

MANAGING FORESTS ADAPTIVELY IN MUONIO, NORTHERN FINLAND

Simo Sarkki

Thule Institute and Department of Art Studies and Anthropology, University of Oulu,
Thule Institute, PO Box 7300, FI-90014, University of Oulu
+358 8 553 3553, simo.sarkki@oulu.fi
<http://www.oulu.fi/hutk/ka/henkilokunta/ssarkki.html>

Abstract

This presentation examines a forest dispute that took place in the municipality of Muonio in Northern Finland. The parties in the dispute were the Finnish state forestry enterprise Metsähallitus and a local coalition consisting of representatives of reindeer herders, the municipality, a local environmental NGO, a game association, and tourism entrepreneurs. The dispute is interesting because it reflects the land-use needs of the growing tourism industry in the area. The primary data for the article was gathered by thematically interviewing the various parties in the dispute. Altogether eighteen interviews were conducted in 2007 and 2005.

The objective is to compare the literature on adaptive co-management to the realworld situation in Muonio in order to examine whether the change is governed adaptively. The literature on adaptive co-management stresses learning, collaboration, management flexibility, social capital, and the taking of ecological and social feedback into account in the decision-making.

The reason for the dispute was that Metsähallitus wanted to log the forests while the local coalition aimed to protect the forests from the loggings. According to the local coalition, Metsähallitus intended to cut the forests without giving the other stakeholders genuine possibilities for participation. As a result, the local coalition self-mobilised and arranged a protest, thereby receiving media attention for their cause. The dispute worked as a trigger for a policy innovation: Metsähallitus rented the forests for ten years to the tourism entrepreneurs and the municipality.

A series of suggestions can be made which would enhance adaptability in resource management. Firstly, the overall objectives of the management institutions should not hinder flexibility or adaptability to local variation. Secondly, matching the scale of the issues considered in participatory processes and the real-world problems at hand is essential for making participation possible. Thirdly, knowledge distribution concerning planned change should be open and transparent.

Key Words

Tourism, Forestry, Dispute, Adaptive Co-Management

Key References

- Folke, Carl, Thomas Hahn, Per Olsson & Jon Norberg. 2005. Adaptive Governance of Social Ecological Systems. *Annual Review of Environmental Resources* 30: 441-473.
- Olsson P, C Folke & F Berkes (2004). Adaptive Comanagement for Building Resilience in Social-Ecological Systems. *Environmental Management* 34: 1, 75-90.
- Resilience alliance (2007). Research on resilience in social-ecological systems – a basis for sustainability. <<http://www.resalliance.org/576.php>>. 22.1.2008.