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In Northern Norway, there has been an increase in nature-based tourism. The authorities have promoted more activity in nature, inclusive of protected areas. As a doctoral student in tourism at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway my project is on protected areas. I explore which discourses have manifested themselves in different interpretations of landscape in two protected areas in North Troms, Norway. In particular, I'm concerned with what values and types of knowledge are emphasized in the management and the development of tourism.

The background for the doctoral project is the political and ideological changes in the management of protected areas. This development also applies for The Barents Region, which has a diversity of protected areas. The management of national parks in the four countries differs in terms of governance and visitor management. In Norway, there has been a development from expert-oriented to more participation-oriented management. At the same time, nature-based tourism is growing and several tourism businesses use national parks in their marketing. In 2003, the Norwegian government introduced what has been called The Mountain Text (Fjellteksten), to enable and increase nature-based tourism in protected areas. In 2009, the Government delegated management responsibilities for large protected areas to regional/ local national park boards and advisory committees. The goal was to transfer more power to the local



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and regional levels, and thus, positions for national park managers were created. The work on management plans and visitor strategies were intensified. Based on this development, professionals in the North-Troms region and at the University of Tromsø initiated a project with the purpose of putting forward ideas for new research and bringing research back to the region. The collaboration is called Forskningsnode Nord Troms (Research Node North Troms).

My disciplinary background is in sociology, and I am concerned with local community development. I wrote my Master's thesis about opportunities and challenges in nature-based farm tourism at Ruralis – Institute for Rural and Regional Research. I examined websites of farm tourism businesses and the way farmers' self-representation meet with different tourism trends. After finishing my Master's degree, I worked at The Centre of Competence on Rural Development (Distriktssenteret), a government agency. My focus was involvement of children and youth in local and regional development, and the municipality as a local democratic arena. My interest in local community development is a driving force also in my work in the doctoral thesis. I am interested in how we can create good places to live, where it is possible to develop businesses and, at the same time, take care of local culture and nature.

The major question for my doctoral project is how the landscape in two protected areas in North Troms is understood. "National park" and "protected area" give different connotations, and it is possible to understand the same nature and landscape in several ways. It can deal with protection of rare plants and animals, cultural landscapes, vulnerable and endangered natural habitats or spectacular tourist attractions. At the same time, protected areas relate to restricted use and control of nature. We define landscape in several ways. An example is how legal and political management influences what different interests emphasize. We also understand landscape as a result of how we use it, or dwell in it. Values and knowledge are central perspectives in my work. Development of marketing and commodification of nature in protected areas affects the perceptions of these areas. The Nature Diversity Act in Norway states that public decisions must be based on scientific knowledge and "generations' experience through use of and interaction with nature". I have approached these questions through analyzing management plans, municipality plans and interviewing different stakeholders in the protected areas, as the members of the management boards and advisory committees. The committees consist of

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“In my research I explore the negotiations between landscape interpretations, values and knowledge in protected areas.”

representatives from reindeer herding, local businesses, municipality, Friends of the Earth Norway and The Norwegian Trekking Association, amongst others. I have had fieldtrips to the areas and spent 1, 5 months at a local center where also the park management for one of the protected areas is located.

The work with this thesis has brought me out in the natural environment in these two protected areas. It has made me curious about the people and the landscapes in this region. There are several assessments done concerning protection of nature, local practices and business development. There are negotiations about values, knowledge and meaning of landscape. This also raises questions related to power. Nature in these areas has always been important, and we might be able to predict future development based on present regulations, management and local practices.