



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY
Francesca Marucco,
University of Turin, Italy

REVIEWED BY
Emily Pomeranz,
State of Michigan, United States
Jennifer Bond,
Charles Sturt University, Australia

*CORRESPONDENCE
Elsa Reimerson
✉ elsa.reimerson@umu.se

SPECIALTY SECTION
This article was submitted to
Human-Wildlife Interactions,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Conservation Science

RECEIVED 22 November 2022
ACCEPTED 28 December 2022
PUBLISHED 01 February 2023

CITATION
Flodén L and Reimerson E (2023)
Conservation, collaboration, and claims:
Saemie inclusion and influence in a
Swedish national park process.
Front. Conserv. Sci. 3:1105415.
doi: 10.3389/fcosc.2022.1105415

COPYRIGHT
© 2023 Flodén and Reimerson. This is an
open-access article distributed under the
terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution
License \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution or
reproduction in other forums is permitted,
provided the original author(s) and the
copyright owner(s) are credited and that
the original publication in this journal is
cited, in accordance with accepted
academic practice. No use, distribution or
reproduction is permitted which does not
comply with these terms.

Conservation, collaboration, and claims: Saemie inclusion and influence in a Swedish national park process

Linn Flodén and Elsa Reimerson*

Department of Political Science, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

In Sweden, environmental governance and management has historically been centralized, with low levels of local influence and control. Although a large proportion of the areas set aside for environmental protection in Sweden are located in Saepmie, the traditional lands of the Saemie people, Saemie influence in the governance and management of these areas has been limited. However, recent events and ongoing processes indicate a potential change in both discourse and policy practice. This paper critically examines the planning process for a proposed national park in the southern part of the Swedish mountain range. It was organized in a collaborative and participatory form, including Saemie representatives on both local and central levels. After several years of planning, local Saemie opposition to the park led to the termination of the process. We investigate discursive constructions of the local Saemie actors' inclusion in the process and their effects on possible Saemie influence. Our results show that state and Saemie actors articulate inclusion in different ways, limiting and enabling varying forms of influence. The landscape and the state of nature were central constructions affecting the process, and the project's aim transformed over time – with significant consequences for the process and, possibly, also its results.

KEYWORDS

conservation, protected areas, collaborative governance and planning, indigenous peoples, discourse

1 Introduction

In efforts to meet the various and increasing threats towards natural environments and ecological systems and to protect, secure, and enhance natural landscapes, biological diversity, and ecological resources, nature conservation policies – often in the form of protected areas – continue to be a significant part of environmental policies and strategies globally (Watson et al., 2014; Dudley et al., 2017). However, the policies and practices of protected areas has often come with extensive social, economic, and political consequences for the Indigenous peoples and local communities whose lands overlap significantly with lands set aside for nature conservation (Colchester, 2004; West et al., 2006; Oldekop et al.,

2016; Tauli-Corpuz et al., 2020). In recent decades, Indigenous peoples' mobilization and political struggles have resulted in increased acknowledgement of Indigenous rights, and of the contributions of Indigenous knowledge and practices to conservation objectives, within the international community and among international conservation authorities (Garnett et al., 2018; Redmore et al., 2018). Shifts in dominating discourses of conservation and of Indigenous peoples have also opened up new opportunities for Indigenous peoples in relation to protected areas on their lands, not least through different forms of shared or collaborative governance and management arrangements (Stevens, 2014; von der Porten et al., 2019; Dawson et al., 2021). Still, Indigenous peoples' rights to access and manage traditional lands and waters are not always respected or secured, and collaborative conservation governance and management do not always deliver the positive outcomes expected (von der Porten and de Loë, 2014; Finegan, 2018; Grey and Kuokkanen, 2020; Kashwan et al., 2021).

In Sweden, a large proportion of the areas set aside for environmental protection are located in Saepmie, the traditional lands of the Saemie people.¹ Like other Indigenous peoples, the relationships between the states and the Saemie have been characterized by unequal power relations, control, and oppression, beginning with the states' colonization of land in Saepmie (Ojala and Nordin, 2019; Össbo, 2022). Sweden generally continues to claim ownership of lands and natural resources in Saepmie, with limited recognition of Saemie territorial rights (Allard, 2011). Swedish environmental governance and management has historically been largely centralized, with low levels of local influence and control (Holmgren et al., 2017). Saemie influence in the governance and management of protected areas has also been limited, with few mechanisms for specifically ensuring Saemie participation and influence (Josefsen et al., 2014; Allard, 2018; Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2019; Allard and Brännström, 2021).

However, a shift may be occurring in the field of Swedish conservation policies, where some recent examples diverge from the traditional centralized governance and management structure and instead stress collaborative forms of implementing and managing protected areas, emphasizing local influence, participation, and knowledge and acknowledging Saemie rights (Reimerson, 2016; Holmgren et al., 2017). In this paper, we examine one such example: the planning process for the proposed Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags National Park in the southern part of the Swedish mountain range. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) identified the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area as suitable for a new national park in 2008 (Naturvårdsverket, 2008). The proposed park

1 The Saemie are an Indigenous people whose traditional lands stretch across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian Kola Peninsula. Saemie subsistence, livelihoods, and culture have always relied on a variety of activities, but reindeer herding is central to Saemie culture and identity (cf. Larsson Blind, 2022).

To reflect the communities and regions in focus in this paper, we use the terms *Saepmie* and *Saemie* in South Saemie language (saS, *åarjelsaemien giële*). Other terms or spellings (e.g., *Sámi* from North Sámi language (saN, *davvisámejiella*) or the anglicized *Sami* or *Saami*) may occur in cited works or references.

would be Sweden's largest, and almost all of it covering core Saemie reindeer grazing areas. The national park planning process began in 2015 with the explicit intention to include local actors, including three Saemie Reindeer Herding Communities (RHCs)², and included work to jointly develop goals and overarching objectives for a potential park – but in 2019, the process ended with a decision to not establish a new national park in the area (SEPA, 2019). Although many factors may have contributed, the demands, claims, and opposition of the RHCs stand out as central to that result (Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022).

The Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process represents a novel and unique case of participatory and collaborative conservation processes in Saepmie on the Swedish side. The outcome, where Saemie opposition contributed to stop a national park process, is largely unprecedented. In addition to being a highly interesting case of negotiations of the form and content of collaborative conservation arrangements, this case highlights a potential shift in Swedish conservation policy. Through a critical examination of this process, focusing on the inclusion and influence of local Saemie actors, this paper contributes to the understanding of collaborative nature conservation processes in relation to Indigenous peoples' various realities, political claims, and traditional lands. Our analysis focuses on dominant discursive constructions, their consequences for the process, and their potential transformation over time.

2 Background and context

2.1 Conservation and colonialism

Discourses on nature conservation are intertwined with discourses on Indigenous peoples and their political claims, identities, and lands in complex ways. The notion of protecting 'wild' and 'untouched' landscapes from damaging human activities stems from a view of the concept of 'nature' that defines it in binary opposition to the concept of 'culture' (Adams, 2003). These 'othering' practices of colonial discourses have also included Indigenous peoples and their traditional lands, as the concept of 'nature' was ascribed to both remote or 'wild' places and to the Indigenous peoples who lived in and cared for these places. Indigenous peoples, in this view, were portrayed as inferior and primitive 'Others' to the colonizers modern, civilized 'Self' (Plumwood, 2003; Loomba, 2005). The nature/culture dichotomy has thus worked both to justify strict regulation of human activities and to marginalize Indigenous peoples' various relationships to, knowledge of, and dependencies on their traditional lands (Reimerson, 2013; Reimerson, 2015). Colonial conservation discourses and practices have worked to remove and alienate Indigenous peoples from their lands, and have failed to recognize the agency and stewardship of Indigenous peoples in the conservation and protection of nature and natural resources (Domínguez and Luoma, 2020; Kashwan et al., 2021).

2 An RHC (Swe: *sameby*, lit. "Saemie village") is an economic association for Saemie reindeer herders. It also refers to the geographical area in which the RHC is entitled to pursue reindeer husbandry. Reindeer herding is an exclusive Saemie right in Sweden, but to exercise that right, the individual Saemie must be a member of an RHC (SFS 1971:437).

In Sweden, colonial and racist notions have permeated dominant discourses on the Saemie people, constructing them as a subordinate race, incompatible with modern civilization and development, and unfit for political influence, land ownership, and management of their own livelihoods (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008; Ojala, 2020; Össbo, 2022). Despite the Swedish Parliament's official recognition of the Saemie as an Indigenous people, Swedish political discourses tend to articulate the Saemie as a minority group, rather than an Indigenous people – with significant consequences for the Saemie's possible political agency, claims, and legal position (Allard, 2022). International bodies have repeatedly criticized Sweden for not realizing and securing Saemie Indigenous rights (Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2019). The state generally claims ownership of Saemie traditional lands and limits the enjoyment of Saemie land use rights to those active in reindeer herding, thus excluding a majority of Saemie communities and individuals from exercising their Indigenous rights to land (Mörkenstam, 2019; Allard and Brännström, 2021).

Perceived as primitive and pre-modern, Saemie land uses and livelihoods were in the 19th and early 20th centuries often regarded as part of nature, as such compatible (or at least not in direct opposition to) nature conservation, and allowed to continue in protected areas (Andersson Hjulman, 2016). As discourses shifted and Saemie reindeer husbandry developed and modernized, conservation interests have increasingly come into conflict with Saemie land uses. Protected areas can serve to protect Saemie lands from other encroachments – however, they still often limit Saemie customary rights and activities, and differing worldviews, goals, and views on appropriate land and natural resource use continue to be a source of conflict in protected areas (Allard, 2016; Österlin et al., 2020). Colonial legacies remain in nature conservation and other environmental governance arrangements in Saemie, affecting or even hindering the realization of Saemie demands for increased influence over land use decisions and planning on their traditional lands (Reimerson, 2015; Reimerson, 2016; Grey and Kuokkanen, 2020; Stjernström et al., 2020).

Postcolonial perspectives on conservation and area protection on Indigenous lands highlight power structures and relationships based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender as embedded and produced in discourses of both conservation and of Indigenous peoples (Adams, 2003). Postcolonial approaches offers ways to identify, question, and deconstruct the dominant assumptions and power relationships stemming from colonial discourses (Hall, 1996; Loomba, 2005), and to further our understanding of how power works and manifests in and through conservation and protected area language and practices (Dominguez and Luoma, 2020; Kashwan et al., 2021). These perspectives are especially salient for the critical examination of the collaborative governance and management practices now being broadly promoted in the fields of conservation and protected areas (Purdy, 2012; Finegan, 2018).

2.2 Protected areas, Indigenous peoples, and collaborative governance

Protected areas have constituted an essential part of environmental protection policies globally since the establishment of the first national parks in the late 19th century, and have often been

modeled after the strict form of environmental protection implemented in those parks (Watson et al., 2014; Redmore et al., 2018). Early nature protection policies served as a mean for national state authorities to protect 'wild', 'untouched', or 'pristine' natural landscapes from human activities perceived as damaging to those values – often ignoring long traditions of use and stewardship of those landscapes by Indigenous peoples and local communities (Adams, 2003). Protected areas have been implemented by national authorities without consideration of Indigenous peoples' and local communities' various dependencies on, claims to, and knowledge about their traditional lands, and have been established, governed, and managed without their influence or control (Colchester, 2004; Domínguez and Luoma, 2020; Tauli-Corpuz et al., 2020). Protected areas have often restricted Indigenous peoples' and local communities' access to land and natural resources in their traditional territories, leading to displacements and loss of livelihood, income, and historical, social, and spiritual values – commonly without compensation (West et al., 2006; Colchester et al., 2008; Agrawal and Redford, 2009).

Following Indigenous peoples' political mobilization and efforts to influence international bodies, global environmental protection discourses are increasingly addressing the marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the conservation policy field, acknowledging the contributions of Indigenous knowledge and practices to conservation goals, and recognizing Indigenous rights in relation to protected areas (Dawson et al., 2021). Recent decades have also seen a growing trend in global environmental protection discourses of promoting collaborative implementation and management systems that acknowledge and respect Indigenous rights (Stevens, 2014; Bodin, 2017; Finegan, 2018; von der Porten et al., 2019). This shift is also notable in Sweden, where nature conservation policies have historically mostly been implemented by centralized national authorities without any substantial influence or consideration of local people, but where top-down governance modes are increasingly being replaced by more collaborative arrangements (Holmgren et al., 2017). Examples include Fulufjället National Park and the Laponia World Heritage Site – both of which include traditional lands of the Indigenous Saemie people (Zachrisson, 2009; Reimerson, 2016).

Almost 15% of the total land- and inland water area in Sweden is set aside for protection, the majority as national parks (12% of the total protected area) and nature reserves (84%). A large proportion of these areas include or cover traditional Saemie lands, and large parts of Saemie on the Swedish side are under some form of environmental protection (SCB and Naturvårdsverket, 2022). However, there are few mentions of Saemie customs or of reindeer herding in Swedish protected area legislation, and no specific provisions concentrating on matters concerning Saemie culture, rights, land uses, and livelihoods (Allard, 2016). In 2022, a new law on Saemie consultation rights was issued (SFS 2022:66) – but before this, Sweden has largely lacked state obligations to consult the Saemie in decision-making processes concerning land and natural resources in Saemie beyond general regulations of public and industry consultation and information (Allard, 2018; Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2019).

Swedish protected area governance and management has traditionally stressed top-down management and expert knowledge,

with few mechanisms for local involvement and input of local knowledge (Holmgren et al., 2017). The SEPA is responsible for monitoring and coordinating implementation of protected areas under the Environmental Code (SFS 1998:808). The County Administrative Boards (CAB; regional state authorities) are, in most cases, responsible for the day-to-day management of protected areas (SFS 1987:938; SFS 1998:1252). Some recent examples of collaborative implementation and management processes of protected areas may indicate a shift, including the Fulufjället National Park (Zachrisson, 2009; Holmgren et al., 2017), the Laponia World Heritage Site (Reimerson, 2016), and the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags National Park planning process (Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022), which is the focus of this paper.

3 Methods and materials

3.1 The Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process

The Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags region is located in the counties of Jämtland and Härjedalen in the southern part of the Swedish mountain range. The landscape in the area is characterized by mountains with softer shapes than those further north, separated by broad valleys, high tablelands, and coniferous forests. Its highest mountain peaks are Sylarna (saS: *Bealjehkkh*) and Helags (saS: *Maajäelkie*), which also hosts the southernmost glaciers in Sweden. Vålådalen (saS: *Bijjie Spädtja*) is a village and mountain tourism resort. The region is considered a sanctuary for rare and endangered species including lynx, wolverine, and kestrel. It is also a popular destination for outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, fishing, and hunting. It has an encompassing network of state-managed hiking trails, of which the trails between the Storulvån, Sylarna, and Blåhammaren mountain stations (the 'Jämtland triangle') are some of the most visited in the Swedish mountains (Naturvårdsverket, 2008). The SEPA identified the area as suitable for a national park in its National Park Plan of 2008 (Naturvårdsverket, 2008). The park would have been Sweden's largest. The Swedish state claims ownership over most of the land, while smaller parts are privately owned. Almost the entire proposed national park area would cover traditional Saemie lands, used for reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting by the RHCs Handölsdalen, Tåssåsen, and Mittådalen.

The planning of the national park in Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags started with the Jämtland CAB, on commission from the SEPA, conducting a pilot study to examine the conditions for a national park in the area. The results led to the formal initiation of the national park planning process in 2015. A preparatory committee (Swe: *beredningsgrupp*) was created, comprising representatives from the SEPA, the CAB, Åre and Berg municipalities, the tourism industry (represented by Jämtland Härjedalen Tourism, a cooperative society for tourism businesses in the two counties), the Saemiedigkie (the Saemie Parliament), and the three reindeer herding communities of the area. About a year later, in 2016, the RHCs presented a number of questions and demands concerning the proposed national park to the SEPA and CAB, stating their intention to oppose the continuation of the process if these were not answered and met. After several exchanges, eventually including a response from the Director-

General of the SEPA and the County Governor of Jämtland, the RHCs agreed to support a continued process. The park planning process was then restarted and reorganized in 2017. New project leaders were hired, the project plan was revised, and a coordinator for Saemie issues was appointed. The work of the preparatory committee continued, including agreement on a final draft on the purpose, goals, and general orientation of the national park. However, following internal discussions, the Handölsdalen RHC eventually concluded that they could no longer support that agreement, and the national park planning process was terminated in 2019 (SEPA, 2019; Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022).

3.2 Analytical framework

This study aims to examine and deconstruct dominant discursive constructions affecting the inclusion and influence of local Saemie actors in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park planning process. For this analysis, we use selected key concepts from discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). For discourse analysis to be used in meaningful ways, it needs to be related to one or several historical backgrounds – that is, we need an idea of which structures to analyze discursive constructions in relation to. Discourses of both nature conservation and of Indigenous peoples carry a legacy of colonial notions, many of which remain today (Dominguez and Luoma, 2020; Kashwan et al., 2021). In this paper, we therefore use a postcolonial approach to situate and examine discursive constructions within the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process.

'Discourse' is here understood as 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)' (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 1). Discourse analysis aims to identify the processes through which meanings and understandings of the social world are constructed, to examine how power structures relationships, identities, and knowledge in cultural and historical contexts, and to ask what social and political consequences this may entail. The discourse theoretical approach, as employed in this paper, focuses on how non-personal, broad, and abstract discourses construct knowledge and political, social, and cultural spheres. These abstract discourses are constructed, reconstructed, and challenged through a myriad of concrete social and linguistic practices. Discourses can never be entirely fixed, unified, or finished, but are momentary fixations of meaning, and there can be multiple, intertwined discourses in the same social context – with different meanings of individual signs. As these fixations of meaning are open to struggles and contestation, they are processes of power and politics (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Postcolonial theory adds to the discursive framework the understanding of how unequal relationships between binary concepts work to justify dominance, oppression, and exploitation (Loomba, 2005). We use postcolonial perspectives on nature conservation and Indigenous peoples to develop analytical categories, to examine dominant discursive constructions in the material, and to explore the ways in which these constructions are contingent on and produced by politics and power. Drawing on previous theoretical and empirical research, as outlined above, we are able to capture postcolonial perspectives on nature conservation and

Indigenous peoples and discourses on Saemie identities and culture, Swedish Saemie politics, and relevant legal actors.

3.2.1 Analytical tools

The discourse analytical approach understands language as constitutive of the social world, rather than a neutral mean for communication. There are no natural connections between the objects of the physical world and the meaning we attach to them through linguistic signs and social practices. Instead, their meaning is determined by their relation and difference to other linguistic signs and social practices. The practices that combine and position linguistic signs, linking them to others and thereby giving them meaning, are called *articulations* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 105).

Through the production of *subject positions*, discourses construct individual and collective identities in relation to other identities. Subject positions are culturally, historically, and politically specific and contingent constructions that regulate how subjects can act, speak, and relate to each other (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 40-41). *Nodal points* are signs central to the construction and organization of discourse – they are points of crystallization, that other signs are structured around. Nodal points with multiple potential meanings, that are subject to ongoing discursive struggles, are *floating signifiers* (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 26-30).

To investigate how the inclusion of local Saemie actors is discursively constructed in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process, we analyze the production of subject positions of local Saemie actors in the material. By considering how identified subject positions enable and limit local Saemie actors in terms of claims, agency, and knowledge as well as relations to other actors, the process itself, and the land, we then analyze the effects of those constructions on local Saemie actors' possible influence within the process. To capture dominant discursive constructions, discuss their consequences, and trace their potential transformation over time, we look for nodal points and floating signifiers in the discourse.

3.3 Materials

The main empirical material of this paper consists of written documentation from the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park planning process, retrieved from the archives of the Jämtland CAB and the SEPA. In addition, to complement and add nuance to the document material, interviews were conducted with one representative of the CAB and one representative of the SEPA in November 2020. The documents and interviews were translated from Swedish to English by the first author.

The selection of documents was made from the complete list of archived material at the CAB and the SEPA relating to the national park process, from which we requested copies of all texts involving the state actors (the SEPA and the CAB) and the local Saemie actors (the RHCs). After manual review, we excluded texts that were not produced by or did not address or involve either state or local Saemie actors. We also excluded incomplete documents, presentation slides, maps, and pictures. The remaining material includes 17 documents (see [Supplementary Material](#) for a complete list).

Interviewees were selected to represent the actors involved in the process. Interview requests were made to both the state actors and the local Saemie actors, but despite repeated attempts, no interview with a member of an RHC who had been part of the preparatory committee was possible within the time frames of the study. The lack of this interview material is unfortunate but not critical for the analysis, as the paper focuses on discursive constructions within the planning process, not how the process was received or experienced by the actors. Our paper thus complements previous research, where such perspectives have recently been covered at greater length (Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022).

The interviews were semi-structured, using pre-prepared themes and prompts as a point of departure but allowing for different ways of reflecting on and discussing the subject (see [Supplementary Material](#) for the interview guide). The interviews were conducted through video- and phone calls, lasting approximately one hour each.

Documents and interview transcripts were coded using categories based on the study's postcolonial framework and previous research in the field. The categories were broad and general in form, allowing them to be altered, replaced, or removed based on what was found in the material (Flodén, 2021).

4 Results and analysis

4.1 Local Saemie actors' inclusion and influence

The state actors – the SEPA and the CAB – and the local RHCs tend to articulate the inclusion of local Saemie actors differently. Following challenges from the RHCs to early articulations of the state actors, their positioning of the local Saemie actors changes over time. The restart of the process in 2017 signifies a turning point for the eventual shift towards a more nuanced recognition by the state actors of Saemie rights, which is closer to the RHCs' own articulations of their subject positions.

4.1.1 Contributors to conservation values

In the earlier phase of the process, the state actors' articulations of local Saemie actors' inclusion appear to be predominantly based on reindeer herding's perceived contribution to conservation values. Before the project's restart in 2017, the state actors (the SEPA and the CAB) tend to articulate local Saemie actors' inclusion through connection to the conservation values of the area. These conservation values are mostly presented as natural values, such as biological and geological entities and conditions. Saemie reindeer herding, represented as a Saemie economic activity, is articulated as essential for successfully preserving the area's conservation values and to establish the national park. The inclusion of the local RHCs in the national park planning process is promoted as following from the assumed contribution of reindeer herding to the area's conservation values, and consequently, reindeer herding must continue within an established national park:

The area is a natural and cultural landscape, influenced by reindeer pasture with high conservation values, and we see

continuous reindeer herding as a condition for maintaining many of the natural values that are the purpose for the national park (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016b).

Documents produced by the SEPA and the CAB in the earlier phase of the process articulate reindeer herding as a condition for the establishment of a national park in the area (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016a; b; c). For example, the project plan declares that the process must investigate how reindeer herding and Saemie culture can continue within an established national park, and that the interests of reindeer herding must be considered in the project (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016a: 5).

Reindeer herding thus appears as a nodal point for the construction of local Saemie actors' subject positions. It is linked to, and derives meaning from, concepts such as *natural values*, *conservation values*, and *conditions for the national park*. The SEPA and the CAB position reindeer herding as an activity and the RHCs as actors in close connection to the landscape's natural values, which are in turn articulated as the primary reason for implementing a nature conservation policy. The RHCs' contributions to these natural values are central for the construction of local Saemie actors' subject positions and articulated as a reason for why the conditions for and interests of reindeer herding must be considered in the process.

A positioning of local Saemie actors as contributors to conservation values through the activity of reindeer herding may affect their possible influence within the national park process. It might contribute to a recognition of the close relationship between the landscape and Saemie practices, realities, and histories. It may increase the opportunity and space for local Saemie actors to speak with authority on conservation matters and bring about acknowledgement of their knowledge of the land and its resources. This positioning might, however, also contribute to upholding (and fail to challenge) the separation between Saemie reindeer herders and non-reindeer herders in political discourses (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008; Allard and Brännström, 2021). Moreover, it entails a tendency to qualify Saemie inclusion on its contributions to and compatibility with conservation values (Reimerson, 2016).

4.1.2 Rights holders

The local RHCs articulate local Saemie actors' inclusion as linked to Swedish legislation on Saemie rights and international discourses on Indigenous peoples, thereby partly challenging the subject positions articulated by the state actors in the earlier phase of the planning process. *Saemie* appears as a nodal point in these articulations of local Saemie actors' subject positions. It works to connect past, present, and future generations of Saemie and their livelihoods, practices, and culture to the land, water, and natural resources of the area through links to *ancestors and future generations*; *lives, practices and culture*; and *relationships to the landscape*.

We, the Saemie, members of the reindeer herding communities Handölsdalen, Tåssåsen, and Mittådalen, live and work in the area. Our ancestors have lived and worked in the area, and our children and future generations must be able to live here in the same way (Handölsdalens sameby et al., 2016).

Like the state actors, the RHCs also articulate connections between conservation and Saemie reindeer herding – but they articulate the relationship between the two in a different way. In addition to linking protected areas to restrictions for reindeer herding and its associated activities and practices, they qualify their acceptance of the national park on its use for explicitly protecting Saemie culture and reindeer herding.

Saemie culture and reindeer herding should be an explicit part of the aim of the national park. (...) Considering our rights and [the legal protection of reindeer herding], it is natural that our way of living should be a part of and protected through the national park (Handölsdalens sameby et al., 2016).

Reindeer herding is central in these constructions, too, but in a broader sense than what is articulated by the state actors – not just as an economic activity that has shaped the landscape, but in relation to the presence and myriad of practices of the Saemie people, which are connected to certain rights. The RHCs thus position local Saemie actors as subjects whose access and use of the landscape and its resources constitute rights crucial to the future existence of the RHCs and Saemie culture. These rights are positioned in opposition to, and as potentially threatened by, the implementation of (centrally decided) nature conservation policy with various regulations. The positioning of local Saemie actors in these articulations connect to broader discourses on conservation and Indigenous peoples, and to Saemie Indigenous rights to protect and preserve their culture and traditional livelihoods.

The inclusion of local Saemie actors in the state actors' earlier articulations does not appear to be based on their status as an Indigenous people, but rather echo tendencies to position the Saemie as a minority group and Saemie reindeer herding as an industry among others – albeit with particular cultural and economic importance for the Saemie people (Mörkenstam, 2019). The state actors' documents from the earlier phase of the process do include descriptions of the Saemie as an Indigenous people, but this articulation is not linked to specific rights, to the region, to the inclusion of local Saemie actors, or to concrete suggestions for planning and management (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016b). By contrast, the RHCs' early articulations of local Saemie inclusion and influence as connected to certain rights position the RHCs in relation to the national park process and the landscape in a way that singles them out from the other actors included in the process in terms of claims for inclusion and influence (Handölsdalens sameby, 2016; Handölsdalens sameby et al., 2016).

After the restart of the project in 2017, the state actors' articulations of local Saemie actors transforms, linking their inclusion to substantial legal rights to culture, reindeer husbandry (including a wider range of practices), and land. Aligning more closely with the RHCs' early positionings, their articulations now place the RHCs in a particular position in relation to the state actors and potentially separated from other involved parties in the process, who lack direct rights to land (SEPA, 2018). The state actors had also issued a position statement including a commitment to not proceed with the national park proposal without the consent of the

Saemiedigkie, the affected RHCs, and the affected municipalities (SEPA, 2017). This could be described as a commitment to implement the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC), which largely lacks precedent in the Swedish context (Allard, 2018; Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2019).

The restart of the project and the shift in state actors' positioning of local Saemie actors came after a breakdown of the process in 2016, as outlined above. Kløcker Larsen and Raitio (2022) describe how the RHCs' statements at that time were perceived as an ultimatum and argue that this was instrumental for how the government agencies proceeded to re-design the process. Our results also indicate an impact of the RHCs' line of argument in the early phase of the process, as we find that the state actors' transformed articulations align more closely with the RHCs' early positionings. The changed positioning of local Saemie actors may then have worked to increase the RHCs influence within the national park process – and possibly also shaped or limited the state actors' actions, as it may have given increased weight to the RHCs' influence and supported their claims (cf. Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022).

4.2 The landscape, its properties and values

The positioning of local Saemie actors, and their inclusion and influence in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park planning process, is closely connected to the area itself. The articulation of the landscape and its properties thus appears central to the form and development of the national park process, providing additional avenues to investigate this collaborative nature conservation process in relation to Saemie rights and claims. The *landscape* of the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area, its properties and values, appears as a nodal point in the broader discourse of the national park process. In the early phase, the state actors and the RHCs ascribe partly different, sometimes opposing, meanings to those concepts. Throughout the process, the state actors' articulations change, becoming more similar to the RHCs'.

4.2.1 A landscape grazed by reindeer

Prior to the restart in 2017, the state actors generally articulate the landscape by linkages to natural values such as biological and geological features. The primary reason to establish a national park in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area is presented as the preservation of these natural values from the potential threats of human activities and intrusions. In this phase of the project, state actors' articulations tend to reproduce discursive constructions of conservation as opposed to use, signifying the influence of broader dominant nature conservation discourses that construct nature and culture as opposing concepts (Adams, 2003).

At the same time, state actors link the landscape, its original state, and its natural values to reindeer husbandry and grazing, which are described as essential to maintain the conservation values of the area.

In the region, reindeer herding has been conducted before [the designation of a national park], which is something that forms the basis for many of the biological and cultural values that exist there. It is the aggregated biological and geological values that

make the area so unique that the SEPA has designated it as especially valuable in the National Park Plan (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016c).

As Saemie practices and reindeer herding are recognized as important for preserving the conservation values of the area, not all human practices are articulated as incompatible with the purpose of a national park. However, proposals and discussion on the purpose, goal, and general orientation of the national park indicate a prioritization of conservation over other interests and activities, with an emphasis on nature conservation values. The state actors emphasize that human activities should be adjusted to comply with the area's conservation values.

Saemie culture and reindeer herding should continue to work and develop in the area in ways that are compatible with the area's values and the national park's purpose (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016a: 4).

We find here some tension in the state actors' articulations of the landscape and its natural state. Articulations of the landscape's conservation values and the national park's purpose seem to reproduce discursive constructions of nature/culture and conservation/use as opposing concepts. Cultural values are acknowledged, but only natural values are to be protected by the national park. At the same time, reindeer herding, and to some degree Saemie culture more broadly, is recognized as contributing to the conservation values, suggesting elements of alternative understandings of the landscape and of conservation.

However, the state actors do not concretize Saemie culture in relation to the purpose, goals, and organization of the national park. *Reindeer herding* is articulated in ways that stress the animals' grazing and obscure the human subjects who manage them, and practices not directly associated with grazing. This is also in line with what previous research has pointed to as problematic aspects of Swedish governance of reindeer husbandry, including framing reindeer herding in terms of industry and economic activities and thereby disregarding the broader cultural and livelihood dimensions of reindeer husbandry (Löf et al., 2022). Such narrow constructions can limit what Saemie practices (related to reindeer herding) are regarded as compatible with conservation, and thus the potential influence of local Saemie actors in the governance and management of the national park.

4.2.2 A Saemie cultural landscape

The RHCs articulate the landscape by links to, for example, *Saemie culture*, *Saemie presence*, and *reindeer herding*. Their articulations position Saemie culture, reindeer herding, and other Saemie practices in a reciprocal, circular, and mutually shaping relationship with the landscape.

Reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, and trapping have been and are natural elements in our lives, and life with the reindeer is one of the pillars of our culture. The reindeer's pasture and our ways of living with the reindeer have shaped the landscape, and the

landscape has shaped us (Handölsdalens sameby et al., 2016).

The RHCs articulate *reindeer herding* more broadly than the state actors, emphasizing various practices associated with Saemie reindeer husbandry livelihoods (including hunting, fishing, and trapping) along with human activities associated with the reindeer herding practice itself (including construction of fences and shelters, transportation, and the importance of modern technology for continued development of reindeer herding in the area) (Handölsdalens sameby, 2016; Handölsdalens sameby et al., 2016).

The RHCs thus challenge the notion that the conservation of the area's conservation values could be protected and preserved by a national park, if the local Saemie people's presence, Saemie culture, and Saemie reindeer herding – more broadly defined – are not. They position Saemie presence and Saemie practices as part of the landscape's natural state, which should be protected through the national park and included in its purpose. They also challenge the state actors' articulation of reindeer herding, expanding its conceptualization and connecting it more clearly to a broader set of Saemie cultural and livelihood practices. Through these articulations, they position local Saemie actors in a way that suggests their inclusion in the general understanding of the landscape that the national park will protect – linking themselves to the values of the site in a way that goes beyond the effects of reindeer grazing on the natural properties of the area.

4.2.3 Towards a recognition of mutual dependency?

Following the restart of the process in 2017, the state actors' articulations of the landscape begin to shift. The natural values, central to the initial purpose of the national park, are positioned closely to *cultural values* and *cultural landscape*. The conservation values are more clearly articulated as influenced by, and sometimes even dependent on, human practices and reindeer herding.

The SEPA did agree on, during the process, purposes as to preserve an area influenced by the reindeer, a landscape influenced by reindeer herding. (...) A quite big shift, which I think was a condition for the group to be able to agree (interview with SEPA representative, November 2020).

The state actors now articulate reindeer herding more broadly than before, in ways that to some extent recognize human practices that are assumed to contribute to both cultural and natural values. However, our interviews with state actor representatives indicate some tension between how the SEPA and the CAB, respectively, articulate human practices and presence in relation to the landscape. While both link the landscape and its natural state to both natural and cultural values, the SEPA appears to continuously position reindeer herding (as an activity) at the center of those values. Meanwhile, the CAB appears to represent a broader view of human presence, articulating it in terms of contributions of both reindeer herding, Saemie culture, and other local populations to the shaping of the landscape (interview with CAB representative, November 2020). This suggests that the landscape continues to be an arena for discursive struggles.

The final document on the goal, purpose, and objectives of the national park states:

The purpose of the national park is to conserve a grand mountain landscape, with ongoing reindeer herding and high natural and recreational values, in an essentially unaltered condition (SEPA, 2018).

It would then seem that although the state actors' articulation of the landscape in relation to the local Saemie actors and Saemie reindeer herding had moved towards a recognition of mutual dependency, the narrower construction remains dominant. The purpose includes the activity of reindeer herding, rather than Saemie practices, livelihoods, or culture in a broader sense.

As discussed by Kløcker Larsen and Raitio (2022), this framing of the purpose of the national park – with its 'instrumental view' of Saemie culture – was a main reason for the RHCs withdrawal of consent and the termination of the process. The struggle over the meaning of the landscape, its properties and values, and its relationship to the local Saemie actors may be seen as indicative of a discursive struggle that given the asymmetrical power relationship between the parties could work to limit the influence of local Saemie actors. However, as the state actors honored their commitment to terminate the process in absence of Saemie consent, the outcome here was different – as the state actors could or would not accept the Saemie articulation of the landscape, its properties and values, and how it should be protected, the local Saemie actors were able to use that to exert influence.

4.3 Re-articulation and change

As discussed above, the state actors' articulations of local Saemie actors' inclusion and influence in the process and in relation to the landscape of the proposed national park changed over time. In relation to the restart of the process in 2017, the aim of the national park planning process itself also seems to change – with potential consequences for the positioning, inclusion, and influence of local Saemie actors.

During the earlier phase of the process, the ways in which state actors commonly articulate its aim appears to draw on discourses of more traditional and hierarchical forms of environmental protection policies – albeit with the stated ambition of achieving legitimacy for state decisions on the local level.

The purpose of the project is to develop a well-anchored proposal as basis for a potential decision on the national park (SEPA and CAB Jämtland, 2016a).

The purpose, as articulated by the state actors, is to establish a national park. Co-management mechanisms, like the preparatory committee, are articulated as necessary to make the national park better, more legitimate, and accepted and to alleviate conflicts between stakeholders. This suggests that the process was also influenced by discourses on co-management in conservation and

nature protection (Holmgren et al., 2017). Moreover, the inclusion of local stakeholders in the preparatory committee appears to assume their participation on similar terms – in line with, as we have shown above, the absence of explicit inclusion of the Saemie as an Indigenous people and the treatment of Saemie reindeer herding as an industry among others.

As the process is restarted in 2017, the articulations of its aim shift, and the state actors begin to draw in alternative meanings and the links to wider discourses on co-management increase. With the mission statement from the SEPA on required consent of the Saemiedigkie, the affected RHCs, and the affected municipalities, all actors represented in the preparatory committee (apart from the local tourism industry) were granted the power to stop the process by withdrawing consent. The SEPA reiterates its intention to establish a national park in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area but acknowledges that the process could end with a decision not to (SEPA, 2017).

The aim of the process transforms from *establishing a national park* to *investigating the conditions for a national park*, where *conditions* refers to the consent of the affected parties and the agreement between them on the governance and management of the park. The outcome of the process can thus be articulated as a success – by both state and Saemie actors (Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022).

Not a failure that a national park was not established in the area, the conditions were lacking, there is no natural law stating that each area with very high [natural] values must be or become a national park (interview with SEPA representative, November 2020).

The transformation of the aim had significant consequences for the organization of the process (cf. Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022) and for the articulations of inclusion of local actors. State actors now stress the necessity of genuine collaboration – and, as illustrated by the quote above, the recognition that the result of the process could be a decision to not establish a national park. They link collaboration to local participation and influence in a broader sense, which contributes to an articulation of collaboration as a tool to counter or mitigate local opposition to conservation and to consider and incorporate local people's needs, histories, and knowledge in conservation planning and management.

Trust that we [local actors] have the possibility to influence the actual decisions and that it is a question of collaboration, not a question of the authorities coming to persuade us to make a decision (interview with CAB representative, November 2020).

The transformation of the aim of the process echoes discourses on collaborative environmental governance and management, more so than Indigenous rights discourses. Nonetheless, this change indicates an expanding space for Saemie voices, claims, and rights within Swedish nature conservation discourse. It is likely to have contributed to the results of the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park planning process and can be seen as both a result of and a

contributing factor to the influence that local Saemie actors were able to wield in the process.

5 Discussion

Nature conservation policies often carry and reproduce colonial legacies that contribute to marginalizing Indigenous peoples – around the world and in Sweden. The policy field of environmental conservation is undergoing a paradigm shift, where traditional and hierarchical modes are increasingly being questioned and replaced by collaborative modes of governance and implementation (Holmgren et al., 2017). The policies, practices, forms, and contents of collaborative governance and management arrangements, especially as regards the participation of Indigenous peoples in relation to conservation efforts on their traditional lands, are the subject of extensive discussions and negotiations (Stevens, 2014; von der Porten et al., 2019; Dawson et al., 2021). Against this background, we have examined the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process in Sweden, focusing the discursive construction of local Saemie actors' inclusion and influence. Through its deconstructing analysis of this collaborative national park process, our study contributes to critical reflections on Indigenous peoples' participation in conservation governance and management.

Our analysis demonstrates that the inclusion of local Saemie actors in the national park process is articulated in different ways by the state actors and the local Saemie actors, respectively. These different articulations of inclusion have different consequences for the potential influence of local Saemie actors in the process. Their potential influence appears greater when inclusion is linked to a broader understanding of Saemie culture and practices, rather than to the assumed contributions of reindeer herding as an isolated activity to conservation objectives. When inclusion is linked to reindeer husbandry rights, connected to Saemie livelihoods and including a wider range of practices, the local Saemie actors are positioned in relation to the landscape, the process, and the state actors in a way that separates them from other actors involved in the process. This increases their possible influence over conservation issues and the planning of the national park.

The state actors' articulation of inclusion is not clearly influenced by a substantial recognition of the Saemie as an Indigenous people. In both phases of the process, there are some explicit recognitions of the Saemie as an Indigenous people in documents from the state actors. However, these are generally not linked to any concrete definitions of Saemie Indigenous rights, neither in nature conservation nor in the specific context. Although the state actors did adopt a discourse of the RHCs as rights holders and committed to securing the consent of Saemie actors, *Saemie rights* appears largely as an empty signifier in the material. It is not clearly defined or concretized in relation to the preparation, management, or purpose of the national park. This may limit the possibilities for local Saemie actors to influence the process based on their rights as an Indigenous people. It may also work to reproduce the division between reindeer herding and non-reindeer herding Saemie in terms of inclusion and influence, as established and perpetuated by Swedish policy and law since the early 20th century (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008).

Discourses on the relationship between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ influence the process, as demonstrated by the analysis of articulations of the landscape itself. Our analysis here points to power asymmetries that affect the national park process. The state actors’ articulations of the landscape transform over time, to recognizing reindeer herding as part of the landscape’s properties and values. However, the state actors articulate reindeer herding in a way that focuses specifically on the animals’ grazing and obscures human activities related to husbandry. The RHCs challenge and attempt to renegotiate this articulation, linking reindeer herding to a wider set of Saemie livelihood practices. We might interpret this as strategies attempting to renegotiate the influences from dominant colonial discourses that construct Saemie identity and culture around the presumed ‘traditionality’ of Indigenous peoples’ practices and knowledge (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008; Reimerson, 2013).

The aim of the national park planning process transforms over time – from the establishment of a national park (in the earlier phase) to the investigation of the conditions for a national park (after the restart of the process in 2017). This transformation appears mainly to be influenced by discourses on collaborative modes of environmental protection and natural resource management (Holmgren et al., 2017). The Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process can therefore be placed within the broader paradigm shift away from hierarchical structures, towards collaborative governance and management modes (Bodin, 2017; Redmore et al., 2018). The influence of Indigenous rights discourses, while present in both state and local Saemie actors’ articulations, seems to have fewer concrete effects on the inclusion and influence of local Saemie actors. The discourse articulated in and through the process tends to reproduce notions of the Saemie as one of several national minorities in Sweden, rather than an Indigenous people with particular rights under international and Swedish law (Mörkenstam, 2019; Allard, 2022).

The Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park planning process appears influenced by hegemonic discourses on conservation, Indigenous peoples, and states’ territorial sovereignty and authority over nature protection governance and management (Reimerson, 2015). However, our analysis indicates that the hegemonic positions of those discourses may be transforming, which could affect prevailing power relations and colonial legacies in the Swedish nature conservation policy field. Although we have found weak links to international Indigenous rights discourses in this case, these changes may expand the space available for Saemie people’s voices, claims, and knowledge within nature conservation discourses. The outcome of the process, which could be understood as an implementation of the principle of free, prior and informed consent (Kløcker Larsen and Raitio, 2022), could promote further changes in terms of forums and tools for the Saemie to consent to, object to, and influence projects and policies affecting their traditional lands. From a broader perspective, a potential change in the hegemonic position of these discourses could increase the space for criticism of and challenges to the authority of state actors over local Saemie actors in the policy field.

Our results add to descriptions of the complexity of nature conservation policies on Indigenous peoples’ traditional lands and contributes to the understanding of how collaborative nature

conservation processes work to enable or restrain the influence of Indigenous peoples in protected area governance and management (von der Porten and de Loë, 2014; Grey and Kuokkanen, 2020). Discursive shifts and transformations such as those seen in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park planning process – and the challenges to dominant discourses of conservation and of Indigenous peoples they entail or imply – may increase the space for critical questioning of the position of state authorities in conservation policy and practice. It may also serve to highlight how asymmetrical power relationships in conservation governance and management contribute to upholding colonial systems and unequal or oppressive relationships between state governments and Indigenous peoples more broadly (Finegan, 2018; Domínguez and Luoma, 2020; Kashwan et al., 2021). In the efforts to address environmental threats and meet environmental challenges, research should continue to explore further potential transformations of discourses of nature conservation, Indigenous peoples, and collaborative governance and management process, considering what that would entail for the relationships of power that permeate nature conservation and for the roles and rights of Indigenous peoples.

Data availability statement

The document data analyzed for this study was obtained from the archives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the County Administrative Board of Jämtland, Sweden and is publicly available under Swedish laws on public access to information. The interview data is not available due to ethical restrictions, as the interview participants did not agree for their data to be shared publicly. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.naturvardsverket.se/>, and the County Administrative Board of Jämtland, Sweden, <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/jamtland.html>.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

This article is based on a master’s thesis submitted by LF under the supervision of ER to the Department of Political Science at Umeå University in 2021. LF conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, conducted the investigation process and data collection, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, and contributed to the manuscript revision. ER contributed to conceptualization and methodology, supervised the project, acquired the funding for the finalization of the paper, and contributed to the manuscript revision. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Funding

The research was supported by Formas – a Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development under Grant no. 2019-01278, awarded to ER. Open access publication fees are paid through an agreement between Umeå University Library and Frontiers.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

References

- Adams, W. M. (2003). "Nature and the colonial mind," in *Decolonizing nature: strategies for conservation in a post-colonial era*. Eds. W. M. Adams and M. Mulligan. (London: Earthscan Publications), 16–50.
- Agrawal, A., and Redford, K. (2009). Place, conservation, and displacement. *Conserv. Soc.* 7 (1), 56–58. doi: 10.4103/0972-4923.54797
- Allard, C. (2011). The Nordic countries' law on Sámi territorial rights. *Arctic Rev. Law Politics* 2 (2), 159–183.
- Allard, C. (2016). "Nordic legislation on protected areas: How does it affect Sámi customary rights?" in *Indigenous rights in modern landscapes: Nordic conservation regimes in global context*. Eds. L. Elenius, C. Allard and C. Sandström (Oxon & New York: Routledge), 21–36.
- Allard, C. (2018). The rationale for the duty to consult Indigenous peoples: Comparative reflections from Nordic and Canadian legal contexts. *Arctic Rev. Law Politics* 9, 25–43. doi: 10.23865/arctic.v9.729
- Allard, C. (2022). Sami land rights: Recent developments in Swedish case law. *Eur. Yearbook Minority Issues Online* 19 (1), 221–238. doi: 10.1163/22116117_011
- Allard, C., and Brännström, M. (2021). Girjas reindeer herding community v. Sweden: Analysing the merits of the Girjas case. *Arctic Rev.* 12, 56–79. doi: 10.23865/arctic.v12.2678
- Andersson Hjulman, T. (2016). "Rights of the naturalised," in *Indigenous rights in modern landscapes: Nordic conservation regimes in global context*. Eds. L. Elenius, C. Allard and C. Sandström. (Oxon & New York: Routledge), 42–61.
- Bodin, Ö. (2017). Collaborative environmental governance: Achieving collective action in social-ecological systems. *Science* 357 (6352), eaan1114. doi: 10.1126/science.aan1114%JScience
- Colchester, M. (2004). Conservation policy and Indigenous peoples. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 7 (3), 145–153. doi: 10.1016/j.envsci.2004.02.004
- Colchester, M., Ferrari, M. F., Nelson, J., Kidd, C., Zaninka, P., Venant, M., et al. (2008). *Conservation and Indigenous peoples: Assessing the progress since Durban* (Moreton-in-Marsh: Forest Peoples Programme).
- Dawson, N. M., Coolsaet, B., Sterling, E. J., Loveridge, R., Gross-Camp, N. D., Wongbusarakum, S., et al. (2021). The role of Indigenous peoples and local communities in effective and equitable conservation. *Ecol. Soc.* 26 (3), 19. doi: 10.5751/ES-12625-260319
- Dominguez, L., and Luoma, C. (2020). Decolonising conservation policy: How colonial land and conservation ideologies persist and perpetuate Indigenous injustices at the expense of the environment. *Land* 9 (3), 65. doi: 10.3390/land9030065
- Dudley, N., Ali, N., Kettunen, M., and MacKinnon, K. (2017). Editorial essay: Protected areas and the sustainable development goals. *Parks* 23 (2), 9–12. doi: 10.2305/IUCN.CH.2017.PARKS-23-2ND.en
- Finegan, C. (2018). Reflection, acknowledgement, and justice: A framework for Indigenous-protected area reconciliation. *Int. Indigenous Policy J.* 9 (3), 3. doi: 10.18584/iipj.2018.9.3.3
- Flodén, L. (2021). *Nature conservation, collaboration and claims: A discourse analysis of the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags national park process*. Master's Thesis. (Umeå: Umeå University). Available at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-179888>.
- Garnett, S. T., Burgess, N. D., Fa, J. E., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Molnár, Z., Robinson, C. J., et al. (2018). A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation. *Nat. Sustainability* 1 (7), 369–374. doi: 10.1038/s41893-018-0100-6
- Grey, S., and Kuokkanen, R. (2020). Indigenous governance of cultural heritage: searching for alternatives to co-management. *Int. J. Heritage Stud.* 26 (10), 919–941. doi: 10.1080/13527258.2019.1703202
- Hall, S. (1996). "When was 'the post-colonial'? Thinking at the limit," in *The post-colonial question: Common skies, divided horizons*. Eds. I. Chambers and L. Curti. (London: Routledge), 242–259.
- Handölsdalens sameby (2016). 2016-05-05. Handölsdalens samebys ställningstagande avseende förslag på inrättande av en ny Nationalpark, Sylarna/Helags/Vålådalen. *Handölsdalen RHC's position on the proposal to establish a new national park, Sylarna/Helags/Vålådalen*.
- Handölsdalens sameby, Tässåsens sameby and Mittådalen sameby (2016). 2016-01-22. Samebyarnas inställning till planerna på en nationalpark i området Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags. *The RHCs' position on the plans for a national park in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area*.
- Holmgren, L., Sandström, C., and Zachrisson, A. (2017). Protected area governance in Sweden: new modes of governance or business as usual? *Local Environ.* 22 (1), 22–37. doi: 10.1080/13549839.2016.1154518
- Josefsen, E., Mörkenstam, U., and Saglie, J. (2014). Different institutions within similar states: The Norwegian and Swedish Sámediggis. *Ethnopolitics* 14 (1), 32–51. doi: 10.1080/17449057.2014.926611
- Kashwan, P., Duffy, V., Massé, F., Asiyambi, A. P., and Marijnen, E. (2021). From racialized neocolonial global conservation to an inclusive and regenerative conservation. *Environment: Sci. Policy Sustain. Dev.* 63 (4), 4–19. doi: 10.1080/00139157.2021.1924574
- Kløcker Larsen, R., and Raitio, K. (2019). Implementing the state duty to consult in land and resource decisions: Perspectives from Sami communities and Swedish state officials. *Arctic Rev.* 10, 4–23. doi: 10.23865/arctic.v10.1323
- Kløcker Larsen, R., and Raitio, K. (2022). Protected areas and Indigenous rights in Sápmi: An agonistic reading of conflict and collaboration in land use planning. *J. Environ. Policy Plann.* 1-13. doi: 10.1080/1523908X.2022.2137483
- Laclau, E., and Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony & socialist strategy* (London: Verso).
- Lantto, P., and Mörkenstam, U. (2008). Sami rights and Sami challenges: The modernization process and the Swedish Sami movement, 1886–2006. *Scandinavian J. History* 33 (1), 26–51. doi: 10.1080/03468750701431222
- Larsson Blind, Å (2022). "Pathways for action: The need for Sámi self-determination," in *Reindeer husbandry and global environmental change: Pastoralism in Fennoscandia*. Eds. T. Horstkotte, Ø. Holand, J. Kumpula and J. Moen (London & New York: Routledge).
- Löf, A., Raitio, K., Forbes, B. C., Labba, K., Landauer, M., Risvoll, C., et al (2022). "Unpacking reindeer husbandry governance in Sweden, Norway and Finland: A political discursive perspective," in *Reindeer husbandry and global environmental change: Pastoralism in Fennoscandia*. Eds. T. Horstkotte, Ø. Holand, J. Kumpula and J. Moen (London & New York: Routledge).
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (London: Routledge).
- Mörkenstam, U. (2019). Organised hypocrisy? The implementation of the international Indigenous rights regime in Sweden. *Int. J. Hum. Rights* 23 (10), 1718–1741. doi: 10.1080/13642987.2019.1629907
- Naturvårdsverket (2008). *Nationalparksplan för Sverige: Långsiktig plan* (Stockholm: Naturvårdsverket).
- Ojala, C.-G. (2020). "Mines and missions: Early modern Swedish colonialism in Sápmi and its legacies today," in *Currents of Saami pasts: Recent advances in Saami archaeology*. Eds. M. Spangén, A.-K. Salmi, T. Äikäs and M. Fjellström. (Helsinki: Archaeological Society of Finland), 160–176.
- Ojala, C.-G., and Nordin, J. M. (2019). Mapping land and people in the north: Early modern colonial expansion, exploitation, and knowledge. *Scandinavian Stud.* 91 (1-2), 98–133. doi: 10.5406/scanstud.91.1-2.0098
- Oldekop, J. A., Holmes, G., Harris, W. E., and Evans, K. L. (2016). A global assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas. *Conserv. Biol.* 30 (1), 133–141. doi: 10.1111/cobi.12568

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcosc.2022.1105415/full#supplementary-material>

- Ösbo, Å. (2022). Hydropower company sites: A study of Swedish settler colonialism. *Settler Colonial Stud.*, 1–18. doi: 10.1080/2201473X.2022.2037293
- Österlin, C., Schlyter, P., and Stjernquist, I. (2020). Different worldviews as impediments to integrated nature and cultural heritage conservation management: Experiences from protected areas in northern Sweden. *Sustainability* 12 (9), 3533. doi: 10.3390/su12093533
- Plumwood, V. (2003). “Decolonizing relationships with nature,” in *Decolonizing nature: Strategies for conservation in a post-colonial era*. Eds. W. M. Adams and M. Mulligan. (London: Earthscan Publications), 51–78.
- Purdy, J. M. (2012). A framework for assessing power in collaborative governance processes. *Public Adm Rev* 72 (3), 409–417. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02525.x
- Redmore, L., Stronza, A., Songhurst, A., and McCulloch, G. P. (2018). Which way forward? Past and new perspectives on community-based conservation in the anthropocene. *Encyclopedia Anthropocene* 3, 453–460. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-809665-9.09838-4
- Reimerson, E. (2013). Between nature and culture: Exploring space for Indigenous agency in the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Environ. Politics* 22 (6), 992–1009. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2012.737255
- Reimerson, E. (2015) *Nature, culture, rights: Exploring space for Indigenous agency in protected area discourses*. PhD Dissertation. (Umeå: Umeå University). Available at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-110737>.
- Reimerson, E. (2016). Sami space for agency in the management of the Laponia World Heritage site. *Local Environ.* 21 (7), 808–826. doi: 10.1080/13549839.2015.1032230
- SCB and Naturvårdsverket (2022). *MI 41 2021A01. Skyddad natur 2021-12-31* (Stockholm: SCB, Statistiska Centralbyrån & Naturvårdsverket).
- SEPA (2017). NV-02982-14. 2017-10-16. Ställningstagande inför den fortsatta processen för att bilda en framtida nationalpark i området Vålådalen Sylarna Helags. *Position statement for the continued process to establish a future national park in the Vålådalen Sylarna Helags area*.
- SEPA (2018). NV-02982-14. 2018-10-15. Mål, syfte och preliminär övergripande inriktning för en eventuell nationalpark i Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags. *Goals, aim, and preliminary objectives for a potential national park in Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags*.
- SEPA (2019). NV-02982-14. 2019-09-06. Nationalparksprojekt Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags - översiktlig beskrivning av nationalparksprojektet. *Summarizing description of the national park project*.
- SEPA and CAB Jämtland (2016a). NV-02982-14. 2016-04-06. Projektplan för att ta fram underlag för beslut om bildande av nationalpark av området Vålådalen - Sylarna - Helags i Jämtlands län. *Project plan for the provision of material as basis for decision on potential national park in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area*.
- SEPA and CAB Jämtland (2016b). 2016-04-28. Svar på brev från samebyarna till projektledningen inom nationalparksprojektet Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags. *Reply to letter from the RHCs to the project leadership in the national park project Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags*.
- SEPA and CAB Jämtland (2016c). NV-02982-14. Dnr. 511-489-16. 2016-07-04. Svar till samebyarna angående frågor kring om eventuell bildning av en nationalpark i Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helagsområdet i Jämtlands län. *Reply to the RHCs concerning questions on the potential establishment of a national park in the Vålådalen-Sylarna-Helags area in Jämtland County*.
- SFS 1971:437, Jemal, A. (1971). *Rennäringslag [Reindeer Husbandry Act]*. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/rennaringslag-1971437_sfs-1971-437.
- SFS 1987:938. *Nationalparksförordning [Regulation on National Parks]*. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/miljobalk-1998808_sfs-1998-808.
- SFS 1998:808. *Miljöbalk [Environmental Code]*. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/miljobalk-1998808_sfs-1998-808.
- SFS 1998:1252. *Förordning (1998:1252) om områdesskydd enligt miljöbalken m.m. [Regulation on Protected Areas for the Environmental Code]*. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-19981252-om-omradesskydd-enligt_sfs-1998-1252.
- SFS 2022:66. *Lag (2022:66) om konsultation i frågor som rör det samiska folket [Law on consultation on issues concerning the Sami people]*. Available at: <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-202266-om-konsultation-i-fragor-som-ror-sfs-2022-66>.
- Stevens, S. (2014). “A new protected area paradigm,” in *Indigenous peoples, national parks, and protected areas: A new paradigm linking conservation, culture, and rights*. Ed. S. Stevens. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 47–83.
- Stjernström, O., Pashkevich, A., and Avango, D. (2020). Contrasting views on co-management of Indigenous natural and cultural heritage – case of Laponia World Heritage site, Sweden. *Polar Rec.* 56, e4. doi: 10.1017/S0032247420000121
- Tauli-Corpuz, V., Alcorn, J., Molnar, A., Healy, C., and Barrow, E. (2020). Cornered by PAs: Adopting rights-based approaches to enable cost-effective conservation and climate action. *World Dev.* 130, 104923. doi: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.104923
- von der Porten, S., and de Loë, R. C. (2014). How collaborative approaches to environmental problem solving view Indigenous peoples: A systematic review. *Soc. Natural Resour.* 27 (10), 1040–1056. doi: 10.1080/08941920.2014.918232
- von der Porten, S., Ota, Y., Cisneros-Montemayor, A., and Pictou, S. (2019). The role of Indigenous resurgence in marine conservation. *Coast. Manage.* 47 (6), 527–547. doi: 10.1080/08920753.2019.1669099
- Watson, J. E. M., Dudley, N., Segan, D. B., and Hockings, M. (2014). The performance and potential of protected areas. *Nature* 515 (7525), 67–73. doi: 10.1038/nature13947
- West, P., Igoe, J., and Brockington, D. (2006). Parks and peoples: The social impact of protected areas. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 35 (1), 251–277. doi: 10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123308
- Winther Jørgensen, M., and Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method* (London: Sage).
- Zachrisson, A. (2009). The designation of Fulufjället national park: efficient co-management through downward accountability? *Local Environ.* 14 (3), 259–271. doi: 10.1080/13549830802693177