



## Research article

## Competing pathways to sustainability? Exploring conflicts over mine establishments in the Swedish mountain region

Karin Beland Lindahl <sup>a,\*</sup>, Andreas Johansson <sup>a</sup>, Anna Zachrisson <sup>b</sup>, Roine Viklund <sup>c</sup><sup>a</sup> Unit of Political Science, Luleå University of Technology, 97187 Luleå, Sweden<sup>b</sup> Department of Political Science, Umeå University, 901 87 Umeå Sweden<sup>c</sup> Unit of History, Luleå University of Technology, 97187 Luleå, Sweden

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 23 November 2017

Received in revised form

6 March 2018

Accepted 13 April 2018

Available online 25 April 2018

## Keywords:

Natural resource management

Mining conflicts

Pathways to sustainability

Place perceptions

Frame analysis

Interpretive policy analysis

## ABSTRACT

Natural resource (NR) exploitation often gives rise to conflict. While most actors intend to manage collectively used places and their NRs sustainably, they may disagree about what this entails. This article accordingly explores the origin of NR conflicts by analysing them in terms of competing pathways to sustainability. By comparing conflicts over mine establishments in three places in northern Sweden, we specifically explore the role of place-based perceptions and experiences.

The results indicate that the investigated conflicts go far beyond the question of metals and mines. The differences between pathways supporting mine establishment and those opposing it refer to fundamental ideas about human–nature relationships and sustainable development (SD). The study suggests that place-related parameters affect local interpretations of SD and mobilisation in ways that explain why resistance and conflict exist in some places but not others. A broader understanding of a particular conflict and its specific place-based trajectory may help uncover complex underlying reasons. However, our comparative analysis also demonstrates that mining conflicts in different places share certain characteristics. Consequently, a site-specific focus ought to be combined with attempts to compare, or map, conflicts at a larger scale to improve our understanding of when and how conflicts evolve. By addressing the underlying causes and origins of contestation, this study generates knowledge needed to address NR management conflicts effectively and legitimately.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

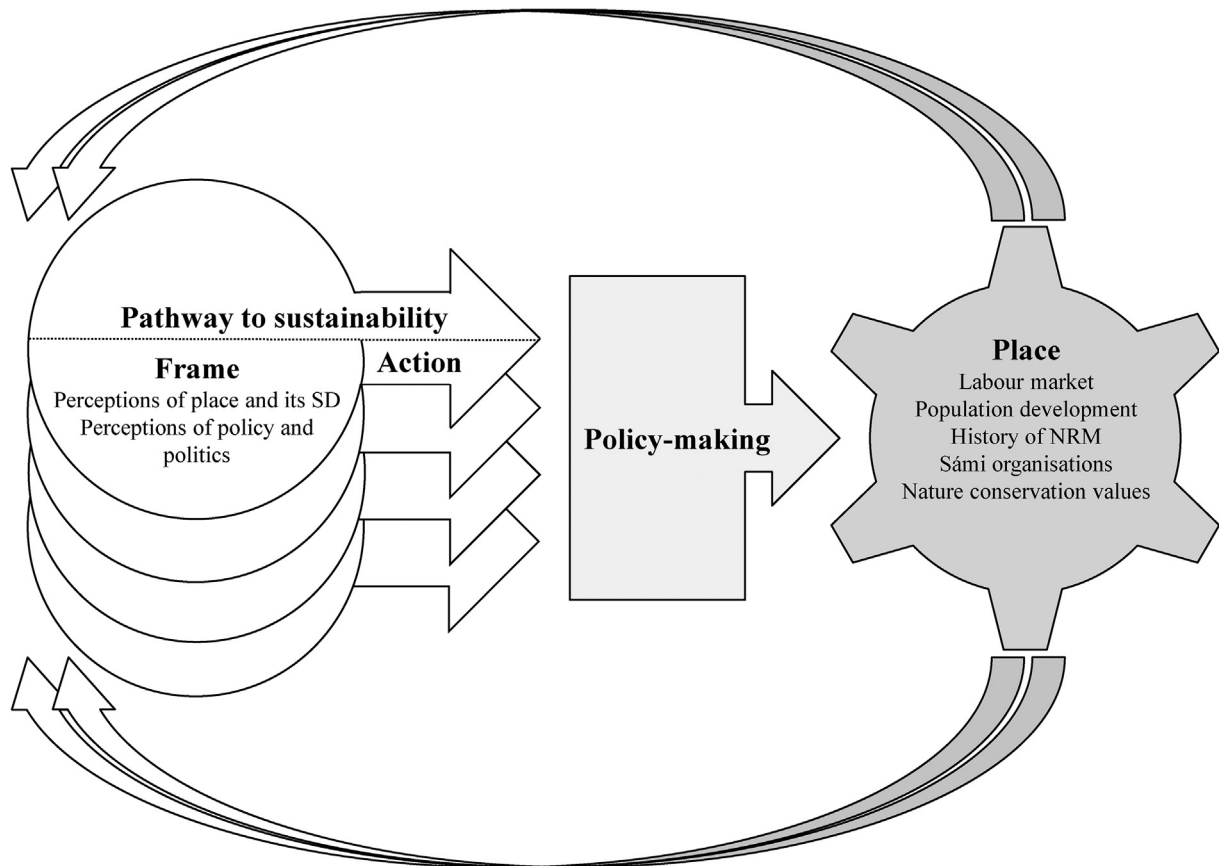
Natural resource (NR) exploitation often gives rise to conflicts between actors holding diverging views of how places and resources should be used and developed. Although most actors want to manage the collectively utilised place and its NRs sustainably, they may disagree about what this entails. Accordingly, actors' preferred development paths may diverge, despite claims that they are all promoting sustainable development (SD; see, e.g., Bruff and Wood, 2000; Biermann, 2013; Bulkeley et al., 2013). This article explores the origin of NR conflicts by analysing them in terms of competing “pathways to sustainability”. By comparing how conflicts are expressed in different places, our specific objective is to

explore the role of place-based perceptions and experiences.

We apply an analytical framework developed by Beland Lindahl et al. (2015) based on the STEPS (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) approach (Leach et al., 2010) and frame analysis (Schön and Rein, 1994; Perri 6 2005) to explore the relationships between actors' perceptions, policy preferences, action strategies, and actual actions that shape NR conflicts and place (see Fig. 1 for an illustration of the relationship between frames, actions and pathways). An assumption underpinning the analysis is that many NR controversies and SD dilemmas are played out in specific places. Attachment to, or senses of, specific regions, landscapes, or locales influence actors' understandings of what SD actually entails, and of whether a specific natural resource management (NRM) activity is enhancing or hindering the pursuit of SD. Place is a concept that has found its way into studies of NRM and conflicts in recent decades. More recently, “place” and “place making” have increasingly entered sustainability science and place-based approaches to SD (Marsden, 2013; Horlings, 2015; Marsden and Farioli, 2015). While it is recognised that place-based

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [karin.beland.lindahl@ltu.se](mailto:karin.beland.lindahl@ltu.se) (K. Beland Lindahl), [andreas.johansson@ltu.se](mailto:andreas.johansson@ltu.se) (A. Johansson), [anna.zachrisson@pol.umu.se](mailto:anna.zachrisson@pol.umu.se) (A. Zachrisson), [roine.wiklund@ltu.se](mailto:roine.wiklund@ltu.se) (R. Viklund).



**Fig. 1.** Theoretical framework. By comparing how conflicts are expressed in different places, we explore how place based parameters shape actors' frames and actions, i.e. their preferred pathways to sustainability.

approaches involve actors with varied interests working in contested arenas, research on the relationship between actors' values, place perceptions, and political actions is limited, especially in comparison to related fields (e.g. political sociology, see [Rootes, 1999](#)). Consequently, empirical, “value-oriented” research is called for, exploring the context of community and development, offering insight into people's motivations and driving forces in place-making processes ([Horlings, 2015](#)). The present study helps revealing the underlying causes of intractable NR conflicts while illuminating how SD is conceptualised, negotiated, and enacted by societal actors in particular places. By addressing the underlying causes and origins of contestation, this study generates knowledge needed to handle NRM conflicts effectively and legitimately.

Our empirical focus is on conflicts over mine establishment. Mining activities frequently give rise to conflicts ([Hilson, 2002](#); [Bebbington et al., 2008](#); [Campbell and Roberts, 2010](#); [Kemp et al., 2011](#)) and offer excellent opportunities to study how SD is negotiated by diverse actors across spatial and temporal scales. The most commonly identified causes of conflicts are socio–environmental impacts on land, water, and livelihoods ([Bebbington and Williams, 2008](#); [Silva-Macher and Farrell, 2014](#)), lack of participation in decision-making processes ([Anguelovski, 2011](#); [Arellano-Yanguas, 2011](#)), lack of monetary compensation ([Walton and Barnett, 2007](#); [Arellano-Yanguas, 2011](#)), and distrust of mining companies and the government ([Muradian et al., 2003](#); [Horowitz, 2010](#)). The literature also includes analyses of state and industry responses, such as regulation ([Khoday and Natarajan 2012](#)), increased participation ([O'Faircheallaigh, 2010](#)), corporate social responsibility (CSR; e.g., [Kepore and Imbun, 2011](#)), and the rise of

the social license to operate (SLO) concept (e.g., [Prno and Slocombe, 2012](#); [Prno, 2013](#); [Parsons et al., 2014](#)). However, most of these studies concentrate on mining development in the developing world. Research on the causes of conflicts in industrialised countries is sparse ([Linde et al., 2012](#)) and comparative studies are needed ([Hojem, 2014](#)). Scholars of mining development increasingly question a linear, universal relationship between commodities and conflicts and call for more qualitative site-specific studies of how different actors perceive mining and its impacts, including the role of underlying interests, worldviews, and relationships with place ([Peluso and Watts, 2001](#); [Horowitz, 2009](#); [Hilson and Laing, 2017](#)). Clearly, trade-offs between the three pillars of SD (i.e., the economy, environment, and society) are key ([Otto et al., 2006](#); [Hojem, 2014](#)) and mine establishment presupposes fair and legitimate permitting and planning processes able to balance competing sustainability claims to the extent possible ([Bergquist et al., 2013](#)). However, more research is needed into the conditions for making legitimate trade-offs, particularly addressing the diversity of and interactions between actors and other forces influencing mining development in different local contexts ([Avci et al., 2010](#); [Hilson and Laing, 2017](#)).

Responding to these knowledge gaps, this article applies an interpretive and comparative approach to explore conflicts over mine establishments in three places in northern Sweden. Two questions are explored: (1) How are actors' positions on mine establishment and action strategies informed by their perceptions of place and sustainable development? and (2) What actions do actors take to promote their preferred pathways to sustainability? The first part of the article outlines the theoretical foundation

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7477070>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7477070>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)