Colonial Struggle and the Infrastructures of Knowing: a story from Sápmi

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Introduction

In spring-winter (giđasdálvi) at the end of winter Sámi people hunt ducks. In the past fresh food was scarce on the subarctic plateau at this time of year, but they hunted just enough to give the family fresh meat. This hunt, it’s called the lodden, the spring-winter duck hunt, is central to Sámi ecological and social knowledge. Except that since the 1950s the tradition has been squeezed to near extinction. For the Norwegian colonial state, spring-winter duck hunting is environmentally damaging (though recreational autumn duck hunting is not). For Sámi people recreational duck hunting at any time of year is offensive and disrespectful. And it is particularly damaging to shoot autumn fledgeling birds.

This chapter is about colonial pressure, Sámi tactics of resistance, and two quite different ways of living in and knowing the world. About indigeneity, colonialism, epistemic decentering and political decentralising, in particular it is about how to resist. Is it better to struggle within the rules and conventions and ways of knowing of a colonial state? Or to break those rules? Sámi experience suggests that this is a matter of tactics. Sometimes rule-breaking works. Sometimes rule-following is better. It all depends. But as many have noted, the dilemma is that to follow the rules of colonial states is also reproduce the conditions of coloniality (Nadasdy 2003). And this is the particular focus of our chapter.

To think about this, we explore what we call the infrastructures of knowing. This phrase is our way of saying that all knowing practices, colonial and otherwise, both draw on and help to reproduce heterogeneous resources. So, infrastructures of knowing are not mainly about water, electricity, or sewerage. Instead, they are the circumstances that make knowing possible at all; that generate what Michel Foucault (1976, xix) called ‘les conditions de possibilité’, the conditions of possibility. Such circumstances are material and practical, but they are also social, institutional, economic, linguistic, narrative, normative, methodological, epistemological and metaphysical. In short, they are heterogeneous.

So far so good. But this is difficult to say well because practices of knowing don’t simply depend on such heterogeneous infrastructures. As we said above, they also help to reproduce them. There’s a performative feedback loop at work here that escapes the gravitational pull of the agency/structure divide. This is because ways of knowing also help to make the conditions which give them life. We need, then, to think of practices-and-their-infrastructures in the same breath, and to understand the ways in which they loop together. The problem is that this is often far from obvious. Some ways of knowing and their infrastructures – say biology or colonial administration – are widely distributed and performed. This means that if they fail in particular instances they do not disappear. Instead, they look fixed, so to speak, ‘structural.’ However, the performativity of knowing practices becomes very obvious when these are precarious. Think of the lodden. Its infrastructures are not being sustained anywhere else. It has been squeezed out of existence almost everywhere in Sápmi apart from a small part of the inland plateau. So, if it is also choked by colonial government here then the infrastructures that make it possible will disappear too. A whole tradition and a way of knowing and living in the land will simply disappear in a chain reaction. Epistemic decentering or political decentralising will become impossible.

We explore this by considering the performative infrastructures of the lodden on the one hand, and
the work of a committee, the *Loddenutvalget* (the ‘*Lodden* Committee’) of the Guovdageaidnu Municipal Council on the other. This Council is the local government for a large part of the subarctic, Sámi-speaking, Norwegian Finnmark plateau. Municipality, county, national government, the Council is therefore a small cog in the Norwegian administrative machinery. This means that it draws on the material, administrative, political, institutional and methodological infrastructures of that machinery: that these that define its conditions of possibility. And it is performative too: in a small way the Council also helps to reproduce those infrastructures. That’s the argument about collusion. But though it is a part of the state apparatus, the municipality has also been battling more or less unsuccessfully for decades with other parts of the government machinery to defend the *lodden*. As it stands the latter is only marginally legal. Its rules are so restrictive that it is barely being practised. And in what follows we tackle the issues of epistemic decentering and institutional decentralising by contrasting the *lodden* with the practices of the Committee. These are two ways of knowing and doing that draw on and help to reproduce two very different infrastructures. And we are particularly interested in the work of the Committee as a form of tactical resistance because it also helps to reproduce more or less repressive state and science-related infrastructures.

Four further introductory observations before we move on. First, colonial government and extraction in Sápmi reaches back at least four centuries. It is a history of economic, political, linguistic, cultural, geographical, material and environmental oppression. We cannot describe this here, but struggles about the *lodden* need to be read against the angry wounding weight of this colonial history. Second, when we talk of ‘Sámi’ or ‘Norwegian’ the distinction is real but it is not binary. Rather, it is a complex and asymmetrical colonial entanglement. As a part of this, the division also tends to homogenise its two halves, whereas in practice ‘Sámi’ and ‘Norwegian’ come in endlessly many different versions. Since our focus is on the colonialism of messy practices of knowing we ask that the chapter not be misread as an exercise in identity politics. Third, three of the authors of the chapter are *árbečehpit* (local knowledge bearers), Sámi activists and also members of the *Lodden* Committee who co-signed its Report. In particular, Johan Henrik Buljo, who chaired the Committee, has a lifetime’s local experience. We do not take this to be problematic, but readers therefore need to understand that this chapter is both substantially self-ethnographic and reflects and extends a collective commitment to political activism. Finally, fourth, there is the issue of language. Originally drafted in English by the fourth author, John Law (a British STS academic who has been working with Sámi colleagues for nearly a decade), it draws deeply on the research and reasoning of the *Lodden* Committee Report. The Report – it is in Norwegian – was mainly drafted by Line Kalak (an activist academic lawyer) and Liv Østmo (another activist and an academic anthropologist who also acted as secretary to the Committee.) But the Committee worked primarily in Sámi. Language is a part of the infrastructures of knowing, an issue we return to below.

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2 In Norwegian Guovdageaidnu becomes Kautokeino.

3 It also relates to a range of other governmental bodies. Some, like the relatively powerless Sámi parliament, the *Sámediggi*, reflect partial recognition by the Norwegian State of Sámi indigenous rights. Others, like the Ministry of Climate and the Environment (*Klima- og Miljødepartementet*) and its Climate Agency (*Miljødirektoratet*) are centrally controlled government agencies.

4 It is limited to: (a) a highly restricted area; (b) ten days; (c) traditional owners who have lived for five years in Guovdageaidnu; (d) 150 ducks of which 50 are (inappropriate) non-diving ducks. It is also so repressively policed that those who practise it do not like to take their children for fear they will be criminalised.

The Lodden

In winter it is cold in sub-arctic Sápmi. No buds, no leaves, there is snow on the ground and ice on the lakes and the rivers. Until all-weather roads came in the 1960s fresh food might become scarce by the end of winter. In the eight season Sámi year the arrival of spring-winter, gidasđálvi, was eagerly awaited. People watched for its signs: cracks in the ice, and the first sign of returning birds: swans, geese and grazing ducks, and finally the diving ducks. This was the moment for the lodden. So Sámi people built (build) hides, čilla, and small rafts, boarri, with decoy ducks čohkkánlottit, and before shotguns they trapped the ducks on those rafts with snares. The lodden was never a large hunt. As we mentioned above, it provided one or two family meals after a hard winter. And it went (it goes) with intensive knowledge of birds, their habits, and their environments, the product of generations of careful observation and adaptation by knowledge bearers, árbečeahpit. Skillful practices. It is an example of traditional ecological knowledge, TEK, with its acute sensitivity to the unfolding patterns in the webs that make up what happens in a particular place, its own special embodied ways of seeing and listening, and its very particular practical skills. It is a profound way of knowing quite unlike and not accepted by biologists and bureaucrats.

Skills. Some of these are physical. Building rafts. Mooring these in the right place. Making decoy ducks. (In this past this was taught in schools.) Locating hides where the birds will gather (Loddenutvalget 2021, 28). Creating these hides out of shrubs and trees or camouflage netting (traditional ways of knowing do not stand still.) Handling guns in boats in ice floes with or without outboard motors. Pulling boats safely over ice. Knowing where to go to watch the ducks, sharing intelligence with other árbečeahpit, and in recent decades catching up on the movements of the heavy-handed SNO, Statens Naturoppsyn (The Norwegian Nature Inspectorate.) Which birds to shoot and which not to shoot. How to shoot at close range so the bird dies instantly. How to gut and pluck and singe a duck. How to clear up afterwards so that you leave no trace behind. And, that contemporary additional burden, how to do the ubiquitous paperwork that comes with every duck that is shot.

Physical skills like these go with those that are observational. We touched on some of these above. Árbečeahpit watch the land, the sky, the weather, the growing cracks in the frozen rivers and the lakes as they look for the returning ducks. They identify the species by how they look, fly6, settle7, swim8 and dive. They know that female diving ducks stay down longer than males10, recognise the mating rituals and dances of different species (Loddenutvalget 2021, 30), observe how the posture of female ducks changes at mating time, and carefully watch the size of broods. And they listen too. ‘Each duck species has its own sound, and the names of ducks in Sámi describe the sound they make when they are flying’ (Loddenutvalget 2021, 29). So they identify species from the faint sounds their wings make as they fly far overhead.11

6 ‘The largest ducks may fly very low over the water and straight ahead. Grass ducks wobble when they fly.’ Loddenutvalget (2021, 30).
7 Some, like the čođgi (goldeneye) sit on the ice close to open water Loddenutvalget (2021, 28).
8 Fiehta, tufted duck, prefer shallows while čođgi like currents Loddenutvalget (2021, 29).
9 Unlike fiehta, goaši, red breasted merganser has long endurance. Loddenutvalget (Loddenutvalget, 29)
10 Loddenutvalget (2021, 29).
11 ‘When the ducks only fly over high up, so high that you can barely see them, you can still tell the species
A third overlapping set of skills is social. Loddenutvalget talk about how this gidasdálvi compares with the last. What the arrival of the ducks this year might portend for future years. They work together to build hides and rafts and decoy ducks. At the same time, young people learn by playing, hearing elders talk, watching what happens and by participating in the lodden, (Loddenutvalget 2021, 32-33). But, this is important, the social skills of ärbeceahpit also extend to interactions with animals including ducks. This is because in the Sámi world, creatures are not objects but lively beings with wills and moral sensibilities worthy of respect in their own right. If you shoot a duck then this is because you have communicated with it,12 you asked it to come, and it gave itself of its own free will13 (Loddenutvalget 2021, 44). As a part of this you may also have yoiked it, sung for and to it, as a sign of respect. And this humility and respect does not stop with the death of the bird. You eat it carefully, trying keep its skeleton intact rather than tearing it apart, and after the meal you show your gratitude by offering a blessing (sivndidit)14 and protecting its skeleton by laying it under a tree15. Ärbeceahpit, then, hunt care-fully (Loddenutvalget 2021, 16). They take a limited number of carefully chosen birds. No-one hunts in the places where they nest, and it is sacrilege to disturb nests because birds need peace, and you hold your breath if you get too close to a nest. So ärbeceahpit were horrified when ornithologists scared birds off their nests by walking across a wetland stretching a cord between them in a bird count (Loddenutvalget 2021, 37-8). And this respectful sociability is not confined to animals and birds but extends to (what outsiders take to be) natural, supernatural or spiritual phenomena including lakes and rivers, the weather, and ‘sacred’ places, siedi.16 In short, the world for Sámi ärbeceahpit is filled with lively and morally sensible beings, and ‘landscape’, meahcci17 is not a geographical area with features and populated by objects but a set of hopefully productive task-related social encounters with other ethically conscious beings. As Audhild Schanche notes, at least in the past people negotiated with meahcci, not about it (Schanche 2004, 169).

These physical, observational and social skills also embody a sense of the contingency of the world (Loddenutvalget 2021, 44). This is a world of processes and relations rather than of objects in an environment. The calendar and the clock have no relevance for the lodden. People say: ‘beaivvit eai leat bodjålagaid, muhto manŋålagaid,’ the days are not on top of one another, they are one after the other.’ You know you cannot follow a fixed schedule. This stress on goings-on and happenings is reflected in the Sámi language which easily makes verbs out of nouns, and vice versa, and often attends to processes rather than designating attributes18. It is reflected, too, in what Sámi call meroštallen: the process of making judgements by watching, observing, and relating different features of the environment together. Here things don’t get fixed or counted. Instead, meroštallen is

from the sound of the wings, the loddi skuvva (the wings of the birds make sound) or the wings’ šuvanastet (hissing from the wings from large flocks of ducks). People can also hear how the wingbeats sound when they start coming down towards the water - gullojit sojiin go luotilit.’ Loddenutvalget (2021, 29).
13 The Sámi word bivdít means both hunting or trapping, and requesting or asking for something.
14 See Lovisa Mienna Sjöberg (2018) on sivndidit.
15 There is an exemplary story about an ignorant hunter who greedily tore his duck apart to eat it. Rather than suffering the usual fate of those who lack respect (failure in next year’s duck hunt) he was torn to pieces by his subterranean duck-related hosts. Loddenutvalget (2021, 41-42)
16 See, eg, Oskal (2000, 179) and Porsanger (2012).
18 On meahcci, plural meahccit, see Sara (2009), and Joks, Østmo and Law, (2020, 310ff).
about sensing the shifting web of relations between the endlessly variable encounters that make up meahcicit. Sámi árbečeahpit do not imagine that they can fully know and control the world. Instead, they interact with it by attending to and interacting with it as it unfolds, knowing that life is uncertain and plans often come unstuck. A final point. Árbečeahpit are also resourceful and adaptable and know how to cope with the unexpected (Loddenutvalget 2021, 35). There is a word, birget, that catches what is at stake. Roughly this means skilfully and flexibly sustaining a livelihood and a good life in changing circumstances. And doing so in ways that balance concerns that (in outsiders’ language) are simultaneously economic, social, spiritual, individual, and environmental. ‘Ethics and spirituality are intertwined,’ writes the Lodden Committee. ‘They offer guidelines for who you are in the world you live in and how you should relate to your surroundings and to all the beings, or actors, that surround you.’ (Loddenutvalget 2021, 44)

Interlude 1

The lodden is a set of practices and a way of knowing that grows out of, depends on, and sustains its own heterogenous infrastructures. Features of its infrastructures?

The stories above tell us that it is locally done in particular observational and practical ways with specific tools and in particular social relations. Árbečeahpit are authorities, know how to observe ducks in their contexts, and how to talk with one another. They carry physical and cognitive skills (think of birget), the practical and more or less modest subjectivities that these demand, and a specialist vocabulary. They have narratives too. Shared in talk and song, these describe a world of contingent encounters where creatures and other features of the environment are social, ethical and demanding of respect and reciprocity. In saying that the hunt is conducted to feed the family, we’ve also implied something about economics: relations of respect are neither commercial nor recreational. We’ve touched, again implicitly, on its epistemological assumptions: this is a world that cannot be fully known or counted. Knowing, for instance through meroštallen, is modest. But repeating interactions between (often social) beings can be understood in particular places by those with appropriate experience. And finally, as a part of this, we’ve also hinted at its metaphysics. On the one hand, the realities of this world are relational, social, ethical and ultimately uncertain; and on the other hand, there is considerable continuity between what outsiders might call ‘nature’ on the one hand, and ‘culture’ on the other.

Such are some of the infrastructures on which the practices of the lodden draw and which they reproduce: that set its conditions of possibility. People become árbečeahpit by practising the lodden, by becoming loddejeaddjit. And children learn about it informally by playing, watching, listening, and by moving from small tasks to larger responsibilities. Except, as we have also said, the practices that sustain these infrastructures are under threat. The lodden is being remorselessly squeezed. The learning that is needed to sustain its infrastructures is critically at risk.

The Lodden Committee

The Lodden Committee Report is more than a hundred pages long. Extensively researched, it describes the lodden, the substantially successful attempts by the state to restrict it since the 1950s, and the struggles to resist that pressure. The Report was commissioned by the Guovdageaidnu Council in response both to a national review of the long-term future of the lodden (as we write the
Norwegian state is still pondering this), and upcoming national and Sámi elections. It is therefore a tactical epistemic and political intervention that argues for the legality of the lodden, greater Sámi control over its conduct, its value as an ecological and cultural indigenous practice, and for the rights of Sámi as an indigenous people to sustain its practices. It situates its arguments in literatures drawn from national and international law, anthropology, biology and local ecological knowledge. In short, it takes the fight to the enemy. But how does it do this? What are its tactics?

One answer is linguistic. We said this earlier. The Committee talks and gathers local stories in Sámi, but its paperwork is primarily in Norwegian, and the mayor asked for the Report in Norwegian since it was targeted at powerful outsiders. In one way this wasn’t an inconvenience: having been pushed through a colonial education, the members of the Committee are bilingual. But it also meant that the Sámi language was side-lined, and Sámi realities were subordinated. Sometimes the Report needed to deal with straightforward mistranslations. The Norwegians call the lodden the ‘spring hunt’ (‘vårjakt’), but it isn’t. As we saw above it’s a spring-winter hunt, over before the ducks start to breed. The Report also needed to point to more subtle mismatches between Norwegian and Sámi words, practices and realities. As we again saw earlier, Sámi talk of meahcit, task-related places and relations (Ingold 1993; Joks, Østmo and Law 2020, 307), but there is no equivalent term in Norwegian, and meahcci gets translated as utmark. So the Report needs to explain that this is a deeply consequential mistranslation because utmark is an agricultural term (it denotes land lying beyond the cultivated fields of a farm) that has nothing to do with the relations and encounters of meahcci. And, another inconvenience that is very difficult to handle, this shift from processes to objects extends into how the two languages work. This is subtle, but much more than in Norwegian (or English) the Sámi language stresses processes and relations rather than objects. As we mentioned above, in Sámi it is relatively easy to make verbs out of nouns, and vice versa. So, bilingual though they are, Norwegian was an awkward tool for the Committee. Realities obvious in Sámi became counterintuitive in Norwegian and had to be laboriously spelled out.

The material practices of the Committee were tactically important too. To think about this well we need to attend to really mundane processes. For instance, when the Committee met, its members sat round a table on blue chairs with pens, notepads, lots of paperwork, mobile phones, computers, and a computer projector in a small room in the offices of the Guovdageaidnu Council. Of course, they talked, but their work was also substantively textual. They worked with: files from the internet; legal and policy documents; historical accounts of the lodden; anthropological ethnographies from other circumpolar indigenous peoples; papers about bird populations from environmental journals. Some of its members visited archives to search through old, undigitized, documents. Then they assembled those documents, took notes, made summaries, cut and pasted paragraphs, and wrote drafts to go into the Report. So, yes, like the árbečeahpit they talked. But they also traded in texts: for the Committee, to know was to know how to play with inscriptions. ‘Dáža lea hárjánan dasa ahte juohke ašši galgå leat čáhppat vielgada odlad go sáhttá mearridit.’ ‘The Norwegians need to see the case, black on white, before making any decision.’ This is what Sámi people say when they think about the Norwegian government, and to take the fight to the administrative enemy the

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19 It would better be called the vårwinterjakt, but the season and the word do not exist in Norwegian.
20 By extension, utmark also relates to the Norwegian friluftsliv, outdoor life, which indexes open air activities such as walking, skiing and camping in remote areas, and is linked to and reproduces a Romantic national origin story.
But what kind of black on white? Policy-relevant texts are simultaneously representational and normative. They: define a problem; describe the parts of the world relevant to that problem; draw inferences from those descriptions; counter alternative inferences; and arrive at a conclusion that solves the problem they set out with. Of course, we are not naïve, there is lobbying in the corridors of power, and there are endless hidden agendas too. But if you want to play the textual policy game, this is how you do it. You write a text that is linear because it needs to work as a narrative (A, B, C.) But your text also needs to be hierarchical, highlighting the most important moves and backgounding the smaller supporting stories (A1, A2, A3.) And finally, your text needs to loop back on itself to close its narrative arc: problem, loop, problem solved, that’s the logic.21 And this was how the Committee wrote the Report. Title, authorship, foreword, and summary: these stand at the top of the hierarchy and frame the Report. Everything the busy reader needs to know is already there. And then, once you go into the body of the text you find chapter titles (See Figure 1 for an English language version). These stand in a figurative line, one after the other, its major narrative steps. And (here’s the looping) they also suggest that the Report will answer its introductory problem in its final ‘Way Forward’ section. And this list is hierarchical too. It hides both the detailed argument, and the subheadings, the sub-steps that go into that argument. (See Figure 2 for an example). And this literary hierarchy extends further. It goes down into footnotes and references. The literary message is that most readers don’t need look at such descriptive ‘details’, but (at the same time) the Report’s narrative draws not only on local knowledge, but also on external historical, legal, scientific and anthropological accounts of worldly realities. Sources that its readers will think of as professionally reliable.

This textual hierarchy leads us inexorably to specialist disciplinary forms of expertise and authority. For instance, anthropology allows it to say: that Norwegian and Sámi cultures are different (Loddenutvalget 2021, 83); that Norwegian culture is dominant; that Sámi daily life depends on the recognition of this difference; that TEK is both a form of culture and a way of life (Loddenutvalget 2021, 11, 17); that the law reflects Norwegian culture with disastrous consequences for the lodd; and that spring-winter duck hunting is practised and accepted by circumpolar indigenous peoples in Fennoscandia, Russia, the US and Canada. But this pushes us back to language because there’s a fair bit of tactical mistranslation involved in these claims. ‘Culture’ (Norwegian kultur)? This term is

21 The differences between oral and textual narrative forms have been widely explored. See, for instance, Ong (1988) and Rotman (2008).
foreign not only to Sámi but also to recent anthropology. But the Committee uses it because the arguments ‘from anthropology’ intersect with those from the law, a form of expertise that precisely deals in ‘culture’ because some laws protect ‘cultures.’

The report, and the Loddenutvalget, is based on legal foundations, and it (also) cites national and international law, and shows: that the Lodden is consistent with the laws on biodiversity and indigeneity; that there are legal requirements to draw on local traditional knowledge as well as scientific knowledge in the management of natural resources; that the lodden is protected because the law safeguards minority indigenous cultures, identities and practices; that the Sámi have the legal right to participate in the management and conservation of natural resources, to practise their culture, and pursue traditional activities that ensure cultural and economic self-preservation; and that the conditions needed to transmit the lodden and its knowledges are similarly subject to legal protection.

And finally, a third form of expertise, the Report also draws on environmental and biological science. Its arguments? First, it says that given its scope and its care-ful conduct the lodden threatens neither duck populations nor biodiversity. And second, it describes what it takes to be the real threats to duck populations (Loddenutvalget 2021, 49-54). (See also Figure 2 above.) Citations here show that the Norwegian recreational autumn duck hunt has no quotas, female ducks are targeted, vulnerable fledgelings are killed or scared off, and protected species are at risk because autumn ducks are difficult to identify. It also shows: that the effects of oil and plastic pollution on seabirds are serious; that wind turbines, masts, buildings and power lines kill or otherwise affect birds and their migration patterns; that predators including foxes, birds of prey and pike have detrimental effects on bird populations; and that there are probably substantial bird losses to fishing boats and trawlers.

Interlude 2

Like the lodden itself the Lodden Committee Report is a way of knowing that grows out of and enacts heterogeneous infrastructures. So it draws on the knowledge of arbečehpit, but also draws on many other sources.

Linguistically it shifts to, makes use of, and reinforces a Norwegian language colonial infrastructure. Institutionally it draws on professional authorities, credentialled expertise and the methodological, argumentative, and theoretical tools of those professions. These are forms of expertise entangled with the state and grow out of specialist divisions of labour and ways of knowing. And, now we get to learning, these are taught, credentialled and practised in formal institutions. Alongside but also entangled with this, the Committee works textually because its narratives have to be detachable from locality, and travel. As indigenous scholars have often noted, textuality remoulds knowing and being. How it does this depends on circumstances (Cole 2002; Smith 2012). But to write about something (as the Report does of the lodden) is to separate accounts of realities from the realities they are describing. This means that we enter the world of remote representation and depend on a caste of ‘clerks’, of writers, whose job it is to describe. And if we are in policy, to recommend. It also opens up new methodological and epistemological issues. Are our descriptions good enough? Are

22 The Comaroffs (2009) note that indigenous ‘culture’ is best understood as a marketable good and a legal category.
they better than the alternatives? And how can we show this? These are the kinds of questions handled by the Committee in its Report. At the same time writing means that knowing becomes centred and centralised. So, as we have seen, the Report works by creating and gathering transportable representations, and juxtaposing, simplifying and ordering these into a summary descriptive and policy narrative. It draws knowing together and makes overviews (Haraway 1988; Latour 1990). And this hierarchical literary form is reproduced – indeed it is mimicked – in the institutional arrangements for knowing. This is because knowledge and policy distinguish centres from peripheries (which is also why the Report needs to travel to Oslo.) And then these textual, methodological and epistemological infrastructures in turn have metaphysical implications. Why?

Because to create overviews and move descriptions around assumes that there is reality out there with a definite more or less discoverable form; and that its basic mechanisms work in much the same way everywhere. And then this final thought: in the policy version we have looked at here, that reality is also binary in at least two senses: nature is separated from culture; and facts from values.

Conclusion

In 1910 herder, hunter and author Johan Turi published the first book of Sámi literature. Called Muitalus smiid birra (An Account of the Sámi) he wrote of reindeer herding, hunting, trapping, healing, and shamanism. In the preface he observed that ‘the Swedish government wants to help us as much as it can, but they don’t get things right about our lives and conditions.’ The problem, he added, is that how people think depends on their material circumstances.

‘When a Sámi becomes closed up in a room, then he does not understand much of anything … His thoughts don’t flow because there are walls and his mind is closed in. … But when a Sámi is on the high mountains, then he has quite a clear mind.’ (Turi 2012 [1910],11)

His argument was that if they were given texts bureaucrats and politicians might begin to understand the Sámi, and he added that:

‘Herein [this book] are all sorts of stories, but it isn’t certain whether they are true, since they haven’t been written down before.’ (Turi 2012 [1910],13)

The Lodden Report follows in Turi’s footsteps. So too does this Chapter. We have described how ways of knowing have shifted materially and socially in a colonial context and explored the tension implied in this shift, the compromises implied in buying into particular ways of knowing and so reproducing infrastructures of knowing that also give life to institutions such as governments and the natural sciences (Nadasdy 2003). But, the other side of the coin and Turi’s argument, we have also explored what it is to make use of those infrastructures. We have tried to show what makes the Lodden Committee Report an intervention that is potentially legible to state power in the continuing colonial struggles in the north of Norway (Scott 1998).

Conscious, then, that our literary techniques in this chapter are similar to those of the Report, and in particular that we risk reproducing the kind of Norwegian/Sámi binary that we warned against in the Introduction, what we have tried to show may be summarised thus:

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23 For a brief introduction see Gaski (2012). For an English translation of the book see Turi (2012 [1910]).
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<tr>
<td>Economic forms are</td>
<td><strong>Relations of respect</strong> in a context of necessity</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narratives are ...</td>
<td><strong>Distributed and relational</strong>: song; talk;</td>
<td><strong>Centred</strong>, linear-hierarchical-loops, means-ends; often textual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td>Contingent and <strong>uncertain, birget</strong></td>
<td>The aspiration to <strong>control</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgements</td>
<td><strong>Unfold</strong> in practice, shifting; <em>meroštallen</em></td>
<td><strong>Formal</strong> and centralised <strong>decisions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods for knowing are ..</td>
<td><strong>Practical</strong>, qualitative, and depend on experience</td>
<td><strong>Formal</strong>, standardised, distanced, detachable, sometimes quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>The world is an <strong>ethical web</strong>: personal ethics respect that web and its inhabitants</td>
<td>The <strong>world is ethically neutral</strong>, a set of causal relations; ethics becomes detached into the social and political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemologies are ..</td>
<td><strong>Practical</strong>, situated, local, place-bound, modest, and about detecting limited forms of patterning</td>
<td><strong>Referential</strong> or representational, about gaining satisfactory summary overviews; good ways of knowing are transportable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysics; realities are ...</td>
<td><strong>Relational</strong>, a shifting web of ultimately uncertain ethically extended social and reciprocal relations</td>
<td><strong>Determinate and binary</strong>. The natural world has a definite and single form shaped by unchanging causal relations. (The social world is made of interactions between ethical or political actors) Events, objects and causal relations in a <strong>space-time box</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaces are</td>
<td><strong>Encounters</strong>, negotiations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So what does this suggest?

As we mentioned in the Introduction, our response to this question is entirely tactical. It depends on circumstances and the character of the particular conflict. Such is the lesson we draw from the history of Sámi resistance to colonialism. Almost always working at a disadvantage and across the grain, the tactics have been endlessly varied. People have often simply ignored the state and carried on hunting or fishing illegally. Sometimes, and very often in the past, they have used the classic tactics of **passive resistance** including foot dragging, apparent compliance, passivity, ‘laziness’ and ‘misunderstanding’ (Lehtola 2018, 30). Sometimes they have taken direct, **extra-legal action** – in recent decades most notably against the Alta dam (Briggs 2006), but also to protest the restrictions on Deatnu salmon fishing by occupying Tiirasaari island (Uutiset 2017). They have created **artworks**. In 2017 one art installation protesting against restrictions on reindeer herding was set up outside the Norwegian parliament (CBC 2017). They have gone to **law**, for instance to resist mining developments (Broderstad 2015, 82) and, most recently, they have won a spectacular victory in the Norwegian Supreme Court which ruled that the rights of Sámi herders had been ignored in the siting and construction of a major wind farm (Agence France-Presse 2021). They have engaged in long-
term constitutional engagement and have succeeded in achieving a level of political decentralisation (Falch, Selle and Strømsnes 2016). They have worked long and hard to think how schooling and educational curricula might be used to transmit traditional skills and ways of knowing to generations of young people who will not be raised on the land (Guttorm 2011). And they have authored and co-authored academic and policy interventions in many contexts including reindeer herding (Benjaminsen et al. 2015), salmon fishing (Joks 2015), powan fishing (Østmo and Law 2018), and land use (Joks, Østmo and Law 2020; Schanche 2004).

Our argument is thus that how best to engage with powerful ways of knowing and the institutions in which these are embedded is a matter of tactics. That there are no rules. So then the question becomes: should those infrastructures be avoided, and if not, then how can they best be used? And in ways that are not too damaging to other Sámi concerns. And a particular version of this question: are there ways in which they can be played off against one another? For, as we have also tried to show, the infrastructures of knowing are not monolithic. Instead, they are heterogeneous, they come in different forms, and they do not add up to a single coherent whole. Yes, they work in ways that mostly disadvantage Sámi ways of knowing and being. A tactical struggle is also a struggle that has to be redone each day. There is no rest. At the same time the infrastructures of the state also tug in different directions. At which point the question becomes: how to use those infrastructures in ways that best undo power in the particular circumstances at hand. Turi used textuality to try to get into the heads of those who govern, and so too does the Lodden Committee. Black on white. In this way it inserts itself into the institutional structures of government and starts to play these off against one another. It levers the non-coherences and the gaps and the differences between the law, environmental science and anthropology to argue that the lodden is legally, environmentally and culturally sound. And it does this by adopting the methods of those disciplines. It distinguishes epistemologically and metaphysically between nature and culture which allows it to make causal claims about the former, and ethical, normative and political claims about the latter.

These are the tactics at work in the Lodden Committee Report as it turns the infrastructures of state knowing against one another in the woven space between epistemological decentering and political decentralising. We do not say that these are the only possible tactics. We offer no general judgement about alternative ways of knowing and enacting resistance. But at least for the Sámi, the changes brought by centuries of colonial entanglement cannot be wished away. The issue – again always tactical – is how to rearticulate ways of knowing with infrastructures that also keep those traditions alive. ‘Jahki ii leat jagi viellja.’ ‘One year is not the next year’s brother.’ The Sámi have always adapted to circumstances that they know they cannot control, and they continue this tradition in the struggles of the 21st century.

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