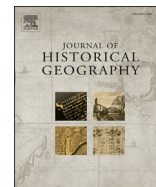




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Historical boundary struggles in the construction of the non-human world: Nature conservation and tourism in Swedish national parks

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ABSTRACT

Tourism and conservation policies in Sweden share a significant common history, involving constructions of the non-human world. In this paper, the development of this historical relationship is traced through national park policies and the Swedish Tourist Association's yearbooks, from the late nineteenth century onward. We explore this in theoretical terms of what Nancy Fraser has called 'boundary struggles': constantly mutating institutionalized divisions between capitalist production and nature, public governance, and social reproductive activities. Through our analysis, we identify five discursive formations — significant changes in the discursive constructions of the non-human world entailing reconfigurations of boundary struggles. Shifts between notions of sublime and wild nature external to capitalism, as stakes in welfare state accessibility debate, and as tools in the current moment of intensified commodification of the non-human world, confirm the persistence of boundary struggles in capitalist society.

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Much of what has been written about Swedish national parks concerns their emergence as a national romantic element in the evolution of industrial capitalism and the budding welfare state.¹ Nine parks were established in 1909, reflecting prevailing motifs of outdoor education, tourism and recreation, natural science, national identity, and the importance of nurturing young Swedes.²

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¹ Lars J. Lundgren, *Staten och naturen: Naturskyddspolitik i Sverige 1869–1935*. 1, 1869–1919. [The State and Nature: Nature Conservation Policy in Sweden 1869–1935. 1, 1869–1919] (Brotby: Cassandra, 2009); Lars J. Lundgren, *Staten och naturen: Naturskyddspolitik i Sverige 1869–1935*. 2, 1919–1935. [The State and Nature: Nature Conservation Policy in Sweden 1869–1935. 2, 1919–1935] (Brotby: Cassandra, 2011); Tom Mels, *Wild Landscapes: The Cultural Nature of Swedish National Parks* (Lund: Lund University, 1999); Sandra Wall-Reinius, 'A Ticket to National Parks? Tourism, Railways and the Establishment of National Parks in Sweden', in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change*, ed. by Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 184–196.

² Lundgren, *The State and Nature 1*; Klas Sandell, 'För människors skull—men för vilka och hur? Friluftsliv och naturturism som hot och möjlighet' [For the Sake of People - But for Whom and How? Outdoor Recreation and Nature Tourism as a Threat and Opportunity] in *Naturvård bortom 2009: reflektioner med anledning av ett jubileum [Nature Conservation Beyond 2009: Reflections on the Occasion of an Anniversary]*, ed. by Lars J. Lundgren (Brotby: Cassandra, 2009), pp. 151–178; Wall-Reinius, *A Ticket to National Parks?*

Not unlike the American predecessors, the Swedish parks found a place in the landscape amidst dominant interests of scientific explorations and natural resource extraction, in particular those of forestry, mining, and agricultural improvement.³ Their ideological intention was to offer a Swedish structure of feeling around the landscape and the non-human world, at a carefully guarded distance from the overriding interests of capitalist modernity.⁴ Although the program of setting aside swathes of original pieces of the non-human world aligned the interests of conservation policies with those of the early tourism movement, the relationship between Swedish national park development and tourism soon proved to be troubled.⁵

In contrast to the American parks and their strong traditions of hosting tourism, a perceived contradiction between visions of 'untouched wilderness' and tourism development yielded a lengthy period in which tourism had a marginal influence on Swedish

³ Richard Grusin, *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of Americas National Parks* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004); Louis Améen, Einar Lönnberg and Karl Starbäck, *Betänkande rörande åtgärder till skydd för vårt lands natur och naturminnesmärken [Committee Report on Measures to Protect our Country's Nature and Natural Monuments]* (Stockholm: Isaac Marcus, 1907).

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Améen, Lönnberg, and Starbäck, *Report on Measures to Protect our Country's Nature and Natural Monuments*; Lundgren, *The State and Nature 1*.

⁵ Lundgren, *The State and Nature 1*.

national park politics.⁶ However, with a countrywide rise of nature-based tourism over the past three decades, the national parks have gradually returned front and center in Sweden's nature-based experience economy.⁷ The thirty currently existing parks (Fig. 1) are promoted as tourism destinations, yearly attracting millions of tourists looking for outdoor experiences.⁸

Studies that trace and problematize the historically shifting and contested relationship between tourism and nature conservation in Sweden, including its construction of the non-human world, are rare. Readings are available on the contradictions between tourism and national park development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the current rise of tourism in the parks, and contemporary constructions of the non-human world.⁹ However, none of these attempts to synthesize developments from the period leading up to the creation of national parks in Sweden until the present.

This paper explores the historically contested conservation–tourism relationship and its construction of non-human nature in terms of what Nancy Fraser called ‘boundary struggles’ in the development of capitalist society.¹⁰ Fraser's umbrella term usefully signals the conflictual relation between marketized and non-marketized aspects of capitalist society. We say umbrella term because it draws on a wide range of research on primitive accumulation and the production of nature, (neoliberal) governance, and social reproduction. Fraser proposed that if we want to understand capitalism not just narrowly as an economic system, but as an institutionalized social order, we need to look behind the economic foreground of capital accumulation. We need to recognize crisis tendencies in capitalism that give rise to ‘struggles over nature, social reproduction and public power’.¹¹

These three realms of struggle (the constantly mutating division between capitalist production and nature, public governance, and social reproductive activities) circumscribe vital ‘background conditions’ for the possibility of capitalist production; their exploitation is necessary for the existence of economic production, but at the same time actively separated from it by obscuring their social value. Boundary struggles thus become a shorthand, for what geographers and others have long identified as key zones of crisis and conflicts over commodification in capitalist society.

⁶ Grusin, *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of Americas National Parks*; Peter Fredman, Klas Sandell, “‘Protect, Preserve, Present’: The Role of Tourism in Swedish National Parks”, in *Tourism and National Parks: International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change*, ed. by Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 197–207.

⁷ Andreas Carlgren, ‘Vårt ansvar för naturen’ [‘Our Responsibility for Nature’], in *Naturvård bortom 2009: reflektioner med anledning av ett jubileum* [Nature Conservation Beyond 2009: Reflections on the Occasion of an Anniversary], ed. by Lars J. Lundgren (Brotby: Kassandra, 2009), pp. 15–19; Linda Lundmark and Olof Stjernström, ‘Environmental Protection: An instrument for Regional Development? National Ambitions Versus Local Realities in the Case of Tourism’, *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 9 (2009) 387–405.

⁸ SEPA, *Vår gemensamma identitet* [Our Collective Identity], (Stockholm: SEPA, 2011); SEPA, *Vår varumärkesstrategi* [Our Branding Strategy], (Stockholm: SEPA, 2011). Available online from SEPA, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency [Naturvårdsverket], <https://www.naturvardsverket.se/vagledning-och-stod/skyddad-natur/nationalparker-varumarkesarbete/>, last accessed on 4 June 2024.

⁹ Lundgren, *The State and Nature 1*; Carlgren, *Our Responsibility for Nature*; Lundmark and Stjernström, *Environmental Protection*; Emelie Fälton, ‘Descendants of The Modernist Museum: Tracing the Musealisation of Swedish National Parks’, *Visual Studies* (2021) 1–20; Emelie Fälton and Johan Hedrén, ‘The Neverlands of Nature: Exploring Representations of the Non-Human in Visitor Information Publication Material on Swedish National Parks’, *Journal of Northern Studies* 14 (2020) 7–34.

¹⁰ Nancy Fraser, ‘Contradictions of Capital and Care’, *New Left Review* (2016) 99–117.

¹¹ Nancy Fraser, ‘Behind Marx's Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism’, *New Left Review*, 86 (2014) 55–72 (p. 55).

It has often been noted that capitalism conceives of an economic realm that is separated from ‘a natural realm, conceived as offering a free, unproduced supply of “raw material” that is available for appropriation’.¹² As Katz and Kirby have argued forcefully, such appropriation has been ‘closely bound to the concept of spatial margins’; to ‘the exploration of new territories, or more recently, those previously considered as uneconomic’; to ‘frontiers’, including national parks. In a more general sense, ‘the relations of domination that inhere in the peculiar ways that nature is constructed, and the articulation of these with historically and geographically specific social relations of production and reproduction’. This indeed involves both nature and social reproduction as ‘grounds for struggle’.¹³

As we will show, tourism in national parks was in that sense geographically and representationally ordered to contribute to the formation and reproduction of capitalism's human subjects. It required and traded on shifting policies of demarcating boundaries between non-human nature and capitalist society. More generally speaking, these boundaries — between capitalist production and the non-human world, public governance and (non-waged) social reproductive activities — have undergone major historical shifts and remained fundamentally contested, in both practice and discourse. They tend to assume different institutional forms and different ‘normative orders’ in capitalism's historical geography.¹⁴

We think boundary struggles is a useful geographical notion, not just because it spatializes social conflict and responses to capitalism's crisis tendencies, but also because it is at once representational (e.g., the discursive boundaries between nature, reproduction, and capitalist production) and material (national parks have actual boundaries on the ground, which are mapped, materially regulated and policed). Where Fraser never explicitly deals with the spatiality of her own terms, human geographers have explored such boundaries as modalities of geographical authority in far more depth and empirical detail.¹⁵ Inspired by this work, we interpret ‘boundaries’ as a fully geographical notion, with tourism in national parks regulated through both material and discursive spatial practices.

We trace how the construction of the non-human world within tourism and conservation policies has changed historically, with a focus on identifying significant boundary struggles. We say ‘non-human world’ here not to reify a ‘natural realm’ (‘the wild’, ‘wilderness’, ‘pristine nature’), but because it catches the socially constructed ideal of what nature in the Swedish national parks has come to represent; a world separated from the human one.¹⁶ In what follows, we briefly discuss our method and empirical material. The social construction of the non-human world and complexities of historical boundary struggles are then presented in five sections, covering the period from 1870 to 2021. We end by arguing that we are living through a period of intensified commodification of the non-human world, engulfing both tourism development and conservation policies in Swedish national parks.

¹² Fraser, ‘Behind Marx's Hidden Abode’, p. 63.

¹³ Cindi Katz and Andrew Kirby, ‘In the Nature of Things: The Environment and Everyday Life’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16 (1991) 259–271 (p. 264).

¹⁴ Fraser, ‘Behind Marx's Hidden Abode’, p. 104.

¹⁵ Cf. Noel Castree, ‘Commodifying what Nature?’, *Progress in Human Geography* 27 (2003) 273–297; David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2019); Katharyne Mitchell, Sallie A. Marston, Cindi Katz, ‘Life's Work: An Introduction, Review and Critique’, *Antipode* 35 (2003) 1–26.

¹⁶ Fälton, ‘Descendants of the Modernist Museum’; Fälton and Hedrén, ‘The Neverlands of Nature’; Emelie Fälton, ‘The Romantic Tourist Gaze on Swedish National Parks: Tracing Ways of Seeing the Non-Human World through Representations in Tourists' Instagram Posts’, *Tourism Recreation Research* 49 (2021) 1–24.

Table 1

Parallel representations of the non-human in the policy documents and yearbooks.

Policy Documents	Yearbooks
1870s to early 1900s <i>The non-human as central for the rise of the tourism and nature conservation movements</i>	1885 to 1900s <i>The sublime and wild to be explored by the natural sciences</i>
1910s to 1940s <i>Conservation in a context of mounting resource exploitation</i>	1910s to 1940s <i>The non-human central to Swedish national park tourism</i>
1950s to 1970s <i>Attention to popular outdoor recreation and the rise of environmental politics</i>	1950s to 1970s <i>Scant attention to national parks and tourism</i>
1980s to early 2000s <i>Non-human wilderness and tourism reemphasized in more expansive planning efforts</i>	1980s <i>The non-human as bond between tourism and nature conservation</i>
Early 2000s to 2021 <i>Conservation as an accumulation and regional development strategy</i>	1990s <i>Scant attention to national parks and tourism (again)</i>
	Early 2000s to 2010s <i>The non-human serving as popular tourism destinations</i>

Tracing representations of the non-human world

To trace the changing representational status of the non-human world in tourism and conservation policies concerning national parks, we analyzed two sets of materials: 175 Swedish official nature conservation policy documents (1870–2021) and the full series of 126 yearbooks (1886–2013) produced by the Swedish Tourist Association (henceforth STA).¹⁷ These sources cover much of the same period, which allowed us to explore two complementary perspectives on the construction of the non-human world and boundary struggles involving tourism and nature conservation. Both the Swedish nature conservation movement and the STA emerged in the late nineteenth century and shared a keen interest in the non-human world, with the STA at once promoting nature conservation and nature-based tourism.¹⁸ A significant number of politicians responsible for early policymaking were also involved in the STA, manifesting an intimate relationship between the two movements and early national park policymaking.¹⁹ Over time, conservation turned into a professionalized field of public governance, with less immediate affiliations with the STA.²⁰ Nevertheless, the association established itself as an important force in promoting Swedish nature-based tourism as vital to the sphere of social reproduction.

The yearbooks served as an outlet for the association's educational agenda, providing information about Swedish tourism opportunities and key insights into the association's public positioning.²¹ While the yearbooks comprise a longstanding record of representing the national parks for the public, the policy documents embody the regulatory bias of official Swedish nature conservation policymaking. As we will show, both the yearbooks and the policy documents share an irregular pattern of intensity. Periodic representational silences about the non-human alternated with periods of more intense devotion to it and only by covering the

¹⁷ From 2013 and onward, the yearbooks were no longer produced. For STA's representational practices after 2013, see Fälton and Hedrén, 'The Neverlands of Nature'. Collections of the yearbooks are available in libraries throughout Sweden, e.g. Nordiska Museets bibliotek, Shelf mark: Tidskr Sv Sthlm/Svenska.

¹⁸ Lars Kvarnström, 'Turistföreningar som berättare' ['Tourist Associations as Narrators'], in *Det turistiska fältet och dess aktörer* [The Touristic Field and its Actors], ed. by Josefina Syssner and Lars Kvarnström (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2013) pp. 99–112; K. Sandell, *For the Sake of People*.

¹⁹ Lars J. Lundgren, 'Miljöpolitiken' ['Environmental Politics'], in *Vad staten vill: mål och ambitioner i svensk politik* [What the State Wants: Goals and Ambitions in Swedish Politics], ed. by Daniel Tarschys and Marja Lemne (Möklinta: Gidlund, 2013) pp. 281–346; Lundgren, *The State and Nature 1*.

²⁰ L.J. Lundgren, *Environmental Politics*.

²¹ Erik Erlandson-Hammargren, *Från alpromantik till hembygdsromantik: Natursynen i Sverige från 1885 till 1915* [From Alpine Romance to Local Romanticism: The View of Nature in Sweden from 1885 to 1915] (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2006).

Table 2

Identified discursive displacements.

Discursive Displacements
<i>The Non-Human World as Background and Foreground: Conservation without Accumulation (1870–1909)</i>
<i>The Non-Human World as Ideological Foreground and Raw Material (1910–1939)</i>
<i>The Non-Human World as a Realm of Social Reproduction (1940–1979)</i>
<i>The Non-Human World as a Resource of Critical Self Reflection (1980–1999)</i>
<i>The Non-Human World as Commodified Foreground: Conservation by Accumulation (2000–2021)</i>

whole period, this pattern and the comprehensive representational content of the yearbooks become visible.

We carried out two parallel analyses, which we subsequently merged to identify representational patterns in tourism mediations and conservation policies. While the policy documents until the 1980s mostly contain textual material, photographs illustrated the yearbooks from the start.²² More than decorations, such imagery offered insights to norms and knowledge, adding additional layers of meaning to the texts.²³ Through our discursive analysis of these documents, we identified two preliminary sets of parallel time periods (Table 1).

The tentative periodization allowed us to identify five discursive displacements — significant transformations in the discursive constructions of the non-human world (Table 2).²⁴ These will be teased out in more detail below.

The non-human world as background and foreground: conservation without accumulation (1870–1909)

By the late nineteenth century, the non-human world featured heavily as a background condition for industrialization in Sweden: a resource for the capitalist economy, and a factor of production for profit-driven agriculture, forestry, and mining. In one of the first documented proposals for the creation of national parks (1880), explorer and politician Adolph-Erik Nordenskiöld contemplated the rapid transformation of this background condition:

Day by day, nature all around us is increasingly affected by the great inventions of the past century. The most peripheral countryside will soon be crossed by railroads and telegraphs;

²² All translations from original Swedish sources are by the authors.

²³ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019); Nika Balomenou and Brian Garrod, 'Photographs in Tourism Research: Prejudice, Power, Performance and Participant-Generated Images', *Tourism Management* 70 (2019) 201–217.

²⁴ Our use of the concept of discursive displacements is inspired by Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

sawmills and all sorts of other workshops are being built in the wilderness and gather a large population in ancient backwoods; ever since farming has been grounded on scientific principles, the farmer's labor is rewarded with an abundant return, even where the land was previously regarded useless; lakes are lowered, bogs and mires are drained, forests felled, new forest parks planted, and old growth forest will soon be seen as a clear sign of poor forest management, just like natural meadows signal poor meadow management, and swidden signals poor agriculture.²⁵

For Nordenskiöld, the large-scale mobilization of modern science and technology in the countryside had reached a critical juncture demanding a political response by setting aside remaining pieces of 'wilderness'. Symptomatic of the era's bourgeois conviction, it touted a shift in the scientific approach to nature and its ideological framing, not a radical critique of capitalism's social and ecological crisis tendencies. Contemporary reforestation legislation confirmed the importance of applying a more scientific approach to forest management to counter overexploitation of an increasingly privatized non-human world, while securing a steady flow of timber resources into the economy remained the central motif. At the same time, the outdoors came to serve an ideological cause, invoking a sense of common identity and Swedishness, culturally rooted in the landscape, and constituting a seemingly classless antidote to the era's social troubles and instability.²⁶ The rise of nature conservation, cultural heritage preservation, the tourism movement, and the artistic turn to the Swedish landscape, were thus different yet related expressions of national romantic ideology around the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁷

Early tourism, primarily engaging elites interested in science, importantly confirmed the national romantic view through travelogues in the STA yearbooks. Yet, making remote parts of the country accessible to the general public was also part of the agenda. The STA regularly reported on accessibility investments that had been made in the 'wilderness', including overnight cottages and trails along with other initial signs of tourist commodification. The northern landscapes of Sweden conveyed through representations of mountain ranges and waterfalls, gained a particular attraction by association with experiences of 'wilderness characteristics' and a focus on the sublime. Recurrent references to wilderness confirmed a bifurcated vision that allowed for the existence of a non-human world outside the world of human affairs.²⁸ Sublime features — nature appearing as at once dreaded and pleasurable, terrifying, and beautiful — were conveyed by panoramic imagery. Numerous photographs in the yearbooks portrayed immense mountains, magnificent waterfalls and breathtaking landscapes gazed at by seemingly petite tourists. Commenting on the photograph reproduced here (Fig. 2), one author in the yearbook of 1889 warned:

The risk and difficulty involved in taking this photograph exhort me to issue a warning to those who visit large waterfalls and have limited awareness of their nerves. During earlier mountain

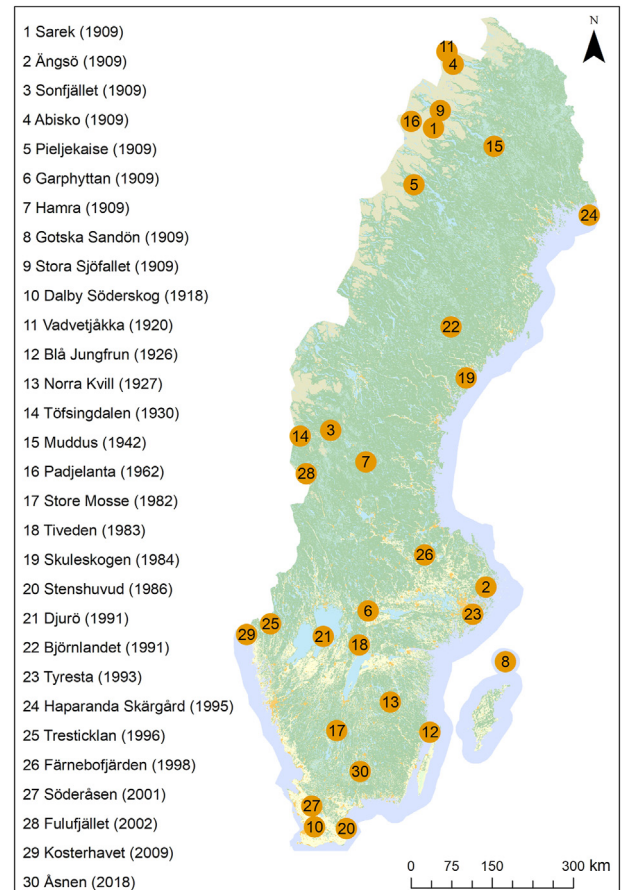
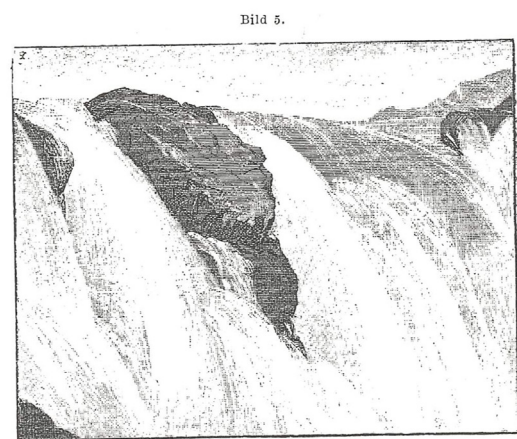


Fig. 1. Map of Sweden's 30 national parks with their names stated, geographical location, and year of establishment.



Detalj från Sjöfallet: Öfre delen af strålen i Hermelinsfallet.

Fig. 2. The white water created by the waterfall is a common feature of the sublime, which demonstrates the powerful forces that the water possesses. As the photographer Fredrik Svenonius describes, taking this photograph involved many risks and difficulties. This enforces the portrayal of the waterfall as powerful and grand — something also visible through the angle through which the photograph was taken. Svenonius' position in relation to the waterfall is slightly beneath its top, which makes it appear huge in comparison to him. This photograph was taken in an area that later became Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke National Park. The photo was taken by Fredrik Svenonius and published on page 14 of the yearbook from 1889.

²⁵ Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, 'Förslag till inrättande av Riksparker i de nordiska länderna' ['Proposal for the Creation of National Parks in the Nordic Countries'], *Per Brahes Minne 1680* [Per Brahes Memorial 1680] (1880), 1–16 (p. 10).

²⁶ Tom Mels, Nature, 'Home, and Scenery: The Official Spatialities of Swedish National Parks', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20 (2002) 135–154.

²⁷ Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890's* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

²⁸ Otto Sjögren, 'Abisko och utflykterna från Abiskostugan' ['Abisko and the Explorations from the Abisko Cabin'], in *STFs årskrift 1905* [STA's Yearbook of 1905], ed. by Mauritz Boheman (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand and Centraltryckeriet, 1905), p. 203–235.

travels, this author has sensed irresistible gravitation towards the seemingly silky soft deep, and on such occasions, it was imperative not to lose sight of the situation.²⁹

Representations of this kind were part of the contemporary artistic and adventurous fascination with the Swedish landscape, but more specifically evoked the non-human world as an inhospitable, sublime, and remote space where humans could only be temporary guests. Thus, the yearbook of 1905 suggested that whereas the wild could become increasingly accessible to humans, it was crucial to set limits to tourism in the national parks because the presence of people would disturb the wilderness character.³⁰ To experience both sublime and wild features, mountaineering was attributed to a unique explorer value — albeit certainly not suitable for all — holding the promise of magnificent vistas from mountain tops (Fig. 3). This activity thus combined the largely passive observation of panoramic views with an active immersion in the non-human world, through which mountaineers were supposed to get closer to Swedish nature, their travel companions, and their individual selves (see Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Four mountaineering tourists gazed at grand mountain vistas in a place that was later included in Abisko National Park. This photograph showcases representations of the coveted wilderness character, with no visible human presence besides the tourists. It also illustrates sublime features, with the grand mountains stretching away from the tourists. The photo was taken by O. Sjögren and published in STA's yearbook from the year of 1907.

These developments, combining national romanticism and tourism, destabilized in some respects the ontological status of nature as a background condition. They helped maneuver the non-human world as an organic space of the nation, into the ideological foreground. With parliamentary deliberation initiated in 1904, an intense search for concrete spaces, species, and objects for conservation, the promulgation of the National Park Act of 1909, and the ensuing establishment of the nine national parks in the same year, it became an ideology materialized.³¹ The conservation project was motivated by two fundamental sets of goals, one often referred to as 'idealistic' and one 'scientific'. Although the *scientific*



Fig. 4. The sublime and wild features are accompanied by the presence of natural science. Here, a participant in a scientific journey to the mountains of the northern parts of Sweden can be seen posing in front of the mountains in Sarek National Park. The photograph was published in a travelogue written by a scientist in 1929 and taken by D. Nygren.

goal partly emanated from a concern with deforestation, the draining of wetlands, and the disappearance of species and habitats, it brought out three utilitarian arguments: to secure the availability of a natural historical record for scientists; to advance rational forest management; and to support educational purposes.³² The *idealistic* goal, harnessing nature in the service of national romantic sentiments, embodied the state's duty to protect 'pristine' parts of the non-human world for aesthetic patriotic experiences of outdoor recreation and tourism. Hence, despite the common focus on limiting human influence, 'scientific research and the facilitation of travels and lodging' could be permitted in regulations for individual parks, as long as they did not counteract conservation goals.³³

A national park, more exactly, would have 'a dual character', encompassing not only 'natural curiosities,' but also qualifying as 'an outstanding tourist area'.³⁴ Central to this vision was to retain a wilderness character, keeping nature untrammelled by human influence. At this time, many of the places that later were designated as national parks had already been widely covered in the STA yearbooks, including Abisko, Garphyttan, Pieljekaise, Sarek, and Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke. Although the yearbooks remained surprisingly silent about conservation issues throughout the early period, the STA's representational practices arguably contributed to turning these areas into self-evident candidates for the new park system.

Notwithstanding the common alignment of tourism and conservation toward the non-human world and the sphere of reproduction, troubling inconsistencies remained. How could the non-

²⁹ Fredrik Svenonius, 'Stora Sjöfallet, Ädna Muorki Kårtje', in STFs årsskrift 1889 [The STA's Yearbook of 1889] (Stockholm: The Swedish Tourist Association, 1889), pp. 7–20 (p. 12–13).

³⁰ Otto Sjögren, Abisko and the Explorations from the Abisko Cabin.

³¹ Svensk författarsamling, Lag angående nationalparker 1909:102 [National Park Act 1909:102] (Riksdagsbiblioteket, shelf mark: refbi Gallerskåp 4 (1825–1850), Hylla 5 (1851–2018:159) 01 (Ex. Ref).

³² Rutger Sernander, 'Naturminnesmärken och nationalparker' ['Natural Monuments and National Parks'] (Uppsala: Uppsala Nya Tidning, 1904); Hugo Conwentz and Karl Starbäck, Naturskydd och industri: Två föredrag [Nature Conservation and Industry: Two Presentations] (Stockholm: Centraltryckeriet, 1915), p. 27–40.

³³ Svensk författarsamling, National Park Act, p. 10.

³⁴ Améen, Lönnberg, and Starbäck, *Committee Report on Measures to Protect our Country's Nature and Natural Monuments*, p. 47.

human world be treated as a background condition for capital, as raw material, while simultaneously conscripting the natural landscape into the ideological foreground? After all, the exploitative energies of the former could rescind the ostensibly stable common ground of the latter. To avoid potential boundary struggles that could challenge capitalist development, early policymaking was based on geographical principles that could be described as ‘conservation without accumulation’.³⁵

The national parks inaugurated, as argued above, a strict division between a natural realm — conceived as unproduced non-human wilderness — and an economic realm in which capitalist development was prioritized. The solution materialized geographically by the establishment of national parks on economically marginal state-owned land in the far north of the country. The attraction of this spatial strategy was that it simultaneously prepared a separate place for the realm of reproduction, thereby further entrenching a division — again emblematic of capitalism — between (the front story of) commodity production and (background conditions of) social reproductive activity.³⁶ Tourism development was also recognized as a potential source of income in national parks, but its primary appeal was social reproduction and socialization into a grounded nationalism of sorts. ‘Know your country!’ was the slogan of the early tourism movement, referring to a knowledge that would at once transcend class division, reinforce patriotism, and provide support for nature conservation.³⁷

The non-human world as ideological foreground and raw material (1910–1939)

From 1910 up until 1930, five new national parks were added to the system. Conservation added a distinctive dynamic to capitalism’s foreground and background relation in the decades that followed the opening of the first national parks. If early conservation advocacy emerged from a scientific and idealistic concern with deforestation, the draining of wetlands, and the disappearance of species and habitats, it surely showed the practical incongruity of treating the non-human world simply as a raw material for capitalist accumulation. Forest management laws emanated from the recognition that nature’s capacity to renew itself was, in fact, a necessary background condition for accumulation. It unveiled the capacity of capitalist production to destroy the very natural background conditions of its possibility.³⁸ With the aid of tourism and outdoor recreation, conservation maneuvered the non-human world into the ideological foreground. Yet such foregrounding had to be handled with care not to challenge the principle of the non-human world’s free availability for appropriation and industrial progress. Early conservation policies, including national park formation, secured a geographical place where its ideological foregrounding could be allowed and celebrated by tourists.

The yearbooks continued their celebration of the sublime beauty and grandeur of Swedish nature in the nine newly established national parks, with the familiar vistas of mountains and waterfalls. For a proper judgment of the parks and their non-human world, the

natural sciences retained a privileged position, assigning scientists the role of interpreters for the general audience. The authority of science and scientists was central to the selection of national parks, and it kept representational force through the yearbooks too. When celebrating the geographer and mineralogist Axel Hamberg in 1922, the STA confirmed the significance of scientific efforts in making spaces available to tourism. The professor’s trailblazing work for the disclosure of Sarek National Park notably stood out:

No one but professor Hamberg could provide a full image of this vast Swedish alpland — no one knows it like him, no one has hiked more trails or climbed more mountain tops there, no one has penetrated deeper into its peculiar world than him. In the early days of tourism, he roamed up there and worked as a pioneer to disclose the Swedish mountains.³⁹

Contrary to the previous period, the STA framed itself as deeply immersed in the cause of nature conservation, now perceiving itself as a central driving force. In the yearbooks, it met the new park system with outspoken approval as the most significant conservation feat of the time and emphasized the strong connection between the tourism movement and the nature conservation movement: ‘one of STA’s greatest and most patriotic tasks would be to pave the way to nature with its outdoor life and attractions’ since ‘that is the most fundamental rationale for the nature conservation movement’.⁴⁰ The association lobbied for more accessibility initiatives that would enable tourists to visit the parks, while not losing sight of the conservation concern. For example, the positive impact of parks was frequently mentioned, including the increasing brown bear population in Sonfjället National Park.⁴¹ As the STA found a more active voice in conservation, travel for leisure rather than scientific purposes became more noticeable in the yearbooks. Fascination with the far north persisted while the national park status was seen to attract tourists on a quest to experience wild natural conditions.

Notwithstanding STA’s portrayals of tourism as a bridge between humans and the non-human world, and as a practice that could promote nature conservation, the association simultaneously entrenched the boundary between culture and nature, portraying ‘civilized’ humans as antithetical to the ‘wild’ non-human world: ‘Our country still has a relative abundance of natural monuments that are worthwhile to conserve, but culture is encroaching steadily, and it is increasingly challenging to discern original nature’.⁴² The non-human world was considered ‘fragile’ and, following standard conservation logic, in need of refuge from humanity. Repeating earlier representational themes, wilderness characteristics merged with the sublime through portrayals of tourists roaming alone or in small groups ‘out in the wild’ — in landscapes devoid of company or signs of capitalist modernity (Fig. 5).

This ontological division was contested and fraught with difficulties and contradictions. From different angles, both the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature and the STA questioned the remote locations of national parks. While accessibility arguments were increasingly on the agenda, a key government report

³⁵ Tom Mels, ‘The Deep Historical Geography of Environmental Justice: Accumulation, Conservation and National Park Planning in Sweden’, *Annales de Géographie* 736 (2020) 31–54.

³⁶ Mitchell, Marston and Katz, ‘Life’s Work’, p. 2; Fraser, ‘Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode’, pp. 61–62.

³⁷ Selim Birger, ‘Naturskydds rörelsen i Sverige’ [‘The Nature Conservation Movement in Sweden’], in *STFs årskrift 1912* [The STA’s Yearbook of 1912], ed. by Ezaline Boheman (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand with Centraltryckeriet, 1912), pp. 129–145.

³⁸ Mels, ‘The Deep Historical Geography of Environmental Justice’.

³⁹ Carl Julius Anrick, ‘Sarekfjällen — Axel Hamberg’ [‘The Sarek Mountains — Axel Hamberg’], in *STFs Årsskrift 1922* [The STA’s Yearbook of 1922], ed. by Ezaline Boheman (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand with Centraltryckeriet, 1922), pp. 364–365.

⁴⁰ Birger, ‘The Nature Conservation Movement in Sweden’, p. 130.

⁴¹ Th. Arwidsson, ‘I Sänfjälls björnarnas spår’ [‘In the Tracks of the Bears of Sänfjället’], in *STFs årskrift: Härjedalen 1931* [The STA’s Yearbook: Härjedalen 1931], ed. by Carl Fries (Stockholm: Centraltryckeriet, 1931), pp. 309–311.

⁴² Birger, ‘The Nature Conservation Movement in Sweden’, p. 133.

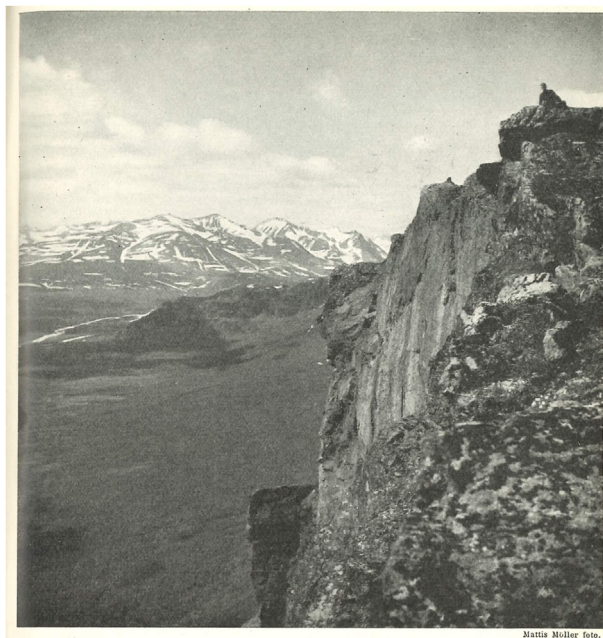


Fig. 5. A person sitting alone on a mountain top, with no signs of other humans or signs of modernity. This photograph illustrates how representations of the sublime and wilderness characteristics worked together, where the grand and breathtaking met the pristine and original — photo taken by Mattis Möller foto, published in STA's yearbook of 1939.

criticized how accessibility arguments had been promulgated in the selection of parks, such as Abisko National Park.⁴³ The problem was that particular types of tourists and associated commercial development risked ruining the wilderness ideal: 'Although we cannot and should not demand splendid isolation of a national park, not least considering that it is Sweden's perhaps most scenic area, and it should be open to everyone who appreciates the wilderness life, it would of course be painful if this area would lose the essence of its wilderness atmosphere due to a massive invasion of the ordinary tourist crowd'.⁴⁴ Yet the STA, which lobbied for making the parks more accessible, assured that it shared 'with every nature lover an interest in the conservation of the wilderness character of the national parks; the association has never had, and will never have, any intention to infringe upon the latter'.⁴⁵

Compared to tourists, Sámi presence and reindeer herding in the parks were officially considered neither an expression of capitalist modernity (let alone as property owners with entrepreneurial interests) nor a threat to the wilderness ideal. Left voiceless in planning, as 'primitive' subjects, this was part of a long history of Sámi repression in Sweden.⁴⁶ It seemed that only with national

parks materially located on state land, and the Sámi discursively construed as a 'natural' element in the landscape, the logic of non-interference with private property and the nature–modernity divide could be sustained.

Further contradictions to the wilderness ideal emerged. Invasive species altered ecologies in abandoned meadows, predators were threatening the Sámi reindeer economy, and incidences of industrial water pollution all defied nature as wilderness and called for new regulations.⁴⁷ An even more far-reaching challenge to the wilderness characteristics was presented by mining and hydro-power development. After a revision of the National Park Act, the government could allow 'particular interests' to take precedence over the park status, opening up the possibility of mining.⁴⁸ Whereas this move never gained momentum, the development of hydropower had already left its mark, as in the stepwise expansion into Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke National Park and Sámi grazing lands between 1919 and 1971.⁴⁹ What these instances show is that the division between capitalist modernity in Sweden and the wild non-human world of the national parks almost instantly mutated, with the contested commodification through mining and hydro-power as active forces. All while tourism commodification remained largely uncontested.

The non-human world as a realm of social reproduction (1940–1979)

In the decades following these discussions on location, access, and wilderness, urban and regional planning in Sweden was increasingly engrossed in welfare state development. Only two new areas (Muddus/Muttos in 1942 and Padjelanta/Badjelánnda in 1962) were added to the Swedish national park system, indicating that government priorities lay elsewhere. There were nonetheless tangible shifts in political discourse, as was evident from the lengthy discussions around Muddus/Muttos. Disagreement about the economic value of mineral and timber resources in the area were familiar enough, but the Muddus/Muttos controversy was also fundamentally about social reproduction. This was most eloquently encapsulated by social democrat Oscar Lövgren, who regarded the national park issue as 'a question of rights and justice', notably concerning access to resources for 'the poor locals' in the towns and the Sámi.⁵⁰ For him, sustaining the Sámi people's means of subsistence was a more crucial issue than reserving a massive space (almost 50,000 ha), primarily for scientific research. With reference to official accounts, he argued that the threat of displacement was looming large. The controversy can be seen as a prelude to a gradually broadening attention to public access and social reproduction that would inform the postwar period.

When the new Nature Conservation Act defined national parks as 'particular types of landscapes in their natural or largely unaltered state,' it certainly ingeminated the importance of the 'wilderness tradition' that emerged during previous decades.⁵¹ The

⁴³ SOU 1935:26, Betänkande med förslag rörande det svenska naturskyddets organisation och statliga förvaltning [Committee Report with Proposals Concerning the Organization and State Administration of Swedish Nature Conservation], Stockholm, 1935. SOU official reports are available at Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm, Shelf mark: RefKB 320.9485 1922–1998 (Ex:A); Cf. Thor Högdahl, Naturskydd i Sverige [Nature Conservation in Sweden] (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1910).

⁴⁴ SOU 1935:26, [Committee Report with Proposals Concerning the Organization and State Administration of Swedish Nature Conservation], p. 73.

⁴⁵ The Board of the STA, 'Turistföreningen och nationalparkerna' ['The Tourist Association and the National Parks'], in STF's årskrift 1928 [The STA's Yearbook of 1928], ed. by Ezaline Boheman (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand with Centraltryckeriet, 1928), pp. 266–292 (p. 271).

⁴⁶ Tore Andersson Hjulman, Ett med naturen: en studie av hur naturen omförhandlades i mellankrigstidens konflikter mellan naturskydd och samiska rättigheter [One with Nature: A Study of how Nature was Renegotiated in the Interwar Conflicts between Nature Conservation and Sámi Rights] (Luleå: Luleå University of Technology, 2017).

⁴⁷ Mels, *Wild Landscapes*.

⁴⁸ Svensk författningssamling 1945:312, Lag om ändrad lydelse av 3§ lagen den 25 juni 1909 (nr 56 s. 7) angående nationalparker [Act Amending Section 3 of the National Parks Act of 25 June 1909 (No. 56 p. 7)] (Stockholm: 1945).

⁴⁹ Tore Abrahamsson, 'Till minne av Stora Sjöfallet' ['In Memory of Stora Sjöfallet'], in STF's årskrift 1975 [The STA's Yearbook of 1975], ed. by Olof Thaning (Stockholm: Nacka: Esselte Herzogs, 1975), pp. 274–312.

⁵⁰ Andra kammarens förhandlingar 1942:12, Ävsättande till nationalpark av viss de av det s.k. Muddusområdet i Norrbottens län, 95 [Proceedings of the Second Chamber 1942:12: Establishment of a National Park in a part of the so-called Muddus area in Norrbotten County]. Available at <https://weburn.kb.se/riks/metadata/08/19568908.html>, last accessed on 4 June 2024.

⁵¹ SOU 1951:5, Förslag till naturskydds lag m.m. betänkande [Proposal for a Nature Conservation Act, etc. Report], Stockholm: 1951, p. 2.

Swedish national parks differed in that sense from those in the US, where, as a Swedish government inquiry observed, ‘outdoor recreation mainly occurs in the national parks’ and where multiple services were provided for visitors, including ‘parking and lodging facilities, access to guides, campfires, marked hiking trails, rental horses and boats’.⁵² However, the act also incorporated notions of social needs and the right of public access, introducing nature parks (*naturparker*) as a means of preserving natural areas while serving the interest of outdoor recreation.⁵³ This link between nature and social reproduction was strengthened further in a pathbreaking government inquiry on nature conservation, now also deploring that ‘protected areas are mostly remnants, left unexploited owing to their remoteness and limited economic value’.⁵⁴

State-managed capitalism invented several new ways to dissolve the contradictions between nature as a commodified resource for capital and the struggle to ensure the integrity of natural processes and social reproduction. One of them was to enroll state power on the side of social reproduction and environment, now increasingly organized around largely social democratic planning principles of materializing access to outdoor spaces. The rise of municipal leisure planning (*fritidsplanering*) in the 1960s and 1970s affirmed a significant reorientation from the sublime and wild to a more mundane yet highly ambitious policy concern with outdoor recreation and public health in urbanized society.⁵⁵ With rapid urbanization and the construction of residential spaces, a novel view of the landscape took shape in which national parks, like other conservation areas, were credited for their ‘increasing importance for public outdoor leisure’, while also providing ‘valuable contributions to securing a continued open access to spaces for outdoor recreation’.⁵⁶

The predominantly ‘scientific and aesthetic nature conservation’ of the past had now been exchanged for ‘preservation of natural areas to serve a public seeking opportunities for recreation and to avoid harmful effects of urban and industrial waste’.⁵⁷ Much of this maintained the ontological divide between capitalist production and its social reproductive and natural background.⁵⁸ Throughout the 1960s, however, these developments also reframed nature conservation and national parks as part of a far wider environmental concern. Following new conservation legislation in 1964 and the establishment of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (henceforth SEPA) in 1967, nature reserves rapidly came to dominate the conservation efforts of the county administrative boards.⁵⁹ Paralleling the postwar move to plan for everyday public green spaces, questions



Fig. 6. The yearbooks within this discursive displacement contained several photographs of bears, accompanied by encouragements for tourists to try to find and observe them. Those encouragements certainly framed the bears as touristic attractions. This photograph was taken by Konrad Nordström and published in STA’s yearbook of 1959. Its positioning of the bear around the center frames the animal as the front figure, once again portraying it as a touristic attraction. The sublime and wild features from the previously presented photographs are also portrayed through massive views and little human presence but here, the wild is reinforced by the presence of the bear.

of access and recreation, and environmental health, the STA’s fascination with sublimity and wilderness seemed to dwindle somewhat.

The yearbooks certainly shifted attention away from nature conservation and national parks, with only a handful of articles on the topic published. However, the few articles that did focus on national parks continued to depict them as a wild and sublime, now increasingly emphasizing the observation of wildlife as a mode of bringing tourists closer to wilderness and, at least momentarily, further away from the foreground of civilization. As somewhat of a precursor to modern nature-based tourism, the STA occasionally argued that a visit to national parks would not be complete if the tourists failed to see certain animal species.⁶⁰ A series of illustrated articles about the brown bear in Sonfjället National Park, notably in the yearbooks of 1959 and 1977, usefully exemplifies this (Fig. 6). These insisted on the importance of the national park status for the bear population, while at the same time challenging tourists to spot one of these wild and ‘hard to find animals’ during their visits (see Fig. 7).

While visual consumption of the non-human world, including wildlife observation, remained pivotal, hiking was also increasingly represented as a modern tourist mode of exploring the wild while escaping the city. In contrast to the previous displacement, few

⁵² SOU 1957:41, *Idrotten och samhället: betänkande om statens stöd åt idrott och friluftsliv* [Sport and Society: Report on State Support for Sports and Outdoor Life], Stockholm: 1957, p. 242.

⁵³ SOU 1951:5, *Proposal for a Nature Conservation Act, etc. Report*.

⁵⁴ SOU 1962:36, *Naturen och samhället: Betänkande angivet av 1960 års naturvårdsutredning* [Nature and Society: Committee Report on the Nature Conservation Inquiry of 1960], Stockholm: 1962, p. 111.

⁵⁵ Ingemar Ahlström, ‘Utomhus i konsumtionssamhället’ [‘Outdoors in Consumer Society’], in *Friluftshistoria: från “härdande friluftsliv” till ekoturism och miljöpedagogik* [Outdoor History: From “Hardening Outdoor Life” to Ecotourism and Environmental Pedagogy], ed. by Klas Sandell and Sverker Sörlin (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2008), pp. 168–185; Lars Emmelin, *Planera för friluftsliv: Natur, samhälle, upplevelser* [Planning for Outdoor Life: Nature, Society, Experiences] (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2010).

⁵⁶ SOU 1965:19, *Friluftslivet i Sverige Del II: Friluftslivet i samhällsplaneringen* [Outdoor Life in Sweden Part II: Outdoor Life in Urban and Regional Planning], Stockholm: 1965, pp. 158 and 169.

⁵⁷ Carl Malmström, ‘Det svenska naturskyddets historia’ [‘The History of Swedish Nature Conservation’], (Uppsala: Svensk Tidskrift, 1962), p. 98.

⁵⁸ Cf. Katz and Kirby, ‘In the Nature of Things’, p. 264.

⁵⁹ The Swedish Department of Environment, *Naturvårdsplan 1964:822* [Nature Conservation Act 1964:822], Stockholm, 1964; SEPA, *Planering för friluftsliv* [Planning for Outdoor Life] (Stockholm: 1971).

⁶⁰ Giovanna Bertella, ‘Experiencing Nature in Animal-Based Tourism’, *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* 14 (2016) 22–26; Stephanie Rutherford, *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).



Fig. 7. This photograph captures much of the typical representational style of the current discursive displacement, with an alone hiking tourist immersed in and gazing at sublime and wild sceneries. The photograph was published in STA's yearbook of 2012. Copyright: Lars Thulin.

tourists were visible in the photographs of this period. However, the yearbooks retained the sublime theme of the non-human world as a dangerous 'other' to culture and safety, underlining that hiking was something that only experienced tourists should endeavor, thereby reiterating the unpredictability and potential dangers of the wild. In the yearbook from 1959, an author cited a 'forest man' who explained that the mountain area in Sonfjället National Park was both 'wicked', 'dangerous', and 'really terrifying' but also 'beautiful', 'enchanted', and 'appealing'.⁶¹ The bears were also invoked as a sign of the sublime and wild: like the wilderness landscape with the solitary hiker, they were represented as at once beautiful and dangerous, imposing feelings of admiration and fear.

Representations of the national parks as unique and extraordinary alternated with a renewed attention to the ingrained nature–culture dichotomy. On the one hand, the park status was desirable for places like Store Mosse. With reference to natural science and breeding bird populations, the 1968 yearbook proposed to turn the peatland into a national park: 'It is of the utmost importance that Store Mosse, which has no equivalent in southern Sweden, is allowed to forever retain its virtually untouched wilderness character'.⁶² On the other hand, one

of the existing national parks, the Ängsö meadows, was criticized for being a cultural product rather than genuine nature. Cases like these illustrate the continuous belief in strictly separating 'wild' nature from culture.⁶³

The non-human world as a resource of critical self reflection (1980–1999)

After several decades of rather scant attention to national parks in the yearbooks, when the focus was directed more towards other Swedish tourism destinations, nature conservation and tourism questions reappeared forcefully in the 1980s. Articles discussing nature conservation and national parks abounded, frequently insisting on the longstanding importance of the non-human world as the STA's primary resource, hence reiterating an interest shared with the nature conservation movement. At its centennial (1986) the association asked:

What have our hundred years of interaction between nature conservation and tourism amounted to? Right from the beginning, it was a happy relationship between pioneers who shared the same ideals. We will get to know this lovely garden and preserve it largely unchanged for future generations. The tourists practice the right of public access. Their partners, the nature conservationists, request enhancing public information on the right of public access, especially for city-dwellers who have lost everyday contact with nature, and for foreigners who lack the tradition.⁶⁴

The association remained confident about its own contributions, including efforts to get more people to experience the non-human world. In this context, both movements were portrayed in the yearbooks as assuming public responsibility for social reproduction, not least as resources of normativity, teaching tourists to behave properly in the national parks.

Notwithstanding this, a remarkable amount of critique was leveled against tourism as a practice, not least concerning what was described as negligent visitors. Experience showed that tourism could have negative impacts on natural areas, calling for stricter regulations and adjustments.⁶⁵ The STA hence practiced critical self-reflectivity, now problematizing the activities of tourism with reference to environmental harm. Motorized mobility and littering were specifically targeted and contrasted with the earlier dominance of accessibility arguments.⁶⁶ The case against cars signaled a greening of national park tourism, but it simultaneously manifested a certain degree of elitism, reserving exclusive access to hikers. Adding to the accessibility question was a novel debate about entrance fees to generate revenue for nature conservation.⁶⁷ The yearbooks failed to offer detailed considerations of how fees could affect accessibility, and it was clear that such measures went against the grain of official policies. However, the idea of charging entry fees confirmed the touristic quality of the non-human world and prefigured its reinvention as a tourist commodity.

Developments in state policy making to an important extent paralleled the reflective moments concerning tourism and

⁶³ Keri Cronin, *Manufacturing National Park Nature: Photography, Ecology, and the Wilderness Industry of Jasper* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Rutherford, *Governing the Wild*.

⁶⁴ Sven Wahlberg, 'Turism och naturskydd' ['Tourism and Nature Conservation'], in Svenska turistföreningen 100 år: Årsskrift 1986 [The Swedish Tourist Association 100 Years: Yearbook of 1986], ed. by Halvar Sehlin (Stockholm: Esselte Herzogs, 1986), pp. 231–252 (p. 251).

⁶⁵ Wahlberg, *Tourism and Nature Conservation*.

⁶⁶ Wahlberg, *Tourism and Nature Conservation*.

⁶⁷ Wahlberg, *Tourism and Nature Conservation*.

⁶¹ Hans Lidman, 'Hemma hos Sänfjällsbjörnarna' ['In the realm of the Sänfjället Bears'], in STF's årsskrift 1959: Skogen [The STA's Yearbook of 1959: The Forest], ed. by Olof Thaning (Stockholm: Svenska Turistföreningens Förlag, 1959), pp. 260–272 (p. 261).

⁶² Göran Svensson, 'Store mosse', in STF's årsbok 1968: Småland [The STA's Yearbook of 1968: Småland], ed. by Olof Thaning (Stockholm: Esselte AB, 1968), pp. 73–88 (p. 88).

education discussed in the yearbooks, and they found their key expression in the National Park Plan of 1989.⁶⁸ The long-term strategic plan advised a fairly expansive reconsideration of the park system, proposing a more than a threefold extension of national park space (from six thousand to twenty thousand square kilometers), backed up by a considerable increase of state funding. Throughout the 1990s, no less than ten new national parks were inaugurated (one third of the current system), most of which were in the southern parts of the country. Their location was hardly accidental, tying into the aforementioned leisure and greenspace accessibility debate within Swedish planning. Rather than confirming the critical self-reflection of the STA, the SEPA was more inclined to intensify attention to touristic audiences. Around a decade after the centennial of the STA, the SEPA published 'Swedish Nature Conservation 100 Years,' confirming the role of tourism in nature conservation:

Tourism is our new basic industry. Protected areas often offer extraordinary nature and outdoor experiences – here, anyone who wants to can enjoy serene, spacious, species-rich and wild nature. Protected areas often become natural attractions that provide PR for Sweden, for the country, the municipality, and the area. In Europe, Sweden is known for its unexploited nature, and protected areas play an important role in the marketing of Sweden as a tourist country. Tourism in Sweden has a greater economic export value than, for example, the export of iron and steel or passenger cars.⁶⁹

After renewed attention in the 1980s, the yearbooks of the 1990s show a waning interest in discussing national parks, tourism, and nature conservation. Exceptions were a critical reexamination of the Swedish hydropower development (mentioning Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorke National Park), and an article about a hiking trail (presenting Söderåsen National Park as an attraction).⁷⁰ This may seem surprising given the intensified planning efforts of the time, but it arguably did not signal a general trend of decreasing public attention to national parks – quite to the contrary. In an official inquiry, the state insisted that essentially all of the nation's national parks and nature reserves were 'of great importance to outdoor recreation'.⁷¹

From the late 1980s, the SEPA itself took on a more active role in creating an audience for its efforts by publishing lavishly illustrated coffee table books such as 'National Parks in Sweden: Europe's Last Wilderness'.⁷² In hindsight, these books may be seen as portents of a more commodified vision of national park politics. In a wider context, they signal a steady move towards neoliberalization of policy making in the 1990s, instigated by a longstanding questioning of the welfare state and experiences of economic crisis.⁷³

⁶⁸ SEPA, Nationalparksplan för Sverige [National Park Plan for Sweden] (Solna: Statens naturvårdsverk, 1989).

⁶⁹ SEPA, Svenskt naturskydd 100 år [Swedish Nature Conservation 100 Years] (Stockholm: 1999), p. 6.

⁷⁰ Per Stymne, 'Norrländsk vattenkraft' [The Hydropower of Norrland], in STFs årskrift 1993: Norrlands älvar [The STA's Yearbook of 1993: The Rivers of Norrland], ed. by Ulf Johansson (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell tryckeri, 1993), pp. 42–61; Solveig Ståhl, 'Till fots på Skåneleden' [On Foot Along Skåneleden], STFs årskrift 1996: Skåne [The STA's Yearbook of 1996: Skåne], ed. by Hans Bauer (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell Tryckeri, 1995) pp. 177–194.

⁷¹ SOU 1983:45, Turist-och rekreationspolitiska utredningen del II: Om förutsättningar och hinder [The Tourism and Recreation Policy Inquiry Part II: On Conditions and Obstacles], Stockholm: 1983, 113.

⁷² SEPA, *National Parks in Sweden. Europe's Last Wilderness* (Solna: Statens naturvårdsverk, 1987); SEPA, *Nationalparkerna i Sverige* [National Parks in Sweden] (Stockholm: SEPA, 1997).

⁷³ Jenny Andersson, 'A Model of Welfare Capitalism?' In *The Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics*, ed. by Jon Pierre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.563–577 (p. 569).

The non-human world as commodified foreground: Conservation by accumulation (2000–2021)

If there were some hesitant initial indications of a more visitor-friendly, even tourism-oriented regulatory moment at the time of the 'National Park Plan,' this was fully developed in the government communication 'A Comprehensive Nature Conservation Policy'.⁷⁴ The latter recommended a revision of the park plan, eventually leading to the adoption of a new, long-term, 'National Park Plan for Sweden' in 2008.⁷⁵ Continuing the accessibility focus of the 1980s, the vision was to increase the park system with thirteen new locations and expand several existing national parks. Apart from the more familiar arguments about the nationwide distribution of the parks and the ambition of the system to represent different ecosystem types, the new regulatory moment differed from earlier ones in its unabashed focus on marketing efforts.

Following the most recent National Park Plan, a largescale campaign was set in motion to promote the parks as an attraction, relying on a completely new strategy for brand management: the national parks were now reinterpreted as spaces in the experience economy, competing with other tourist attractions in that nook of the global economy. Attracting visitors to the national parks was identified as the central goal of this strategy, with the idea that every visit would serve an auxiliary role as an opportunity to promote the cause of conservation.⁷⁶ The brand management maneuver signaled a political intention to revise earlier bans against commercial activity in the national parks.⁷⁷ In stark contrast to the extensive concern with accessibility to green space of the 1960s, recent government bills and policy reports reinvented national park space as 'a driver of regional and local development'.⁷⁸ This was soon also tangible in SEPA reports:

The goal of protecting nature as a reserve or national park is to cherish and nurture particularly valuable areas in the long-term. This protection shall also guarantee the availability of great nature experiences – today and in the future. [...] Protected areas that are also attractive for outdoor recreation, tourism and hospitality, contribute to local development as they provide local entrepreneurs the opportunity to offer their services.⁷⁹

In contrast to decades of consensus around accessibility, the right of public access and limitations to commercial developments were increasingly perceived as more than just prerequisites for outdoor recreation: they could now also constitute impediments to

⁷⁴ The Swedish Government, En samlad naturvårdspolitik, prop. 2001:02:173 [A Comprehensive Nature Conservation Policy, 2001:02:173] (Stockholm: 2001).

⁷⁵ Rolf Löfgren, Nationalparksplan för Sverige: Långsiktig plan [National Park Plan for Sweden: Longterm Plan] (Stockholm: SEPA, 2008).

⁷⁶ Mels, 'The Deep Historical Geography of Environmental Justice'.

⁷⁷ SEPA, Vår gemensamma identitet [Our Collective Identity] (Stockholm: SEPA, 2011); SEPA, Vår varumärkesstrategi [Our Branding Strategy] (Stockholm: SEPA, 2011); SEPA, Designplattform: En gemensam identitet för Sveriges nationalparker [Design Platform: A Common Identity for Sweden's National Parks] (Stockholm: SEPA, 2012). Publications available through <https://www.naturvardsverket.se/vagledning-och-stod/skyddad-natur/nationalparker-varumarkesarbete/>, last accessed on 4 June 2024.

⁷⁸ SEPA, Skyddad natur: En motor för regional och lokal utveckling, Rapport 5504 [Protected Nature: A Driver of Regional and Local Development, Report 5504] (Stockholm: SEPA, 2005); Cf. The Swedish Government, *Hållbart skydd av naturområden: Prop. 2008/09:214* [Sustainable Protection of Natural Areas: Prop. 2008/09:214] (Stockholm: 2009); The Swedish Government, *Framtidens Friluftsliv: Prop. 2009/10:238* [The Outdoor Life of the Future: Prop. 2009/10:238] (Stockholm: 2009).

⁷⁹ SEPA, Organiserat friluftsliv och naturturism i skyddad natur: Vägledning för förvaltare [Organized Outdoor Recreation and Nature-Based Tourism in Conservation areas: Guidance for Trustees] (Stockholm: SEPA, 2015), p. 3.

entrepreneurial opportunity.⁸⁰ To dissolve this conundrum, the conservative government urged the SEPA 'to make commercial activities possible' — a proposition that provoked considerable outrage among a number of key nongovernmental organizations, including the STA, but nevertheless resulted in the abolishment of permit requirements for commercial activities in sixteen parks by 2015.⁸¹

Following these policy trends, the STA yearbooks of the 2000s brought an intensified focus on national parks, now represented as 'nature's hall of fame', at once bringing out their individual characteristics and their offerings for tourism experiences.⁸² Outstanding scenic beauty and wilderness features were once again highlighted as core reasons for the park status, and tourists were invited to gaze at the grand sceneries of the non-human world. Sarek National Park was praised as the most beautiful national park of the Nordic countries, rewarding its tourists with one of Europe's most scenic views.⁸³

Portrayals of Swedish parks as 'Lovely places for everything and everyone' did not fully replace reminders that national parks ideally needed to retain their non-human status. The general director of SEPA was cited in 2008 as questioning the status of Ängsö and Garphyttan as national parks, owing to the strong cultural imprint on these landscapes.⁸⁴ Notwithstanding this, there was simultaneously a remarkable shift in the way human agency was envisioned.

Firstly, there was an insistence on human practices in the cause of conservation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, employees in the nature conservation sector were depicted as heroes working at the service of nature. They were described as 'park rangers', 'game wardens', 'knowledge sources', and 'the wilderness police'.⁸⁵ Yet more interestingly, the public (notably including tourists), was described as an important 'stakeholder group' endowed with a crucial force to spread the message of nature conservation and thereby engage a wider audience in the cause. Thus, tourists were no longer portrayed simply as visitors or potential destroyers of fragile nature, but as *guardians* of the conservation effort and powerful mouthpieces for the rationalities of conservation. This argument clearly echoed recent SEPA viewpoints.

Secondly, far greater attention was directed toward the experiential values that parks could offer tourists. Flora, fauna, and geology were seen as key experiential features, textually confirmed through the readily available lists of species and descriptions of noteworthy experiences, such as 'magnificent primeval forests', 'wild and desolate valleys', and 'dramatic, untouched and monumental wilderness'.⁸⁶ Accompanying earlier notions of remoteness,

the many initiatives to improve accessibility for all kinds of tourists was positively received by the STA. Simultaneously, the remoteness of areas like Sarek National Park, was also recognized as valuable and its inaccessibility 'a conscious strategy to save Sarek from becoming overly prearranged', which would weaken its wildness.⁸⁷ Examples like this, with a thematic variety of (in)accessibility and wildness, helped to retain the impression that national parks offered tourists a journey back in time and into a separate, non-human reality of sorts.

In rather sharp contrast to the critical reflections of the 1980s and 1990s, the shift toward accessibility also suggested a change in the perception of the tourism industry, now frequently appreciated for its positive relation to nature. For the STA, again following recent official policy developments, historical contemplation confirmed this. Looking back, the STA relishes its intimate relationship with the national parks, sharing with them a long history of overlapping interests. Looking forward, this relationship remains vital for the association and its quest to recognize new destinations.⁸⁸

Closing remarks

From the historical geography of official policy making and tourism representations analyzed in this paper, several empirical elaborations of Fraser's boundary struggles emerge. Amidst an overwhelming mobilization of nature as raw material, Swedish national parks took on a duplicitous ideological role in regulating the separation between capitalist modernity and the non-human world. In official policy making until the 1980s, the parks were state owned spaces of public governance regarded as sublime wilderness abodes where (commercial) tourism development would be firmly restricted. Notwithstanding the initial enthusiasm of integrating tourism in park planning, these features were confirmed through the representational repertoire of the STA for decades. The STA yearbooks helped establish a vision of national parks as pieces of a non-human world, avowedly separate from capitalist modernity in general, and production in particular. They thereby affirmed the institutional differentiation of public land and state power from private property and economic coercion.

With capitalist production out of the way, as it were, the whole practice of visiting national parks was more firmly embedded in the realm of social reproduction, notably to processes and capacities tied to experiences of the non-human world. The few tourists who visited the parks early on would reinvigorate themselves through activities that were carried out largely, though not entirely, outside the market. In all these respects, Swedish national park policy and tourism can be described in terms of what Fraser sees as the (non-marketized) 'background conditions' of capitalism: they were institutionalized on the side of the polity, reproduction, and the non-human, rather than that of the economy, production, and the human.⁸⁹ However, adding to other welfare state policies, much of twentieth-century national park planning in Sweden explicitly sought to counter the socially corrosive and self-destabilizing propensities of capitalist development. It thereby performed not simply as background conditions, but also entered the officially managed domain, as 'ideological foreground'.

⁸⁰ The Swedish Government, *The Outdoor Life of the Future*.

⁸¹ The Swedish Government, *Regleringsbrev för budgetåret 2012 avseende Naturvårdsverket M2012/177/S* [Appropriation Directions for the Financial Year 2012 Regarding SEPA M2012/177/S], (Stockholm: 2012); *Svensk författningssamling 1987:983, Nationalparksförordning* [Swedish National Park Ordinance], Stockholm: 1987.

⁸² Mats Ottosson, 'Nationalpark: Ny kurs vid Koster' ['National Park: A New Course at Koster'], in *Svenska parker: Sköna platser för allt och alla* [Swedish Parks: Nice Places for Everything and Everyone], ed. by Nina Wahlsten, Anders Tapper, and Märten Leo (Horsens: Stibo Graphic A/S, 2008), pp. 81–93 (p. 83).

⁸³ Åsa Lindstrand, 'Nationalpark: Sareks vakande ögon' ['National Park: Sarek's Watchful Eyes'], in *Svenska parker: Sköna platser för allt och alla* [Swedish Parks: Nice Places for Everything and Everyone], ed. by Nina Wahlsten, Anders Tapper, and Märten Leo (Horsens: Stibo Graphic A/S, 2008), pp. 106–119; Åsa Ottosson and Mats Ottosson, 'Pilgrimsled: Låt tankarna vandra' ['Pilgrim Trail: Let the Thoughts Wander'], in *Svenska leder: på äventyr i andras spår* [Swedish Trails: On Adventure in the Tracks of Others], ed. by Anders Tapper, (Horsens: Stibo Graphic A/S, 2011), pp. 118–131.

⁸⁴ Ottosson, 'National Park: A New Course at Koster', p. 83.

⁸⁵ Lindstrand, 'National Park: Sarek's Watchful Eyes', p. 108.

⁸⁶ Ottosson, 'National Park: A New Course at Koster', p. 83.

⁸⁷ Lindstrand, 'National Park: Sarek's Watchful Eyes', p. 109.

⁸⁸ Erling Matz 'På salta vindars vis' ['In the Way of Salty Winds'], in *Skärgårdslandet: Äventyr i svenska vatten* [The Archipelago Country: Adventures in Swedish Waters], ed. by Anders Tapper and Nina Wahlsten (Svenstrup: Nørhaven A/S, 2006), pp. 13–27 (p. 20–21).

⁸⁹ Fraser, 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode'.

To grasp national parks as resources of reproduction, nature, and political power was, as we have seen, a dominant theme in conservation policy and tourism alike. Yet, as suggested, this is no longer the whole story. Regional development through the promotion of nature-based tourism is increasingly considered a means to strengthen the case for conservation. Under the influence of intensified policy developments surrounding outdoor recreation, a modern environmental concern with biodiversity loss and climate change, but also reconsiderations of regional development and entrepreneurial initiatives, twenty-first century national parks have transcended their nineteenth-century national romantic legacy. From its erstwhile somewhat uneasy status, tourism has been reinvented as a principal driving force in national park policies. These shifting boundaries can be understood as an emergent commodification of the non-human world, installing a new regime of conservation by accumulation and tourism consumption, the representational practices of which can be felt not only in planning but also in a wealth of contemporary promotional materials.⁹⁰

On the one hand, these developments confirm the view that boundaries between capitalism's foreground and its background conditions of possibility are not settled once and for all but require historicization: they reveal constantly renegotiated configurations of conflict. On the other hand, following the discursive displacements of national parks identified in this paper—from the 'outside' of industrial resource exploitation in the nineteenth century, to the current condition of a more vigorously commodified 'inside' of society—it may seem increasingly challenging to 'counter the widely held view that capitalism propels the ever-increasing commodification of life as such'.⁹¹ The displacement rather seems to re-instantiate what Katz called 'the reproduction of nature as an accumulation strategy'.⁹²

Granted, the move from the tourist's reinvigoration to the experience industry and regional development; from non-human nature to a touristic niche resource; from state policies to local entrepreneurialism and public private partnerships—all are testi-

mony to marketization. Yet such a unidirectional view of the expansion of capital accumulation towards its (avowedly residual) background conditions, overlooks capitalism's dependence on non-marketized aspects of society. Such view also fails to grasp 'the social, political and ecological as reservoirs of "noneconomic" normativity', which can nurture critical reflection and under certain circumstances incite struggles to confront capitalism's boundary work.⁹³ Perhaps there are elements of this in the park history accounted for here: counterposing notions of sublime wilderness, embodied experience and biodiversity against capital's exploitation of nature as raw material; moral claims against littering and treating nature as a sink; engagements with outdoor pedagogy, popular accessibility, and a fair distribution of leisure space against exclusionary elitism. At the very least, this helps explain why national parks in the past as well as in the current moment continue to leave us with engagements, claims, and norms that remain contested and, at least to an extent, outside the purview of the market.

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⁹⁰ Mels, 'The Deep Historical Geography of Environmental Justice'.

⁹¹ Fraser, 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode', p. 55.

⁹² Cindi Katz 'Whose Nature, Whose Culture? Private Productions of Space and the 'Preservation' of Nature', in *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium*, ed. by Bruce Braun and Noel Castree (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 46–63 (p. 48).

⁹³ Fraser, 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode', p. 55.