Local support among arctic residents to a land tenure reform in Finnmark, Norway

Abstract:
Claims for indigenous rights to land and resources are influencing land use policies worldwide. The public’s support for such land tenure arrangements has rarely been investigated. We present a unique case from the Norwegian Arctic, where land claims made by the indigenous Sami people have resulted in the transfer of land tenure and resource management from the government to the residents of Finnmark in 2005. Based on indigenous land claims, a management agency was established, the Finnmark Estate (FeFo), which on the operational level provides Sami and non-Sami users the same services. Public debates and conflicts among politicians and the public framed the political process leading up to this establishment. Based on a survey and interviews in Finnmark, we explored the public’s support for the new land tenure arrangements. We use the term diffuse support to investigate whether residents conform to FeFo’s basic ideas, values and principles, while specific support refers to the supportive attitudes for management actions carried out by the institution. We conclude that there is a general low diffuse support for FeFo among the residents in Finnmark, but a relatively high specific support for the policies and management actions implemented by the estate among those who have experiences with FeFo. We explain the gap between diffuse- and specific support by the historical, social and political processes which led up to the establishment of the land tenure arrangements.

Key words: The Finnmark Estate; indigenous land claims; land tenure; public support.
1. Introduction

All over the world new land tenure arrangements have been established to formalize Indigenous peoples’ rights to resources and land (Herrmann and Martin 2016, Zips and Weilenmann 2011, Meijl and Benda-Beckmann 1999). These tenure arrangements have usually been born out of political struggles with national authorities, often from clashes between traditional land use of renewable resources and large scale economic development (cf. Dahl 2012). Yet, differences in colonial histories, how Indigenous peoples have been integrated into nation states, demographic conditions and legislative and political processes of the state determine institutional and administrative frameworks of land tenure arrangements.

The contested nature and the legal processes preceding the establishment influence legitimacy and support of the new land arrangements, and thus the room to maneuver for decision makers. Weak support of ideas and principles of the land tenure arrangements from its own residents could result in institutional instability and a continued political struggle to change the foundation of the arrangements. Therefore, analyzing the debates about public support for land tenure arrangements is important, not only for documenting the actual support or lack thereof, but also to increase our understanding of peoples’ experiences and their reasoning for opposing or supporting the institution.

Support for governments has been widely debated in political sciences since David Easton’s conceptualization of the term political support in 1965 (Easton 1965). The concept has mostly been used to analyze political-administrative institutions at national levels. However, it is equally relevant to look into public support for (non-public) management bodies at regional- and local levels, as we will demonstrate in this paper. Leaning on Easton’s
definition of political support, we address public support as the residents’ support of a person, group, or institution, or institution action on their behalf (ibid.). A resident could conform to the more fundamental principles, values or norms associated with the institution (i.e. diffuse support), or they could express support and satisfaction with policies or a decision-making process that lead to that management output (i.e. specific support) (Easton 1975). These two forms of support are interdependent and interact to influence one another over time (Christensen and Lægreid 2005).

In the last two decades, land claim processes have resulted in the establishment of novel institutions directed at co-managing land and natural resources, based on indigenous rights and traditional uses (Poelzer and Wilson 2014, Fondahl et al. 2015).¹ Many case studies have documented how land claim processes have resulted in the establishment of new institutions in the Arctic, but few have scrutinized the public support in the aftermath of their establishment. One exception is wildlife co-management in Nunavut in Canada, where diffuse support was reported as high, despite dissatisfaction with specific policies relating to polar bear quota (Lokken et al. 2018). Easton’s concepts of diffuse and specific support ties in to broader debates on the governance of indigenous lands, used and settled by both Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Young (1999), who explores aspects of the debate about the reconciliation of indigenous and non-indigenous land ownership in the specific context of the management of land under pastoral lease in Australia, suggests that such reconciliation is possible and practical.

¹ According to Scott, an institution is a social structure that has attained a high degree of resilience: it is composed of “cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott 1995, p. 33).
The Finnmark Estate (FeFo) was established following a prolonged public debate over Sami rights to land and water in Finnmark, the northernmost county of Norway. We investigate public support to this land ownership reform and the management body. Pursuant to the 2006 Finnmark Act, the ownership of land and resources was transferred from the government (95% of the land area in Finnmark) to the population in Finnmark. The aim of FeFo as the managing body is to manage land and resources in accordance to the Finnmark Act. Its executive body consists of members appointed by the Sami Parliament and the Finnmark County Council, constituting co-management. The FeFo case is the only example of co-management of traditional Sami areas in Norway, where land tenure is transferred to a private landowner body (Josefsen et al. 2016a, p. 25).

Our study is based on two inquiries carried out in Finnmark in 2012 and 2013. The two studies are: a) a survey directed towards the inhabitants of Finnmark and b) interviews among resource users at Varanger peninsula in eastern Finnmark. Below we will first draw an analytical distinction between the two dimensions of support. Then we present the background and content of the Finnmark Act. We will thereafter account for methods and the main findings, before discussing the relationship between diffuse and specific support as it relates to FeFo as an institution and management agency.

2. The foundation of legitimacy and support

---

The Sami Parliament is a democratically elected body comprised of 39 representatives elected from 7 districts every four years. Only Sami listed in the Sami Parliament’s electoral roll have the right to vote. The registration is voluntary. For more information, see Josefsen, Mörkenstam and Nilsson 2016b.
The legitimacy of an institution relies on the public’s acceptance and support of its authority, and consequent willingness to conform to and obey decisions made. Legitimacy reflects both how values between the public and the institution coincide, and the relation between the concrete performance of the institution and public opinion, i.a. diffuse and specific support.

The establishment of FeFo was controversial amongst the public in Finnmark, with questions arising regarding the legitimacy of the institution. To investigate this, we explore the public support or the lack thereof, by examining the diffuse and specific support for FeFo.

2.1. Specific support

Specific support refers to peoples’ concrete experiences with specific decisions, actions and results, influencing the specific trust people have towards political authorities and institutions (Easton 1975, Gibson and Caldeira 1992, Christensen and Lægreid 2005, Gibson et al. 2017). Here we intend to understand the specific support of the inhabitants of Finnmark as it relates to the concrete management arrangements and decisions, actual policies or actions of FeFo (Gibson and Caldeira 1992, p. 1126). It is likely that individual elements of trust, such as first-hand experience, contribute to specific support, “whereas long-term experience points more in the direction of diffuse support and trust” (Christensen and Lægreid 2005, pp. 490, 491). One could anticipate that the interactions and concrete experiences between FeFo and engaged actors and organized user-groups will influence the legitimacy of FeFo (Gibson et al. 2017, p. 981). On the other hand, scholars have long suggested that there is a weak connection between specific and diffuse support (Swanson 2007, Gibson et al. 2017).
2.2 Diffuse support

Gibson and Caldeira (1992, p. 1121) hold that diffuse support is especially useful for the maintenance of an institution, as citizens could accept singular decisions they disagree upon without eroding the institution’s credibility. Easton (1975, p. 451) defines this as “a willingness to maintain and defend the structures or norms of a regime even if they produce unfavorable consequences.” In other words, are the inhabitants willing to support FeFo, even if the estate produces unfavorable results, or is there a lack of diffuse support and anti-system attitudes impacting the residents view on the specific management? And conversely, will the public grant FeFo diffuse support when it produces favorable decisions? Levels of diffuse support may be based on peoples’ ideological beliefs regarding what values and political viewpoints the land management should be organized according to, and/or ethical principles for supporting different institutional arrangements (Gibson et al. 2017).

For several decades Sami land rights were debated in Finnmark, a debate highly politicized and polarized (Eira 2013, Olsen 2011), with a peak in 2005-2006 around the establishment of FeFo. One can assume the public was quite familiar with the background, the basis for and the management policy of FeFo, through mass media, political parties and non-governmental organizations (Nygaard and Josefsen 2010). At the same time, the debate was partly biased marked by prejudices, misinformation and unsubstantiated statements about encroachment on the rights of the non-Sami population, amongst other topics (Broderstad et al. 2015, Eira 2013). The ideological public conflict in favor of or against Sami land rights was intensified after the establishment of FeFo by an interpretation of the estate not just as an ordinary land management institution but as a highly politicized institution. In general, the publics’ perception of an organization depends, in many ways, on images that are shaped and communicated by mass media (Falkheimer 2014, p. 128). In their study of
potential threats to support for the US Supreme Court, Gibson and Nelson (2017, p. 595) find that the greatest threats towards a non-political institution come from perceived politicization. Is this a relevant assumption for a management entity like FeFo established to implement the Finnmark Act?

2.3 Research objectives

High diffuse support, even if the specific support is low, indicate that the general level of legitimacy is strong. We anticipate that high specific support, but low diffuse support does not put the institutions at risk. But low scores on both types of support clearly indicate a legitimacy crisis for the involved system or institution (Christensen and Lægreid 2005, p. 490). We examine public support for FeFo or lack thereof, for different segments of the resident population, and explore the experiences and reasoning for opposing or supporting FeFo. We ask: What can the Finnmark case teach us about the significance of, and potential relation between the concepts of diffuse and specific support? How do residents’ conflicting views on indigenous lands claims affect the support and legitimacy of land tenure institutions?

3. The Finnmark Act and the Finnmark Estate

The main purpose of FeFo’s land and resource management embedded in the Finnmark Act, is: “to facilitate the management of land and natural resources in the county of Finnmark in a balanced and ecologically sustainable manner for the benefit of the residents of the county and particularly as a basis for Sami culture, reindeer husbandry, use of non-cultivated areas,
commercial activity and social life. The Finnmark Act is linked to Sami rights and land claims, and has given Finnmark an official Sami status through the explicit recognition of Sami rights to govern the land. The Act is also the foundation for the legal processes of the Finnmark Commission and the Uncultivated Land Tribunal for Finnmark, but here we emphasize the governance agency (FeFo) due to the politicized history of the land tenure arrangement.

The Finnmark Act does not discriminate between ethnic groups with regard to access to resources and land. The law manifests Sami rights concerns, but the actions carried out apply regardless of ethnic identity, a position also held by the Sami Parliament. As far as the need for access to resources and the right to practice one’s livelihood are concerned, procedures established recognize the rights of groups and individuals independent of ethnicity (Broderstad and Hernes 2014). The principle of equal access to land applies equally for both non-Sami and the Sami, and is rooted in the historical use of land by different ethnic groups. Land use history is important for understanding attitudes to indigenous land tenure arrangements. In particular, Finnmark differs from many other indigenous territories that are undergoing decolonizing processes, as the indigenous Sami and non-Sami peoples have shared the land for centuries (Olsen 2010, Ween and Lien 2012).

The Finnmark Act and FeFo were established as a result of an enduring political process where the Sami, both individuals and organizations, challenged the government’s claimed ownership of the land. This process can be viewed against the background of an earlier state

---

3 Act of 17 June 2005 No. 85 relating to legal relations and management of land and natural resources in the county of Finnmark (Finnmark Act) (Lov om rettsforhold og forvaltning av grunn og naturressurser i Finnmark fylke (finnmarksloven)), §1, the purpose of the Act.

4 The Finnmark Act establishes the Finnmark Commission (Sections 29-35), and on the basis on current national law, the commission shall investigate rights of use and ownership to the land to be taken over by FeFo.

5 The Finnmark Act also establishes the tribunal (Sections 36-43), a special court which shall consider disputes concerning rights that arise after the Commission has investigated a field.
policy towards assimilation of the Sami. This public policy was abandoned after WWII but the consequences are still found in public structures and regulations.

Until 2005, 95% of the land in Finnmark was assigned as state property and managed by Statskog. Local people’s resource use was tolerated, but could be disregarded by the state. This was the case in 1970 when protests were raised against the plans for an electric power plant and the damming of the Alta-Kautokeino River in Finnmark. Civil disobedience, Sami hunger strikes and the occupation of the prime minister’s office by Sami women during the late 1970’s and early 1980s, led to a fundamental change in Norwegian politics towards the Sami people. Even though the Sami lost the fight against the power plant, a paradigm shift occurred in the state policy towards the Sami. The government established commissions on Sami rights and cultural affairs. Based on the proposals of the Sami Right Commission (NOU 1984: 18), the National Parliament (Stortinget) adopted the Sami Act7 in 1987, and amended the constitution to accommodate Sami rights in 1988. The most significant result was the establishment of the Norwegian Sami Parliament in 1989. The work of the Sami Rights Commission continued; based on their proposal (NOU 1997: 4), and after a political process of consultations between the Government and the Sami Parliament, the National Parliament adopted the Finnmark Act in 2005 (Hernes and Oskal 2008; Josefsen 2008; Broderstad 2015). The ownership of the former crown land was subsequently transferred from the state-owned company to the inhabitants of Finnmark, to be managed by a regional management agency, FeFo, from 2006. FeFo is a property owner, and thus an independent legal entity.

---

6 Statskog is a state enterprise, directed at managing, operating and developing the state forest and mountain properties and associated resources in Norway (https://www.statskog.no).
7 As a result of the work of the Sami Rights Commission, the national parliament adopted the Sami Act (Lov om Sametinget og andre samiske rettsforhold (sameloven)). The act establishes the Sami Parliament of Norway.
not a public authoritative body. A management board was established including three representatives appointed by the Sami Parliament and three appointed by the Finnmark County Council.

The Finnmark Act shall apply with the limitations that follow from the ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO 169), and be applied in compliance with the provisions of international law concerning indigenous people and minorities. The Act recognizes that Sami, through prolonged use of land and water areas, have collectively and individually acquired rights to land in Finnmark. This recognition of Sami land rights was not present in Norwegian legislation prior to the Finnmark Act. The “Act does not interfere with collective and individual rights acquired by Sami and other people through prescription or immemorial usage.” The provisions on international law and established rights contribute in legal terms to conformity with ILO 169.

Meanwhile, several court cases following the Finnmark Commission’s investigations of usage and ownership rights, e.g. the Nesseby case, illuminate that the asserted right claims of local Sami, based on customary use and occupation, are not recognized.

---

8 According to the Proposition to the Norwegian Parliament O. nr. 80 (2004-2005), the Finnmark Act gives FeFo status as a regular owner. However, the law makes certain limitations on the body’s ownership interest (distribution of profit, relation to future legislation, others’ right to hunt and fish on its grounds etc.), without changing the legal nature of the Finnmark property.

9 Finnmark Act, Section 3, Relationship to international law.

10 Finnmark Act, Section 5, Relationship to established rights.

11 Ibid. The recommendations from the Norwegian Parliament’s Standing Committee on Justice, commenting on §5 by a majority of the committee, maintain a principal and political acknowledgement of Sami’s collective and individual rights based on prolonged use of land and waters. Meanwhile, after the identification of rights in each case, types of rights recognized are to be based on current law (Innst. O. nr. 80 – 2004-2005, p. 37).

12 The question in this case was whether the village board in a certain area in Nesseby municipality in addition to holding usage rights based on immemorial usage, also had the right to manage the renewable resources of this area or whether this right was upheld by FeFo as the landowner. The Finnmark Commission concluded that the village council had usage rights over the local area in question, but not the right to manage. The village board brought the case to the Tribunal that passed a verdict in favor of the board. FeFo appealed the verdict to the Supreme Court, which in March 2018 passed a judgement that FeFo continues as the manager of the area, but must take into account the usage rights of the local population. See HR-2018-456-P, (sak nr. 2017/860).
Early on FeFo took on an active role as landowner and developed a strategy plan within the first two years deciding principles for land management (Finnmark Estate 2007). Unlike Statskog before 2006, the FeFo board differentiated the price for fishing and hunting between residents and others. They also divided the land into zones for small game hunting and established hunting quotas. Moreover, FeFo increased the annual rent on leased property to (private) residences and leisure homes (cottages), and set the price of estates in residential environments according to market price. This was controversial, especially when the two largest municipalities in Finnmark had to negotiate with FeFo over the property prices. As a private property owner, FeFo has no funding from the government to sustain the organization, and depends on the incomes from selling or leasing property, or commodities such as gravel. However, FeFo’s overall strategy is not to profit from real property, but rather the opposite: to manage the Finnmark property in perpetuity, on behalf of future generations (Finnmark Estate 2007, 2015).

Four years after the establishment, FeFo was evaluated in terms of how the Finnmark Act had been followed up and implemented in the initiating phase (Nygaard & Josefsen 2010). The conclusion was that in general FeFo attended to its responsibility, but in relation to the public surroundings it had potential for improvement.

---

13 FeFo has 12,000 lease contracts for residences, leisure homes, and other purposes (www.fefo.no).
14 Anyone who has a residential lot which they lease from FeFo, may request a purchase offer. FeFo often collects independent tariffs over the property to determine the land value. If the lessee accepts the offer, a purchase is made and the property is transferred from FeFo to the buyer. If the offer is not accepted, the existing leasing contract continues. FeFo can also enter into real estate development agreements with municipalities and business actors. This implies that certain areas are made available for development within the framework set out in the municipalities’ regulatory plan. Such agreements apply mainly to the development of residential or cabin areas and industrial and industrial areas (www.fefo.no). Area for cabin fields cannot be bought, only point leased. Any larger projects that may change the use of uncultivated land have to be assessed regarding consequences for Sami culture, reindeer herding, and other present traditional Sami use of the land.
Table 1 illuminates the differences between Statskog and FeFo’s fundamental management principles.15

Table 1. Statskog and FeFo’s principles for managing the land in Finnmark, before and after 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before 2006: Statskog</th>
<th>From 2006: FeFo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stat ownership: 95% crown land</td>
<td>Regional ownership: 95% owned by FeFo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage land- and resources for the common benefit of all Norwegian citizens</td>
<td>Manage land- and resources for the common benefit of all Finnmark residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive ownership: less clear policy for the use and the disposal of land and resources</td>
<td>Active ownership: clear strategies for regional value creation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Study design and methods

4.1. Finnmark County

Finnmark County is populated by 74 000 inhabitants, covering 19 municipalities (48, 618 Km2). Most of the residents are concentrated in 4 towns with 6-20 000 inhabitants, while the remaining municipalities are small and rural. Finnmark is ethnically diverse; Norwegians are the dominant population in numbers. In addition to the Sami people, the Kven are a national minority, and there are also newer immigrants. The demography differs with respect to geography. The Sami population is dominant in the inland areas, which make up the winter pastures for semi-nomadic reindeer husbandry. The Sami reindeer husbandry summer pastures are along the coast and along the fjords, where the Sea Sami have also practiced their traditional livelihoods of small-scale fisheries and/or livestock farming. Today, Sami and others share the same employment pattern.

---

15 The table does not include the actions or policies implemented by FeFo, only emphasis the differences in the fundamental principles of the two estates’ management, operation and development of the land in Finnmark before and after 2006. Today Statskog practices an active ownership in their management of state property in other parts of Norway, cf. footnote 6.
4.2. Research data

This article builds on data collected through a large research project funded by the Research Council of Norway (2011-2013). We used mixed methods to analyze the support for FeFo. Two inquiries were carried out: a general public survey which targeted all inhabitants in Finnmark, and interviews with resource users dependent on land and resources in Finnmark. Prior to designing the surveys, we used discourses in newspapers and media to ensure coverage of the main topics of interest to inhabitants. The result from the research project is previously published in a Norwegian-language report by Broderstad et al. 2015, and in Josefsen et al. 2016a. The report (ibid.) elaborates in details the methods for the investigations, which were granted approval from the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research. The analysis of the surveys and the interviews were presented at dialogue meetings in six communities in 2014 and 2015. We also participated in two meetings with FeFo where the results of the survey and the interviews were presented and discussed. Documents from the Sami Parliament, the Finnmark County Council and governmental and parliamentary decisions covering the period of time from 2006 to 2015 were analyzed in order to understand and interpret the assumptions of the participants about FeFo.

4.3 Public survey

We carried out a public survey in Finnmark County in the fall of 2012. A random sample of 3000 persons was selected out of a total of 55975 inhabitants over the age of 18. 150 dropped because of unsuccessful mail delivery, returning blank forms or deceases. Excluding the dropout, the response rate of 33% resulted in a final dataset of 953 persons. A response rate at 33% is not unusual in social science surveys, and there is an ongoing scientific debate on non-response and potential skewedness (see Hellevik 2015a). Hellevik (2015a, 2015b) finds that there is no direct link between low response rate and data representability, every
data set must be assessed individually and in relation to the representation of the general public.

The respondents correspond fairly well with the general population which consists of 51% men and 49% women. Men were slightly overrepresented and women were slightly underrepresented in the survey. Age distribution was somewhat skewed compared to the population at large. People under the age of thirty were largely underrepresented, cf. figure 1. This is not unexpected in surveys. The majority of respondents were between 40 and 70 (63%). We examined the difference in attitudes depending on demographic variables and socio-political profiles (see Appendix A and Broderstad et al. 2015).

The respondents corresponded to the Finnmark population, consisting of Norwegian, Sami, Kven, and newer immigrants. 17% of the respondents (N=162) were registered in the electoral register of the Sami Parliament which corresponds to the 13% of the registered population.

---

16 In addition, 9% (N=83) respondents have not stated their age. How this affect the skewedness in the age numbers is difficult to assess.
Sami in the general population in Finnmark.\textsuperscript{17} In the survey 19\% stated a Sami or a mixed origin. We categorized those respondents registered in the Sami electoral roll as “Sami” in the analysis (17\%),\textsuperscript{18} and those not registered as “non-Sami.” The Sami representation in the data material is somewhat higher than in the population, and those registered are in general more politically active (Selle and Strømsnes 2010). Sami ethnicity is not generally recorded in population censuses (Samiske tall forteller 1, 2008), but we expect that the electoral roll’s registration is sufficient for analyzing major differences in support among residents.

Two other relevant dependent variables are political affiliation and education level. In terms of political affiliation 57\% of the respondents placed themselves on the left side and 43\% on the right side of a political left-right axis. 40\% of the respondents have higher education while the number for the whole population of Finnmark is 24\%. While the education level is higher in our material, people with primary school are underrepresented (17\% with primary school in the survey compared to 33\% for the population in general). We used frequency counts and K-mean cluster analyses to, analyze differences among groups.

4.4. Interviews with local resource users
Six communities\textsuperscript{19} on the Varanger peninsula were selected: three coastal villages: Berlevåg, Båtsfjord and Kiberg, and three fjord villages: Austertana, Nesseby/Varangerbotn and Vestre Jacobselv - a “suburb” to the administrative centre, Vadsø.

\textsuperscript{17} In order to be able to register, one has to identify as Sami, speak Sami at home, or at the very least have a relative who spoke the language at home, be they a parent, grandparent or great-grand parent.

\textsuperscript{18} In the survey, 57 of 953 respondents did not report on the question about registration in the electoral role.

\textsuperscript{19} These were selected according to governance criteria seeking to maximise contrasts in a) governance regimes on a circumpolar scale, b) socioeconomic criteria like contrasts in socioeconomic conditions, contrasts in opportunities for wage income and a population number between 200 and 5000, c) biophysical criteria as the model communities should be located on the tundra to ensure comparison between biogeographically regions.
Table 2: Socioeconomic characteristics of communities in the interview study (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Pop.size</th>
<th>Income USD</th>
<th>Unemployment %</th>
<th>Key occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Båtsfjord</td>
<td>2,058</td>
<td>58,791</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Coastal commercial fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlevåg</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>51,755</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Coastal commercial fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiberg</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>53,474</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>Coastal commercial fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nesseby/Varangerbotn</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>55,663</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Fjordfishing, sheep, reindeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austertana</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>60,511</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Fjordfishing, mining, reindeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vestre Jakobselv</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>65,827</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Service hub (Vadsø)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main purpose was to gain insights into governance processes, differences in nature use and values, and perceptions of the residents. We interviewed local people that use nature actively and those likely to interact and have experience with the institutions that are responsible for the management of land and natural resources. We therefore used quota sampling to select participants in our study. Our interviewees are local leaders and active users of nature, either through harvesting and/or recreational use. The interviewees are adults, year-round residents and have lived more than 5 years in the community. We were interested in identifying a diversity of relationships that local people hold with nature and to governance, rather than achieving statistical generalizability at a community level. Additionally, we aimed to control for gender, age and ethnicity within the limit of our sampling frame. 79 interviews were conducted. The self-identified ethnicities of Sami, Sami-Norwegian, and Sami-Finns/Kven together constituted 29% of the interviewees.

5. Results

5.1. Respondents attitudes towards the new land arrangements and Sami rights

In the survey (Table 3) we asked about the respondents’ attitude towards FeFo when it was established in 2006, six years prior to the survey. It is important to note that this is recall data. Even though it is not as reliable as survey data conducted at that time, it has value as
data about respondents’ self-evaluation of their opinions about FeFo and changes in opinions. The aim of making use of recall data is to explore possible changes in diffuse support and reasons for it among the residents (cf. Swanson 2007, p. 648). Over half of the respondents reported that they were negative towards FeFo in 2006, while only 14% were positive and 14% were indifferent. The respondents were divided into two groups,20 “Sami” and “non-Sami,”21 and there is a clear difference between Sami and non-Sami (Table 3). The Sami (33%) were more positive to FeFo than the non-Sami (10%), and non-Sami (57%) reported to be more negative in 2006 than the registered Sami (40%). The overall tendency is that the Sami were more divided in their view on FeFo in 2006 than the non-Sami, who were clearly more negative. For more insight, see Josefsen et al. 2016a.

Table 3: The public attitude towards FeFo when established in 2006. Sami and non-Sami. (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sami</th>
<th>non-Sami</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not remember</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=845</td>
<td>N=154</td>
<td>N=691</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fisher’s exact test: p=0.000

To explore why respondents were negative to FeFo in its pre-implemental phase, they were asked to elaborate on reasons for being negative to the establishment in 2006, according to the claims in Table 4 (these are identical to the claims the respondents considered in the questionnaire):

---

20 Dropout N= 57 (cf. footnote 19.)
21 When referring to the Sami in relation to the survey, we mean those who are registered in the electoral roll of the Sami Parliament (N=162). The term non-Sami is used to include all respondents in the survey not registered in the electoral roll of the Sami Parliament (N=733). The non-Sami respondents therefore also include Sami who are not registered in the Sami Parliament’s electoral roll.
Table 4: Percentage of respondents supporting different reasons for (all, Sami, non-Sami) negative attitudes to FeFo in 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>All respondent (N=515)</th>
<th>Sami respondents (N=61)</th>
<th>Non-Sami respondents (N=422)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fearing Sami would gain too little influence</td>
<td>3 (N=15)</td>
<td>8 (N=5)</td>
<td>2 (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Skeptical to whether FeFo was able to manage land and resources for the best of Finnmark's inhabitants</td>
<td>39 (N=203)</td>
<td>49 (N=30)</td>
<td>38 (N=162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feared the Sami and non-Sami in Finnmark would be discriminated</td>
<td>45 (N=233)</td>
<td>39 (N=24)</td>
<td>46 (N=194)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pleased with Statskog's work</td>
<td>58 (N=301)</td>
<td>70 (N=43)</td>
<td>57 (N=241)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Preferred Finnmark to continue as crown land</td>
<td>60 (N=308)</td>
<td>64 (N=39)</td>
<td>59 (N=249)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Skeptical to FeFo, thought it would give the Sami Parliament too much influence over resource management</td>
<td>70 (N=359)</td>
<td>44 (N=27)</td>
<td>73 (N=309)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent reason for negative attitudes towards FeFo in 2006, was the perceived influence the Sami Parliament would gain over the land and resource management in Finnmark. Most of the respondents who were negative to FeFo were pleased with Statskog, and preferred Finnmark to remain crown land.

However, there are some differences in the reasons given by the Sami and the non-Sami. Those of the Sami respondents negative to FeFo in 2006, were satisfied with Statskog (claim 4: 70% Sami, 57% non-Sami). In percentage, there are more Sami respondents than non-Sami respondents who wanted Finnmark to continue as crown land in 2006 (claim 5: 64% Sami, 59% non-Sami), and who were critical to FeFo’s ability to manage land for the best of Finnmark’s inhabitants (claim 2: 49% Sami, 38% non-Sami). A higher proportion of the non-Sami (46%) feared differential treatment (claim 3: Sami respondents 39%), and a significantly higher proportion of non-Sami (73%) were skeptical to FeFo because of the influence of the Sami Parliament (claim 6) than the Sami (44%). This reveals two interesting tendencies. First, compared to the non-Sami respondents, there are more Sami respondents who were negative to FeFo in 2006 because they were satisfied with the Statskog tenure.
Second, there are more non-Sami respondents who were negative to FeFo in 2006 because they believed this would strengthen the Sami Parliament’s influence over the resource management in Finnmark.

In 2012, after six years of operation, only 1/4 (26%) wanted to retain FeFo (Table 5). Many had not made up their mind (30%). A large percentage of the population wanted to remove FeFo (44%). Sami respondents were more positive to the existence of FeFo than non-Sami. Among the Sami, 41%, reported that FeFo should continue to exist, but as much as 30% wanted to dissolve the organization. Among the non-Sami respondents, 47% wanted to remove FeFo.

Table 5: Registered Sami’s and non-Sami’s views on whether FeFo should continue to exist. (%) N=852.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sami</th>
<th>Non-Sami</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should continue to exist</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should close down</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know/no opinion</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=852</td>
<td>N=157</td>
<td>N=695</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fisher’s Exact Test: p=0.000

The respondents’ attitudes towards FeFo seem to have changed between 2006 and 2012 (cf. Table 3 and 5). In general, more respondents were negative to the establishment of FeFo in 2006, than those who wanted to close down FeFo in 2012. Even if the questions are not identical, the findings could indicate that public attitudes towards FeFo have somewhat improved.
5.2. Support for land management arrangements among different groups

We used a K-mean cluster analysis to statistically divide the observations into distinct groups based on their attitudes (see Appendix A). After testing for different numbers of clusters, we found that four clusters identified the data patterns and correlations the most. A series of statements concerning the Sami Parliament, the Finnmark Act and FeFo were used in the analyses to identify these four clusters visualizing the different views of FeFo. We have named the four groups: "Rejecters I," "Rejecters II," "Don’t Knowers" and "Precautionary Supporters."

Table 6: Four clusters of opinion on FeFo. N= 688

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Rejecters I (49%, N=336)</th>
<th>Rejecters II (13%, N=86)</th>
<th>Don’t knowers (9%, N=63)</th>
<th>Precautionary supporters (30%, N=203)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a need for a management body as FeFo</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FeFo has contributed to making the people of Finnmark &quot;masters in their own house&quot;</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Parliament contributes to a positive development in Finnmark</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Parliament should be closed down</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Parliament should have less influence over the use of natural resources in Finnmark</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Parliament has too much influence over FeFo</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to distinguish between what is the responsibility of FeFo and the Sami Parliament</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Neither/ nor</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnmark Act will help ensure local concerns</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22 The objective of cluster analysis is to assign observations into groups or clusters so that observations within each group are similar to one another with respect to variables or attributes of interest, and the groups themselves stand apart from one another. Methods have been described in Broderstad et al. (2015).
The four groups identified by K-mean clustering of the support for FeFo. The respondents scored each item on a Likert scale. The items that respondents scored were statements drawn from media discourse analysis. We report the mode (i.e. the most common score) for each statement in the group.

"The Rejecters I" representing almost half of our sample have four features that separate them from the other clusters (see appendix A for further details about the demographic and socio-political profile of each cluster). First, a large part of the respondents in this group say they are politically interested. Second, the respondents in this cluster are evenly distributed when it comes to orientation to the political left and right. Third, and different from the others, they live in densely populated municipalities, and do not reside in the Sami language municipalities. Last, the respondents are not registered in the Sami Parliament’s electoral roll. "The Rejecters I" are categorically against implementing Sami rights, which they believe will discriminate against other inhabitants in Finnmark, and associate Sami rights with the restriction of public access to land and resources in Finnmark (see Table 6). "The Rejecters I" want to dissolve FeFo and the Sami Parliament, thought they find it difficult to distinguish between the institutions’ responsibilities.

"The Rejecters II" (13%) are politically left-oriented, and have below average interest in politics (see appendix A). Most were against implementing Sami rights, but not to the same degree as "the Rejecters I". "The Rejecters II" do not have the same categorical view.

---

23 These are municipalities where the Sami have the right to use Sami language when they are in contact with official agencies, which operate in the area. Norwegian and Sami language are equal in the Sami language administrations areas.
on whether to dissolve the Sami Parliament, but do not support the politics of the Sami Parliament (see Table 6). They do not reject the Finnmark Act based on ethnic differences or public access to land and resources – but they think that FeFo has not led to better management of the nature. In contrast to "the Rejecters I", they are more aware of the difference between the Sami Parliament and FeFo.

"The Don’t Knowers" (9%) are younger than those in the other clusters, are politically left-oriented and include a higher percentage of women (see appendix A). The political interest is low while the number registered in the Sami Parliament’s electoral role is above average. The respondents do not want to dissolve the Sami Parliament or FeFo – despite having negative attitudes toward both institutions (see Table 6). They strongly disagree on whether or not there is a need for a management body such as FeFo. We call them "Don’t Knowers" because the respondents appeared as either having little knowledge about, lacking opinions, or not having made up their mind on issues regarding the implementation of Sami rights.

"The Precautionary Supporters" (30%) have a higher level of education. This group includes a larger portion of those registered in the Sami Parliament’s electoral roll and they have a high interest in politics (appendix A). The respondents are supportive of Sami rights and think that FeFo has improved land and resource management. "The Precautionary Supporters" tend to be supportive of the Sami Parliament, FeFo and the Finnmark Act, but have a wait-and-see attitude about the results of the reform – which explains our naming of the group (Table 6). As “the Rejecters I”, the respondents in this cluster are also evenly distributed when it comes to orientation to the political left and right, which illustrate that
being supportive of Sami rights is not necessarily in itself an issue about political party affiliation.

The principle of regional ownership, which entitles the population in Finnmark a first claim to land and resources, differ from the former Statskog land management regime (cf. Table 1). In the survey, respondents were asked to consider the following statement: “In the case of resource scarcity, FeFo should give the Finnmark inhabitants the first claim” (Table 7).

Table 7: The public’s view on whether Finnmark inhabitants ought to have first claim in case of resource scarcity. (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rejecters I</th>
<th>Rejecters II</th>
<th>Don’t knowers</th>
<th>Precautionary supporters</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/nor</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total, 67% of the respondents’ support this principle of first claim, while 11% reject it. "The Precautionary Supporters" generally agree with the statement, while "the Rejecters I", who fully oppose Sami rights, agree on the principle of the first claim. This shows that most of the people support the management institution’s fundamental principle of regional ownership, which makes it possible for Finnmark inhabitants to have the first claim to the county’s resources. Simultaneously, most of the respondents reject implementation of Sami rights, which made regional ownership possible in the first place.

5.3. Support for FeFo’s specific policies and management decisions

Many respondents reject the basic norms of Sami rights, and, simultaneously, support FeFo’s management actions. This is particularly evident for the introduction of hunting zones for grouse in the autumn of 2010 and the principle of selling building lots in residential areas at
Statskog had no regulations of hunting zones; one could pay a fee and then hunt anywhere (except if the fee was paid for just one municipality), i.e. there were no regulations of hunting pressure. Hunters now have to report where they are hunting and register the time period they are present in the hunting zones. FeFo established this system to regulate the hunting pressures in popular zones including the possibility to exclude hunters from outside of Finnmark. This practice is supported by the inhabitants; only one out of five agreed that the hunting zones should be terminated, while 38% disagreed about removing the regulations.

Before FeFo was established, land prices in Finnmark had not been regulated due to the upcoming clarification of land rights. FeFo decided to introduce market prices on building lots in residential areas, a principle met with loud protests in the two largest municipalities where the pressure on residential development is high. Local politicians argued that the market prices made it impossible to pursue investments in social housing. In our study, 1/3 disagreed with the opinion that “FeFo should sell property to market price,” 1/3 agreed, while the rest were in between or did not know. We found greater support for the principle of market price than expected from the public debates. As argued by FeFo: Selling the common properties under market price would result in private individuals or companies taking the profit. Another survey done 2012 among Finnmark FeFo’s business customers also revealed that people are satisfied with FeFo as a regional economic developer (Broderstad et al. 2015).

5.4. Interviews with resource users

Resource management of fish, wildlife and recreation is one of the primary tasks of FeFo and is more specifically defined in the Finnmark Act than other fields of responsibility. To learn how FeFo’s operationalization of the Finnmark Act generates specific support for resource
management, we focused on resource users that actively use nature and local leaders that have experiences with FeFo. The data highlights important views among those who actively engage in traditional harvesting, hunting, hiking or other forms of use. Local leaders were expected to be well informed and knowledgeable about the management arrangement. In Norway, land owners do not manage natural resources freely. The state regulates, for example, how and when one is allowed to fish or hunt, and reindeer husbandry is regulated by their own legislation. FeFo’s management of resources is limited by a state regulative framework related to nature and wildlife protection, where the County Governor oversees that governmental regulations are implemented. The County Governor is also the regional authority for environmental management under the Nature Diversity Act. In one of our questions “which are the two most important institutions for you,” these two institutions were identified as the two most important with a total of 28% mentioning FeFo and 24% the County Governor (Figure 2).

Both small and big-game hunters were satisfied with wildlife management (Figure 3). When asked whether they have experienced any changes with the transfer of wildlife management to FeFo, only 8% reported negative experiences, which could possibly explain the strong specific support for wildlife management among resource users. The few having
negative experiences reported increased charges for moose hunting and the new and complicated digital registration system for small game as their main reasons for discontent.

Figure 3: Small-game and big-game hunters’ satisfaction/dissatisfaction

The interviews showed that more than 70% of the small game and 78% of the big game hunters were satisfied with the management. Bag limit, temporary restrictions on hunting and rotation of hunting grounds were considered acceptable measures in case of resource decline. The Finnmark Act gives the population of Finnmark priority to harvest, a principle supported by as much as 68% of the respondents in the survey. These results may suggest increasing specific support for FeFo’s management.

When asking different groups of land-users about their trust in FeFo and the County Governor, we found a relatively high degree of expressed trust especially among those who actively use the land, such as recreationists and subsistence harvesters (Figure 4). This indicates that those who actively use nature might be more supportive of FeFo than others.

---

24 Trust could be linked to people’s satisfaction with specific public services (ibid: 488), or more generally as trust in institutions. The distinction between institutional trust and satisfaction with policies and public services is interlinked to the concept of diffuse and specific support for institutions. Diffuse support for political authorities will generally be expressed as trust and confidence in those institutions, which is important for long-term institutional stability (Easton 1965, Gibson and Caldeira 1992).
Our results may also reflect a generally high institutional trust as the environmental governor also scored high on these analyses.

Figure 4: Degree of trust among different groups of resources users.

Different groups of resource users statistically identified by cluster analysis (see Broderstad et al. 2015) and their median trust in the governor and FeFo scored on a scale from 1 (lowest level of trust) to 7 (highest level of trust). The categorization of the different use is done based on the interviewee own definition of important resources.

We used Kruskas-Wallis H test to investigate significant differences in trust levels associated with demography and role in the community (appendix B). The only significant difference in trust of FeFo was the higher level of trust among leaders of village boards and organizations that have more frequent contact with FeFo. The ethnic dimension was not important for explaining trust of FeFo. Trust in the Sami Parliament is best explained by age and whether one is a Sami or comes from a Sami village. We also found statements similar to the surveys which reflects that people perceive FeFo as an exclusive Sami project; “FeFo is local, but favors the Sami.” People also directly associate the slogan used for FeFo before its establishment “people in Finnmark should be masters in their own house” as directly linked to the Sami Parliament’s use of the slogan and thus Sami rights. Many of the resource users were supportive of FeFo’s management of small-and big game hunting and inland fishing,
and were less concerned about the fundamental principles of self-governance of FeFo. Some
of the interviewees were knowledgeable of FeFo and spent a lot of time explaining their
view. Similar to “the Rejecters,” they were against the establishment of any institutions
based on Sami rights. However, they had come to the conclusion that FeFo will not be
dissolved, so the best strategy was to understand FeFo as an institution for all in Finnmark.
While this example substantiates findings of the survey that many respondents reject
implementation of Sami rights, it may also indicate a change in levels of diffuse support for
FeFo.

6. The relationship between diffuse and specific support – a discussion
The public support for FeFo is influenced by the history of events leading up to FeFo, by the
experiences with the estate and by the multiple mandates of FeFo. We found considerable
local resistance towards the new land tenure arrangement in Finnmark. As much as 61% of
the non-Sami respondents were negative about the establishment of FeFo in 2006, and 47%
still wanted to dissolve the land tenure arrangements in 2012. In 2006, 40% of the Sami
respondents were negative to the establishment, and in 2012, 30% wanted to dissolve the
land tenure arrangements. Comparing this resistance among the Rejecters with their
support for the principle of a first claim appears quite inconsistent. While the principle of
regional ownership makes it possible to have the first claim to the county’s resources, most
of the respondents reject implementation of Sami rights, which made regional ownership
possible in the first place.

Previous studies have shown that values, norms and attitudes towards policies
depend on the land tenure arrangements and the historical legacies on which they are built
(e.g. Hausner et al. 2015, Jentoft and Søreng 2017, Schmidt et al. 2018). The main reasons
for the negative attitude towards FeFo as expressed by “the Rejecters I” and “the Rejecters II,” is the unfounded fear that Sami heritage should result in an unequal distribution of land rights based on individual and ethnic rights rather than managed in common like the FeFo model arrange for. Despite the salient role of media in the formation of opinions for or against FeFo, the debate was partly marked by unfounded anxiety about Sami gaining more rights than others (Broderstad et al. 2015, Eira 2013).

As in every population, a diversity of opinions is evident among the Sami, manifested by a wide range of perceptions about FeFo. The support based on the public perceptions of FeFo is weak (diffuse support), but the specific support for management actions and policies implemented by FeFo does not show the same patterns among those who have experiences with FeFo. This might explain the slightly more positive attitudes towards FeFo since its establishment.

Our data was collected six years after the establishment of FeFo. The transfer of state ownership and management authority to the collective ownership by the inhabitants is different than other indigenous land tenure arrangements within demarcated indigenous land area. Finnmark is not purely indigenous land because of the non-Sami majority that have resided there for centuries. Seeing Sami as lower on some imagined ethnic hierarchy where Sami culture was regarded as backwards and worthless, justified the assimilation policies of the Norwegian state (Eidheim 1971, Eythórsson 2003; 2008, Minde 2005). Additionally, Sami concerns were not to be brought up on the public agenda, as illustrated by those who opposed the Sami paragraph of the Norwegian constitution (NOU 1984: 18, p. 444). Such ideas do not necessarily disappear even though public policy changes. The Finnmark Act challenged these ideas; and it also affirmed Finnmark as a Sami region with
legal land rights. As a response to the Finnmark Act, Olsen (2010, pp. 112, 115) explains that
the non-Sami inhabitants in Finnmark believe that the establishment of the Finnmark Act has
unjustly treated them as settlers. Our data shows that the negative attitudes can be
explained mainly by opposition to indigenous rights, particularly among non-Sami residents
that live in the more densely populated areas in Finnmark, such as Alta and Vadsø. The Sami
history of FeFo clearly explains the low diffuse support among those opposing the Sami
rights’ development, which indicates that pre-existing ideological tensions may affect
individual’s diffuse support level. As the FeFo case is highly politicized and polarized due to
Sami rights, the relationship between diffuse and specific support may be significant due to
the high level of political attentiveness (ibid., p. 647, Gibson and Caldeira 1992).

The “Don’t knowers” cluster shows that people may dismiss the need for a
management body such as FeFo (see Table 6). Simultaneously they do not want to close it
down (Appendix A). This could be regarded as a contradiction. But as they also strongly
support the existence of the Sami Parliament, it could be an expression of public support
across these two institutions (cf. Easton’s concept of support regimes; Swanson 2007, p.
657) due to their common platform of strengthening Sami culture. This indicate other
reasons for dismissing the need for a management body as FeFo than being opposed to Sami
rights.

In contrast, “the Precautionary Supporters” are positive about Sami rights and
believe that FeFo has led to better management of land and resource management in

---

25 According to Olsen (2010), the Sami right issue in Finnmark, as embedded in the Finnmark Act, is
substantiated in a global indigenous rights discourse, and illustrates that the Sami right issue in Finnmark is
similar to indigenous rights issues in most of the former colonized societies in other parts of the world, where
local people were deprived their rights. This led to, according to the postcolonial discourses, a
conceptualization of the people and the state as respectively indigenous/colonized, and the state/colonial
power (Lawson 2004, p. 1218). Such concepts have consequences on peoples’ self-perception on their
ethnicity and identity, which may imply a view on non-Sami in Finnmark as settlers.
This cluster included a higher percentage of the Sami population than the other groups. As their expectations correspond with the principles and values that FeFo is founded on, it is reasonable to expect a higher diffuse support for FeFo. The specific support of “the Precautionary Supporters” is a “reservoirs of good will” that could become tested, as negative reactions to management decisions may have negative impact on the institution’s diffuse support (Mondak and Smithey 1997, Swanson 2007, p. 647).

Despite the general lack of support, the attitudes towards FeFo have become more positive in the six years after its establishment. The level of diffuse support for FeFo in 2006 has changed in 2012. The most likely reason is that experiences with FeFo’s management decisions, for instance to the introduction of hunting zones for grouse, have made people more supportive. Also direct relations can increase diffuse support, as the interviews with resource users can imply. Direct relations have led to specific support, which in turn may have increased diffuse support. Those who are leaders and are in direct contact with and have knowledge about FeFo, trust the estate more than those who are not highly engaged with the estate, indicating that direct and positive experiences with FeFo can increase specific support for the institution. Those actively using nature through traditional harvesting and recreation showed a higher trust in FeFo than others. FeFo was regarded by these groups as a caretaker of traditional uses and access to hunting and fishing rights for all inhabitants of Finnmark. Thus, direct experiences with FeFo indicate what FeFo could do to improve the negative attitudes toward the institution, i.e. specific support can increase through positive experiences of residents who benefit from the services that FeFo offers over time. This is also evident among the businesses that have dealt regularly with FeFo in their daily work (Broderstad et al. 2015). However, in cases where the management of FeFo is perceived to de-emphasize Sami rights i.a. exploitation of natural resources for economic
growth, the support of “the Rejecters” may increase, while increased support from “the Precautionary Supporters” depend on a restrained attitude to exploit these resources.

Nevertheless, given the multiple mandate of FeFo, involved institutions and actors have to recognise the dilemmas of the governing interactions and the wickedness of the problems (cf. Jentoft and Chuenpagdee 2009). As long as parts of the county population contest Sami rights, FeFo has to live with and learn how to manage conflictual surroundings, and a relative low diffuse support in the foreseeable future.

In Finnmark and other Sami areas, the inhabitants constitute a diversified demographic composition and a complex land use history, which demands governance solutions that differ from tenure arrangements and land use policies in other indigenous areas, like Northern Canada. This complexity is reflected in the multiple mandate of FeFo. The Finnmark Act resolves this diversity by establishing a management regime that increases the representation and the degree of Sami influence, but where the rights of groups and individuals to land and resources are acknowledged independent of ethnicity (Broderstad 2015, p. 16). We found high support for regional ownership and a first claim to resources for residents in Finnmark, indicating that that the population support the underlying principles of FeFo. The fact that there are no significant differences in the level of trust in FeFo and the County Governor for the resource users interviewed, suggests that FeFo is able to handle multiple mandates, which in the long run could contribute to increased institutional trust across ethnic groups.

The weak diffuse support has implications for the long-term institutional stability of FeFo. Nygaard and Josefsen (2010) concluded that FeFo has not sufficiently implemented the

---

26 Problems are wicked in the sense that there are limits to how systematic, effective and rational a governing system can be in solving them (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee 2009: 553).
Finnmark Act’s principle of “management as a basis for Sami culture,” because of the strong opposition to Sami rights. A lack of implementation of this principle may reduce both the diffuse and the specific support, first and foremost among the Sami and “the Precautionary Supporters.” Given the many expectations about how Sami rights should be implemented, there may be a risk that FeFo does not become the institution they hoped for. After the survey was conducted, the public debate as reflected in Sami media, may indicate a growing dissatisfaction with the concrete implementation of Sami rights in the Finnmark Act. On the other hand, those opposing Sami rights are against such an implementation as the two groups of Rejecters illustrate. FeFo finds itself caught in the middle, without being able to reconcile neither “the Rejecters”, “the Don’t knowers”, nor “the Precautionary Supporters.” That said, the fact that FeFo is established as a result of Sami rights claims anchored in international human rights law on Indigenous peoples, implies that particular values, norms and principles are constitutive for and underpin FeFo as an institution. In case of a weakened Sami support, the correspondence to international indigenous rights as established in the Finnmark Act, runs the risk of waning and in the longer term open up for profound changes in the Finnmark Act impairing the pillars based on indigenous land use and rights. Such a prospect asserts that the Sami support is of vital importance to FeFo. Obtaining legitimacy calls for long term efforts to change the residents preferences based on positive experiences and new knowledge gained.

7. Conclusion

In this article we have addressed two questions: what is the significance of, and potential relations between, the concepts of diffuse and specific support for FeFo; and how
do residents’ conflicting views on indigenous lands claims play into the support and legitimacy of land tenure institutions.

Having analyzed and interpreted the public support for FeFo as an institution and a governance agency, we have found a polarized public with a majority who opposed Sami rights and a minority of precautionary supporters. FeFo does therefore not only operate in “the shadow of politics” (cf. Schmidt 2013, p. 10), but also in the spotlight of two clearly different and conflicting perspectives on indigenous rights. Ideological convergence or divergence between individuals and an institution, does explain the level of diffuse support (Swanson 2007), which is the most difficult to change. In our case, this is probably more valid for the rejecters of FeFo than for those who have a precautionary standpoint. We also found that the diffuse support for FeFo was higher among those actively using nature, as FeFo was regarded as a caretaker of traditional uses and access to hunting and fishing rights for all inhabitants in Finnmark. As well, we found support for concrete management decisions, both in the survey and the interview study.

This can be explained as specific support, since it is directed at perceived decisions (cf. Easton 1975, p. 437). As evident from our results, those who have experience with FeFo, such as local leaders, businesses and active users of the land, and thus FeFo’s services are more supportive of FeFo than others. The slight positive change in diffuse support for FeFo may reflect a growing specific support based on experiences. However, specific support does not necessarily transform into diffuse support, since diffuse support is difficult to strengthen once it is weak (ibid., p. 444). This insight is important in the debate about the future of FeFo.
Institutions build up goodwill over time. As any institution born in conflict and highly politicized, FeFo’s experience with weak support was anticipated. One strategy which may be tempting for FeFo to choose in order to establish a reservoir of goodwill is to downplay Sami rights. However, choosing such a strategy, would likely result in an escalation of the polarized Sami land rights discourse due to FeFo’s obligation to adhere to the Finnmark Act.

That said, the risk of unhandled conflicts may diminish the overall public support of FeFo and the land tenure system would fail to reconcile indigenous and non-indigenous lands rights.

Thus, the main responsibility rests with FeFo as an institution, the institutions appointing the FeFo board – the Sami Parliament and the Finnmark County Council - to ensure both Sami and regional concerns in the land tenure governance of FeFo are heard.

Acknowledgements: This article is a result of the project Finnmark landscape in change: support and participation concerning FeFo; local resource use, industrial value creation and global changes, funded by the Regional Research Fund Northern Norway. The survey was conducted within this project. The Research Council of Norway supported the interviews through the research project TUNDRA – Drivers of change in circumpolar tundra ecosystems.

We are grateful to the friendly participation of the interviewees, of those participating in the survey, and of FeFo for accommodating parts of the data acquisition. We also appreciate the role of professor Per Selle as the project manager of the Finnmark landscape in change project. Lastly, we thank the three anonymous referees for their insightful, constructive and critical suggestions for improvement.

---

**Literature**


Eidheim, H. 1971. *Aspects of the Lappish Minority Situation*, Universitetsforlaget


Finnmark Estate 2015. Strategisk plan [Strategy plan]. Adopted by the FeFo board, 15 December 2015


Hellevik, O. 2015a. Hva betyr respondentbortfallet i intervjuundersøkelser? Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning 02 / 2015, Volum 56, 211-229


Herrmann, T. M.; Martin, T. (eds.) 2016. Indigenous Peoples’ Governance of Land and Protected Territories in the Arctic. Springer Verlag DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-25035-9

Innst. O. nr. 80 – 2004-2005: Innstilling fra justiskomiteen om lov om rettsforhold og forvaltning av grunn og naturressurser i Finnmark fylke (finnmarksloven),


Lokken, N.; Clark, D.; Broderstad, E.G.; Hausner, V.H. 2018. Inuit attitudes towards co-managing wildlife in three communities in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, Canada. Arctic, accepted August 29th, in press


NOU 1984:18 Om samenes rettsstilling

NOU 1997:4 Rett til og forvaltning av land og vann i Finnmark


Olsen, K. 2011. Fefo, reinsdyr og andre vederstyggeligheter – Om urfolk, staten og finnmarkingene, i *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* Vol 22 nr 02,116-132


---

**APPENDIX**

**A. Profile of respondents in the four clusters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variabel</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rejecters 1</th>
<th>Rejecters 2</th>
<th>Don’t knowers</th>
<th>Precautionary supporters</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% men</td>
<td>0,54</td>
<td>0,57</td>
<td>0,50</td>
<td>0,26</td>
<td>0,59</td>
<td>&lt;0,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age (year)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>&lt;0,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% higher education</td>
<td>0,46</td>
<td>0,43</td>
<td>0,44</td>
<td>0,41</td>
<td>0,55</td>
<td>0,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% registered in Sami Parliament' electoral roll</td>
<td>0,19</td>
<td>0,09</td>
<td>0,17</td>
<td>0,29</td>
<td>0,34</td>
<td>&lt;0,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Settled the last 15 years</td>
<td>0,21</td>
<td>0,19</td>
<td>0,21</td>
<td>0,31</td>
<td>0,21</td>
<td>0,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% residing in four largest populated municipalities in Finnmark (Alta, Hammerfest, Sør-Varanger and Vadsø)</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% municipalities using Sami language</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% residing in costal municipalities</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% oriented towards the political left</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% interested in politics</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% that want to close down FeFo</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>