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Abstract

Recent forest clearance in North Sweden aims, besides forest regeneration, at different changes of land use. Predominantly, forest land is converted to roads, but in notifications on forest felling housing sites, nature protection, and, interestingly, pasture and cropland can be found among the goals. This contrasts with passive reforestation or active forest plantation as prevailing conceptions of trends in the boreal landscape as presented in research publications and official accounts alike, concurrent with concerns about the futures of (open) cultural landscapes. Similarly, tensions may arise while attempting to place recent forest clearance in a wider context, as deforestation can be regarded of as coinciding with losses of habitats and/or livelihoods, and as a driver of global change. This paper opens up the extent and goals of recent forest clearance in the northern-most counties in Sweden and analyses motives behind forest felling for pasture or crop land. The materials used are descriptive statistics and farm level case studies. The paper ends with discussing links between land use conversion and the emerging quest for renewable energy sources, in this case stump harvesting, on one hand, and the demand for profitability as part of neoliberal economic discourse, on the other.

Keywords: land use change, land use conversion, forest clearance, boreal agriculture, stump harvesting, farmer decision-making

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