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The absent of contextual knowledge practices in the management of Deanu river

Sámi societies have been ruled by different national states for a number of centuries, and those states have brought their own rules into Sámi communities. Those rules have not always been consistent with Sami ways of living and their knowledge practices. Norwegian politics for instance sought to turn Sámi people into Norwegians by taking away Sámi languages and also in some measure their practices. In other words, Sámi ways of life were ignored and considered to be old-fashioned and devoid of any future. Even though this way of thinking is far removed from contemporary democratic ideas, the effects of such earlier politics are still present. Most obviously this is reflected in the ways that peoples' own knowledge practices still are absent in decision making. Deanu river is a border river to Finland and Norway and most of those living by the river are Sami people. Long term traditional fishing has used a range of different methods. Those practices have given rise to concepts that illustrate the knowledges of the people who live by the river. People know where the currents flow quickly and where they flow slowly; where there are boulders that might snag the net; where salmon rest and where they don't; what happens if the water level is high, or low; when or whether it is worthwhile fishing on a particular day; and where. However, such forms of knowledge are absent in the official management of the river. Faced with falling numbers of salmon, official managers instead refer to natural science knowledge. Natural science refers to salmon population statistics and argues that declining numbers are caused by overfishing. Most local people accept that there is some overfishing, but in addition, they also suggest that a wide range of different factors affects salmon populations.

In this paper I ask how research is used in the management of Deanu river and how that has affected the way the river and the salmon is perceived officially. What do those knowledges look like and how are they different from local peoples knowledges?