Results and lessons from
the research programme
Mistra Arctic

mistra arctic sustainable development

Natural resources in Northern Europe

Historical perspectives on resource use for better management today

Welcome from the Programme Manager

Welcome! This booklet summarizes the results from Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development, a social science and humanities research programme that ran from 2014 to 2018.

Carina Keskitalo, you were the scientific coordinator of the research programme, which highlighted the use of natural resources mainly in northern Sweden, Norway and Finland, from as far back as the 13th century until today. Why is this important?

Applying more knowledge from the social sciences and humanities is fundamental to understanding how natural resource use has taken shape. Such knowledge determines not only what is possible to do today, but also what actors and social sectors will likely be able to do in the future.

Among other things, the programme has asked the following question: Who has the right to natural resources, and how is that right determined? Is it possible for research to provide an answer to that question?

The right to natural resources has been determined by long historical processes that still affect us today. The mining and forest industries, which have historically been large land users, still have a special position in the legislation. However, a younger industry like tourism does not have the same legal status, despite its current economic importance. Furthermore, other important industries and interests are affected by, for instance, the special position of forestry. To take one example, forestry affects the scope of action of reindeer husbandry and environmental interests.

How did the researchers carry out their work in the programme?

We based our work on international and national research, but we also conducted local case studies. We amongst other things utilized data from registers and statistical databases, studied the research literature and conducted historical studies, and interviewed various actors.

Geographically, the programme focused on the Arctic, but programme conclusions still question the "Arctic" concept. Can you explain this?

The programme is a result of the Swedish strategic environmental foundation Mistra's investment in a Swedish social science and humanities research programme on the Arctic, and it started from an increased international focus on this area. But Northern Europe is not a historical "Arctic" area that can easily be compared with areas in, for example, North America or Greenland. Instead northern Norway, Sweden and Finland are best understood by looking at their long development into integrated areas in Northern Europe's welfare states, with a relatively well-developed infrastructure, large industries and population centres.

How can the programme's findings and conclusions lead to better management? Why should decisionmakers make use of your results?

Above all, we want everyone working with northern issues or natural resource issues – at the national, regional and local levels – to better understand how different the areas internationally considered "Arctic" actually are.

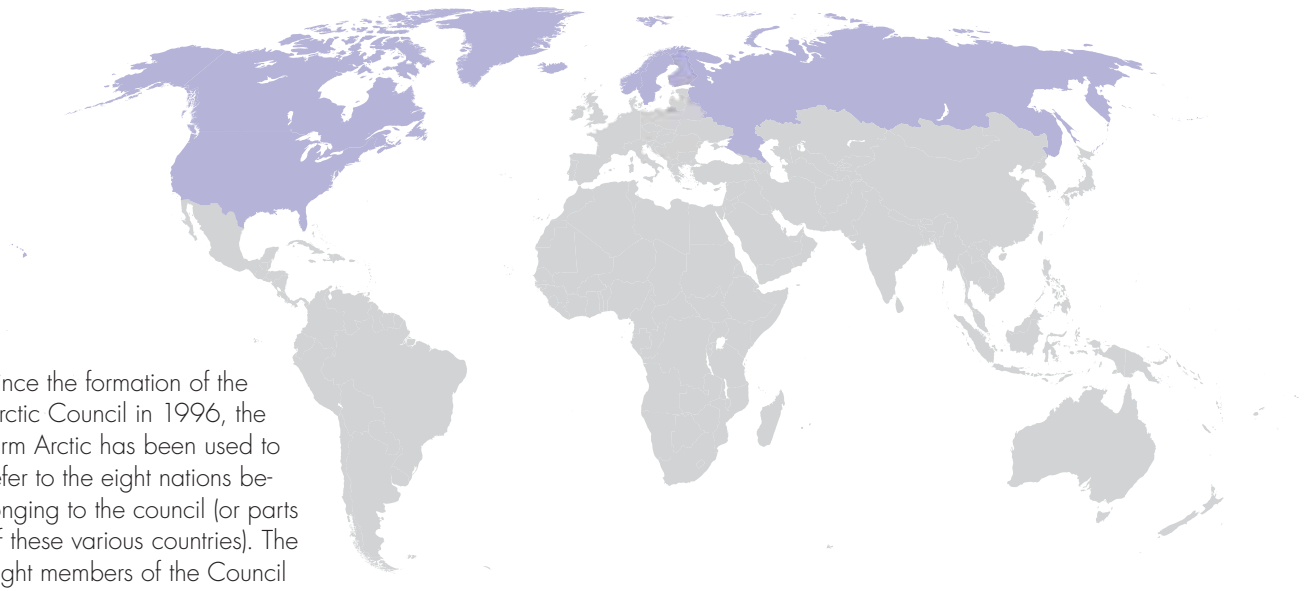
Growing interest in natural resources in the north

A greater historical understanding of how natural resources have been used in northern Sweden, Norway and Finland can create better conditions for future management and governance in the region. That was the starting point of the research programme Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development.

Increased focus on the Arctic requires new knowledge

The geopolitical significance of the Arctic – including the Arctic Ocean as well as the northernmost parts of Europe, Asia and North America – has increased in recent decades. Climate change, increased political activity and especially new technology for extracting natural resources have attracted interest in the northern areas. Unfortunately, this also leads to increased conflicts of interest and challenges.

The aim of starting Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development was to generate new knowledge that can be used to support sustainable development in Northern Europe and the Arctic. Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development was the first major Swedish research programme to focus on Arctic issues by using knowledge from the social sciences and humanities.



Since the formation of the Arctic Council in 1996, the term Arctic has been used to refer to the eight nations belonging to the council (or parts of these various countries). The eight members of the Council are the United States, Canada, Russia and the five Nordic countries: Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

Seven social sectors – a multidisciplinary approach

The programme focused on seven societal sectors: mining, forestry, oil and gas exploration, fishing, reindeer husbandry, tourism and municipal planning. The researchers – among others planners, political scientists, lawyers, historians and historians of ideas – studied natural resource use from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

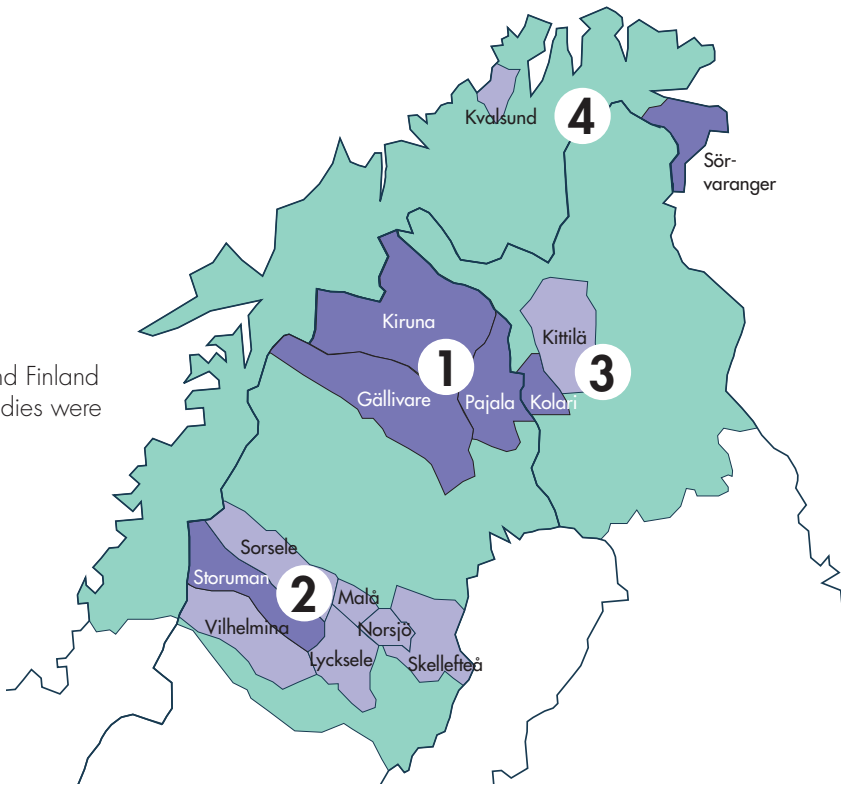
The programme also looked at various conceptions of the Arctic and how these affect development of the area. Furthermore, the researchers stressed the impact of global change, including the geopolitical security situation and climate change.

Case studies in four areas in Sweden, Norway and Finland

Geographically, the research was limited to the northernmost parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland. The focus was on four areas in which case studies and conversations with representatives of various actors were conducted:

1. Norrbotten, with a special focus on Kiruna, Gällivare and Pajala.
2. The Skellefteå area in Västerbotten, with a special focus at Storuman.
3. Kittilä-Kolari in Northern Finland.
4. Sorvaranger in Northern Norway.

Smaller case studies were also conducted on Svalbard and in the Russian provinces of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk.



The map of northern Sweden, Norway and Finland shows the four areas in which the case studies were conducted.

In short – conclusions drawn from the research

The development of societies and natural resource policy in Northern Europe has been going on since the 13th century. The research shows that the natural resource sectors that were in focus – that is, forestry, mining, fishing, oil and gas, reindeer herding and tourism – cannot be understood without taking a long historical perspective. Legislation, regulation and industries have been developed over hundreds of years, in some cases since the 13th century and partly in conflict with the state. The result is that questions related to natural resource use in Northern Europe must be understood as being part of the development of the state and society over hundreds of years.

The programme thus shows that northern Norway, Sweden and Finland cannot primarily be described as traditionally "Arctic", given their long term developed decision structures, governance and communities. Instead, the areas are more generally European in nature. This explains, among other things, the direction Sweden has taken and the comments the country has made while developing EU Arctic policy – namely that areas in Northern Europe cannot be understood by focusing primarily on the environment and indigenous peoples, but must is looked at in a much more multifaceted way.

Historical paths and complex networks govern today's challenges

The programme shows that many paths created through historical processes still affect today's use of natural resources. Many historically based assumptions concerning land use as well as ownership and the rights of different sectors and population groups can be found in current legislation, policy and practice.

The programme as a whole reveals how resources are mobilized and gain usage through complex networks and collaboration among local, national and international players. To deal with the challenges of today and the future – for example, determining which of many potential climate adaptation measures or emissions reduction can be made feasible – one needs to understand these conditions. Decisions concerning, for example, land use, nature tourism and conservation must be based on established knowledge about the counties, localities, industries and actors that are affected.

Northern Europe in a time of change – historical paths have established current characteristics

Northern Sweden, Norway and Finland should primarily be understood as being part of their respective states. Resource use in Northern Europe is established within social, economic and political systems developed over long periods of time. Today's decisionmakers must therefore understand both the unique conditions and the players and interest groups that are and have been active in the areas.

One important goal of the research programme was to try to understand the specific conditions and history in Sweden, Norway and Finland that resulted in developed welfare states. In the international research literature, these welfare states are often seen as being characterized by high levels of confidence in other individuals, society and politics.

At the same time, the programme also took as its point of departure the existing research on "Arctic" or "northern" communities. According to this research – which has often studied areas other than Northern Europe – "northern" areas are often characterized by a short period of state rule, a focus on natural and indigenous issues, and significant differences between these areas and the central areas of the states. Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development has been able to show that such broad categorizations created for other areas cannot be assumed to function in the same way in the northernmost regions of Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Forestry and mining developed in close cooperation

Northern Europe has had, and for hundreds of years been influenced by, strong institutions. This has resulted in extensive social, economic and political frameworks and networks. These frameworks and networks must be understood in detail if they are to be understood at all – without making simplifications that directly compare conditions in Northern Europe with those in other areas considered arctic or northern. For example, both historically significant

processes and natural resource use are different in Russia than in Northern Europe. This is partly a result of differences in development during the Soviet era, but also of differences in regulation of resource use as well as in population patterns in the northern regions. This complexity, and the specific Northern European conditions not found in Arctic areas in general, largely holds true for all of the sectors studied in the programme.

Two of the largest natural resource industries in Sweden are forestry and mining. These have largely been developed in parallel and during certain periods in symbiosis: The first forestry laws that developed from the 13th century chiefly focused on securing possibilities to develop charcoal for mining. Both forestry and mining were thus driven largely by the state. Mining was mainly undertaken in state-owned companies, to facilitate extraction of ore and minerals and to favour production and export.

Exports of wood as material became economically advantageous from the 18th century onwards. With the sawmill boom that occurred around the beginning of the 19th century, forestry legislation was changed to increasingly favour wood and wood production. Forestry came to be defined as what is today called "ongoing land use" – that is, the sector other uses are compared to – and thus acquired a stronger role. Financial gains, especially from exports, were fundamental to how forestry and mining developed.

Past land use affects today's views on nature

Already around the 13th century, when the forestry and agricultural sectors began developing, so did the administration and settlements of varying ethnicity and origin in northern Sweden and Finland (which was part of Sweden until the early 1800s).

From the beginning – and into the 20th century – land use was characterized by small farms, with both individual properties and so-called outfield areas (in Finnish *erämaa*). These outlying areas were used for hunting, fishing and berry and mushroom picking, among other things. In this way, land use often encompassed many different activities and areas. What other countries and people with other points of view describe as "wilderness" might be seen in Northern Europe as areas for different types of use – not as threatening or something to be preserved because it is placed outside human influence, but as part of various human activities. This may have contributed to different views on nature than we find in many other countries – for example, areas in North America where settlers initially perceived nature as something threatening and external to society.

The communities created during this long historical period – from the 13th century until today – were also largely made up of many different groups and actors. Many of those who came to reside or settled in emerging populations centres were people who were already in the areas, such as Swedes, Finns and Sami.

Issues related to indigenous peoples can be taken as an example of the multifaceted situation prevailing in Northern Europe compared to Greenland and North America, where for example interaction between indigenous peoples and the state took place over a much shorter period of time. The term "indigenous people" is commonly used internationally to distinguish a group from the population at large, but that is not always possible to do in the same way in the case of Northern Europe. This is because there has been significant mixing for many hundreds of years, often with considerable interaction at the local level.

Development of the large industrial companies created over the centuries was supported by the fact that they could attract labour in the immediate area. In an international comparison, industrial growth in Northern

READ MORE ABOUT THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Those who wish to delve further into the conclusions drawn from Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development are advised to read, for instance, the programme's final report and book. Some of the programme research has also been presented in theme issues in the Journal of Northern Studies and Polar Record. All publications are in English.

Programme Report

Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development – New governance for sustainable development in the

European Arctic. Final Report. Publications from Arctic Research Center, No 7 / Mistra Arctic, report No 6. ISBN 978-91-7855-057-9.

Programme Book

Keskitalo, E.C.H. (2019, ed) The Politics of Arctic Resources: Change and Continuity in the "Old North" of Northern Europe. Routledge: London and New York. 270 p.

Special Issues

Avango , D. and P. Sköld (eds). Constructing natural resources in the Fennoscandian north. Journal of Northern Studies 12: 2 (2018), and 13 : 1 (2019).

Avango , D., O. Stjernström , and C. Winqvist (eds, in press) Mining legacies in (post-industrial) Arctic futures - Constructing industrial heritage in Norrbotten and Västerbotten. Polar Record.

Stjernström , O., D. Avango , and A. Pashkevich (eds, in press). Local government with complications. Polar Record.

Europe was relatively integrated and happened gradually. At the same time, the conflicts were both many and widespread. Conflicts existed between and within industries, between different groups and in relation to new regulations – for example, the so-called Baggböleri predatory operation of forest companies during the 19th century.

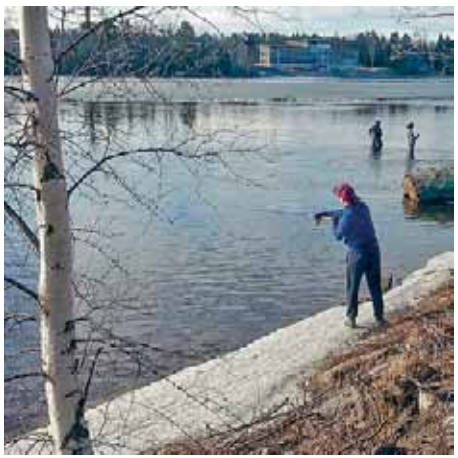
One factor that contributed to conflicts, but also to interaction between different groups, was the relatively high level of local self-determination. This link between population, land ownership and proximity to the resources may perhaps be seen as part of the Scandinavian welfare state's historical background. One of the programme researchers, Urban Wråkberg, noted that the "special type of Nordic state capitalism" is often supported by population – because the population has often gained employment opportunities in, among other things, the large resource industries. This high degree of self-determination can also be seen today in the fact that Sweden's 290 municipalities are often seen to have a "planning monopoly" in physical planning.

Industrial forest and energy use – historical paths affect society today

As we can see, historical paths affect both how we view different groups and how we view land use today. The fact that Northern Europe has a large proportion of small-scale forest owners, and a well-developed system for supporting them, can be seen as the result of a strong organizational community and historic structures for land ownership. Today, half of all forestland in Sweden is owned by private individuals, who have many different interests regarding use of their forest, who may have their main occupation outside forestry or the area where their forest is located, and who may not be economically dependent on their forest. But despite this, forest companies continue to have relatively great – at least not decreasing – access to material. This means that much of this forestland is still managed for wood production. This is interesting in itself: Despite historical diversity in forest use, forest owners may have come to assume that forests should be managed and harvested for wood and wood products.

These are the types of historically established practices and institutions that then come to influence what people do – or do not do – even down to the level of what they assume should be managed in the landscape.

Thus, to some extent, small-scale and large-scale interests coincide in relation to established practices. The fishing industry, especially in Norway, is yet another case in which the simultaneous existence of



smallholding and economies of scale was created historically and still exists today.

The historical development has also given us large state companies that are often taken for granted in the region today. This applies to forestry and mining, as well as to oil and gas extraction and fishing. Even today's energy use can be seen as having been shaped by these historical paths. But the development of large-scale industries has also helped to create areas with a high concentration of companies, for example within the forest industry – and because of this, companies are able to attract labour even though they are located in sparsely populated areas.

In this respect, "rural" areas may have what are sometimes seen as "urban" characteristics, for instance with regard to employment attractivity.

However, the processes that have historically supported the relationship between population, industry and state power in Northern Europe are partly changing. A larger proportion of the population is currently active in the service sector than in the natural resource and industrial sectors. In line with developments all across the world, urbanization is increasing.

One challenge here is that territorially large municipalities with complex resource use issues, but relatively limited resources, need to manage increasingly internationalized and market-governed natural resource issues.

Lessons for decisionmakers

This research programme shows how historical developments have created many of the assumptions about land use and activities that we still take for granted today. How we act and think about different phenomena has been shaped by specific conditions, assumptions and distinctions that have developed historically. The programme demonstrates the importance of understanding how actors, interests, legislation, policies and practices interact.

Swedish and Northern European areas are so complex, and have been shaped by changes for so long, that it is too simplistic to see them as "Arctic", as "sparse" or as "rural". Conditions across different areas differ, even when treated in broader terms. Decisions concerning what questions about, for example, land use or planning should be posed must be based on well-established knowledge of the counties, localities, industries and actors that are affected.

FACTS ABOUT MISTRA ARCTIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

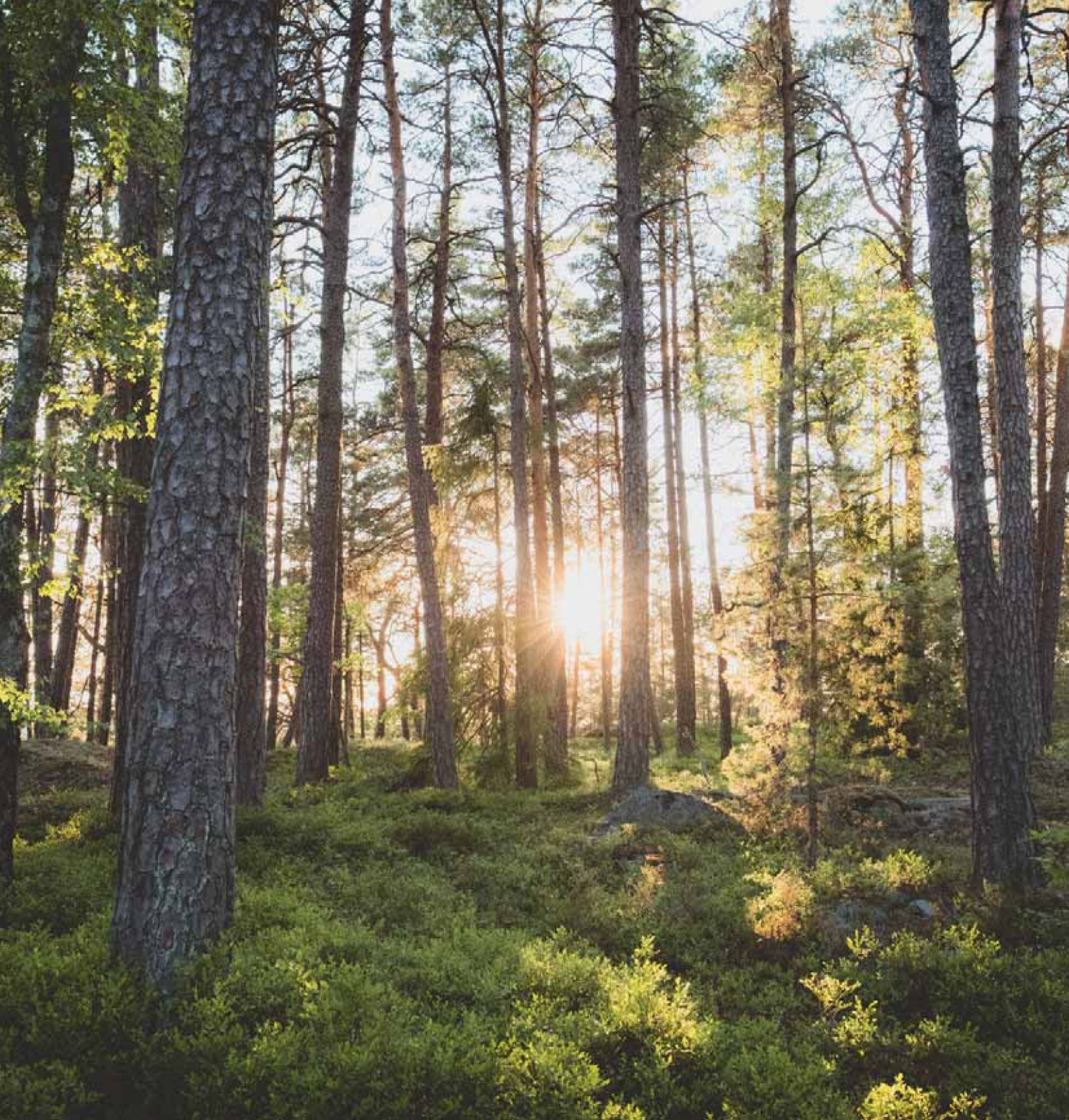
The research programme Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development was ongoing from 2014 to 2018. The programme was a standalone sequel to Mistra Arctic Futures, which ended in 2013. Both programmes received their primary funding from the Environmental Strategic Research Foundation Mistra.

Application Period
2014–2018

Program host
Umeå University

Participating organizations
Umeå University, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI).

Financing
Mistra covered the total budget of approximately SEK 30 million. Additional funding came from the participating organizations.



More information about the research programme
(webpage is no longer updated):
www.arcticmasd.se

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More information about Mistra :
www.mistra.org

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Mistra Arctic report No 8.
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Land use, industries and social structures in northern Sweden, Norway and Finland have been shaped since the 13th century. A better understanding of historical paths, and how they continue to characterize our view of natural resource use, will improve conditions for future management of and decisions on issues related to land use.

This booklet summarizes the conclusions of Mistra Arctic Sustainable Development. The research programme, which ran between 2014 and 2018, studied natural resource use in Northern Europe in relation to, among other things, historical, geographical and political science perspectives.

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