

The Meaning of Forests: Linking Conflicting Views with Colonisation

A narrative analysis exploring internal colonisation of Sápmi



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Abstract

Sweden is a forest abundant country. The forestry sector is associated with the building of the welfare state and remains central to Sweden's export industry and economy. However, large tracts of the forest are found in Sápmi – the homelands of the Indigenous Sami. Following the colonisation of Sápmi in the 17th century by the Swedish state, the Sami – Swedish relationship have become increasingly complex and remains so today. Despite Sweden having officially distanced itself from colonisation, voices from Sápmi contends that colonisation is still on-going, particularly in the context of natural resource exploitation. Using a combination of postcolonial theory and internal colonisation, this research delves into the complex Sami – Sweden relationship in the context of forests and forestry. It analyses two narratives which concern the relationship between people and forests to disclose continued colonial practises in Sápmi. In combining understandings of narrative as inherently linked with knowledge systems, in addition to their role in social and political life, the research uses narrative analysis to unveil how internal colonisation manifests in one Sami narrative on the environment and a Swedish narrative on the forest. The Swedish narrative is found in the strategy document for Sweden's first national forest programme, whereas the Sami narrative is derived from the Sámediggi's environmental programme Eallinbiras. The analysis and comparison of the two narratives discern the silencing of Sami voices and knowledges, and further illustrates struggles over land, resources, and jurisdiction in Sápmi. The findings constitute a challenge to colonial practises in Sweden and highlights the links between acknowledging Indigenous worldviews and decolonisation.

Key words: Internal colonisation, Sápmi, Sweden, forests, forest policy, knowledge-systems, narrative, decolonisation

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1 Introduction

That natural forests are valuable is self-evident for people in the Sami village. Yet, it is only when outside experts have done inventory, analysis, and assessments of the same forests that such an insight becomes regarded as legitimate knowledge. Sofia, Brita-Stina and the others in the Sami village have felt forced to learn to understand the surrounding world's view and use a language where forests are 'objects' on which you 'take action' (Lindberg and Orre, 2021)

This raises question on whose knowledge is perceived as legitimate in issues pertaining to forests. The story suggests that there is a contradiction between the knowledge system of Sami and non-Sami society. The relationship to the environment is negotiated and understood differently, resulting in different views on how people should relate to the world around us. The above quote is an excerpt from an article illustrating the conflicts between state-owned forestry company Sveaskog and the Sami village Luokta-Mávas. The contestation between the forestry sector and the Sami over their traditional lands is not new but has increasingly taken up space in non-Indigenous' media as Sveaskog is being critiqued for dismissing demands from Sami and clear-cutting natural forests (see e.g., Lundgren et al., 2020; Lindberg and Orre 2021; Sundholm et al., 2021). The critique against Sveaskog has furthermore unfolded against the backdrop of the development of a new national forest programme, the idea of which is 'The forest, the green gold, should create job opportunities and support sustainable growth in the whole country, and further contribute to the development of a growing bioeconomy' (Ds 2018/N2018.15:12).

Meanwhile, Sami representatives and activists are demanding decolonisation of Sápmi, and makes links between Swedish forestry and colonisation (Aksoy, 2020). Previous research shows that Swedish natural resource use is closely linked to the colonisation of Sápmi, suggesting that colonisation is ongoing (Lawrence, 2014), a version of colonisation often referred to as internal colonisation (Tully, 2000). It is imperative that colonisation of Sápmi is understood, so that steps towards decolonisation can be taken. One approach to do this is to critically analyse natural resource use and the mechanisms sustaining internal colonisation. This research attempts to do so by analysing two different narratives.

Narratives are used to understand our reality and are inherently linked with our knowledge systems. Meta-narratives are abstract understandings in which we are embedded, appearing as universal, shaped by the historical and cultural context (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). Bhambra (2009) argue that narratives function as a justifying ideological tool, meaning that narratives can be mobilised to legitimate processes of colonisation. Further, due to their selective nature, concrete narratives may silence and marginalise voices that do not align with the meta-narrative in which the concrete narrative is embedded, allowing meta-narratives to assume universal legitimacy (Loomba, 2015; Howitt and Suchet-Pearson 2016). Narratives on

the environment then, can provide a lens for analysing the Sami – Swedish relationship in the context of forests.

1.1 Question and aims

This research will analyse two narratives. One narrative is found in Sweden’s strategy document for the Swedish National Forest Programme (NFP). The other is retrieved from the Sámediggi document Eallinbiras – “our overarching story that ties us all together” (Sametinget, 2016). Both narratives concern the relationship to forests. The narratives will be analysed in terms of their structure, content, and context. For the latter, previous studies on the Swedish – Sami relationship and the NFP are used. The research question is:

How does internal colonisation manifest itself in the narratives of the Swedish state and the Sámediggi regarding the relationship to forest?

This research has a twofold decolonising aim. First, it hopes to contribute to creating room for Indigenous knowledge in Western institutions, which as Kovach (2009) suggests, is closely linked to acknowledging an Indigenous cultural worldview. In following the guidance from what Denzen and Lincoln calls the “decolonising project”, it will attempt to do so by avoiding objectifying Indigenous knowledges and attempting to fit them into Western knowledge systems (2000:6). Rather, this thesis will critically question the latter against the backdrop of Sami worldview. In doing so, the second aim of this thesis is thus to interrogate the dominant narrative which legitimises the state’s non-recognition of Sami knowledge systems and land rights. This in turn discloses how colonisation manifests in the narratives and provides a challenge to the colonial agenda.

1.2 Outline

The thesis is structured as follows. First, a section outlying the background and previous literature on the topics of meta-narratives, Sami, Swedish forests and colonisation is provided to situate the study in Development Studies and to review previous literature on the Swedish – Sami relationship in the context of forests and forestry. The theoretical framework is then presented, followed by a section which contextualities the narratives. The methodology is then laid out, explaining the research design and process. Subsequently, the analysis, divided into three sub-sections, is presented. The thesis is wrapped up by providing concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

2 Background

The following section begins by situating the research in Development Studies. It is followed by an overview of previous research on forestry and Sami, as well as the connections between natural resource use and colonisation in Sweden.

2.1 Development and meta-narratives

Congruent with independence of former European colonies, the field of development began to emerge. In the global North, theories of modernisation emerged, aimed at turning the former colonies into modern and developed societies (Saffari 2016:37). Meta-narratives were produced, such as modernisation and economic growth, aligning development with these aspects. Development thus became a project to be carried out in the global South, with experts from Western institutions in the global North as project managers (ibid.).

There has since been paradigm shifts in the study and practise of international development, turning to rights-based paradigms and pro-planet approaches (ibid.). With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals, which argue for development being a shared global challenge, development is increasingly seen as something equally relevant for the global North as the South. Nevertheless, the meta-narratives of progress and growth pervasively resist in development, and Saffari (2016) points to the embeddedness of knowledge producers in the global North who continue to frame development agendas. Saffari (2016) argues that this has led to marginalisation of Indigenous voices and knowledges in the global South. Arguably, this marginalisation is a reality in global North too, where Indigenous people continue to live in contexts of colonisation (Tully, 2000).

Defining ‘development’ is a risky endeavour, as anyone attempting to define its objectives and strategies is in a position of power and risks reproducing asymmetric power relations. If one however rejects the meta-narratives of modernisation and economic growth, instead assuming that processes of development entail the ability of individuals and cultures to freely frame their own definitions of development, then development must target other areas than those which can bring growth. If understood as such, in Sápmi and Sweden then, a context of internal colonisation, development is tied to processes of decolonisation.

2.2 Sami and forests in Sweden

The Sami are Indigenous people of Fennoscandinavia. The Swedish part of Sápmi¹ has been inhabited by Sami for millennia. Forests are important components in Sami culture (Sametinget 2021a). Reindeer-herding, one of the many dimensions of Sami culture, is exercised on approximately 55 % of Sweden's land area (Larsen et al. 2017:68). Lowland forest areas in Sápmi constitute the winter pastures for the grazing reindeers, in which they depend on the availability of lichen for food. Sami have use-rights in forests, but ownership lies with forest owners, companies, or the state (Larsen et al., 2017).

Forest management, policy and politics in Sweden is a well-researched topic. The current mode of governance is now understood as deliberative and collaborative governance, with emphasis on participation and consultation with the various stakeholders and competing interests involved in forest issues (Bäckstrand et al., 2010). It is acknowledged that there are several competing interests using and remaining dependent on the forest resources within Sweden, including the forestry sector and Sami reindeer-herders (Widmark, 2006). This has led to conflicts regarding land use, where the two have adverse effects on each other. However, several studies indicate that the effect on Sami reindeer-herders by forestry is more severe than the other way around (Sandström and Widmark, 2007; Kivinen et al., 2010). Intensified forestry has led to a decrease in lichen and fragmentation of grazing land (ibid.). As an attempt to manage the conflicts between reindeer-herders and the forest sector, the Swedish government decided to introduce consultation in the Swedish Forestry Act (SFA) in 1979 (Sandström and Widmark, 2007). Consultation procedures have thus been the object of much research regarding Sami reindeer-herders and the forestry sector. Much of this research has been guided by institutional theory and analysis, more specifically the issue has been studied as a common-pool resource situation² (Sandström and Widmark, 2007; Sandström et al., 2010; Widmark 2019)

2.3 Forestry and colonisation

While the above studies have been important in highlighting power asymmetries in forest governance, and consultation procedures more specifically, there is a lack of studies that have approached Swedish forestry with a colonial lens, as noted by Lawrence (2014). While such a lens has been used in research related to other resource exploitation by the Swedish state such as wind-power development (Lawrence, 2014) and hydroelectric development (Össbo and Lantto, 2011), it remains little used in research on contemporary natural resource management in the context of Sweden.

¹ Sápmi is both the name for the geographical area spanning across northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, in addition to a term which includes the Sami people and their languages (Lantto 2000:31)

² Common-pool resources are resources that are so large that it is costly "to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from their use" (Gardner et al., 1990:335), a concept born out of institutional economics.

Historical accounts do however emphasise the link between colonisation and natural resource exploitation in the North by the Swedish state, such as forestry. Colonial policy can be discerned when applying a critical lens on administrative operations such as the introduction of the Reindeer Grazing Act (RGA) of 1886 (Lawrence 2014; Össbo and Lanto, 2011). Legislative and administrative changes concerning forestry and reindeer-herding have been identified by Lantto and Mörkenstam (2008) as closely tied to the issue of Sami rights, yet denied as such by the state. This has resulted in a non-recognition of Sami rights to their traditional territories, which remains an issue today, as while the Swedish state has distanced themselves from colonialism, there has been few changes in actual policy concerning the Sami and their rights (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008; Lawrence, 2014).

Evidently, there is a link between colonisation of Sami territories and Swedish natural resource use (Lawrence, 2014). Yet, as stated previously, this is an area that has gained little attention in research on forestry in the context of Sweden. This research attempts to fill this gap.

3 Theoretical framework

Combining postcolonialism with internal colonisation, this research has formed a context-specific approach which both deconstructs the universalist dominant narrative of Sweden and brings to the front other perspectives of the world, while simultaneously highlighting ongoing colonial practises.

3.1 Postcolonialism and decolonisation

Postcolonialism is a contested term, partly due to the heterogenous nature of colonisation and the different understandings of it. Nyström presents an understanding of colonisation as functioning in two interrelated ways: the ordering of the physical and political reality and the ordering of ideological and ontological (2018:31). The former refers to the material ordering: the domination of a territory, the exploitation of resources, and establishment of controlling institutions. The latter concerns the psychological violence through the naturalisation of colonial discourses which manifests through science, religion, education, legal and bureaucratic institutions (ibid.:32).

Another point of debate concerns the *post* in postcolonialism. The prefix implies that colonialism is a thing of the past. In many instances, colonialism is not a thing of the past (Loomba, 2015). This issue becomes relevant in contexts such as Sweden, or Australia, New Zealand and Canada, where colonisation is ongoing and there is no ‘post’ (Tully, 2000; Alexander, 2008). In understanding colonisation as heterogenous, it becomes evident that the adaptation of postcolonialism must depart from an understanding of the context of inquiry. Given that the research is situated in Sápmi, insights from postcolonialism will be used together with theory on internal colonisation, a term which denotes the ongoing colonisation (Tully, 2000).

Postcolonialism provides important insights for the study of colonial legacies and the contestation of colonial domination (Loomba 2015:16). Colonial discourse analysis contributes to a study of colonialism which not only concerns the material reality, but which engages with the ‘intersection of ideas and institutions, knowledge and power’ (Loomba 2015:51). Much like Nyström (2018), Loomba argues that colonisation includes “an ‘epistemic’ aspect” (2015:51). That is, oppression of culture and value systems of the colonised (ibid.). This oppression is itself linked with the colonialist production of knowledge and Western science, which has developed in constant engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems, through selective appropriation and aggressive dismissal of these.

Howitt and Suchet-Pearson (2006) identify how Eurocentric notions of development and conservation, and thus concepts of environmental management, assume a hierarchy and separation between society and nature. This ontological position mirrors other colonial meta-narratives, such as industrialisation and economic growth, which rely on the departure from a 'primitive' state and on 'mastering' nature. These assumptions of hierarchy, separation, and progress inherent in colonial meta-narratives legitimises control and management of colonised people and territories. Indigenous people have been subjugated into this hierarchy, as exemplified by the Swedish race-biological and hierarchical cultural arguments underpinning early Sami policy (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008). As not aligning with these meta-narratives, Indigenous knowledges are rendered invisible. With the obfuscation of alternative knowledges, colonial knowledge assumes a sort of universal legitimacy. As such, colonial narratives institutionalise and legitimise certain representations of the world yet framed in objective terms (Howitt and Suchet-Pearson, 2006).

Decolonisation is closely linked with postcolonialism and relates to the questioning of colonisation and its legacies, as well as challenging and changing colonial expressions (Kovach, 2009; Smith 2012). One cornerstone of postcolonial and decolonising studies then is to deconstruct historical representations, and to further reconstruct future projects, making narratives central in decolonisation processes (Bhabra, 2009; Nyström, 2018). Bhabra (2009) argues that the meta-narratives associated with the construction of nations must be understood in relation to their silencing and marginalisation of alternative perspectives. Such an undertaking cannot be done if colonial encounters remain silenced and obscured.

Postcolonialism provides an approach for deconstructing the impact of colonisation in Sápmi, both in terms of the material and the ideological. However, to be better attuned to the context, and to further highlight techniques for maintaining material domination, the concept of internal colonisation will also be used.

3.2 Internal colonisation

Internal colonisation departs from the traditional constructions of colonisation in its focus on the geographical coexistence of colonial metropolis and colony. In other words, "the colonising society is built on the territories of the formerly free, and now colonised, peoples" (Tully, 2000:39). As such, the colonial domination has not ceased, but is rather ongoing, masked by assimilation measures and unequal negotiations regarding jurisdiction over territories (Tully, 2000). The concept of internal colonisation thus serves the purpose of providing a colonial lens that is sensitive to the Indigenous experience and situation in a context of sustained colonisation.

Internal colonisation, Tully (2000) argues, is a slow process which continuously undergoes changes to sustain the system. It has developed, and continue to do so, in response to a number of factors: the capitalist market; overriding objectives of colonial societies; and in response to the struggles of Indigenous people against and within colonisation (Tully,

2000:38). In this system, where the colonisers and the Indigenous people inhabit the same territories, the position of the coloniser has been formed in this engagement with, or rather – appropriation of, Indigenous people and their lands to establish “territorial foundations of the dominant society itself” (Tully, 2000:39). The geographical coexistence separates internal colonisation from external colonisation, meaning that colonies in the former cannot create geographically independent societies. As a result, internal colonisation is imbued with unresolved contradictions and struggles for land, resources, and jurisdiction (ibid.). In this manner, forests in Sápmi are sites for these contradictions and struggles, making it integral for understanding the ongoing colonial processes in Sweden.

4 Contextualisation

To better understand the context in which the research is situated, this section will begin by focusing on the history of the relationship between Sweden and Sami, highlighting the connection between resource exploitation, reindeer-herding and Sami rights. It will then situate the NFP narrative in its contemporary context.

4.1 Sami policy, reindeer-herding and forestry

Understanding Swedish Sami policy is relevant on several levels as it is intertwined with a system of Sami rights, including those relating to Sami claims to land and the right to self-determination. Furthermore, policy can be understood as a tool to legitimise colonisation. Examples of Swedish Sami policy includes the RGA of 1886 and the subsequent Swedish Reindeer Husbandry Act (RSHA) (Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008). However, due to the co-existence of forestry and reindeer-herding on the same lands, it can be argued that laws and regulation on forestry are implicitly linked with Sami policy and rights as well.

Lantto and Mörkenstam (2008) describes how Swedish Sami policy has historically been legitimised by a certain system of knowledge and beliefs. The RGA, which set aside grazing lands for reindeer-herding, and the right to hunt, fish and to forestry, to reindeer herders, was based on a conception of Sami as nomads. This “nomadic way of life” was central to good reindeer-herding and institutionalised the view of the ‘real Sami’ as people living a nomadic way of life, singling out reindeer-herding as the legislative defining aspect of Sami (ibid.).

This Swedish official representation of Sami as nomads and thus as ‘uncivilised’ justified the paternalistic style of policy which can be discerned in the RGA. Such policy and its underpinning narrative can be viewed with a colonial lens as institutionalising, and legitimising, a hierarchical order that grants the coloniser control over colonised lands and people (ibid.). It can further be viewed as the coloniser’s attempt at retaining jurisdiction over Indigenous lands (Tully, 2000).

Prior to the RGA, the Swedish Crown had colonised land in northern Sweden, based on the terra nullius narrative. This started the development of forestry activity in northern Sweden, which became increasingly important during the 17th century. Parallel land-use was introduced around this time, and thus the notion that reindeer-herding and forestry were to co-exist (Widmark, 2009). A growing Swedish population and industrialisation in the 19th century increased the need for land. In line with Tully’s (2000) concept of internal colonisation, the Swedish state’s implementation of the RGA which followed can be seen as

an attempt to retain jurisdiction over the Indigenous territories in response to the capitalist market and the overriding objectives of the colonial society.

Forestry was important to the Swedish welfare system during the 20th century, and as such imbued with political and economic importance for the majority society (Widmark, 2009). Forests were linked with welfare and progress in the narratives of the state at the time, embedded in the meta-narratives of development and growth. As the Swedish state entered this ‘modern era’, marked by ‘technological advancement’ and rationalisation during the 1950s and 60s, reindeer-herding, and Sami policy were subject to the same rationalisation processes as any other industry. That is, issues were framed in terms of efficiency, profitability, and technological progress. The established view of reindeer-herding as nomadic was thus viewed as an obstacle, causing the state to suggest that the ‘industry’ was lagging behind (Lantto Mörkenstam, 2008). As Lantto and Mörkenstam (2008) suggests, the framing in such economical terms sustained the hierarchical colonial politics, cloaked in more neutral terms. Moreover, by recognising reindeer-herding as any other economic interest, the issue was yet again separated from the more fundamental issues of Sami rights.

In this manner, reindeer-herding could not be detached from other land uses in the same geographical areas. Competing ‘interests’ had to be managed by the state, to minimise conflicts. This argument remains and reinforces the role of the state as a regulatory power with a legitimate say in reindeer-herding matters, ultimately a continuation of paternalistic policy (ibid.).

4.2 Mobilisation, the Sámediggi and self-determination

Important to note is the political mobilisation of Sami in response to Swedish colonisation. An early organisation which provided a focal point for this mobilisation was the Swedish Sami Association (SSA) in 1950. SSA provided a contestation against the Swedish official view of Sami usage of land as a ‘privilege’, an argument which laid as the basis for the RGA. The SSA argued, as Indigenous people, their right to reindeer-herding was based on Sami rights to land. This deviated from the official view, as in that narrative, Sami were not recognised as Indigenous (Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008).

Political mobilisation of the Sami, alongside the international debate on Indigenous and minority rights since the 1960s can be connected to the establishment of the Sami Parliament – the Sámediggi. The mobilisation also led to a formal recognition of Sami as Indigenous, leading to a more rights-based debate on Sami policy. Self-determination became an item for debate – that all people should have the right to determine their political status, and to pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. This was rejected by the Swedish state through utilising the ‘blue water thesis’ – self-determination was only argued to be an issue in overseas colonies (ibid.). Rather, Sweden selectively chose to justify rights related to cultural

autonomy, and the establishment of the Sami Parliament (Sámediggi) in 1993 was viewed as an avenue for the Sami to obtain cultural autonomy (ibid.:38). However, self-determination continued to resurface because of the debate surrounding Swedish non-ratification of ILO 169³. The official explanation for the non-ratification refers to the issue of unclear land rights. Sweden maintains that ratification must be postponed until investigations into land rights have been conducted (ibid.).

The Sámediggi functions as an elected representative of the Sami in Sweden. The legal status of the Sámediggi is as an administrative body, with no actual political influence. It is a consultative body which must maintain objectivity, making the dual roles of the organisation rather confusing and problematic (ibid.). It is the Sámediggi, in their role of providing the Sami perspective for a living culture, that has produced the Sápmi environment programme Eallinbiras.

4.3 The National Forest Programme

70 % of the land area in Sweden is covered by forests. Alongside mining and hydropower, Sweden's export-oriented forestry industry is often viewed as the backbone of the Swedish economy (Fischer et al., 2020). Consequently, forest owners, forestry industry, forestry-related academia and the state have historically worked together to ensure that decision-making has facilitated forestry production in a manner favourable for economic gains. Due to the co-existence of reindeer-herding and forestry on the same lands, conflicts between the two are common, and have intensified lately. The tensions between the two, in addition to increased pressure from environmentally oriented actors, led to the initiation of the Swedish NFP process in 2013 (ibid.).

NFP's can be defined as state-initiated national forums for deliberation on forest policy, including both public and private actors (Johansson, 2016:137). In terms of the overarching objectives of the Swedish NFP, it was established early by the Government that the NFP should generate suggestions on how to effectively facilitate the forest's contribution to the "development towards a sustainable society and a growing bio-based economy" (Gov. Bill, 2013/14:41 cited in Johansson 2016:138). This to adapt to the new challenges posed by the spread of bioeconomy in Europe (Johansson, 2016; Fischer et al., 2020). This position was echoed throughout the NFP process, with majority of stakeholders aligning with the idea of a bioeconomy. It should be noted that Sami representation was severely limited throughout the whole NFP process (ibid.)

The concept of bioeconomy emerged in Europe and the US as a new way of ensuring economic growth and competitiveness through technological innovation. Derived from a

³ Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989, an International Labour Organization Convention that if ratified would mean that Sami land rights need to be acknowledged and respected (Sametinget, 2018).

bioresource-centred narrative putting renewable natural resources as the engine for growth, it can be viewed as built on the idea of ecological modernisation. That is, that sustainability can be achieved within the current capitalist system (Fischer et al., 2020:897-898). It thus shares several ontological assumptions with the meta-narratives of development and economic growth.

The research and empirical material have now been situated and the subsequent sections will delve into the methodology and analysis.

5 Methodology

As this research is closely intertwined with politics and with an aim of confronting colonisation, it is positioned within a transformative worldview (Creswell and Creswell, 2018), and aligned with a decolonising standpoint. Part of the decolonising lens entails the recognition of the political nature of knowledge construction: how Western research and colonisation have constructed knowledge about the world based on their worldview, and further dictated knowledge construction by way of sanctioning ‘objective truths’ and positivism. It has entailed the discrediting of Indigenous knowledge and value systems, as well as Indigenous people themselves (Loomba, 2015).

This positioning informs both research content and process. The research design is qualitative and interpretative. As interpretive research, it seeks contextualised knowledge and rejects the notion of the existence of one objective truth (Kovach, 2009). This is reflected in the choice of method. Narrative is closely linked to knowledge systems, and as such, different truths. It is a political and cultural method, and therefore suitable for the research (ibid.). Another aspect of interpretive research is that the researcher is inherently linked with what is studied: my position as researcher will inevitably be reflected in the meaning that is being made. Reflexivity throughout the process is thus vital and discussed in the following sections.

A final, important aspect that relates to the positioning of this research must be addressed. In transformative and decolonising research, there is an emphasis on giving back to the community (Smith, 2012; Creswell and Creswell, 2017). As there is no direct collaboration with research participants, the research will instead attempt at creating meaning and understandings that provides a challenge for reform in the politics in which the colonial relations are embedded.

5.1 Method

This research has performed a narrative analysis, of which there is “no best method” (Robertson, 2017). The method has thus been formed according to the understandings of narrative presented below, as well as the research question.

Narrative in the social sciences has various definitions. In its most basic form, a narrative can be understood as an account of events (Pierce, 2008). Hinchman and Hinchman provides an elaborated definition:

Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it (cited in Elliot 2011:4)

Many scholars agree that the use of studying narratives derives from the importance of narrative as a tool for humans to understand reality (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). In political science, narratives are thus important as they are created, and used to "interpret and understand the political realities around us" (ibid.:316). This is done individually and collectively (ibid.).

A narrative contains a setting, a complicating action, and a resolution. As such, a narrative tells of something that is noteworthy, meaning that it deviates from something which is normal, such as a problem. Herein lies the justification for the narrative and it illustrates a state of disequilibrium. In other words, the narrative may address a problem which has caused a state of disequilibrium. The purpose of the narrative is thus to resolve the issue which has caused the disequilibrium (Robertson, 2017).

Three key features of narratives according to Jane Elliott (2005) are their temporal, meaningful and social aspects. The first refers to narratives as representations of a sequence of events linked together. This temporal ordering endows the narrative with its distinction from a description. A narrative presents an explanation, as it links together events in a casual manner. Second, narratives become meaningful when there is an evaluation of the events. This may be done explicitly or implicitly and can be understood as an interpretation by the narrator of the events. The evaluation informs the audience 'how they are to understand the *meaning* of the events that constitute the narrative' (Elliott, 2005:9, emphasis in original). However, agreement on evaluation of a narrative is also dependent on negotiation with the audience, whereby such is reached by the audience understanding the evaluation. This highlights the third feature, that a narrative is influenced by the social context (Elliott, 2005).

The three features disclose the importance of content, structure, and context of narratives. Scholars in narrative research stress the role of context and culture: the stories that are told are influenced by what is valued in our culture. Collectives, such as nations or groups, share and tell stories that draw on collective understandings, creating concrete narratives which themselves are derived from more abstract narratives (Robertson, 2017), often called meta-narratives. In Western thought, these often include the narratives of industrialisation, development, and economic growth (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). In analysing more concrete narratives, we then acquire a tool for elucidating the circulation of meaning in social contexts and the power dynamics that not only regulate understandings in society (Robertson, 2017), but which sanction certain solutions to problems.

Narratives can also become sites of cultural contestation. The understandings underpinning a certain narrative may be challenged by those who feel marginalised by the ordering of life that a dominant narrative sanction. This gives rise to alternative narratives or counter narratives (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). Such contestation reflects 'struggles over meaning' (Robertson, 2017).

The use of narrative, or story, is a popular method in Indigenous and decolonising research. An important point that is raised by Indigenous scholars is that the use of narrative is not an apolitical or acultural method. Rather, as Kovach (2009) argue, one must consider the knowledge system which sustains, and is inextricably linked with, the narrative. A narrative does not present an objective truth. As such, narratives can contribute to shattering the illusion of ‘natural’ truths that have been constructed by Western institutions.

5.2 Data collection

Narratives can be found in various forms and from different sources. This research will analyse two narratives in accordance with the research question. The empirical material has been translated from Swedish to English, using my own language skills and online dictionaries. As such, it is not guaranteed that the analysis is free from interpretation errors.

On the one hand, a section from the strategy document for the Swedish NFP is used, titled “The Forest Nation Sweden – towards sustainable use of forests”, pages 6-8, along with the vision of the programme, page 12 (Ds 2018/N2018.15:6). This document represents the Swedish state’s view on forests.

On the other hand, to represent the alternative narrative, is the document by the Sámediggi called ‘Eallinbiras’, pages 3-11, which they say is “our overarching story that ties us all together” (Sametinget, 2016). It is chosen based on including the relationship to forests as expressed by Sami.

In addition to the empirical material, secondary sources in the form of research articles were used. Articles by Lantto and Mörkenstam (2008) and Widmark (2009) have been used to situate the historical Sami – Sweden relationship. This was used to situate the texts within the historical and cultural context, a necessary step in order to analyse the narrative context. Additionally, research articles by Johansson (2016) and Fischer et al. (2020) analysing the proceedings leading up to the NFP strategy document, used to contextualise the NFP. All articles were retrieved using Google Scholar.

5.3 Data analysis

As outlined in the theoretical section and in its position as decolonising research, this research will combine the understandings of narrative outlined above to analyse the dominant narrative of the Swedish NFP. It will further ‘see’ the alternative narrative, that of the Sámediggi. Subsequently, it will compare the two.

The analysis is guided by questions that are central to narrative analysis concerning the context, content, and the structure of the narrative. As such, it is divided accordingly, with further questions guiding the analysis.

The structure is guided by questions concerning how events are linked in a casual manner. For example, how are forests and environment, and the use of these, linked with other events?

In terms of content, analysis focused on how the linking of events is evaluated. That is, what is the meaning that is conveyed? How is the audience to understand the meaning of the use of forests? What actors are involved in the narrative? Analysis also covers the problem that is formulated, as well as the solution that is proposed.

Lastly, an analysis of the context will follow. Focus is on how the narrative makes links to the historical and contemporary context. Questions also include how the narrative is linked to meta-narratives available within the historical and cultural context of the research, and if they reiterate or counter these meta-narratives (Esin et al. 2013:213).

After the separate analysis of the two narratives, they are compared in a third section, analysing them according to the theoretical framework. This is analysed along two themes: silencing of alternative narrative and struggles over land, resources, and jurisdiction. The former relates to the ideological functioning of colonisation. The latter analyses how the material functioning of colonisation manifests in the narratives. While the material conditions cannot be separated from the ideological (Loomba 2015), for the purpose analysis they are analysed separately.

5.4 Ethical considerations

As a non-Indigenous person, part of the colonising society, engaging in research not only related to Sami issues, but *utilising* narrative told by Sami, it must be recognised that I cannot share the experiences of the story that is presented here, nor can I speak on behalf of the Sami. What I can, and intend to do, is to be an ‘allied other’, striving to critically question the colonial structures in Western institutions: to challenge Western ways of knowing and challenge myths of universal truths (Mutua and Swadener 2004, cited in Denzin and Lincoln 2008:6). Avenues for taking this position include letting myself be guided by Indigenous and decolonial methodologies. However, as Smith (2012) argue, as non-Indigenous I cannot actually carry out such research. Nevertheless, with guidance from these methodologies, along with theoretical literature on internal colonialism and postcolonialism, I hope to create space for Indigenous research and knowledge within Western institutions (Kovach, 2009). It should be further noted that the research emanates from having shared interests. Decolonising Sápmi entails the challenge to colonial and patriarchal structures which sustain unsustainable resource policies, an interest that I share.

Further ethical considerations have been made concerning the framing and design of research. Kuokkanen (2000) points out the importance of formulating research in line with the perceived needs of Indigenous communities. Further, it is important to consider what the objectives of Sami research are (ibid.). In reference to the former, the formulation of the research problem departed from the demands by Sami in Sweden to decolonise Sápmi (Jannok 2016; Aksoy 2020)

Objectives of Sami research are derived from Sámediggi's statement on research. There are four strategic principles which aim to state the responsibilities of researchers to focus on research *with* Sami rather than *about*, and should be regarded as a baseline for decisions in relation to Sami research. There are four principles, one which is about doing decolonised Sami research (Sametinget, 2021b). This study will focus on this principle, which states that the impact of colonialism on Western epistemology and knowledge systems must be disclosed (ibid.).

5.5 Limitations

There are four significant limitations to this study which are entangled with its decolonising position. Some are linked with the ethical considerations outlined above. One limitation concerns the collaboration emphasised in decolonising and Indigenous research (Smith 2012; Kovach, 2009). Due to the limited time and scope, I cannot build personal relationships and trust with the Sami communities, nor are there any participants who can be co-researchers and aid in interpretation of the findings.

The second limitation relates to the notion that the Sami are not a homogenous group, and as such there is a danger of reproducing a generalised discourse of Sami identity. A third limitation is that there are inherent power dynamics that cannot be overcome, as I cannot remove myself from my position as a member of the colonising society, meaning that I am in a position of power. The choice to conduct the research, and the methodological considerations, are still choices ultimately emanating from me, a non-Indigenous person. This presents a limitation to the research's position as decolonising and in its use of decolonising and Indigenous methodology. While care has been taken to let the research problem be formulated according to needs of communities in Sápmi, it is still based on my perception of these needs. While narrative is a method used in Indigenous research, the Western style of narrative analysis used here is different from how it is done in Indigenous research, where categorical boundaries are rejected, and a holistic approach is used (Kovach, 2009). The danger of reproducing Western epistemological dominance is thus almost unavoidable.

The fourth limitation pertains to the issue of language. This is an extremely important limitation to note, as the Sami languages are central, and inherently linked with, Sami culture and worldview (Sametinget, 2021a). I do not speak any Sami language myself, and the Sami narrative in the research is written in the language of the majority society – Swedish. As such, the narrative has to a certain extent already lost one piece of its wholeness.

5.6 Reflexivity

In light of the limitations and as interpretive research, reflexivity is paramount. My position explained above has informed the research process, yet I share the notion by Lawrence and Raitio that research is inherently political, and it must respond to the political context in which it takes place (2016:117). In the context of social injustice, it thus becomes morally indefensible to remain too disengaged and objective. I hope that the acknowledgement of this, and of my position, illustrates the rationale for my subjective and engaged researcher role.

6 Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the two narratives, structured along structure, content and context, which stem from the key narrative features discussed above (see appendix 1 for summary of analysis). Subsequently an analysis according to the theoretical framework of postcolonialism and internal colonisation, is presented.

6.1 The tale of Sweden's sustainable forestry

The narrative tells the story of “the forest nation Sweden”, and the work towards sustainable forestry (Ds 2018/N2018.15:6). When combined with the vision of the NFP-program:

The forest, the green gold, should create job opportunities and support sustainable growth in the whole country, and further contribute to the development of a growing bioeconomy (ibid.:12)

the narrative tells the story of what Swedish forests currently mean for the country and what the future purpose of forests is.

6.1.1 Structure

The narrative provides linkages between the forest and different types of events. The narrative links forest, and the use of these, with economic, social and environmental aspects, or – ‘events’. It thus presents an explanation for the audience how the forest is linked with these different aspects. The narrative sets out by presenting the role of forest in Sweden:

Sweden is a forest abundant country, approximately 70 % of its land area is forested. The forest capture and store carbon, protects various species, as well as economic values, recreation, and brings prosperity to people (ibid.:6)

As illustrated by this introduction then, and throughout the narrative, the NFP links and divides the importance of the forest into three categories; economic, social, and environmental.

In the latter half of the narrative, it recounts specifically for the current economic contribution of the forest to the Swedish economy, followed by the development of Swedish forestry and

forest politics over time. In these sections, the narrative makes use of statistics, laws, and regulations to illustrate the links. The economic contribution of the forest is linked with growth of the forestry sector and employment opportunities. To address the environmental aspects, the narrative links Swedish forest policies with a historically sustainable use of forests. Nature and culture values are linked with reindeer-herding *industry* alongside tourism industry and public health. In sum, the NFP presents an explanation for how forests and Swedish forest policies are connected to favourable economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

6.1.2 Content

Subsequent to, or sometimes embedded in, the explanations are evaluations. Through the evaluation of the links, the narrative informs the audience of the value and importance of Swedish forests. Following the introduction above which highlights a few of the economic, environmental, and social features, the narrative posits that:

Economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable forestry is of great significance for a sustainable society. The Swedish forest is of great significance for the growth of industry and competitiveness, employment, and sustainable growth in the whole country, for a prosperous countryside and for recreation, in addition to a growing circular and bio-based economy (ibid.:6)

These explanations and evaluations offer an interpretation of how the Swedish society – the audience, are to understand society’s relation to forests, arguably cementing an understanding of forests as a resource to be used in a certain manner to provide economic, social, and environmental benefits to the society.

Actors

Five actors can be discerned in the narrative: Swedish forests, Swedish forestry/forest industry, unspecified “interest groups”, the Government and the Swedish society. The producer of the narrative is the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation on behalf of the Government. While not explicitly addressed, in its function as a publicly available government document, the audience can be perceived as the general public.

The narrative talks about Swedish forests as a common resource, one which encompasses several different values and is “characterised by multiple-use in various forms” (ibid.:6). The multiple uses include, in addition to production of forest products:

Conservation of biological diversity, culture and environmental values, aesthetic values, reindeer-herding, hunting, berry and mushroom picking, along with summer pastures and outdoor life (ibid.:6).

By including these various uses under the umbrella of Swedish forests, the narrative reinforces the view that these multiple uses are part of *Swedish* sustainable forestry and should all strive towards fulfilling the objectives that the program sets out.

The (Swedish) society is portrayed as the beneficiary of forests and sustainable forestry. While the narrative does take note of different interests, it does so in an assimilative manner, by using the using the ‘society benefits’-narrative. Implicitly then, the narrative claims jurisdiction over all uses, by referring to the forest as a common resource that is used for the good of the ‘society’. As the interest in this research lies with colonisation of Sápmi, it should be noted that reindeer-herding is only mentioned twice in the narrative, and no reference is made to the Sami or Sápmi.

Problem and solution formulation

The narrative posits that “Sweden has a long tradition of forest policy in favour of a long-term sustainable use” (ibid.:7). The problem, however, can be discerned as adapting and developing sustainable forestry in response to “changes in the world economy, population growth and demography, climate, ecosystems, digitalisation and technical development” (ibid.:8). Moreover, against the backdrop of different perceptions among different interests regarding the state of the forest and to what extent the forest contributes to the society (ibid.:8), the narrative emphasises the need to “over time and geography strive towards balancing all dimensions and uses” (ibid.:8). The latter is part of what we may identify as the solution, and reiterates the notion that the programme claims jurisdiction over all uses, across the whole country. The solution is tied up with the rationale for the NFP, which is to function as a dialogical process that continuously revise what sustainable forestry entails.

Sustainable forestry is developed with new knowledge and changes in the surrounding world, and not the least alongside society’s perception of what sustainable forestry entails. Research, inventories, and follow-ups are thus important for long-lasting sustainable use. Continuous dialogue and follow-ups of the implementation of the politics ensure that both new knowledge and changes in the world, such as value changes, can be integrated into the politics and its implementation (ibid.:8).

The above paragraph constitutes the finishing section of the narrative. By merely reading the narrative, we cannot take for granted what type of knowledge or research is referred to, nor can we discern who is included, or excluded from the dialogical processes. However, in analysis of narrative context, answers to these questions can be found.

In sum, the narrative conveys the meaning of forests and forestry in Sweden, which are to be understood as a common resource to be used for the development of a sustainable society, and which increases economic growth and employment.

6.1.3 Context

The narrative is characterised by an emphasis on positive development that goes hand in hand with sustainable forestry. “Positive development” “increased employment”, “growing tourism industry” and “growth” (ibid.:7) are phrases and words used in conjunction with the economic and social events that are linked with forests. In a section which provides explanation and evaluation of how the audience is to understand sustainable forestry, we find this sentence:

An increased emphasis on refinement and processing in the forest industry, together with investment in innovation and research strengthens the growth of the industry and its competitiveness, creates new employment opportunities in the whole country and pushes the development of new sustainable bio-based products from the forest (ibid.:7)

With this emphasis on growth and development, it can be argued that the narrative aligns with, and reiterates the Western meta-narratives of development and economic growth (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). The narrative positions forests, and sustainable use of these, primarily through a transition to a bioeconomy, as a driver for economic growth and job creation, thus aligning with the emerging bio-resource centred narratives in Europe and the US (Fischer et al. 2020). The narrative mirrors the separation between nature and society inherent in Eurocentric narratives of development, thus reinforcing the view that the environment can be separated, controlled, and managed (Howitt and Suchet-Pearson 2006). This embeddedness suggests that the research and knowledge referred to in the solution is such that is sanctioned in the meta-narratives.

The narrative further reiterates previous dominant understandings of the Swedish forest. That is, as a valuable resource for the society, particularly when exploited for economic gains. Additionally, the narrative in which reindeer-herding is represented as just another industry is reproduced.

In sum, the narrative reproduces the Eurocentric meta-narratives which grants colonisation legitimacy.

6.2 Eallinbiras – the Sápmi environment

Eallinbiras is the Sámediggi’s programme for a Sami living environment. It provides a framework for the value systems of the Sámediggi and further articulates the objectives for a strong, thriving and sustainable Sami environment, something which is linked with the future of Sápmi and its people (Sametinget, 2021a). The meaning conveyed by the narrative is counter to the dominant NFP narrative and can, as such, be seen as a counter-narrative in the historical and cultural context (Robertson, 2017).

6.2.1 Structure

The narrative about Sápmi is a holistic account, or explanation, of the connection between Sami culture and activities, including language, árbediehtu, joik⁴ and spirituality, and the environment. It departs from establishing the value system in Sápmi, followed by a section on árbediehtu and nature from a Sami landscape perspective. Subsequently, there is a section on balanced development and sustainability. Together, the three sections narrate events in a manner which provides an explanation for the historical and contemporary relationship between Sami culture and the environment, as well as linking events such as colonisation, climate change and resource exploitation with changes in adaptability, wounding of culture and Sami people, in addition to imposition of Western worldviews, science, religion and language (Sametinget, 2021a).

A key insight is that the narrative does not deal with forests separately but is rather included in the notion of the environment. This illustrates a fundamental difference in worldview between the two narratives. This structure bears witness of the underpinning knowledge system.

6.2.2 Content

In *Eallinbiras* it can be discerned that there is an emphasis on close relationship to the environment and a balanced use of it, inextricable link between all aspects of Sami culture and the Sápmi environment, a desire of self-determination, and an urge towards the majority society to recognise all this (ibid.).

Actors

The actors involved in *Eallinbiras* are the Sámediggi, Sápmi and Sami, the majority society, Sami organisations and institutions, as well as political entities and institutions in Sweden. The latter, that is the political and administrative institutions, constitute the audience, as the document is explicitly addressed to these actors (ibid.:3). The producer is the Sámediggi. As Sami and Sápmi are portrayed as inseparable and include all dimensions of Sami culture and the environment in Sápmi, the two are posited as hurt by the problem that is formulated in the subsequent section. They are likewise, alongside the majority society, posited as the beneficiaries of the proposed solution.

Eallinbiras separate Sápmi from the majority society, thus resisting the conception of Swedish society as a homogenous entity. Rather, the majority society and non-Sami activities in Sápmi are cautiously pointed out as contributors to the problem that is illustrated.

⁴ Árbediehtu is Sami traditional knowledge and joik is Sami traditional singing.

Problem and solution formulation

The narrative tells how people in Sápmi have adapted their use of the environment in response to changes in it by way of finding balance between what the nature can give, and what can be used (ibid.:4). Understanding that balance is rooted in all the dimensions of Sápmi, as explained above: language, árbediehtu, reindeer-herding, hunting, fishing and beyond (ibid.). The narrative posits that this ability to adapt to significant changes in the environment and continue to develop is inherent in their worldview and relationship to the environment. However, links are also made between a decrease in this ability and severely limited influence over land, water, and environmental resources in Sápmi. Moreover, with the impact of non-Sami activity in Sápmi due to increased demand for environmental resources, leading to fragmentation and increased strain on the environment (ibid.:11).

Self-determination is then linked with an increased capability to face these challenges, as well as to the continuation and survival of Sami values (ibid.:7, 11). Moreover, a greater recognition and respect of the Sami view and values is of relevance not only for Sápmi, but for the majority society as well:

An ecological, social, and economically sound long-term keeping of environmental resources are central to the development and survival of Sami culture. The Sami view on how environmental resources ought to be used is a role model for navigating a sustainable approach to the use of land and waters. In many regards, the majority society can learn from the Sami approach. (ibid.:11)

The solution thus appears twofold: self-determination and greater influence over land, water, and the environment; and the recognition by the majority society of balanced development and sustainability as seen from the Sami view. The linking of the environment, the ability to live in a balanced relationship with it and its significance for Sami culture convey how recognition of Sami land rights are intricately linked Sami rights, the health and survival of Sami culture, and a thriving Sápmi.

6.2.3 Context

Eallinbiras both links with and presents a counter narrative to three larger narratives: the Swedish representation of Sami and Sami rights as exclusively linked to reindeer-herding, the Swedish forest narrative and to the colonial and Western metanarratives of development and economic growth, separation, hierarchy, and progress. The holistic account, and the Sami worldview underpinning the narrative, explicitly extends the notion of Sami. Sami rights are linked with land rights, and the ability to use the environment, and thus forests, on their terms. Reindeer-herding is central to Sami culture, yet constitutes only one of many dimensions and Sami uses of environment (ibid.:8). It is thus linking with, and challenging the historical and contemporary Swedish narrative of reindeer-herding and forestry as two national and competing economic interests that legitimises the state's paternalistic policy and monopoly on decision-making regarding these issues. It further counters the understanding of forests as a

resource to be exploited through forestry and managed in isolation by rejecting the separation between nature and society. The explicit non-separation of nature, society and culture engages with, and challenges the Western meta-narratives above.

6.3 Silencing and marginalisation

A postcolonial reading of the narratives discloses the ideological functioning of colonisation, showing how Sami views are silenced. In a comparison of the two narratives, it is evident that the relationship to forests is negotiated differently. The structures of the narratives link events to the use of forests differently. The NFP narrative categorises events by way of separating the importance of forests into three different domains: economic, social, and environmental. Eallinbiras do not separate forests from the environment of which they are part. Rather, reference is made to the environment. As a result, there is no explicit link to the use of forests, but rather the use of the environment. This is subsequently linked to culture, which itself includes many dimensions. This comparison reflects a stark contrast in how forests are linked to events, and hints about the worldviews and knowledge that sustain the narratives. The absence in the NFP of a holistic conception and any reflection over forest exploitation and colonisation, in conjunction with the use of facts and figures to convey a seemingly objective account of the importance of forests, disclose a silencing of Sami narratives and knowledges on the forest.

The silencing can be further observed in the content. Eallinbiras speaks of a balanced use of the environment, a notion which is not touched upon in the NFP. Rather, the NFP says sustainable use, in a manner which aligns with changes in society's perception. Interestingly, Eallinbiras says that the majority society can learn from the Sami approach, yet no recognition is made of this view in the NFP. It is only recognised that reindeer-herding, in its function as a user of forests, can contribute to forming society's perception. This mirrors the historical selective appropriation and assimilation of Sami systems.

The contextual reading of the narratives further exhibits the ideological functioning of colonisation. Historically, we have seen how both forest and Sami policy is based on the Swedish representation of the two. The NFP reproduces this representation by extracting reindeer-herding, and aggressively dismissing all other dimensions of Sami value and knowledge systems. While social and environmental values of forests have been gradually incorporated in the dominant narrative, the role of forests as a resource for exploitation and economic growth has remained constant. The NFP reiterates the meta-narratives of development and growth, and the assumptions of separation and hierarchy in concepts of nature and society, thus obfuscating Sami knowledges and values.

6.4 Struggles over land, resources, and jurisdiction

Turning to the physical and political functioning of colonisation, internal colonisation is used to show how the narratives witness of on-going colonisation.

Tully (2000) argues that the system of internal colonisation is imbued with unresolved contradictions and struggles for land, resources, and jurisdiction. Treaty-making and assimilation are techniques used by colonisers. When comparing the two narratives, we see how these are manifested.

In the structure, by way of linking events, the NFP posits that forests are linked with growth and income for the society, whereas Eallinbiras posits that forests, as part of their environment, are linked to Sami culture and livelihoods. This presents a first, and fundamental unresolved contradiction on the understanding of land and resources. This inevitably leads to different evaluations, or meaning of forests. Moreover, it leads to a difference in problem and solution formulation, as observed in the contents.

The NFP maintains that use of forests must retain opportunities for economic growth employment. Solutions are found in continued control over all forest use, balancing uses for the purposes of growth and progress. Eallinbiras formulates the problem in terms of difficulties in adapting and maintaining a balanced relationship to the environment, arguing for increased rights for Sami, self-determination and thus a wider recognition of Sami value and knowledge systems. The Swedish solution then, is implicitly to retain jurisdiction over Sami lands, framed as a society-wide issue of economic growth, whereas Eallinbiras is struggling to regain jurisdiction, formulated as an issue of rights.

Struggles over land and resources are further reflected in the narrative contents. The content of the NFP tells how different uses – including reindeer-herding and forestry – must be reconciled, implying that there are unresolved conflicts regarding land. In Eallinbiras, this struggle is more explicitly addressed: “Today, us Sami barely exercise any influence over land, water and environmental resources in Sami territories” (Sametinget, 2021a:11). Eallinbiras narrates the continued struggle for self-determination, as well as how it links with land rights. The content of the NFP narrative shows what can be discerned as some of the strategies employed by the Swedish state to respond to these struggles. Assimilation and treaty-making, techniques used by colonisers (Tully, 2000), are observed by the assimilative inclusion of reindeer-herding in the narrative. Attempting to balance the multiple uses can be seen as treaty-making. This adjustment to the struggles of the Sami does not resolve the contradictions inherent in the relation between them and the colonising society, but rather reinforces the non-recognition of Sami demands and rights.

In the context analysis, we see how The NFP narrative reiterates meta-narratives of development and growth and the Swedish narrative of reindeer-herding being equal to any other land use. The universal legitimacy of meta-narratives arguably grants the cornerstone of the NFP narrative legitimacy with the audience. The historical and cultural context thus facilitates and obscures the material functioning of colonisation. However, the assumption, or

illusion, on which the NFP gains public legitimacy for retaining jurisdiction over forests becomes questionable when acknowledging the counter narrative.

Eallinbiras' challenge to Swedish narratives on forests, Sami identity and the meta-narratives of development and growth is a further manifestation of struggle over land, as the challenge to these are entangled with their struggle for land and jurisdiction. In challenging these, Eallinbiras rejects the notion of a separation between people and nature, thereby destabilising the Western narratives and contesting both the material and ideological functioning of colonisation.

7 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the narrative underpinning the Swedish NPF and the Sami environment programme, Eallinbiras. It has been shown that colonisation manifests in the narratives by way of silencing Sami voices and knowledges and through the contradictions and struggles in relation to land, resources and jurisdiction that have been discerned in them. This was distinguished by comparing the dominant narrative of Sweden and the counter narrative of the Sami. In acknowledging the Sami narrative, it at once becomes evident that there is no universal truth. It thus allowed the research to question the universality and legitimacy of Swedish narratives. Together with the theoretical framework, the research has disclosed the ongoing colonisation of Sápmi in the context of forests, in addition to the linkages between knowledge systems and colonisation. The research thus suggests that the representation and use of the forest can be seen as an opportunity for the coloniser to maintain both the ideological functioning of colonisation, as well as the material functioning. It has further showed that a recognition of Sami knowledge systems is linked with self-determination, rights, and decolonisation.

Going forward, it remains important to continue acknowledging and recognise Indigenous knowledges, to destabilise and deconstruct Western narratives, so that Indigenous and colonised people can regain the ability to freely form their own definitions of development. Future research in Sweden ought to continue applying a decolonial lens to contemporary resource use and do so in collaboration with Sami, something which was not possible in this research. While the present study is contextual, the overarching insights gained here can be used to disclose connections between colonisation and resources in similar contexts of internal colonisation, such as Finland and Norway, North America, South America, New Zealand and Australia.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of analysis, NFP

	Structure	Content	Context
NFP	<p>Separation and categorisation.</p> <p>Forest and use of forests are linked with three different events: economic, social, and environmental.</p>	<p>Meaning</p> <p>Forest is a resource used to provide economic, social, and environmental benefits for the society.</p> <p>Sustainable forestry is important for economic growth and employment.</p> <p>Actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swedish forests - Swedish forestry/ forest industry - Interest groups - Government - Swedish society <p>Problem</p> <p>Continue developing sustainable forestry in response to political-economic and environmental changes while maintaining economic growth.</p> <p>Solution</p> <p>Balancing all uses over time and space. Using research and new knowledge to facilitate the development of sustainable forestry.</p>	<p>Reiterates dominant narratives of Swedish forests and the Swedish narrative on reindeer-herding.</p> <p>Reiterates development and economic growth meta-narratives.</p>

9.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of analysis, Eallinbiras

	Structure	Content	Context
Eallinbiras	<p>Holistic conception of nature, forests are not singled out.</p> <p>The environment, and use of it, is linked with culture. Colonisation is linked with changes in adaptability and wounding of culture.</p>	<p>Meaning The environment is an integral dimension of Sami culture. The ability to maintain balanced use of the environment, on own terms, is detrimental for the survival of Sami culture.</p> <p>Actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sámediggi - Sápmi, Sami - Majority society - Sami organisations and institutions - Swedish political and administrative institutions <p>Problem Ability to adapt to changes in the environment and maintain balanced relationship with it is limited by limited influence over land, resources, and water in addition to non-Sami exploitation activity in Sápmi</p> <p>Solution Recognition of Sami values and knowledges, greater influence over land and water, self-determination and increased rights.</p>	<p>Counters the Swedish separation-narrative of forests and the Swedish reindeer-herding narrative of the Sami.</p> <p>Counters the development and economic growth meta-narratives.</p>