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Participation lost in translation? – An assessment of local participation during the operational phase of nature reserves

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Abstract

This master thesis explores how the County Administration Boards (CAB) in Halland, Uppsala and Västerbotten describe how they work with local participation during the operational phase of already established nature reserves. The empirical material consists of reserve decisions and management plans from 186 nature reserves and interviews with CAB officials. When assessing the reserve decisions and management plans, three categories of local participation were discerned: i) local participation as practical management, ii) local participation as consultation, iii) and local participation through management boards. Based on the assessment of the steering documents and the interviews local participation mostly seems to occur through practical management. Management boards and projects with various degrees of dialogue were found in a handful nature reserves. The CABs seem to have a pragmatic view of local participation. If local actors are to be more active in decision making during the management of nature reserves, the CABs need to facilitate and institutionalise such possibilities for local actors.

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Introduction

In Sweden about 1.2 million hectares were protected as nature reserves in 1987 (Wramer and Nygård 2010). In 2016 more than 4.5 million hectares¹ were protected. This increase in nature reserves has since the 90s been driven by a focus on preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services (Wramer and Nygård 2010). Currently about 9 per cent of Sweden's land area is protected by nature reserves, comprising an area equal to the size of Denmark. A nature reserve can be established for protecting and promoting nature values and for recreation purposes. After a nature reserve has been established, the nature reserve enters the operational phase. The way a nature reserve should be managed is found in the 'reserve decision', which states the aims of the reserve, and in the 'management plan', which guides how the aims should be reached.

Establishing a nature reserve in Sweden entails a state intervention, which often means a violation of property and land user rights, as private land is bought by the state. Occasionally, protest highlight the sensitivity of establishing nature reserves. In the autumn of 2017, Swedish media wrote about landowners in *Allmåsaaberget*, in the county of Jämtland, who were protesting against the county administration board's (CAB) attempt to establish a nature reserve. The governor of the CAB backed away from the proposal and stated that no reserves should be established against a land owner's will. A metaphor often used by landowners in connection to nature reserve establishments are that the authorities put a 'dead man's hand' over the area (Sandström 2008, Swedish Radio²). The metaphor expresses a view of nature reserves as areas where nothing can be done, meaning an end for development in the area. Protests against the establishment of nature reserves are not exclusive to Allmåsaaberget but has been frequently reported in other places over the years (e.g. in Österängsån in the county of Dalarna in 2008, Torrböle and Nybrånet in the county of Västerbotten in 2009 and Säveån in Västra Götaland in 2008³). Even though a survey indicates that most landowners are satisfied with the CABs' performance when establishing nature reserves (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and Swedish Forest Agency 2018), the view of nature

¹ <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/miljo/markanvandning/skyddad-natur/pong/statistiknyhet/skyddad-natur-2016/2018-04-10>

² <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=78&artikel=6766187>

³ <http://www.lerumstidning.se/2008/01/naturreservat-ar-inte-enda-losningen/>
<http://www.dt.se/dalarna/rattvik/skogsagare-protesterar-mot-naturreservat>
<https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/vasterbotten/lansstyrelsen-stoppar-naturreservat>

reserves as “dead areas” signals a need to reflect on what happens during the operational phase.

In 2001, the government presented a new nature conservation policy (*A cohesive nature conservation policy*) that describes how nature conservation should be carried out (Skr. 2001/02:173). The policy acknowledges the importance of increased public participation and involvement in nature conservation and underlines that local participation is key in order to achieve this. The policy stresses that planning and implementation of nature conservation should be carried out in cooperation with local stakeholders and citizens, in order to ensure increased local commitment in nature protection. The dialogue with citizens should be strengthened and people who feel that they are affected by nature conservation measures should also be given possibilities to be part of the process. The policy further suggests that local resource users and entrepreneurs should be hired to carry out the practical management activities in nature reserves to a greater extent. Local and traditional knowledge should also be acknowledged and used when working with nature conservation (Skr. 2001/02:173).

Participation has emerged globally during the recent decades as an important component in dealing with the complexity surrounding environmental decision making and management of natural resources (Goodwin 1998; Johnson 2004; Zachrisson 2004; Reed 2008; Sandström 2008; Luyet et.al. 2012). Studies concerning participation in nature conservation in a Swedish context have mainly focused on assessing and understanding the participatory processes in specific cases when new forms of nature conservation management have emerged (c.f. Wallsten 2003; Zachrisson 2004; Schultz et.al. 2007; Sandström 2008; Stenkseke 2008). It has also been common for the studies in Sweden to approach participation using qualitative methods, having one or a few cases (c.f. Rådelius 2002; Wallsten 2003; Zachrisson 2004; Schultz et.al. 2007; Sandström 2008; Stenkseke 2008; Holmgren et. al. 2017; Blicharska and Rönnbäck 2018). No studies, to my knowledge, have specifically studied how participation is catered for in reserve decisions and management plans of already existing nature reserves.

Assessing the status of local participation in Swedish nature reserve management is important, not only because nature reserves cover 9 per cent of Sweden’s land area, but also because nature conservation is expected to continue with more land areas being protected. If more land is to be protected by state interventions it is important to have a legitimate nature conservation apparatus and that people have trust in the current nature conservation management.

Participation can be a component in building that trust and legitimacy.

Aim

This thesis explores to what extent and in what ways local actors are involved in the operational phase of already established nature reserves. More specifically, the thesis assesses how the CAB describe their work and intentions to work with local participation. This is done by reviewing reserve decisions and management plans from 186 nature reserves and through interviews with CAB officials.

- How is local participation in nature conservation management catered for in nature reserve decisions and management plans between 1960-2018?
- How do CAB officials describe their work with local participation after nature reserves have been established?

Methods

In order to explore in what ways and to what extent local actors take part in the management of nature reserves, I have assessed 193 nature reserve decisions and 182 management plans from 186 nature reserves from three different counties; 67 reserves from a total of 179 from the county of Halland, 48 reserves from a total of 166 reserves from the county of Uppsala, and 71 reserves from a total of 361 reserves from the county of Västerbotten. These three counties were chosen due to their different geographical contexts. The county of Halland is located on the west coast in the southern part of Sweden, the county of Uppsala in the mid-east of Sweden, and the county of Västerbotten in the north of Sweden.

Reserve decisions and management plans are central pieces during the management of nature reserves. The reserve decision declares that a nature reserve is created and states its purpose. Its purpose guides the rest of the decision and the management plan (SEPA 2003b).

Furthermore, the reserve decision contains a presentation of the needs and conditions for achieving the purpose(s) of the reserve. The reserve's land and water usage restrictions are also presented in the decision. The management plan can be seen as a practical guide for implementation of management activities (ibid.). It is divided in a descriptive part and a planning part. The descriptive part consists of a presentation of the area, the values that the reserve it is supposed to preserve and an overview of the historical land use. It also contains a description of the reserve's outdoor life activities and recreational interests. The planning part describes how the nature reserve should be managed so that the purpose(s) of the reserve is

met. Reserves are often divided into smaller management areas, each with its own conservation purpose and description for how the purpose should be met.

Since this study concerns how the CABs describe their intentions to work with local participation in their reserve decisions and management plans, I have used the following criteria when selecting the nature reserves. I consider nature reserves that have been established by the CAB, with the CAB as its principal manager. Moreover, the state should not be the only landowner in the reserve, since this may affect the CABs' willingness to initiate participation with local actors. My ambition was to collect 10 reserves established in each decade between 1960 and 2000, two reserves per year between 2000 and 2010, and three per year from 2010 and onwards. The reason behind this particular selection criterion was to see if there had been any changes in how the CAB expressed 'participation' in their management plans over the years. The rationale behind selecting more reserve decisions and management plans in later years was to get in depth information about how participation is catered for currently. This ambition of gathering/collecting ten reserves per decade could, however, not be completely fulfilled for each county, due to lack of reserves meeting my criteria for ownership.

*Table 1. Distribution of studied reserve decisions and management plans.
X/Y: X= Reserve decision. Y=Management plans*

Year/County	1960- 1969	1970- 1979	1980- 1989	1990- 1999	2000- 2009	2010- 2018	1960- 2018	Number of reserves
Halland	5/0	10/1	6/12	6/9	18/18	26/25	71/65	67
Västerbotten	2/0	8/2	8/7	5/8	13/20	38/39	74/76	72
Uppsala	0/0	7/4	3/2	0/1	14/10	24/24	48/41	47
Totally	7/0	25/7	17/21	11/18	45/48	88/88	193/182	186

In order to further understand how the CABs work with local participation, I conducted three semi-structured telephone interviews with officials in leading positions at the CABs' environmental department, who work with nature reserve management. One interview with two officials was also conducted at the CAB's office in Uppsala. After approval from the informants, two interviews were recorded. A third interview was intended to be recorded, but due to technical problems only the two first minutes were recorded. Fortunately, notes were taken during the interview. The interviews were conducted in order to receive clarifications

on a number of questions that had emerged while doing the document analysis. During the interviews I also asked general questions about how each county works with participation during the operational phase of the nature reserves. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and started with a question of whether the CAB are working actively with local participation or not. From there on, questions were asked to get a general picture of local participation in each county: what do local actors participate in, who is participating and how local actors can influence a reserve? Another theme was why the CAB work with participation the way they do. Some findings from the reserve decisions and management plans were also subjects during the interviews.

In order to contextualise my empirical findings, I have also reviewed and studied literature connected to the history of nature conservation in Sweden and studied public policies and strategies regarding protection of nature. The literature reviews, together with the interview material and the document assessment of the nature reserves, have formed the basis for discussions in this thesis about how the CABs describe their work with participation during the operational phase of nature reserve management.

Data analysis

In the data analysis, 193 reserve decisions and 182 management plans have been assessed. During the analysis of decisions and plans, I was looking for content related one of these four categories: communication (i): possibilities for communication between the CAB and local actors; involvement (ii): duties and responsibilities given to local actors; local knowledge (iii): References to local actors' knowledge; other (iv): noticeable findings that did not fit any of the other columns. For each county I made a table with every nature reserve and these categories, which made it possible to also compare the three counties with each other and over time.

Guiding concepts

This section presents key theoretical concepts and terms used in the thesis.

Participation

Participation is a term that is used and understood in many different ways. Roughly speaking, it means consulting and involving people in agenda-setting, decision making and policy making (Roew et.al. 2004). The World Bank (1996) defines participation as a *process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them*. Reed (2008) defines participation as processes where actors take an active role in the making of decisions that affect them.

In this study, local participation is defined as a process of involving local actors in the management of nature reserves, in decision making and/or in the practical operations. Local participation is about providing possibilities to influence the direction that nature reserves develop in, also including e.g. active involvement in the practical activities in the reserve. I make a distinction between participation in the practical management and participation in decision making, where the latter is considered a higher level of participation. For this study, the term local actor is used and defined as individuals, companies, groups of people or associations living and acting in the reserve or in the vicinity of the reserve.

Participation is claimed to entail numerous advantages, such as increased public trust and reliance in the decisions being made (Reed 2008; Luyet et.al 2012). It is often argued in the literature that participation provides a platform for exchange of knowledge between different actors, which lays a foundation for improved project design, decisions and for developing new relationships (Reed 2008). Participation is also claimed to optimise practical implementations, as the implementations are better adopted to local conditions (Reed 2008; Luyet et.al 2012). Active state intervention is also costly, and a more passive way of management is usually not enough to uphold all the qualities in a cultural landscape, which is why Selman (2004) argues that local participation is necessary for a sufficient nature conservation. Borrini-Feyerabend (1996), who has worked with participation in the co-management of protected areas, stresses the advantages of incorporating different local actors and stakeholder in the management of protected areas. Borrini-Feyerabend (1996) argues that local actors possess specific capacities, such as knowledge, and/or comparative advantage to state officials, such as local legitimacy. They are also often willing to invest resources such as time, money or political authority into the management.

Participation is seen as a solution to complex problems (Reed 2008). However, it also has some concerns. First of all, it is often an expensive and time-consuming process (Luyet et.al 2012). Secondly, it is not certain if those involved in participatory processes may have enough opportunities to participate and actually influence the process, with the risk that existing power relations and group dynamics could be reinforced, leading to “dysfunctional consensus” (Reed 2008). Another pitfall is the “consultation fatigue” which can be developed when participants perceive that they get little reward for their involvement and lack capacity to influence decision making (Reed 2008; Luyet et.al. 2012). The participation becomes more of a “talking workshop”. In summary, there is a risk that participation reinforces already existing power relations and that “weaker voices” are not heard (Reed 2008).

In order to overcome some of the pitfalls when initiating participatory processes, Reed (2008) and Luyet et.al. (2012) have developed a number of principles to follow for successful participation. These principles entail that; i) the process should be transparent and promote equity, learning, trust and respect among the participants, ii) an early involvement of all relevant stakeholders, iii) the existence of adequate resources, including time (Luyet et.al 2012).

Reed (2008) presents four different typologies of participation useful for classifying and understanding an instance of participation. The first typology is focusing on the degree of participation, often visualised in different frameworks constituted by levels of participation based on how much influence the participants possess. Most famous is Arnstein’s “Ladder of participation” (ranging from information to public control), which over the years have been further developed by other scientists (c.f. Zachrisson 2004; Sandström 2008; Luyet et.al. 2012). The second typology concerns the direction of communication between the involved parties. Simply providing information to passive participants is regarded as “communication”, while gathering information from participants is “consultation”. Only “two-way communication” is classified as participation. The third typology distinguishes between normative and pragmatic participation. Normative participation has its roots in the thought that people have the right to participate in decision making, focusing on the process of reaching the decision. Pragmatic participation focuses on the end result, such that participation is regarded as a method for reaching high quality decisions. The fourth typology focuses on the objectives for which participation is used, for examples whether the objectives are research driven, planner and/or people centred (Reed 2008).

Level of participation

Since this study is interested in how and to what extent local actors take part in nature reserve management, Arnstein's ladder for public participation (Arnstein 1969) is relevant for the study. The ladder consists of eight steps where each step entails a higher degree of citizen participation. The two bottom steps of the ladder are called manipulation and therapy, where both steps can be seen as levels of non-participation. On these bottom levels, people are not included in decision making. Rather, the power holders seek to "educate" or "cure" the participants (Arnstein 1969). The next two levels involve informing and consulting, where the participants may be heard without any guarantee by the powerholders that their views will be acknowledged. In the fifth level, participants are allowed to give advice, although they have no decision power. The three highest levels; partnership, delegated power and citizen control, are different degrees of participants' control in the decision making (Arnstein 1969). The partnership level entails that the participants mean to negotiate with the powerholders. Delegated power means that participants receive decision power over a particular plan or program. Citizens control entails full managerial control for the participants. As Arnstein (1969) points out the ladder is a simplification, but it illustrates that there are significantly different degrees of participation. This study uses the following six steps of participation, called *level of participation*, (adopted from Arnstein 1969; Zachrisson 2004; Sandström 2008) to explore to what extent local actors take part in nature reserve management:

1. Information: Contact and mostly one-way dialogue is established between the authority and local actors, with the ambition of the authorities to provide information.
2. Communication: Concerns and suggestions from local actors are beginning to have an effect in the operational phase but the agenda is still set by the authorities.
3. Advisory arrangements: Local actors have a platform where they can express their thoughts, concerns and suggestions but their role is advisory and lacking decision power.
4. Partnership: An arrangement for collaboration between the authorities and local actors is established and local actors have more than just an advisory role.
5. Actors control: Local actors have full control over the reserve.

Participation is not only about to what degree local actors can influence the development of a reserve. It also about what can be influenced and where participation can take place. Kiser and Ostrom's (1982) have developed a framework called *institutional arrangements* which will be

used to illustrate to what level local actors have influence. According to Kiser and Ostrom, institutional arrangements “are the sets of rules governing the number of decisions makers, allowable actions and strategies, authorised results and linkages among decisions situations” (Kiser and Ostrom 1982, p.191). Kiser and Ostrom differentiate between three different institutional levels: operational, collective and constitutional. Important for this thesis when analysing participation in nature reserve management is to understand the relationships between the different institutional levels, how an upper level sets the rules and frames possibilities for participation for a lower level. Operational level can be seen as the world of action where decisions about practical day-to-day actions are conducted, where a decision leads to a direct physical action (Kiser and Ostrom 1982). The collective level concerns plans of action and set the conditions for the operational level. The highest level is the constitutional level which sets the conditions for collective level in forms of rules for how decisions are to be taken and for whom is eligible (Kiser and Ostrom 1982, Ostrom 1990).

The walkthrough of the concept of participation brings some further questions that can be used to understand the material gathered in this study. What kind of participation is taking place in nature reserve management and what can local actors participate in? What do the local actors contribute with? Who is participating during the operational phase and under what conditions does participation take place in nature reserve management?

Nature conservation and nature reserve management

Nature conservation is all types of action or non-action to achieve a certain goal or value in nature. They can be done voluntarily, by force or encouraged by subsidies. Action can for example be weeding, grazing or burning. Non-action refers to the management action of “free development”, where nature is left to develop on its own without human intervention.

In this thesis, I use the term management which can be translated to *förvaltning* in Swedish, meaning both administration of something for someone else and the practical day-to-day management. Nature reserve management entails both decision making concerning a nature reserve and the practical operations carried out to implement the decisions made in a nature reserve.

From romantic nationalism to local participation

This chapter contains a brief historical overview of Sweden's nature conservation and protection policies from the early 20th century to the early years of the 21th century. The chapter provides a background which is helpful for understanding and contextualising the empirical data and material in the following chapters.

Ideas of protecting undisturbed areas from exploitation emerged first among natural science academics, and in the early 1900s the ideas became a subject for Swedish politics (Wramner and Nygård, 2010). The early period of nature protection was influenced by romantic nationalism. Areas of interest for protection were those considered unique for Sweden and majestic for the observer (*ibid.*). Scientific and purely environmental reasons for nature protection were also present at this time. A governmental investigation from 1904 stated that the protected areas should preserve native plants and animals and be an object for research. Public investigations from 1904 and 1907 culminated in the establishment of nine national parks in 1909. The investigations emphasised scientific reason for the establishment, but when it came to the establishment of the national parks, the decisions lacked scientific argumentations (*ibid.*). The choice of the nine parks was based on the argumentation that they lacked economic value, was owned by the crown, portrayed so-called unique Swedish nature, and that the areas would benefit economically from potential tourists.

Between 1930 and 1960, few practical actions were taken concerning nature protection, with only a few smaller areas being added to the list of protected areas (*ibid.*). However, during this period the concept of nature protection was expanded upon. Values connected to 'outdoor life' had been present from the start, but during the 1930s it was further emphasised and an 'outdoor life investigation' was presented in 1938 and 1940. The investigations proposed beach protection and leisure reserves but due to the Second World War all reforms were put on hold. The idea of landscape conservation also emerged during the end of the 1930s. It was acknowledged that whole landscape types needed attention and not only single objects. A new nature protection investigation was initiated in 1946 and was presented in 1950/51. A new legislation was approved which meant that nature reserves now could be established without landowners' approval. The legislation stated that "Nature is a national asset, which should be protected and conserved". Wramner and Nygård (2010) mean that this formulation indicated a shift from emphasising the private land owner's right to advocating the public interest for nature conservation. The law meant that authorities received stronger legislation to establish

nature protection, but the authorities still lacked sufficient resources such as money and organisation to carry out a sufficient nature conservation (Wramner and Nygård 2010).

In 1962, the Swedish government launched and presented an investigation, which according to Wramner and Nygård (2010) laid the foundation for a modern nature conservation approach in Sweden. The investigation directed sharp criticism to the past 50 years of nature protection for its lack of scientific approach, and that the areas protected were scattered leftovers and insufficient for fulfilling the recreational demands for the public. From now on, nature conservation was considered to be based on ecology, biology and human ecology. Two main tasks for nature conservation were proposed: i) to strive for nature consideration in all fields that could affect nature and ii) to protect and manage more valuable areas. It was also proposed that a central authority for nature protection should be established, that would coordinate and develop nature conservation. The old nature protection law was also proposed to be replaced by a new nature conservation law. The biggest difference was new ways of protecting nature in forms of nature reserves. Before, nature could be protected by the instrument national parks and “nature memory” (*naturminne*). Nature reserves were introduced and replaced nature memories. In two decisions (1963 and 1964) the parliament approved the investigation with few changes, and in 1967 the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency was officially established (Wramner and Nygård 2010).

In the late 1980s, biodiversity became a part of the nature conservation agenda and in 1993 Sweden ratified the biodiversity convention. From now on, environmental concerns were considered to be equally important as economic concerns. In 1998, the Swedish Parliament launched 15, and later 16, so called environmental goals to be achieved within one generation. Sweden also joined the European Union in 1995 which meant that the Swedish conservation practices had to be adjusted to European standards. This had the implication that biodiversity gained more attention and emphasis on protecting larger “ecological systems” as opposed to isolated areas. A new instrument for protecting nature was also introduced, namely Natura-2000 areas, and in 1999 a new environmental legislation replaced the nature conservation law from the 1969s (Wramner and Nygård 2010).

Nature conservation management in Sweden has been characterised as a centralised top-down system (Hovik and Sandström 2008; Hongslo et.al. 2016; Holmgren, Sandström & Zachrisson 2017), with an emphasis on expert knowledge (Hovik and Sandström 2008; Wramner and Nygård 2010; Holmgren, Sandström & Zachrisson 2017). Small steps towards a more inclusive bottom-up approach have been taken since the mid-1990s, starting with some of the

national parks, where public and private actors started to gain influence in the process. A step towards a more bottom-up approach with regards to nature conservation management was taken by the government in 2001 with their policy *A cohesive nature conservation policy* (Skr. 2001/02:173). It was the first-time that local dialogue and participation were emphasised at a national level (Hongslo et.al. 2016). Earlier, local participation had been more of a response to local opposition rather than a strategy to facilitate a discussion and cooperation around conservation (Hovik, Sandström and Zachrisson 2010).

The nature conservation policy from 2001 (Skr. 2001/02:173) describes the government's approach towards nature conservation. It is focused on how the goals for the nature conservation can be reached, where local participation is brought forward as a key component for reaching nature conservation goals.

“Nature conservation has to widen to include more actors for us to be able to reach the goals. Local participation is a key concept” (Skr. 2001/02:173, p. 24)

The core of the participation approach as outlined by the government is that people who are going to be affected by e.g. nature reserve decisions should be able to be part in the process (Skr. 2001/02:173). This should be done by strengthening the dialogue with citizens, trying new participatory management arrangement such as management boards and incorporation of local knowledge in the management. Local actors that can participate are not only companies, but also landowners and land users as well as local associations (Skr. 2001/02:173). The participatory approach should be present through both the planning stage and implementation stage (ibid.).

The ideas of increasing local participation in nature reserve management and nature conservation was introduced in the government's paper in 2001 and have influenced later strategies and policies launched by Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). Regarding the operational phase of nature reserve, the report *Local support for nature conservation*⁴ (SEPA 2003a) recommends that it should be easy for the public to make comments and express desires during the management of the reserve. Management activities should be announced by the manager in advance. It is further stated that a management board is a proven form of local participation, which can be used to a greater extent according to the report. Furthermore, procurement should be respected, although it is good to utilise local

⁴ *Lokal förankring av naturvård*

landowners or companies for the management activities (SEPA 2003a). The handbook for nature reserves states that the administrator of the nature reserve should prioritise the cooperation with the land owners and users (SEPA 2003b). In nature reserves which have more actors than just the administrator, the management plan should guide the administrator in how to act towards other actors, in order to achieve the reserve's aim (ibid.).

Results

In the following chapter, the empirical material, comprising reserve decisions, management plans and interviews with CAB officials is presented. First, data from the reserve decisions, management plans and interviews are presented and discussed in relation to three categories of participation and projects. Second, I discuss how the management activity “free development” can be related to the metaphor of “dead man’s hand”.

Local participation in reserve decisions and management plans

In order to explore how local participation is catered for in Swedish nature reserve management, 192 reserve decisions and 183 management plans from 1960 and onwards were analysed. The results are presented in the table below (Table 2).

When assessing the nature reserve decisions and management plans for the nature reserves it is possible to discern three categories of different forms of local participation: i) local participation as practical management, ii) local participation as consultation, iii) and local participation through management boards. Participation in nature reserve management also occurs through specific projects that the CAB are involved in, which cannot be found in the reserve decisions and management plans. These projects may cover several of the reserves in the counties and they have different goals, such as for example increasing accessibility in the reserves for persons with disabilities, providing work opportunities for people who have difficult to enter the labour market and creating a trail system across several nature reserves.

In 29 nature reserves (16%), local actors are appointed to carry out practical management activities. The majority of these activities are related to grazing activities to be carried out by landowners. Other examples of management activities are maintenance of buildings and various facilities related to outdoor life. Landowners are the most frequent mentioned actor in the plans, but local associations are also mentioned.

In 81 (44%) nature reserves, it is expressed in the nature reserve plans that consultation between landowners and the CAB should take place and in four reserves it is explicitly stated that management boards should exist.

In about 90 (48%) nature reserves nothing is stated in the reserve decision or the management plan that can be related to any of the categories of local participation. Many of these reserves practice so called “free development”, which means that the reserve should develop free from human intervention.

Table 2. Categories of local participation

	Nature reserves	Participation in the practical management	Participation through consultation	Participation through joint management boards
Halland	67	17	43	2
Västerbotten	72	6	17	1
Uppsala	47	6	21	1
Total	186	29	81	4

Participation as practical management

The involvement of local actors in practical nature reserve management activities includes tasks related to weeding or grazing, but also work related to renovation and maintenance of facilities for recreation and outdoor life (e.g. wind shelters, fire places, track and trails etc). Most descriptions of local actors' involvement in practical management tasks are from the county of Halland and are related to grazing. Interviews with the officials from all three CABs also confirms the need of involving local actors in nature reserve management, particularly with regards to grazing. The CAB official Mikael Stenström, coordinator of the management of the reserves in the county of Halland, describes the importance of local actors' involvement with regards to grazing in the following way:

“Grazing can't be carried out in any other way. We cannot hire one big landowner who should send out grazing animals in the whole county. It would not work. It has to be local users who does the grazing.” (Mikael Stenström, 18th April 2018)

Mikael Stenström's answer indicates that nature reserve management is dependent on local actors' involvement. Another example of local actors' involvement in the management of nature reserves is expressed in the management plan for Brånsjön in the county of Västerbotten. This particular nature reserve was established for its rich bird life and it is surrounded by 136 hectares of arable land. In the management plan of the reserve it is stated that:

“An active and varied arable land use is a precondition for reaching a rich birdlife. [...] Abolishment of farming or change in land use that leads to arable land overgrown is a real threat against the nature reserve's nature values.” (County Administration Board Västerbotten 2010 A, p. 10)

Brånsjön is not the only nature reserve where farming is allowed and part of the nature conservation plan. Much like grazing, it seems that farming is dependent on local actors, in the cases that farming is part of the nature conservation plan. This is another indication that nature reserve management is dependent on local actors' involvement, particularly in activities related to cultural landscapes.

During the interviews with officials from the CABs in Halland and Västerbotten, they state that they work actively with local participation. Between 2012 and 2016 the CAB in Halland worked with a program called "preserve, take care of, show" (*Värna, vårda, visa*), that concerns the incorporation of local actors' knowledge, interests and commitments. Even though the program has ended, it has continued to influence the way the CAB work with nature reserve management, according to Mikael Stenström. He states that the CAB try to assign practical management tasks to local actors as much as possible, which includes assigning local actors tasks related to e.g. construction of trails in the reserve, beach cleaning etc. Also, the CAB in Västerbotten has local participation on the agenda when working with nature reserves during the operational phase, according to Peter Jonsson, head of the nature conservation section. The CAB in Västerbotten works with the slogan "A living local community", with the aim of making the reserves more beneficial for local communities living in or in the vicinity of the nature reserves. One way of doing this is to appoint and employ local actors to carry out practical management, as described by Peter Jonsson. Associations like local sports clubs, hunting teams or a bird club can be hired for collecting junk, distributing firewood or for maintaining outdoor life facilities.

An interesting observation can be made when comparing the reserve decision and management plans with the interviews with officials. Nature reserve decisions and management plans rarely state that practical management should involve local actors. Out of the 186 assessed reserves, only about 16 per cent of the reserves' management plans explicitly express local actors' involvement in practical management activities. However, the CAB officials express that local participation is something that the CAB work with as much as possible, by e.g. assigning practical management tasks to local actors. My own definition of participation for this thesis incorporates having local actors carrying out practical management activities. However, this concerns only one, arguably lower, level of participation. As per above, a number of researchers and institutions have other criteria for local participation. Reed's (2008), Roew's et. al. (2004) and the World Bank's (1996)

definition have focus on influence in decision making. Actors being involved in the management as merely executing management activities would not be sufficient for this definition of participation. In summary, it seems like the CABs in Halland and Västerbotten have a view of participation as mainly being a question of involving local actors in the practical management, a view I will come back to in my discussion.

Participation as consultation

In 81 nature reserves, it is explicitly mentioned in the reserve decisions or in the management plans that consultations with local actors and the CAB should be carried out. In 35 of these reserves it is stated in the documents that landowners should consult the CAB before any activity is carried out. These consultations are also mainly related to practical concerns, when for example a landowner needs to carry out maintenance of roads and ditches or cutting down branches that grow over agricultural fields in the vicinity of a nature reserve.

In 16 of the nature reserves, it is stated in the management plans that it is the CAB who should consult landowners before an activity is carried out. For example, in some nature reserve management plans it is mentioned that the CAB should consult landowners if the CAB intends to dam up ditches which could affect the groundwater condition on nearby land or when the CAB intends to carry out protective hunting or constructing facilities for outdoor life.

“Before building of a potential resting spot/fireplace on Brännberget, consultation shall take place with the landowners regarding suitable placement and management”. (County Administration Board Västerbotten 2015, p. 7)

In issues related to construction of facilities for outdoor life and recreation, it seems that local actors are provided with possibilities to influence decision making. This is also confirmed by the interviews with the CAB officials who express that it is easier to change restrictions that limits the public, rather than alter restrictions with regards to landowners' user rights.

In 35 nature reserve decisions and management plans, it is stated that the management should be carried out by a state authority and landowner in consultation. *“The nature reserve shall be managed by the National Forest Agency in consultation with the landowners.”* (County Administration Board Västerbotten 1974, p.2)

Similar formulations, as the one from Skeppsviksgården quoted above, can be found in several reserve decisions from the 60s, 70s and 80s, but they have later been repealed when the nature reserve management has been transferred to the CAB. These formulations show

that some form of joint consultation process between local and state actors with regards to nature reserve management was present earlier. The annulment of formulations that state “that management should be carried out by a state authority in consultation with landowners” also indicate that local participation in nature reserve management have decreased since the 1960s. The only nature reserve that have this kind of formulation left in the steering documents of the nature reserve, is the nature reserve of Idön in the county of Uppsala, (County Administration Board Uppsala 2005). In this particular nature reserve, the landowner is the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskyddsföreningen*).

Participation through management boards

Local participation is not only about being involved in the practical operations in nature reserve management, it also about providing possibilities for local actors to influence the development of nature reserves. One way of increasing possibilities for local actors to influence nature reserve manage is through the establishment of management boards, which is also something that SEPA recommends (SEPA 2003a). In four out of 186 reserves, it is stipulated that a management board should be in place.

The management board of in the nature reserve of Holmöarna, Västerbotten

One of the four nature reserves that has a management board is the nature reserve of Holmöarna, which consist of a number of islands, located 30 kilometres southeast from the town of Umeå in Västerbotten. The nature reserve is a popular destination for making excursions and has a rich bird life and traces of earlier fishing and hunting communities. (County Administration Board Västerbotten 1980a, County Administration Board Västerbotten 1980b). In the reserve decision from 1980, it is stated that an advisory management board should be established with representatives from the CAB, Umeå municipality and residents from the islands (County Administration Board Västerbotten 1980a). The management board serves as an advisory board to the CAB and deals with issues such as for example protective hunting on mink, reparation of berths and questions related to reindeer herding.

Peter Jonsson from the CAB also mentions that there are other management boards, other than Holmöarna in Västerbotten, although not many. For the CAB it is not possible to have a deeper dialogue with local actors in every reserve and they have prioritise, according to Peter Jonsson. The reserves that are prioritised for management boards are often large with many owners, and where the level of activity is high in terms of tourism and outdoor life activities, or if it is a reserve that requires a special management practice. Peter Jonsson points out that it

is easier to deal with a reserve's management where deeper dialogue arrangements already exist.

The management board in Gräsö, Uppsala

Another nature reserve that has a management board is Gräsö-Östra Skärgård in the county of Uppsala. (County Administration Board Uppsala 2012a, County Administration Board Uppsala 2012b). The nature reserve is located outside Östhammar and comprises a number of islands and surrounding water areas. Gräsö-Östra Skärgård's reserve decision and management plan stands out from all the other nature reserves assessed in this study, in the sense that the documents are rich on expressions concerning local actors' involvement. For example, it is stated that all "active management activities should be approved by the landowners" (County Administration Board Uppsala 2012a). Land owners, and particularly farmers, are also acknowledged and promoted in the nature reserve management, for their contribution to take care of "nature and cultural values".

The management plan also acknowledges how hiring local actors for practical management activities can contribute economically to the community (County Administration Board Uppsala 2012b). The management plan for the reserve expresses how hiring local actors and the management board could cultivate local knowledge.

"An advisory board is to be established with at least annual meetings to discuss administration, management and other activities in the area. In the advisory board, the dialogue with stakeholders and other interested shall be developed. Through the advisory board, local knowledge and tradition can be combined with scientific principles for evaluation and management strategies." (County Administration Board Uppsala 2012a, p.12)

The reserve decision and management plan express an attempt to incorporate so called local knowledge with scientific principles. This is something Reed (2008) and Luyet et.al. (2012) means is an important component in participation. The management board seems to be run by the locals as an annual meeting, with an ongoing process of figuring out what the management board should be.

"Q: Do you still have a management board on Gräsö?"

A: Yes, it can be put that way. There are so many stakeholders. They have mostly been running it as a meeting where they invite everyone. It has been held once a year. Well, that's

kind of the plan, that it should continue or develop in some sort of way.” (Camilla Wessberg, 2nd May 2018)

It is the local actors who run the meeting where everyone is invited, including the CAB. The CAB officials describe the meetings as being informative.

“They are informative meetings. The CAB can say what we have done in the reserve during the year – if we, for example, have done an underwater measurement. We recount the information we have gathered during the year, what activities we are planning to do in the reserve next year. There is a possibility to ask questions. Discuss what we think about the management of the reserve.” (Calle Mälson, 2nd May 2018)

On the meetings initiated by local actors, the CAB take an informative role. According to the reserve decision, the management board should be a place for cultivation of local knowledge and tradition, in combination with scientific principles. However, the CAB do not seem to work actively for facilitating such a platform. The quote gives an impression that the CAB does not take much responsibility for the development of the management board when local actors are running it. This is a problematic situation as the CAB still have the decision power. There is a risk that the management board merely becomes “talking workshop”, lacking any mandate over how the nature reserve should be managed.

Another reserve with a management board is Fagerön where the CAB and landowner meet annually to discuss the management of the reserve, says Camilla Wessberg, nature reserve management coordinator. She explains that the reason for the management board is a particular butterfly species which requires special management. Uppsala used to have more management boards, which were abolished when no longer needed, according Camilla Wessberg. However, in Hjälstaviken, which previously had a management board, the CAB now interacts with hunting teams and ornithologists through focus group meetings.

Participation through projects

Some nature reserves in the county of Halland have been part of the project “Sand life” with the aim to restore overgrown sand dunes and heaths along the coast. The Sand life project was considered as controversial as it implied significant changes in the physical environment. In an attempt to receive support for the project, the CAB arranged several meetings with local residents and associations. Mikael Stenström from the CAB in Halland describe how the meetings are mainly about informing local actors, but some room exist for input from local actors:

“[The meetings are] *Partly of course to inform how it is going to be done. But it would be presumptuous if we would not consider comments made [by local actors]. [...] But we can't compromise with the project or with the aim of the reserve, or what is written in the management plan. Local knowledge can be incorporated into the details of the implementation.*” (Mikael Stenström, 18th April 2018)

Mikael Stenström's description of the meetings mean that local actors participate on meetings under conditions set by the CAB. The goal of the project is already set and the meeting is primarily informative. Possibilities for the local actors to influence is limited to details of how activities are to be carried out.

Another project involving the participatory elements of partnership was run in *Åkulla Beech Forest*, an area popular for excursions that comprises 12 nature reserves outside the town of Varberg in the county of Halland. In 2010 a 66-kilometer-long trail system was constructed, on an initiative from Åkulla Beech Forest Association. When the CAB heard what the association was doing, the CAB asked if they could join the project and did so. In this project, the goal was set by the local association and a partnership between the association and the CAB characterised the project. This partnership meant that some trails were built by the association and some by the CAB. The association's contacts with other landowners made it possible to build trails on land that were not nature reserves, while the CAB could build trails on land managed by CAB.

“Free development” and the metaphor of a “dead man's hand”

The majority of the assessed steering documents of the nature reserves never mention the phrase local participation. A frequently used term in the management plan is instead “free development”, meaning that a reserve's area should be left without any human interventions, in order to let nature's own dynamics and functions work freely (Naturvårdsverket 2013). Here is an example from Hässningsberget's management plan from Västerbotten:

“Weeding should be done no later than 2007. After completed weeding the area is handed back to the force of nature” (County Administration Board Västerbotten 2006, p. 5)

When assessing the amount of free development in the three counties, only the currently active reserve decision and management plans are included. In total, 173 nature reserves have been assessed. The 71 nature reserves in Västerbotten cover a total area of 54000 hectares. 22500 hectares (42%) of these nature reserves are designated areas of “free development”. In Halland, the total area of nature reserves cover 10700 hectares, with 344 (3%) hectares of

“free development”. In Uppsala, nature reserves cover 8100 hectares, with 516 (6%) hectares of “free development”. The higher percentage of free development in the county of Västerbotten could probably be explained by its abundance of forest. Forests are typically managed by free development, as opposed to cultural lands, for example old grazing lands, which are more common in nature reserves in the counties of Uppsala and Halland.

The term “free development” can also be related to the metaphor of “dead man’s hand”, which is an expression, commonly used by e.g. landowners when a nature reserve is established (Sandström 2008), with the underlying meaning that the reserve prohibits any form of human intervention. “Free development” can be seen as an antonym to local participation, as the activity means no human intervention. Emelin (2009) means that landscape management, which nature conservation is a part of, have two paradigms: the environmental paradigm and the plan paradigm. A good decision within the environmental paradigm is based on verified scientific and preferable quantified knowledge. In the plan paradigm, a good decision is based on a process where different interests are heard, and a democratic process that accounts for the balance of interests. A fundamental thought in the environmental paradigm is to make a clear distinction between the two concepts “nature” and “culture”, where the latter should be understood as something man made and the former as something untouched. Furthermore, “nature” implies that nature itself has value and that a natural state can be reached in contrast to “culture”, which represents human intervention and impact. The management activity “free development” is more related to the idea of “nature” and the environmental paradigm, as areas should be “handed back to the forces of nature”.

Discussion

In this chapter I discuss my findings in relation to the concept of institutional conditions and the concept of pragmatic and normative participation. I also discuss how the CABs' work with participation can be described as either ad hoc or flexible.

Institutional conditions for local participation

As stated earlier, the reserve decisions and management plans are central documents that describe how a nature reserve should be managed, such that the reserve's aims are met. During the interviews with the CAB officials, they have repeatedly stated that nothing can be done that goes against the reserve decision or the management plan. However, the officials also say that smaller things not covered by the steering documents can be implemented.

Peter Jonsson at the CAB in Västerbotten says that people sometimes suggest or request things that are not covered by the management plan. If they are reasonable and minor things, as it often is, a solution is often worked out. It is up to the authority to decide, according to Peter Jonsson. During the trail system project in the Åkulla-area, Halland, Mikael Stenström describes that the interpretation of the management plan had to be "*stretched a little*", so the trail system could be constructed. The CAB in Halland is continuously working with reviewing current reserve decisions and management plans, declares Mikael Stenström.

"There are possibilities after a decision have been taken of course. When you are out and visiting a reserve. Someone wonders why it is not allowed to camp in this reserve. It is always possible to reconsider such restrictions for the benefit of the public. It's not difficult, and we make such evaluations. It is possible even if the process is quite slow." (Mikael Stenström)

The CAB in Uppsala, however, does not describe their approach towards the reserve decisions and management plan in the same way.

"It is a matter of resources and priorities. If you have established a reserve, it is at least protected to some degree. If the restrictions or the management plan are not an optimum you may have to live with that, because it is more important that we can protect more forest which we have been working with the last couple of years. It is that harsh." (Camilla Wessberg)

The quote above indicates that the county officials perceive it is difficult to change the reserve decision and management plans, which is confirmed by the other officials from Halland and Västerbotten. This is especially the case for Uppsala, who update existing reserve decisions and management plans to an even lesser degree than CAB:s in Västerbotten and Halland.

Based on the interviews with the CAB officials together with reserve decisions and the management plans, it seems like local actors are fairly active in the practical nature reserve management. Activities concerning practical management is what Kiser and Ostrom (1982) calls the operational level. It is, however, less common that local actors are participating on what Kiser and Ostrom (1982) call the collective level, that is to say the level which sets the conditions for the operational level. The conditions for the operational level is partly framed by the CAB through reserve decisions and management plans. In other words: How a nature reserve should be managed and developed is regulated by the reserve decision and the management plan.

Pragmatic participation

In studies on participation a distinction is made between normative and pragmatic participation (Reed 2008), where participation is seen either as a right or as means of reaching certain goals. The reviewed management boards and projects in nature reserve management are closer to pragmatic participation than normative participation. Local actors' participation in management boards and projects exist because of pragmatic reasons, motivated by certain practical goals rather than local actor's right to participate in nature reserve management. For example, the management board on Fagerön in the county of Uppsala exists because of a butterfly species that requires special attention. In Västerbotten the management boards are established as it supports the CAB's management of nature reserves with many stakeholders. The pragmatic approach is maybe even more significant in Halland's two projects. Both projects have had a clear and limited goal from the start: to restore sand life and the trail system project to build trails. The pragmatic approach can provide local actors with opportunities to influence how the goal should be reached but with limited opportunities to influence what the goal should be.

Institutionalisation of higher levels of participation

As per above, according to Reed's (2008), Roew's et.al. (2004) and The World Bank's (1996) definition, using local actors for carrying out practical management activities is not considered participation. However, the CABs seem to perceive local participation mainly as involving local actors in the practical management. This view might be one of the reasons why participatory arrangements that involve local actors in planning phases and decision making are so few. Another reason might be that the officials do not always know how to facilitate deeper participatory processes.

When comparing the guidelines concerning local participation in the establishment of nature reserves, the guidelines (SEPA 2003a, SEPA 2003b and SEPA 2008) for local participation during the management are not very elaborate. During the establishment phase, dialogue with local actors, where they should be provided with possibilities to influence the process, are emphasised in the reports from SEPA (ibid.). Detailed guidelines for how the officials should work with local actors during establishment are presented: an early contact with landowners, excursions with landowners, the use of “advertisement-species” (well-known animal and plant species) during the dialogue, promotion of positive landowners, and not only listening to traditionally strong interests. Drafts of reserve decisions and management plans should be presented early to the stakeholders so they can be discussed and, if needed, revise such decisions (SEPA 2003a, SEPA 2003b).

Local support for nature conservation (SEPA 2003a) includes only a short section about local participation during the operational phase. The report states that bad management is devastating for the public trust. In order to increase public trust and avoid conflicts, the report recommends giving guided tours and also informing nearby residents about activities in the nature reserve. It is recommended to use local actors to carry out management activities. It should also be easy for the public to hand in suggestions. The report has one sentence about management boards:

“Management board is a proven form for local influence on the management and practical management of protected areas.” (SEPA 2003a, p. 17)

There are no guidelines or advice on how a management board can be established or organised. In the handbook for establishment and management of nature reserves (SEPA 2003b) it is stated that cooperation with landowners/resource users is important during the management. However, it is up to the individual official to figure out how this should be done during the operational phase. The manoeuvrability of the manager during the operational phase depends on her/his competence, resources and voluntary cooperation with local actors (SEPA 2003b). Furthermore, nothing is written on how to facilitate possibilities for local actors to influence the reserve during the operational phase. More focus is put on how support for the already established reserve can be facilitated.

In the wake of the nature conservation policy in 2001, there was a programme run in 2008 and 2009 to improve the competence in communication, participation and conflict management, primarily among staff at the CABs and SEPA (SEPA 2010). The presentation of (SEPA 2008)

and the evaluation of the program (SEPA 2010) reveal a program that focuses on how officials should deal with conflicts. Focusing on communication is not a bad idea but perhaps there should also be guidelines on how to structure and organise local participation. Stenseke (2009) found in her study about participation that structures and strategies for co-management need to be developed to survive changes of employees in the agencies. In her study she found that local stakeholders are not satisfied with only being active on the operational level, carrying out management activities. Local stakeholders also want to participate in defining the institutional arrangements (Stenseke 2008).

Participation: Ad hoc or flexibility?

Before I come to the conclusion, I want to elaborate on if the CABs' work with participation can be described as ad hoc or if the CABs in this study are flexible.

Honglso et.al (2016) uses the concept of decentralisation, meaning a transfer of power from central government to actors and institutions at lower levels in the political and territorial hierarchy, meaning that local actors can get more involved in decision making. Hongslo et.al. (2016) have looked at the emergence of new Swedish national parks and mean that small steps have been taken towards decentralisation. Hongslo et.al (2016) describe the decentralisation of nature conservation in Swedish national parks as ad hoc and restricted to challenging cases for the authorities.

Similar to the case of national park management, the CABs' work in Halland, Västerbotten and Uppsala can also be described as ad hoc. The CABs in this study seem to take initiatives to establish projects and management boards with participatory elements when the CAB find it appropriate, when it serves a direct practical purpose. These participatory arrangements also seem to emerge when they face some challenge. Examples are the Sand-life project where the CAB in Halland expected controversies and the management board on Gräsö, which was necessary in order to establish the nature reserve, according to CAB officials in Uppsala.

One could also describe the CABs' work with participatory arrangements as flexible. The CABs are limited by their appointed resources and are therefore aware of when participatory arrangement can help to fulfil a function. Officials identify when participatory arrangements are most needed and make use of that. Examples of this include the identification of opposition in the Sand-Life project or the how the CAB in Västerbotten prioritise management boards in nature reserves with many stakeholders.

Conclusion

This study's assessment of reserve decisions and management plans reveals that elements of local participation are present in about half of the nature reserves' steering documents. The participation mostly concerns practical matters, such as consultations between the CAB and local actors or local actors carrying out management activities. It is more common that local actors are included in the management plans to carry out management activities characterised by cultural landscapes, compared to nature reserve characterised by "free development". A handful of nature reserves have management boards and projects with various degrees of dialogue with local actors.

It seems like the CABs in Halland, Uppsala and Västerbotten have a pragmatic view of participation. Participation can have good effects, such as better implementation of decisions and increased public trust, that the CABs miss out on. The CABs could widen their view of what participation entails, from mainly considering participation as having local actors carrying out practical management activities to include local actors in decision making. In order to accomplish this, new strategies, routines and guidelines also need to be developed and institutionalised at the CABs.

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