**Nordic Resource Management: Finnish Component**

**Work Report 3: Other Activities / Nordic Resource Management**

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**1. Introduction**

While the Nordic Resource Management Project was initiated in the Jukajoki and Näätämö as primary pilot activities, other activities were carried out during the project time line that had links to the actual work. Additionally comparative views were collected from two Finnish northern basins and one Russian basin, Ponoi.

**2. Methods**

Methods for the ‘other activities’ –reporting included research visits to Sámi home areas (Utsjoki, Inari, Vuotso), Finnish Lapland (Tornio, Haaparanta), literature and report review and interviews with the involved parties, mainly for the Tornio river work.

**3. Results**

**Views from Torne River Basin[[1]](#footnote-1)**

This cross-border river is the largest unregulated water system in the Northern Europe and a major home stream of Atlantic Salmon stocks from the Baltic. The catchment area cultures include North Sámi, Swedish, Finnish, Tornedal *Meä*-speaking minority and other groups, languages and traditions. Main natural resource management bodies in Finland who participate in the local interaction are Metsähallitus, Natural Resources Institute – Finland and the Ministries for fishery management as well as the Finnish and Swedish municipalities and the Sámi Parliaments along the river catchment area.

Here the focus can be defined more clearly as the Tornio-Muonionjoki catchment area. The local peoples’ interest in the context of renewable resources mostly focuses on uses and harvest of Atlantic salmon (wild stocks) and migratory whitefish. Smaller interest and fishery also includes grayling, burbot, lamprey and northern pike.

Industrial and large-scale non-renewable natural resources activities in the basin include international commerce, manufacturing and exports, tourism, transport and energy infrastructure and possible mining activities in the future. Out of these tourism is on the rise, but there are only a handful of actors and infrastructure-communications-cooperation complex remains still low and dispersed. Sweden, Norway and Finland are to tackle the development of tourism together with a new EU- funded INTERREG -project, contents of which are still unknown.

Some of the local municipalities have together developed their own tourism and fisheries strategies, bit without a cross-border link and cooperation, which remains a hindrance.

In order to implement the UN transboundary water conventions and EU’s Water Framework Directive on an international catchment area, the agreement between Finland and Sweden concerning transboundary rivers and a cooperation organisation between countries, Finnish-Swedish Border River Commission was established in 2010. The main mandate of this new body is to ”ensure equitable use of water-related resources” and sustainable fisheries. Representatives include authorities, municipalities and different other stakeholders, appointed by the governments. The chair rotates annually. A secretariat has been founded to coordinate all activities.

Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission tries to foster better cooperation and negotiations between authorities and other parties, issues statements regarding the developments of the basin especially when transboundary implications are present. It can appeal national authorities in courts. It also approves or disapproves plans for water management and flood risk management, before they go the governments to be ratified. The transboundary river agreement includes the fisheries rules of the Tornio River. The Commission also works in various other bodies, such as the regional cooperation group, the Salmon Committee of the Bothnian Bay (SALCOM), which is the newest body of coordination activities regarding salmon, established in 2014. State local authorities, municipality associations, Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission and sports fishermen’s organisations assess and discuss the situation of the Atlantic Salmon from the northern perspective.

Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission follows closely other developments regarding fish and renewable resources, including the Finnish and Swedish salmon and trout strateges, the other was approved in 2013 and the latter will be delivered to the Swedish Government in 2015. These two strategies constitute a major document to follow over the next 12 months. Various long-running associations such as the *Tornio-Muonionjokiseura* (Association for the Tornio Muonio River) present possibility for dialogue on the Commission work.

In recent years a significant legal turn has been the question in parts of the basin – who ’owns’ the salmon legally? The state or local real estate / land owners with private water areas?

An inquiry has been in the works, and will be released in the 2015-2016. The local fisheries communities have challenged the state mandate on salmon fishing and continue to pursue this topic, which is expected to produce further heated debates and possible processes in the next few years.

In summer 2014 and 2015 authorities and most of the resources were aimed to determine and assess the major outbreak of lethal fungi *Saprolegnia* infection, which may have affected salmon in the river. A record 100,000 salmon came up the river in 2014. In 2015 the number was 60,000.

Dead, rotting Atlantic salmon was discovered on the banks of Tornio river in their thousands, but definitive reason is still elusive. Some of the reasons discussed have included:

* Baltic Sea seals affecting the salmon
* Net fishery out in the sea and on the river
* Poachers at sea coasts
* ”Spinfluga” fishery on the Matkakoski rapids
* Catch and release fishing
* UDN disease

Finnish Food Safety Authority EVIRA has been researching the issue all fishing season. Some of the impacts (wounds on the skin) to the salmon are from fish traps and net fishery according to them. Natural salmon has to be ‘released’ from the nets on the Swedish side and the net fishery may have caused skin problems and damage, which then have resulted in fungi diseases and dead fish. EVIRA staff also agrees that the seals out in the sea have caused some of the wounds on the fish.

The Swedish Vetenary Authority SVA sampled also the fish and discovered Ulcerative Dermal Necrosis – UDN in them. It affects the skin of the salmon. All in all the SVA discovered four fish carrying this disease. UDN was first discovered in the UK in the 1800s but then became an issue in Sweden in 1970s and 1980s with wild salmon.

In summary, this cross-border river basin has a range of actors in the context of renewable natural resources. The issues are also regulated with state agreements between Sweden and Finland. The regional salmon working group SALCOM affects the discussions as well as the various projects, stakeholders, associations and regional governance. The basin is large and the river a major river course in the region. Issues of engagement with the local stakeholders and coordination of all activities between two countries is a very time-consuming effort. Establishment of the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission is one of the new steps to improve cooperation in sustainable management of fish stocks, and will include a range of new tools to achieve that.

The use of forms was exchanged with Jukajoki and Näätämö as an experience, but not yet implemented. Documentary film from Jukajoki efforts will be disseminated in Autumn 2015 in a seminar for the river valley stakeholders. This will be a forum to discuss the Nordic Resource Management issues, in preparation for 2016 season.

**Deatnu and Ponoi as Comparative Views**

In the Deatnu watershed, the restoration and monitoring activities from Näätämö were discussed with those North Sámi who are involved in developing the river management. Spring 2015 saw major disruption of state-Sámi relations and this affected possibilities of officially proposing new innovations for local governance, and the situation will continue until early 2016 when the new Sámi Parliament will take office and on the other hand the Norwegian – Finnish river border treaty has been negotiated[[2]](#footnote-2).

In Ponoi the international cooperation possibilities deteriorated over the 2015 summer as the geopolitical situation in the Arctic worsened. Small steps and discussions were taken to exchange salmon data and interestingly enough, the previous cycle of Snowchange work in Ponoi watershed had resulted in public discussions of re-establishing now-abandoned river communities such as Ponoi[[3]](#footnote-3).

**4. Discussion**

Tornio, Deatnu and Ponoi river discussions have proven that new mentalities, new directions and ultimately, new governance, that accepts and welcomes both the Indigenous and other local views are much in need across the region.

In Näätämö, a focal point of the Nordic cooperation will be in addition to the observations that have been documented on forms, the restoration attempts of the Vainosjoki sub-catchment area. The co-management project has submitted a request for small funds to restore a salmon spawning gravel sites along Vainosjoki. The application is in and decisions on it are expected towards early 2016.

In summary it can be said that the Nordic initiative is seen locally and regionally very positively and the forms can produce a partial view of harvest / observations / governance flow. However, the fishermen involved strongly advocate for complementary methods, such as oral history documentation and mapping to further offer a better view of their self-governance and monitoring efforts along these rivers.

**5. Conclusion**

Use of workshops and extended dialogue with state actors regarding local governance of renewable natural resources remains a very hard topic in the Finnish (and Russian) areas where these surveys and inquiries have been conducted.

*Why so?*

The main reason for this on-going context can be identified back to the socio-historical developments of Finland, where the state agencies, research bodies and ‘expert knowledge’ solidified their roles as the gatekeepers of *how the discourses of governance* happens.

This position has not shifted since independence at 1917. It further intensified at various points in history, in 1944-1979, in 2002-2009 and then again in 2015 due to political power shifts.

While individual solutions and small steps have emerged, such as the establishment of local fisheries bodies for the lakes and rivers after the Second World War, they are tied in and controlled by the state resource structure in terms of fish stocking, which is the primary driver of activities for these bodies.

In the 2010s the issues of local governance have emerged in those places (Jukajoki, Näätämö, lake Puruvesi, parts of the Tornio catchment area to name some examples) where the local people have *challenged,* for various reasons, the legitimacy of the state agencies to monitor and govern. Then some arrangements have developed, for example co-management projects and inclusion of Indigenous and local knowledge, pilot-style, into these discussions.

But none of these cases have yet ‘breached’ through to deliver a full-fledged and well-running system of ‘local – national governance of resources’ where all parties would be satisfied to the extent these ‘latent conflicts’ would end.

In 2015 several deep new conflicts emerged, when the government abandoned the ILO 169 Agreement ratification for heavy-handed industrial development in Lapland. The Sámi requests UN help to assist their situation in Finland and the conflicts worsened throughout the year.

*How then to remedy the situation?*

Capacity building amongst authorities and civil society organizations may provide some avenues to improve the situation. The Näätämö co-management project is furthest along in this regard. Problem is that while good-minded individuals in the ‘structure’ may listen, the use and distribution of social power prevents any real progress on these topics.

Internationally the main cases here, Näätämö and Jukajoki, have received much accolade, whether in the context of uses of citizen, traditional and Indigenous knowledge on the UN level and in the Arctic forums such as Nordic Council of Ministers, Arctic Council, CAFF and UNFCCC. But we have not seen significant increase in how often community knowledge of natural resources is incorporated into decision-making procedures at all. This remains the on-going and future main challenge to which the current project contributes positively.

1. Written together by Tero Mustonen and Virve Sallisalmi, Executive Secretary of the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission. The views expressed in other parts of the reports do not represent the views of the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission in any manner. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Both of these trends continued through-out Autumn 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See more at <http://www.snowchange.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Snowchange-Discussion-Paper-6-.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)