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Hunting cultures and the 'northern periphery': Exploring their relationship in Scotland and Finland

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ABSTRACT

Hunting is a rural activity and attempts to influence it are often framed, in northern Europe, in terms of 'urban elites' seeking to impose their will on 'rural' cultures. Hunting cultures are the subject of this paper, but instead of focusing on their relationship with conservation, as most previous work has done, it explores their interaction with proposals to expand commercial hunting tourism to generate endogenous economic development in remote rural areas of Scotland and Finland.

It does so by examining stakeholders' attitudes towards the potential for increased commercial hunting tourism in peripheral areas in Scotland and Finland. The paper identifies a neoliberal policy perspective that recasts such areas as 'resource peripheries' and outlines their dominant hunting cultures. Using qualitative, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, it explores the motives and means for dominant hunting cultures to exert 'frictional' resistance on attempts to 're-map' peripheral areas in ways which were perceived to work against their interests.

The paper highlights the importance of taking account of the influence of dominant hunting cultures on attempts to introduce neoliberal economic development policies in resource peripheries, especially where they may have an impact on game resources. By demonstrating the frictional resistance that they can exert on such policies, it sheds light on a neglected aspect of hunting cultures. The paper suggests that, rather than demonstrating the limits of neoliberalism, these northern peripheries are increasingly its deliberately constructed 'other'. This is because Scotland's and, to lesser but growing extent, Finland's dominant hunting cultures are maintained by people who lives are led for the most part outside the 'northern periphery'.

1. Introduction

In northern Europe, cultural factors are often at the forefront of debate over hunting. Game hunting is a rural activity and attempts to influence it are often framed in terms of 'urban elites' seeking to impose their will on 'rural' cultures. Such framings were identified in studies of the successful campaign to ban hunting with dogs in Great Britain.[1] A key tactic used by opponents was to argue that such a ban represented a threat to rural cultures (Anderson, 2006; Milbourne, 2003a, 2003b; Woods, 2005: 217). Similar framings have been identified in Nordic countries, where certain predators – especially wolves – are killed illegally by hunters who regard the level of their protection as unjustified (Bisi et al., 2007; Krange and Skogen, 2011; Pohja-Mykrä, 2016; Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014; Von Essen and Allen, 2017; Von Essen et al., 2015). Refusals to accept the protection and even, in some areas, the presence of wolves are expressed in terms of rural resistance to the imposition of outsiders' values: such as those of conservationists (Krange and Skogen, 2011: 477; Von Essen, 2017) and national and European Union policy makers (Bisi et al., 2007: 305; Von Essen et al., 2015).

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[1] The main source of controversy appears to have been the Hunting Bill, passed into law in 2004, which banned hunting with dogs in England and Wales. In Scotland, the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 banned the hunting of wild mammals with dogs (q.v. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2002/6/section/1; accessed 14/6/17).

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This, in turn, resonates with research in England and Wales, which has identified 'important connections between nature, rurality and hunting' (Milbourne, 2003a: 169) and documented hunting's role as a powerful agent of socialisation in rural communities (Cox et al., 1994). The strength of this relationship has led prosperous rural in-migrants either to take up hunting, or to refrain from criticising it openly, in order to 'fit in' (Heley, 2010; Milbourne, 2003b).

Hunting cultures are the subject of this paper. However, instead of focusing on their relationship with conservation, it explores their interaction with proposals to expand commercial hunting tourism[2] to generate endogenous economic development in remote rural areas of Scotland and Finland. This exploration draws on the findings of the research project 'Sustainable hunting tourism - business opportunity in Northern Europe', which was funded by the European Regional Development Fund's Northern Periphery Programme 2007–13 (http://northernperiphery.eu/en/home/). Finland and Scotland were selected for comparison as they represent the opposite ends of the commercialisation of hunting in Northern Europe. In Scotland commercial hunting tourism is well developed, while in Finland it is still in its initial phase (Matilainen and Keskinarkaus, 2010).

Given the cultural salience of hunting, part of the project examined stakeholders' attitudes towards it and to a possible expansion of commercial hunting tourism; it is these results that are discussed here. The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate how hunting stakeholders can exert 'frictional' resistance (q.v. Hayter and Barnes, 2012) on attempts to promote endogenous economic development in the northern periphery through an expansion of commercial hunting tourism. In doing so, it will provide new evidence on the influence of hunting cultures in Europe's northern peripheries. The paper also problematises the cultural-geographical dichotomy between 'rural insider' and 'urban outsider' that is prominent in many discussions of hunting cultures. It is structured as follows. Section two discusses the economic policy context for Europe's northern periphery and the concept of 'frictional' resistance to neoliberal prescriptions for endogenous economic development. Section three outlines the dominant hunting cultures in Scotland and Finland. Sections four and five set out the data collection methods and the main findings. The findings are discussed in section six, while the conclusion reflects on them in the context of the issues raised above.

2. Economic development and the northern periphery

From a neoliberal economic development perspective, peripherality is usually interpreted as a problem to be overcome. Peripheral rural areas are remote from the urban economic core. Their relatively small, dispersed populations mean that they: lack easy and cheap access to markets; suffer from 'thin institutional structures, narrow business networks, limited local embeddedness' (Jauhiainen and Moilanen, 2012: 119); and have comparatively low levels of investment in research and development (Ramsey et al., 2013: 341–2). To overcome these disadvantages, 'an approach emphasising local responsibility has gained currency, with a strong focus on the regenerative powers of capital' (Conradson and Pawson, 2009: 77).

This neoliberal approach has frequently been manifested in policies and research that encourage and support the commercialisation of material and cultural resources to create branded commodities unique to the area; the aim being to sell them at a premium compared with generic, mass-produced products. The combination of a price premium and a greater share of the added value being retained in the area will, it is argued, generate endogenous economic development. This was codified by Ray (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000) as the 'culture economy' approach to economic development. Although associated primarily with food and drink products (e.g. Ilbery and Kneafsey, 1998, 1999; Parrott et al., 2002), it is also applicable to other tangible commodities (e.g. Kneafsey et al., 2001) and to services such as tourism. Indeed, some areas, such as the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island, have turned peripherality to competitive advantage by emphasising their 'unspoilt' environment when marketing export commodities (such as dairy produce) and their attractiveness as a tourist destination (Conradson and Pawson, 2009).

Thus, neoliberal economic development policies cast peripheral areas of the Global North as 'resource peripheries'. This categorisation has been developed, notably in the work of Hayter and Barnes (Hayter et al., 2003; Hayter and Barnes, 2012), to emphasise commonalities in the experiences of peripheral areas whose endowments of natural capital become the focus of economic activities and policy emanating from core areas. Drawing on Tsing's (2005) study of Indonesia's 'resource frontier', Hayter and Barnes (2012) argue that any attempt to implement in resource peripheries economic policies from the core will tend to involve a process of 'remapping', whereby: '[m]aps of landownership, control, and use are reshuffled; boundaries are redrawn; and the material landscape is sometimes dramatically remade' (Hayter and Barnes, 2012: 203). Thus, attempts to impose neoliberal economic development policies on resource peripheries will tend to involve the disruption of extant social, cultural and economic relationships and norms. The disruption caused by neoliberal re-mappings of resource peripheries appears to generate two main types of response. It may be welcomed by those who view it as providing opportunities for them to 'attain traditional markers of success and increase their social standing' (Silva and Motzer, 2015: 67). Conversely, it can generate 'friction', where the 'aspiration to free market neoliberalism grates against the institutional and material form of a given local site, creating particular types of connections, responses, and clashes' (Hayter and Barnes, 2012: 202). From their study of attempts to impose neoliberal policies on the forest peripheries of British Columbia (Canada), Tasmania (Australia) and North Island (New Zealand), Hayter and Barnes (2012: 203) argue that the best means for understanding the sources of such friction is to consult institutional stakeholders, as they will tend to 'make explicit at the local level what neoliberalism rubs against when it creates friction'. Hayter et al. (2003) place these stakeholders into four main groups: economic, environmental, geopolitical and cultural (see also Hayter and Barnes, 2012: 203).

For Hayter and Barnes (2012), the frictional resistance of key stakeholders to the imposition of neoliberal policies does two things. First, it demonstrates that resource peripheries are where neoliberalism encounters 'geographic limits'. Secondly, it creates hybrid and possibly alternative ways of thinking and doing economic activity that could form a basis for what comes after neoliberalism (Hayter and Barnes, 2012: 217). However, other studies of economic development in resource peripheries point to a more cautious interpretation. First, they caution against overdrawing the similarities both between and within resource peripheries (see, respectively, Horsley, 2013; Kortelainen and Rannikko, 2015). As demonstrated in studies of mining in the Pilbara region of Western Australia (Horsley, 2013), of tourism in Namibia's Uibasen Conservancy (Silva and Motzer, 2015), and of forestry in Russian Karelia (Kortelainen and Rannikko, 2015), both the re-mapping and the frictional resistance identified by Hayter and Barnes tend to be manifested differently in different areas. Secondly, by focusing on a resource periphery that does not have a

[2] In this paper, commercial hunting tourism is use to describe paid-for hunting activities undertaken by non-residents.