Environmental Policy and Governance   ERP ENVIRONMENT   WILEY

Frontline bureaucrats in wildlife management: Caught in the dilemma between effectiveness and responsiveness

Serena Cinque[1] | Annelie Sjölander-Lindqvist[2] (ORCID) | Camilla Sandström[3]

[1]Gothenburg Research Institute, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden

[2]School of Global Studies & Gothenburg Research Institute, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden

[3]Department of Political Science, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

Correspondence
Annelie Sjölander-Lindqvist, School of Global Studies & Gothenburg Research Institute, University of Gothenburg, Box 603, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.
Email: annelie.sjolander-lindqvist@gu.se

Abstract

Frontline bureaucrats are positioned at the interface between citizens and the state. They convert political resolution into action and in effect form the core of many public decisions through interaction and communication with both the recipients of those decisions and upper management levels that initiate them. However, dilemmas often arise when frontline bureaucrats attempt to translate political goals and strategies into local administrative praxis. The case of large carnivore management in Sweden will be used to demonstrate the insuperable difficulties that can arise when managers simultaneously need to balance the bureaucratic tasks of planning, executing, and evaluating performed decisions with attending to calls for increased responsiveness to public values in order to improve the delivery of service. This responsiveness is typically reflected through the new principles of public participation and collaboration, which are added to the bureaucracy to support the integration of broader sets of interests, experiences, and knowledge. In such an environment, the work of frontline managers becomes even more crucial in order to balance and align policy goals with the need to enhance public involvement. Our study reveals that in striving to meet the formal policy requirement to implement and lead collaboration (which in turn creates the central dilemma that concerns us here) managers develop strategies to secure effectiveness rather than responsiveness. Actually, they have few possibilities to do, otherwise when the latest policy edict clearly instructs the authorities to oversee the effective implementation and achievement of goals, leaving little opportunity to pursue genuine collaboration.

KEYWORDS
collaborative governance, coping strategies, frontline bureaucracy, large carnivores, Sweden

1 | INTRODUCTION

Securing the goals of biodiversity requires revision and adaptation of policy, implementation and practice in the light of experience (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). One way of conceptualizing this is through the application of different governance measures through which power is transferred down from central governments to actors at lower levels in the political-administrative and territorial hierarchy, often referred to as collaborative governance (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Lange et al., 2013; Larson & Ribot, 2005). Another way of conceptualizing collaboration is as a "set of techniques by which authorities wield their power in attempting to ensure support" for policy and implementation (Vedung, 2010, p. 21). Hence, collaborative governance is recognized both as a governance mode (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Lange et al., 2013) and a policy instrument (Bemelmans-Videc et al., 2010; Scholes et al., 2018). This

provides a dilemma when it is unclear whether it is a form of governance that replaces other forms of government or if it is employed as a policy instrument. Further knowledge is required regarding how frontline managers, that is, managers working at the end of the public policy chain cope with this dilemma (Brodkin & Marston, 2013; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Vedung, 2015).

The underlying proposition of the paper is that the frontline, positioned at the interface between the local level and the state, plays a critical role in the implementation of natural resource policy (Cinque, 2008; Nordberg & Salmi, 2019; Säve, 2015); this needs to be further explored to build stronger and long-term successful policy endeavors. We thus ask the following overarching question: Is it possible to combine increasing requests for responsiveness (collaborative governance as a mode) while at the same time upholding and securing support for the prescribed policy, and achieve effectiveness (collaborative governance as a policy instrument)? In the former, the concerned actors are involved in the overarching policy formulation; while in the latter, the actors focus in particular on policy implementation. What is confusing is that in both of these processes, inclusiveness is, through facilitative negotiation and consensus-based decisions, employed as an organizing strategy for interaction. Depending on the result of this, there is a risk of blurred boundaries between governance, that is, the creation of a setting in which actors can manage wildlife effectively, and management, that is, the making of operational decisions of wildlife (Decker et al., 2012).

This line of inquiry, implemented using qualitative methods, extends the idea that the daily work of the frontline managers is crucial for the realization of policy goals due to their considerable degree of autonomy and discretion when transforming high-level policy decisions into action (Brugnach et al., 2011; Cinque, 2008, 2015; May & Winter, 1999; Nordberg & Salmi, 2019; Rinfret & Pautz, 2013; Säve, 2015). Since they are expected to harmonize the multiple interactions of scale and levels while maintaining administrative rules and achieving the specific targets of policy decisions (including the key task of increasing and stimulating the involvement of different actors in the governance of natural resources), the frontline managers must balance these different and complex tasks.

To illustrate our case and increase our understanding of the challenges confronting the frontline, we turn our attention to Swedish large carnivore management: herein there are acute difficulties in harmonizing conventional management tasks with the expectation that work will proceed in an integrative fashion, considering, and satisfying the interests of all of the involved actors. The present study draws in particular on how the management of large carnivores in Sweden struggles with difficulties in balancing national policy with local/regional dimensions and circumstances (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). While the frontline managers are expected to make decisions that support the maintenance of the Favorable Conservation Status (FCS) of the large carnivore populations in their natural range, they should also consider economic, sociocultural and ecological factors as well (Government Bill, 2012/13:191; Committee of Environment and Agriculture 2009/10:MJU8). This formidable dual task is implemented against an extensive regulatory regime that includes monitoring, damage prevention, stakeholder compensation, and controlled hunting. In addition, to reduce conflicts and enhance policy legitimacy, inclusive processes have been designed and set in place to

provide different concerned interests with the opportunity to participate in decisions concerning overall guidelines and management plans for large carnivores—and all without losing track of national goals (Cinque, 2008; Duit & Löf, 2018; Lundmark & Matti, 2015; Sandström et al., 2019; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). The latter, here represented through the adoption of Wildlife Management Delegations (WMDs), is an example of the system shift from government to governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Lange et al., 2013). The WMDs, which were initiated in 2010 to support the ongoing recovery of protected large carnivores, have attracted conflicting interests which, in collaboration with the County Administrative Boards (CABs), implement and manage what is deemed as a controversial policy (Hansson-Forman et al., 2018; Lundmark & Matti, 2015). In this case, the CAB managers are responsible for enabling participation by involving the delegates in collaborative-based discussions and decision-making on wildlife management within the county unit. Using the empirical example of Swedish wildlife management and the implementation of the large carnivore policy through the WMDs, the paper explores, based on interviews and document analysis, how the managers in the frontline deal with tensions created by regulations that aim to increase legitimacy and achieve intended policy results (Government Bill, 2012/13:191).

In sum, while research efforts have been made to identify the essential factors that influence the outcomes of collaborative management (e.g., Agranoff, 2006, 2012; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015), the role of the frontline bureaucrat and worker has received less attention within collaborative governance and environmental management more generally. This study seeks to remedy this gap in the literature, focusing on how the bureaucrats in the frontline execute their tasks and how they cope with the various demands arising from conflicting interests and the different expectations generated by the balancing of collaborative governance as a governance mode or as a policy instrument. On the one hand, favoring responsiveness, and on the other hand, favoring effectiveness. The objective is to develop our understanding of the coping strategies emerging from multifaceted contexts where effectiveness (i.e., the achievement of stated objectives) must be combined with responsiveness (i.e., paying attention to the different interests involved through strategies associated with the collaborative leadership). To operationalize this inquiry, we ask: How do managers balance between the factors that are crucial within the collaborative process (i.e., face-to-face dialog and the development of commitment and shared understanding) and the need to achieve stated policy objectives? What type of coping strategies do they apply? What consequences do we observe?

2 | CHALLENGES TO THE POLICY PROCESS AND THE FRONTLINE

The conventional approach to dealing with issues pertaining to policy implementation builds on the idea of the policy process as a stage model (Hill & Hupe, 2006). Often, the literature refers to these stages as: the initiating stage; the decision-making stage; the implementation stage; and the evaluation stage (Hill, 1993). This way of categorizing the policy process implies a linear view of policy shaping and

implementation and assumes that decision-making in organizations is logical (or should be), and where alternatives for organizational action are made explicit and the decision-maker calculates the effects of certain alternative strategies to evaluate against set goals (Simon, 1997).

This view of the policy process was first questioned some 30 years ago when Prottas (1979) and Lipsky (1980) both argued that implementation has to be seen as a process in which the frontline managers contribute to the creation and adjustment of public policy that the citizens, in turn, meet and experience (Lipsky, 1980; Peters, 2001; Winter, 2007). Prottas and Lipsky demonstrated how street-level bureaucrats/frontline bureaucrats not only deliver but also actively shape and reshape policies by interpreting rules, setting priorities and allocating resources (cf. Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Through their interaction with clients, they form the core of the policy process and they tend to conflate organizational goals with personal preferences and perceived necessities (Lipsky, 1980; cf. Winter, 2007; Vinzant & Crothers, 1998). This means that the policy process is not devoid of ambiguity and uncertainty (van Asselt, 2005); rather, decision-making in the frontline is both emotionally embedded and complicated by the bureaucrats' intuitive knowledge acquired over time (Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2013). This summarizes well the argument advanced by Hill and Hupe (2006), who emphasized how the stage model "underestimates the complexity both of many policy issues and of the organizational arrangements for modern governance" (p. 558).

Drawing on a range of cases, Lipsky holds that frontline managers face tensions and conflicts between different principles, aims, expectations, and demands (cf. Brodkin, 2011; Cinque, 2008; Hupe & Buffat, 2014; Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2013). This imbalance generates dilemmas that are fraught with tensions and conflicts, and which the managers have to solve. Finding pragmatic ways to cope with the dilemmas, frontline managers develop a number of coping strategies that are reflected in their practices (Billig et al., 1988). To bring clarity to these dimensions, some scholars have focused their research on how frontline managers cope with the dilemmas, suggesting that the behaviors of the managers are relatively uniform and predictable (Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Hjörne et al., 2010). The frontline does not, for example, have the freedom to treat clients just as they wish, owing to the constraints imposed by the institutional

context of the job and the often limited resources that are available. This is confirmed by previous studies of the role of frontline managers in Swedish natural resource management (Cinque, 2008, 2011; Säve, 2015; Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2013). In this particular field of study, it has also been shown that the frontline managers find it difficult to balance impartiality with the expectation from both policy and clients to act supportively and emphatically to promote local support for national large carnivore protection policies (Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2013).

By studying how leadership may influence the implementation of policy decisions, Winter and Nielsen (2008), Vedung (2015), and Baviskar and Winter (2017) identify three overarching coping strategies, which the frontline can choose between if they wish to control and limit their interactions with the clients (see Table 1, column 1): (1) *Limiting client demand for service* through which the frontline managers focus their efforts on a limited number of selected clients, cases, and solutions; (2) *Creaming*, which refers to the prioritization of more easily handled cases at the expense of more complex and time-consuming cases; and (3) *The accomplishment of organizational goals*, which means that the frontline managers adopt standardized routines and praxis to perform the goals of the agency in a more efficient way, instead of giving priority to the clients. Moreover, these three main coping strategies are neither adopted linearly nor constantly by the frontline managers; rather, the strategies are adjusted to the institutional context and the organizational conditions in which they work (Jewell, 2007).

However, as will be discussed, these strategies have proven to be insufficient in the context of a shift from government to governance. The potential to realize complex policy goals on one hand, suggests deeper collaboration between public agencies and nonstate organizations as an alternative to top-down governance (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Lange et al., 2013). On the other hand, collaboration is utilized as a part of an extended mix of policy instruments (IPBES, 2018) to manage a complex policy situation and to achieve the policy objectives.

Feldman and Khademian (2002) find that in implementing collaborative arrangements, managers complement the above strategies by deliberately trying to include opposite points of views in the process through recognizing alternative ways of understanding policy issues,

TABLE 1 Types of coping strategies in different governance and management contexts

Government vs. governance Different types of coping strategies	Frontline management (Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Lipsky, 1980; Vedung, 2015; Winter & Nielsen, 2008) Coping strategies in the traditional model of government	Collaborative governance as a mode or as policy instrument (Agranoff, 2006; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015)	
		Coping strategies in collaborative governance	Coping strategies in a wicked problem context
Clients	Limit client demands for service	Opening up for multiple values and interests through inclusive practice	Closing down through evidence- and regulation-based arguments
Work	Creaming	Facilitative negotiation	Consultation
Outcomes	Accomplish organizational goals	Consensus-based decisions	Comply with the superior level of management

sharing information about different ways of knowing and understanding, and creating connections between people who need to work together. Generated and sustained by the complexities and contradictions arising from the political decision to revive large carnivore populations, being responsive in the frontline and working towards consensus on interventions to support the management of large carnivore recovery, may be difficult to achieve due to value-driven circumstances that enter the participatory process (Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2014).

Still, there is no comprehensive theoretical framework to understand how managers in the frontline cope with this shift from governing to governance. However, we can turn to Huxham and Vangen (2005) suggesting that in collaborative arrangements managers are no longer in the position to prioritize easy cases, as previously argued by Lipsky (1980). Instead, they are required to discuss the terms of an arrangement with the involved organizations by facilitating negotiation through trying to establish a win–win situation for all of the concerned parties, drafting a dialogue built on the idea of a fair distribution of wins and losses, or, adoption of what Huxham and Vangen (2005) refer to as solution-oriented mediation. While Winter and Nielsen, Vedung, and Baviskar and Winter identified limitation of client demands for service as a coping strategy, the utilization of collaborative governance and management, results in a modified coping strategy in relation to the clients: opening up for multiple values and interests (Table 1, Column 2).

This shift leads to a situation where the frontline has to adapt their role as a bureaucrat, using facilitative negotiation as a way to cope with the situation confronting them when collaborative management is implemented to handle a complex situation. Cleveland (1972) referred to this as "multilateral brokerage". Wenger's (1998) concept of "collective brokering" over the actors' different values and ends, attributions of meaning, and clashes regarding rationales of knowledge, is a similar concept. While traditional frontline management has the accomplishment of organizational goals as a coping strategy, collaborative management strives toward consensus-based decisions, which, as literature demonstrates, is difficult to achieve (e.g., Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Sjölander-Lindqvist).

We thereby end up with, borrowing from Rittel and Weber (1973), a "wicked" situation where the ultimate goal is not only to realize effectiveness but also to facilitate responsiveness on the contents of the decisions made (cf. Agranoff, 2012; cf. Thomson & Perry, 2006).

3 | METHOD AND MATERIAL

The work presented in this paper is a study of WMDs, which was undertaken during 2015–2019. It is primarily based on analyses of semi-structured interviews with frontline managers at the regional and national levels, complemented by document studies and informal observations made during two WMD meetings. Developing further the findings of previous researches on the role of frontline managers in Swedish large carnivore management (Cinque, 2008, 2011, 2015;

Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2013, 2014), this study was part of a research project investigating environmental collaborative governance in Finland, Norway, and Sweden; this dealt with the involved actors, focusing on the motivations for participating, the groups to whom the members of the WMDs considered themselves as being accountable and the role of the administration. A second focus was the understanding, views and policy work of the managers involved in the work of the WMDs.

The collection of data was made with deliberate openness and receptivity to new connections as we wanted to be able to critically interrogate engagement and the manifestation of meanings, intentions, and the aspirations of people involved. This approach requires great sensitivity to the tangible and associative values of those concerned, and the circulating discourses, multiple contestations and regimes of power enacted and confirmed within the participatory field (Shore et al., 2011). Through nine semi-structured interviews with managers at the regional and national levels—undertaken in situ or over the phone—and document analysis, we investigated the immanent norms and values regarding experiences of collaborative measures and how they coped with the dilemma confronting them when balancing responsiveness with effectiveness. The goal was to outline different understandings about the essential meaning of policy, participation, and collaborative practice.

The document analysis had the purpose to make a review of the principle organization of the Swedish large carnivores' administration, both at the national and local level. The documents included the Swedish Government Official Reports, the Swedish Government Bills and several Code of Statutes. The Regional Administration Programmes were also analyzed.

At the regional level, we selected two administrative Counties,[1] which at that time presented the highest presence of large carnivores. In those Counties, the research group conducted interviews with three CAB managers having the main responsibility to implement the large carnivore policy and three CAB chief managers. At the national level, interviews were carried out with three managers responsible for large carnivore administration at the SEPA.

The interviews lasted around 1–2 h and were carried out with the deliberate intention of being open to the manifestation of the bureaucrats' meanings, intentions, and aspirations. The interviews therefore covered a number of key general themes, but the conversations were also intended to encourage participants' reflections, thoughts, associations and questions. The interviews focused on the informants' understanding of the context for action, including questions on the current situation for collaborative management, and the associated opportunities and challenges for managerial work in the frontline. The interviews dealt with different themes, including interpretation of the mandate of the WMD, the managers' work in relation to fulfilling the mandate, potential and present conflicts and divides that influence the work of the management and, the WMD, and ways of coping with the expectation to balance responsiveness and effectiveness.

Detailed notes were taken during the interviews to complement the audio recordings. The interviews were transcribed in full. Excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews presented in this text have been

translated into English by the authors. All the respondents were guaranteed anonymity as the large carnivore management is a very sensitive topic.

The analysis of the interviews employed an abductive approach to creatively "interpret and recontextualize individual phenomena within a conceptual framework or a set of ideas" (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 80). This means that we have integrated data-driven as well as concept-driven ideas in the analysis of the collected data (Schreier, 2012).

4 | SWEDISH LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT

Investigating how frontline managers cope with and navigate the different dilemmas arising in the policy context is itself highly controversial and surrounded by a range of conflicting interests and tensions (Hallgren & Westberg, 2015; Sandström, Sjölander-Lindqvist, Pellikka, Hiedenpää, Krange & Skogen, 2018; Sjölander-Lindqvist, 2008). The conflicts mainly relate to the status of, and consequences related to, the presence of large carnivores (i.e., *Lynx lynx lynx*, brown bear *Ursus arctos*, wolf *Canis lupus*, wolverine *Gulo gulo* and golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*) in forests, forest-fringe areas and mountain ranges. While the return of large carnivores is strongly supported by the urban public (Ericsson et al., 2018), farmers and hunters living in rural areas and the indigenous Sami people practicing free-ranging reindeer husbandry on their traditional land, Sapmi (ca. 50% of Sweden), conceive the presence of large carnivores as an intrusion on local lives and traditional cultures; the result of this tension is heated debate regarding optimal measures for securing endangered species' recovery while simultaneously maintaining local livelihood opportunities, human wellbeing and a good quality of life (Sjölander-Lindqvist, 2008, 2009; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2015).

On one 'side', we find farming, pastoralism and hunting being affected by the presence of large carnivores. Livestock depredation by large carnivores entails economic damage but it does also have other significant adverse impacts, such as difficulties in upholding small-scale farming, traditional pastoral practices and hunting since livestock and hunting dogs are exposed to the risk of predatory attacks. Likewise, reindeer herders, which face increasing damage to their herds due to the increasing number of all the five large carnivore species making it more difficult to make a living from reindeer husbandry. Their livelihood has changed from regular herding to preventive work, looking for reindeer killed by carnivores and finding ways to prevent additional predatory damage (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). An official report indicates that 40,000–45,000 reindeers are killed by large carnivores annually in Sweden. In terms of losses for reindeer herders, it represents about 55 million SEK (5,17 M €), without taking into account the additional losses, such as the breeding and meat value (Swedish Government Official Reports, 2012, p. 22). People living in rural areas perceive that they have insufficient control over wolf management; this is one of the reasons that they experience themselves to be politically alienated, that is, relatively enduring

sense of estrangement from, or rejection of the prevailing political system (Ericsson et al., 2018). This situation has led segments of the rural population to consider Swedish large carnivore management as illegitimate (Ericsson et al., 2018; Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2013).

On the other "side," we find the position of the environmental discourse, which advocates that action must continually be taken to restore the ecosystem. This position is backed by two important prescriptive documents from Europe: the Council of Europe's 1979 Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), which obliges contracting parties to take measures to maintain populations of wild flora and fauna at appropriate levels according to ecological, scientific and cultural criteria; and the 1992 Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive), which stipulates that Sweden as a member state of the EU must take measures to reach or maintain FCS of natural habitats, wild plants and animals.

A recurrent theme in several governmental inquiries has been the importance of regulatory renewal to resolve mounting conflicts, including the need for administration and management to become more dynamic and attentive to local circumstances (Government Official Report, 1999, p. 146; Government Official Report, 2007, p. 89; Government Official Report, 2012, p. 22; Government Official Report, 2013, p. 60). To manage social conflicts and to promote dialog in the ongoing recovery of protected large carnivores, Swedish large carnivore management has tried different measures, involving both governmental and non-governmental actors. It started off in 2000 with the creation of advisory Regional Large Carnivore Committees; these bodies, however, failed in considering local and regional concerns and were unable to reconcile radically different interests and expectations (Government Bill, 2008/09:210; Lundmark & Matti, 2015; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2015). This failure should not be seen as surprising: several studies have demonstrated that the task of the Committees was—and is—extremely difficult to achieve due to the infeasibility of absorbing and managing expectations among stakeholders in the ordinary management process, affecting levels of trust in the regional and national agencies, leading to less consensus and a sharp increase in the demand for decision-making procedures (Cinque, 2008; Sandström et al., 2009; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2015; Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2014).

This early failure in establishing a legitimate governance solution in which economic, social, cultural, and regional requirements were acknowledged and reflected in decision-making led to the implementation of the WMDs in 2012; the intention was to further increase regional and local influence over large carnivore management and to gain trust for the management system. The WMDs replaced the Regional Committees, and there is now a Delegation in each of Sweden's 21 counties. The WMD in each county is led by the County Governor and includes 17 representatives of: political parties; forestry, local business, outdoor recreation, hunting, nature conservation, agriculture, reindeer herding, fishery, and mountain farming interests; and the Sámi Parliament where appropriate (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2009a, p. 1474). The CAB managers take part in WMD meetings, and while they formally do not vote or exercise opinions

the managers do assume a facilitative role during the meetings, administering information to the delegates, preparing draft papers for discussion, and decision-making and maintaining protocols during the meetings. The WMDs have a formal mandate to decide overall guidelines for large carnivores, which may involve licensing hunting and protective hunting, and to consider matters relating to the approval of a management plan, including suggestions of minimum and interim levels of county carnivore populations. A decision on the minimum level for a large carnivore population is, however, made by the Swedish Parliament, based on the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's (SEPA) recommendations about viable numbers for each region. The numbers are distributed between the counties by the County Governors represented in the Collaboration Council (*Samverkansråd*) in the three large carnivore regions (the Northern, Middle and Southern regions) (NFS, 2010:1). These regions were set up to facilitate coordination between counties which share similar conditions (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2009b, p. 1263), and to deal with the fact that some counties may be too small to manage their own large carnivore populations (Swedish Government Official Reports, 2012, p. 22). In conclusion, then, according to policy, the WMDs assume power in terms of deciding overall guidelines and more of an advisory role in the planning and implementation of policy (Lundmark & Matti, 2015). However, since the policy does not provide clear-cut guidelines for the implementation of collaborative governance, the interpretation of the power of the WMDs varies between the counties (Sandström et al., 2018).

5 | COPING WITH THE COMPLEX MANAGEMENT OF LARGE CARNIVORES

In the following section we present the results of this study, based on the analysis of the interviews and previous research. We have identified three overarching coping strategies (see Table 1), which relate to how the CAB managers cope with the challenge to include opposite points of views (i.e., responsiveness) in a collaborative manner while trying to achieve the policy objectives (i.e., effectiveness). The three coping strategies correspond to the three management stages that emerged from previous studies on modern bureaucracy (Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Vedung, 2015; Winter & Nielsen, 2008). These are: (1) clients, (2) work, and (3) outcomes. Each of the three subsections below, which are example-based rather than comprehensive, describes a category of activities that was repeatedly reported by the CAB managers.

5.1 | Ensuring effectiveness through scientific facts and the regulatory regime

Lipsky's work deals with the often unendurable cross-pressures that frontline managers experience when they cope with multiple client service demands and the limited resources (such as public funding) that are available (Lipsky, 1980; Vedung, 2015). A strategy to reduce the tension between demanding clients and limited resources is to

reduce the quantity and the quality of information given to the clients (Cinque, 2008; Prottas, 1979). The coping strategy adopted by the CAB managers follows a similar rationality where the WMD members' different opinions and viewpoints are filtered through scientific facts so as to reduce complexity and ensure effectiveness.

When describing WMD meetings, several CAB managers refer to the importance of using scientific evidence to keep the discussions under control and avoid division. One of the managers stated that "*it is very important to present the hard facts; it affects the discussion in the group. As a manager, you can put things straight referring to research reports and prevent possible disputes*". Another manager said: "*I do not leave space for discussion, I try to show that we're logical and legally secure in our decisions. Scientific facts have to predominate in the discussion*". By invoking a scientific framework to control discussions, the CAB managers try to cope with the dilemmas that follow on from what they perceive as hindrances to policy implementation (cf. Cinque, 2008; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020; Sjölander-Lindqvist & Cinque, 2014). As one informant simply explains, scientific facts and regulation are used as a dialog-blocker when discussing issues that are known to generate divergences within the group. Another example: when discussing the minimum levels[2] for wolf reproduction the CAB managers remind the group that the only eligible criteria are the inventory reports and that any other criteria will be dismissed:

> The CAB receives a lot of observation reports from people living in large carnivore areas, mainly concerning wolves and bears. Those observations need to be carefully evaluated by our staff, and this work proceeds from a rigorous scientific methodology. But many delegates do not understand the importance of such results and still try to influence other delegates, suggesting minimum levels which are completely made up.

This quote points to an important dimension of the current frontline situation: disputes over the ends and meanings of policy make conflict a recurrent component of the social dynamics; the managers cope with this volatility by using arguments based on the regulations and scientific evidence as tools to close down the discussion and deal with discontent. As with scientific knowledge, the CAB managers refer to regulatory norms as a means to cope with a management situation they experience as inherently tense and wide open for criticism:

> As CAB managers we should refrain from any comments or suggestions. We are supposed to apply the legislation even if sometimes it is not particularly clear. But we are in a vulnerable situation – we are subject to severe criticism. Sometimes we are forced to anonymize our decisions. Sometimes we are verbally threatened. Therefore we need to refer to the regulations as far as possible.

Scientific facts and the regulatory regime permit the CAB managers to delegitimize other possibly relevant ways to interpret the presence of

large carnivores in the Swedish landscape. Thus from a collaborative point of view this strategy, as it unfolds in this case, does not nurture a sense of inclusion.

5.2 | Adopting consultation instead of collaboration

Although frontline managers struggle to fulfill the different organizational goals they are confronted with, resource inadequacies and ambiguous goals further compound their workload. As suggested by Lipsky, to simplify their task the frontline managers often prioritize the "easy cases," that is, the cases which they understand will be easier to handle according to policy (Lipsky, 1980, p. 107). This "creaming" strategy cannot, however, be fully adopted in the management of large carnivores since the regulations state that the CAB managers have to collaborate with the WMD delegates before making a decision (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2009a, p. 1474). This tension between the need to be responsive toward the various relevant actors and interests, and the requirement to deliver effective decisions, is solved by the CAB managers through consultation. Consultation means exchanging information and opinions in order to reach a better understanding of the topic. However, consultation does not necessarily imply that the final decision is in line with the opinions of the delegates as expressed and negotiated in the WMD meetings. In other words, by employing a consultation strategy the CAB managers can refrain from adopting the delegates' views and opinions while making decisions; they do so by referring to specific categories and models that, as they say, must underlie the decisions made by the regional administration. By pointing to, for example, the specification of population targets and the monitoring of rejuvenating females, certain expert knowledge is authorized and given precedence even if policy builds on a commitment to international conventions. As shown elsewhere (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020), safeguarding biodiversity conservation while at the same time enforcing sociocultural criteria, leaves the regional-level decision-makers with a dilemma where they need to be attentive toward the needs and values of the different levels, including the national level. Even if they have contradictory understandings and feelings about this strategy, the frontline managers solve this dilemma by overseeing the delegates' views and opinions while making decisions. As they explain, the transition from collaboration to consultation is necessary to secure performative management.

Since the number of carnivores is defined nationally, the WMDs can only decide how to deal with the local implementation of national decisions, for example, by mitigating conflicts through damage compensation measures. The managers recall that in 2015 the WMD in the County of Jämtland agreed on a decision regarding protective hunting of wolverines. The decision was made after a long and intense process where the delegates collaborated with each other and they obtained support from their respective organizations. The CAB and the County Governor approved the decision proposed by the majority of delegates on protective hunting in the Sami territory to prevent loss of reindeer. However, when the SEPA received the WMD's decision, it was challenged on the basis that there was insufficient data on possible damage due to wolverine presence in the area. The SEPA's attitude was strongly criticized in the media and local newspapers, and farmers, hunters and Sami reindeer herders expressed discontent against what they summarized as an urban-based decision neglectful of countryside concerns and reality (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). Referring to this event, one manager commented:

> [the delegates] *were very disappointed. They asked us to do something to stop the SEPA. Unfortunately we cannot modify a SEPA decision [....] After this incident, we had a crisis meeting with the County Governor where we* [CAB managers] *decided to explain our standpoint to the SEPA but we didn't receive any response. I think we became more careful after this incident and also aware that the SEPA have a limited understanding of local conditions.*

The interviews confirm that managers experience a tension between the requirement for collaboration and the demand for effectiveness. In other words, the CAB managers need to find a balance between the delegates' expectation that they will exercise influence and the standards set by the SEPA. This basic operational condition restrains the managers' possibility to realize a collaborative mode of action. Instead, managers adopt consultation with adverse consequences for the frontline's capacity to reconcile effectiveness with responsiveness.

5.3 | Complying with the superior level to reach expected outcomes

Work performance in frontline management is measured and evaluated through the adoption of standards that are connected to organizational goals (Lipsky, 1980 p. 48). Similarly, previous studies of large carnivore management regimes have underlined the monitoring role of the SEPA toward the administrative counties regarding goal performance and implementation outcomes (Cinque, 2008, 2015). However, work performance in large carnivore management is difficult to assess because of goal ambivalence and complicated quantitative measurements. The focus on quantitative goals for large carnivore presence in Sweden has been questioned since in the past it has prevented other interests being part of the local management (Sjölander-Lindqvist, 2008, 2009). To remedy this situation, the WMDs were established as one of the instruments to achieve more responsive decisions. However, our interviews show a more complex landscape, as the distribution and coordination of setting the number of large carnivores between the counties takes place in the Collaboration Council.

Our interviews reveal that this management system creates a contradiction in terms when it requires that the WMDs (representing local interests) and the Collaboration Council (representing the interest of counties located in the same administrative area) have to agree on a common plan to the SEPA. One manager says:

> *It's like trying to hit right in the bull's-eye. The delegates in each WMD want to decide here and now, but their*

decision needs to get the approval of the Collaboration Council in each of the three areas. We [CAB managers] have had a hard job trying to lead the delegates towards a reasonable solution so the final proposal to the SEPA will not be completely random.

The tense ambivalence between the expectations of attaining consensus-based decisions and the need to achieve organizational goals is typical of frontline management (Lipsky, 1980). In large carnivore management, however, ambivalence develops a stronger tension as the CABs, while making a decision, have to take into consideration different levels of management. Regulations state that County Governors should chair WMD meetings in order to moderate and lead the group. However, our interviews reveal that the managers are supervised by the Governors: "[...] *his presence reminds us of our duties, he has a gatekeeper role*". Another CAB manager tells about feelings of frustration towards a system that: "[...] *delegitimizes managers as professionals while elevates the Governors as law and order guardians*":

> *How do they become experts? Why do they talk about issues that they do not understand? They get data and knowledge from us* [CAB managers]. *And then they meet their counterparts and they make decisions which often are against the WMDs decision. To me, this doesn't mean local co-decision. This is hypocrisy.*

Regarding the methods implemented to monitor large carnivores, several informants talk about the difficult relationship with the SEPA. The CABs are responsible for the inventory of the presence and numbers of large carnivores and packs in the region (SEPA 2007:10), and inventory results are indispensable to determine how the carnivores are managed. For example, to regulate controlled hunting or to agree on other preventive measures, the SEPA proceeds from inventory data. As large carnivore inventories are mainly based on documented tracks in the snow, the collaboration between CAB field staff and voluntary organizations is to collect field observations. But according to one manager, the problem is that the criteria to assess an observation are unreasonably meticulous, which in turn discourages people reporting observations made in the field to the CAB administration:

> *For me it is embarrassing. Because I'm responsible for this process. I have to go out and say* [to the delegates] *that a large number of the observations reported are not being considered due to the strict criteria decided by the SEPA. At the same time it is my duty to tell the delegates to encourage their fellows to continue reporting every observation. I see how they look at me, I hear what they are thinking and I think the same – why should we report to you when we still do not get our observations down on the map.*

The empirical findings suggest that managers comply with the superior level of management as they perceive that satisfying the delegates' demand for influence could result in opposition.

6 | DISCUSSION

In the last few years, we have witnessed a worldwide intensification of collaborative modes of governance in various public management sectors (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Hansson-Forman et al., 2018; Huxham & Vangen, 2004; McGuire & Agranoff, 2001; O'Toole Jr., 2000). This is also the case with the governance and management of large carnivores, which is characterized by wickedness (Duit & Löf, 2018). As there are no bureaucratic established routines and strategies associated with this relatively new situation, the frontline managers that are in charge of the collaborative arrangements cannot rely on traditional frontline coping strategies.

Government incentives and directives related to collaborative initiatives are increasingly abundant, and politics requires the active participation of local communities in order to achieve sustainable outcomes (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Imperial, 2005). For government agencies, collaboration has become a primary means of coping with modern problems, such as complexity in the policy process, local dissent, the input of expert knowledge and the constant flow of information (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Fleishman, 2009). This study complements with important insights and knowledge regarding both the implementation of collaborative governance and the increasing complexity of frontline work. Our findings show that the widespread use of collaborative governance is further complicated when it becomes either a mode or a policy instrument. This generates a need for the frontline management to develop additional types of coping strategies when they have to navigate between responsiveness and effectiveness.

Hence, collaborating seems to be easier said than done considering the numerous difficulties that this "new" direction entails for the frontline workers who, it is assumed, will transform policy decisions into action at the lower level of the bureaucratic system. In particular, the policy-generated expectation to deliver harmonized multiple interactions generates an obvious dilemma when two management arrangements must be balanced: the frontline bureaucratic role versus the collaborative leadership role. By showing how CAB managers navigate the requirement to create participatory and legitimate co-management with the goal of effectively preserving an FCS for large carnivores, we have learned that the frontline managers deal with this complex situation through a developed set of coping strategies (Table 1, column 3). While the policy is based on the idea to increase responsiveness, the frontline management still prioritizes effectiveness. A comparative study from 2020 shows that when the frontline focused on responsiveness, the superior level (SEPA) forced them to stick to effectiveness (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). According to Lipsky (1980) and Prottas (1979), tensions are typical between levels of management when frontline managers are expected to be accountable to both their agency and their clients. These tensions, developed from the actors' different values and motivations, attributions of meaning, and clashes regarding rationales of knowledge (see also Riccucci, 2005), highlight what Cleveland (1972) referred to as "multilateral brokerage." Wenger's (1998) concept of "collective brokering" is a similar concept. Together, this points toward the need to merge

an understanding of both the administrative realm and collaborative governance. This includes understanding the ways the different actors make sense of the situation, and the roles given different ways of knowing and regulations.

Even if the policy demands responsiveness and the managers should work toward inclusiveness, the discretion of the frontline is limited by strict regulation regarding conservation. In addition, the frontline management is neither provided with adequate resources and preconditions to develop collaborative governance, nor are they given any guidelines on how to balance responsiveness with effectiveness. This lack of precise rules indicates how collaboration should be concretely realized, limits the possibility for the managers to embrace collaboration as an efficient and effective approach to accomplish goals and actually create sustainable management of large carnivore populations.

To cope with this wicked situation, the management, for example, apply a scientific lens and comply with the demands set by the national level of management, oftentimes despite the delegates' divergent beliefs and opinions. When CAB managers experience a high level of conflict in their group they tend to reinforce a traditional management approach based on selected scientific arguments in order to secure goal performance or effectiveness. Instead, they turn to consultation as a mode for interaction, which means that they can balance autonomy with the necessary compliance with the superior level of administration. This finding is in line with the earlier studies that demonstrated that the capacity of the CAB managers to foster responsiveness is rather limited (Duit & Löf, 2018; Lundmark & Matti, 2015; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020; Zachrisson et al., 2018).

The results show that despite the policy stating that CAB managers should develop strategies to secure a fair and inclusive decision-making process on large carnivore management, this has seldom happened. This leads to the next point: In consequence of national level control and monitoring of management actions at the regional level, those in the frontline align their management strategies according to the indications they get from SEPA. Another reason for complying with the national management instructions comes from the fact that the decision-making power of the CAB managers can be revoked by SEPA if they find that WMD decisions go against the national goal of maintaining FCS. For the CAB manager it is not in any way profitable to participate in a decision that they know will be revoked and amended by the national agency. Strategies adopted by the CAB managers reveal a disaccord between different management levels, with each enjoying a conflicting degree of power and control. This is not unique for this case, but according to several studies of frontline management, managers usually disagree with the superior level of management and of their job thereby bringing them more into line with personal beliefs (Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003).

Our study does not find support for this latter behavior, which probably results from unclear mandates. This suggestion finds support in discussions over the discretionary opportunities for the frontline since it appears that when frontline managers have limited scope to disagree with the superior level of management (Hajer, 2009; Meier &

O'Toole Jr., 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2005) they tend to comply with the national agency rather than collaborate with the local interests. In our case, the CAB managers' default position is to comply with the national level of management as they perceive that they do not have the chance to make their voice heard. As other research findings show, managerial influence on the behavior of the frontline is directly related to the extent to which decision-making authority is delegated (Riccucci et al., 2004). When the ultimate decision-making power is retained by the superior level of management, the lower level tends to be much less inclined to deviate.

7 | CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we have discussed how frontline managers navigate among different dilemmas arising in the policy context as they seek to move the decision-making process forward, and how the strategies which they adopt may affect the implementation of Sweden's large carnivore policy. That particular policy is deeply contentious and conflict-ridden, but precisely because of that it serves as an excellent case in point to demonstrate how Swedish wildlife managers at the regional level cope with their intermediary position between local conditions and national policy requirements. Understanding how the frontline translates political goals and strategies into local administrative praxis while at the same time striving to be responsive towards the concerns of farmers, hunters, and reindeer herders who live and work in large carnivore-inhabited areas, is important not only for the policy sector but also for administrative theory.

We have found that although the regulations demand that the CAB managers balance and align policy goals (effectiveness) with public participation (responsiveness) in large carnivore management, this requirement and expectation remains to be conciliated. From a theoretical point of view, our work confirms Lipsky's results from his seminal 1980 study. Due to the formal policy requirement to implement and lead collaboration, which in turn creates its own dilemmas, managers develop strategies to secure effectiveness rather than responsiveness. There is, in fact, little chance of doing otherwise when the latest policy clearly imposes the will of the national level, in the form of SEPA, to oversee the effective implementation and achievement of goals.

The prioritization of scientifically assured knowledge over local concerns and knowledge based on practical experience, adds further weight to the role of the national-level agent. Even if the system, and in particular the regional level, *did* enable the inclusion of different knowledge spheres in the decision-making process, the CABs are stripped of their abilities to consider knowledge that is not scientifically approved. This is a challenge for those on the policy frontline, who basically lack the power to make decisions over key issues in carnivore management. In short, the goals of effectiveness and responsiveness seem—at least in our case study—to be irreconcilable. The national agency body is given the power to normalize particular ideas and concepts, which opens the way for the potential dismissal of certain problem descriptions. Some delegates in the WMDs struggle to

have their views acknowledged and counted as valid knowledge when interacting with agencies from the upper governance levels, and this is a battle that is difficult to win given the status of FCS in the management system. This inevitably leads to dilemmas for the regional decentralized bodies seeking to fulfill their mandates (cf. Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020).

The fact that the CABs are now given full decisive power creates an uncertain situation for the capacity of the WMDs to function when the managers face the central agency's apparent determination to resist the transfer of sufficient appropriate powers to the regional level. This tendency seems to be exacerbated by weak institutional arrangements (cf. Falleth & Hovik, 2009) and distrust of lower-level actors' abilities (or willingness) to comply with policy (cf. Cinque, 2008, 2015). If the governance mode is not designed appropriately, the concerned actors are left with restricted options to exercise influence and push their objectives (e.g., Risvoll et al., 2016; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). This may lead down an unwanted path where nonstate actors may consider stepping out of the formal governance arena to seek other ways to influence the management of large carnivores, for example, through court cases. Ultimately, the current study highlights the need to develop professional skills, particularly in relation to the management of conflicting goals, when managers have to cope with different expectations from their clients and the presence of multiple, and sometimes conflictive, institutional frames. If responsiveness is a valued goal, the national level needs to equip the frontline managers with adequate resources and extended discretion to foster effectiveness.

Based on the results of this study of frontline workers in conservation, we would like to promote a "turn of attention" to other policy areas, such as water, forests, and fishery policy, to learn how the frontline can cope with the increasing demand to balance responsiveness with effectiveness. From a theoretical point of view, there is also the need to explore this comparatively to understand how context influences the outcome.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ORCID

Annelie Sjölander-Lindqvist https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8283-3860

ENDNOTES

[1] Sweden is divided into 21 counties. Each county has its own county administration and governor. As a representative of the state, the administration functions as a link between the inhabitants, the municipal authorities, the government, the Swedish parliament and other central state authorities.

[2] Minimum levels indicate the number of individuals required in a management area to maintain a FCS. Minimum levels are based on the reproductions verified in a management area through inventories.

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