1 Modernized reindeer industry

The reindeer herding Sámi have become more integrated in the surrounding society, and their methods of management have been changed through a technological revolution, starting by the introduction of the snowmobile in the mid-1960s, where muscular power from animals and humans to a large extent have been exchanged by motor power, at all seasons [7]. ATVs cause manifest tracks and challenge the ideal of pristine nature.

### 2.2 Recreation society expansion

General societal trends, such as expansion of the road system, improved personal economy; more leisure time and the car becoming everybody's property have both made mountain areas more accessible for the general urban population and also doubled the number of secondary homes during three decades [8]. Besides direct encroachments the problem for the reindeer industry is avoidance effects; i.e. the more the animals are disturbed by people, the less grazing and the poorer economy for their owners [9].

### 2.3 Nature protection apparatus

Major events in the set up of an administrative apparatus of nature protection were:

- 1962- First National Park established
- 1964- First National Park Plan (green book)
- 1970- New Nature Protection Act (adopted)
- 1972- Ministry of Environment
- 1982- Regional Environmental Departments

The phases of the Second National Park Plan were: Green book 1986, white book 1992, adoption 1993, implementation from 1994 and set up of new parks from 2001-2006 (final fulfilment planned 2010).

The internal Norwegian development went on in parallel with international events as the World Commission of Environment and Development (1987) and major conferences, such as those of Stockholm (1972) and Rio (1992). In line with this Norway has

ratified a row of international conventions including the Convention on Biological Diversity (COB, 1993).

The nature conservancy apparatus has still limited resources and operates in a tension between challenges and possibilities. One inter-national challenge is the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) goal that all countries should protect 15 % of their land surface. In 2008 Norway has reached 14.3% [10], but a major part of the protected areas are remote mountain areas with relatively low biodiversity, while protection of areas of higher biodiversity that coincide with higher population and development pressure, e. g. along waterways and fiords, lag much compared to the need of protection [11]. As in other countries, protected areas in Norway tend be *residual lands*, areas not needed for other purposes [12], or maybe areas not having actors for other interests being strong enough to avoid protection.

## 2.4 indigenous interests

Under influence from Social Darwinism and the doctrine of *terra nullius*, reindeer management was from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century considered as no more than a tolerated use obliged to give way to better entitlements. Major events contributing to the improvement of the societal standing of the Sámi and the reindeer industry were:

1968-Supreme Court stating full land rights  
 1976-General Agreement-reindeer industry  
 1978-Act of Reindeer Management  
 1987- Constitution Amendments, Sámi Act  
 1989-Sámi Parliament  
 1990-Ratification of ILO Convention 169  
 2005-Land Reform starts. Consultation right  
 2007-Agreement on protection planning

The list of events makes evident that the reindeer herding Sámi during four recent decades have improved their formal standing considerably. Obviously their expectations of influence in societal processes including processes of park establishment are quite at another level than in the 1960s.

## 2.5 Contemporary policy

The total protection area of Norway has increased sevenfold since 1975, mainly as an outcome of the Second National Park Plan. Obviously this could not take place without tensions and conflicts. In accordance with the intentions of Agenda 21 the Parliament took initiatives to increase local involvement and influence in protection processes and park management. One of the outcomes was that the government in 2003 advanced a new policy for increased use of national parks for commercial tourism, named the "*Mountain Text*". The intention was to give something back to local communities, i.e. to provide new opportunities for activity and income in rural areas [13]. However, this change in policy has unintended consequences.

## 3 CONFLICT OF OBJECTIVES

Whereas the *Mountain Text* strengthen the goal of recreation, affected Sámi herders fear that parks instead of protection for them will mean increased disturbance of vulnerable animals and areas and accordingly have changed their basic attitudes from being positive to becoming ambiguous towards new parks and park extensions.

### 3.1 Policy basis

According to IUCN Category II national parks are "*protected areas managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation*". The expansion phase of the nature protection apparatus in Norway engraved the sector by a natural science basis and political consensus processes. Accordingly, the network of protection areas were selected in accordance with expert judgment of protection value while the concrete design of the park area and management regime were adjusted through cooptation processes [14] trying to achieve as far as possible a local/regional consensus around the final solution.

### 3.2 Changing objectives

Up to the 1980s public reports on nature management had little focus on the relation to reindeer management. The objects clauses for parks established in the 1960s throughout the 1980s do not mention protection of the natural base for reindeer management. It is remarkable that the often only land users completely dependent on sustainable use of the protected areas not are mentioned.

This changed by the Second National Park Plan implemented from the mid 1990s. For new parks the objects clauses have an addendum: "*Safeguarding the natural base ... is important for Sámi culture and industry. The area can be used for reindeer management*" [15]. Despite this, recreation is still mentioned before reindeer management, and further; the position of recreation is reinforced through the new policy of the Mountain Text. The assessments of the situation for the reindeer industry are inquired by a survey to herder leaders representing the majority of herder households in Norway [6].

### 3.3 Survey outcome

The survey shows that the half of the asked leaders consider the advantages of a park within their district to be greater than the drawbacks. Those having achieved better protection of their winter land are most positive as this also reduce disturbance as recreation driving with snowmobiles. Those with a more negative attitude to parks tend to be districts with parks in their summer land. This can be connected with negative experiences or expectations of increased tourism in the parks.

There is also a comprehensive dissatisfaction with how the reindeer industry has been involved in park establishment and management. I.e. the survey confirms that the reindeer herding Sámi have ambiguous attitudes towards park establishments in their areas. Park establishment can be pos-

itive, but if a park means more encroachment and disturbance, more bureaucracy and reduced influence over traditional areas of the reindeer industry, a park can also be a negative phenomenon [6]. Accordingly, the question is how, and on which premises, can it be possible to bridge the opposing interests between the reindeer industry and parks?

## 4 PROBLEM AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Our review reveals a problem including as well equity as well as efficiency aspects. Not taking action will be an obvious source of new conflicts.

### 4.1 Problem to address

The equity side of the problem includes making the formal achievements of the Sámi and the reindeer industry real within the field of protection policy. As the government via the Mountain Text tried to practice Agenda 21 intentions for local people, these were clearly overlooked for *indigenous* people. Moreover, the protection processes in the Second National Park Plan were conducted without taking much attention to Sámi interests, even when protests were clear, unequivocal and principally based. In all park processes, except one, Sámi protests have been overruled [4], [6]. In reality, the first principal breakthrough did not take place before 2007 (see 2.4). Until then Sámi interests have been treated like one of many interests which the protection apparatus could or could not give weight in their case treatment. However, the agreement of 2007 provides Sámi interests a special access to the process at all levels, but no guarantees of influencing the outcome. We see this as a necessary but insufficient contribution to resolve the problem for the reindeer industry; that will require that protection of herding interests receives priority over recreation interests.

## 4.2 Possible solutions

Norway currently reforms its conservation legislation to reinforce biodiversity protection. Though indigenous interests have not so far become a core issue in this process; this process and the international process under the COB, demanding indigenous influence within 2010, together create a window of opportunities for reconciling conflicting objectives. One of the relevant instruments is the IUCN Category VI, available from 1994, which *juxtaposes biodiversity protection and sustainable use*. Other international instruments, such as community conservation areas, are also available, but we consider Category VI as sufficient. Our main argument is that recreation and reindeer management are no way incompatible interest; what counts is who is to give the premises, i.e. *who is going to adapt to whom*. In line with the trends of the Vth World Park Congress in 2003 we underline that protection need to be a societal issue to be efficient [16]. Therefore the long-term main users should be given priority and other interest should adapt to the reindeer industry.

## 5 CONCLUSION

We recommend that IUCN Category VI become standard category for larger protection areas within the Area of Sámi Reindeer Management Entitlement as this will provide opportunities for solving the perceived problem both on equity and efficiency basis.

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**Jan Å. Riseth** M. Sc. in Nature Management (1979) Ph. D. in Natural Resource Economics (2000); Directorate for Reindeer Management 1980-90. Municipality of Narvik 1990-92. Narvik University College 1992-2002. Norut- Northern Research institute 2002-. Sámi University College, Sámi Research Institute (part time) 2003-; *Research interests*: Nature management. Sámi Reindeer Management (climate change, traditional/indigenous knowledge, institutional economics, innovations).