

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

Liv Østmo<sup>a</sup>, Johan Henrik M. Buljo<sup>b</sup>, Line Kalak<sup>c</sup>, and John Law<sup>d</sup>

Corresponding author: John Law (john.law@open.ac.uk)  
(OstmoBuljoKalakLaw2021ColonialStrugglesInfrastructuresOfKnowing.pdf; 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Sámi Allaskuvla, Sámi University of Applied Sciences, Hánholuohkká 45, NO-9520 Guovdageaidnu, Norway, [livostmo@gmail.com](mailto:livostmo@gmail.com)

<sup>b</sup> [jhbulo@gmail.com](mailto:jhbulo@gmail.com)

<sup>c</sup> Sámi Allaskuvla, Sámi University of Applied Sciences, Hánholuohkká 45, NO-9520 Guovdageaidnu, Norway, [linek@samas.no](mailto:linek@samas.no)

<sup>d</sup> Department of Sociology, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK,  
[John.law@open.ac.uk](mailto:John.law@open.ac.uk)

and

Sámi Allaskuvla, Sámi University of Applied Sciences, Hánholuohkká 45, NO-9520 Guovdageaidnu, Norway

---

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to: the *árbečeahpit*, traditional knowledge bearers, and *loddejeaddjit*, the spring-winter duck hunters and to Magnar Evertsen, May Torill Hætta Siri, Klemet Utsi, members of the *Lodden Committee*, for sharing their knowledge and their generous contribution to this collective writing project; to Guovdageaidnu Municipal Council for commissioning and supporting the work of the *Lodden Committee*; and to our academic colleagues within and beyond the *Sámi Allaskuvla* for discussion and resistance including Gunvor Guttorm, Solveig Joks, Wen-yuan Lin, Annemarie Mol, Mikkel Nils Sara, Lovisa Mienna Sjöberg and Heather Swanson.

## 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 *loddan*, 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 *loddan*. 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 *loddan* on the one hand, and

the work of a committee, the *Loddenutvalget* (the ‘*Lodden Committee*’) of the Guovdageaidnu Municipal Council on the other.<sup>2</sup> This Council is the local government for a large part of the sub-arctic, Sámi-speaking, Norwegian Finnmark plateau. Municipality, county, national government, the Council is therefore a small cog in the Norwegian administrative machinery.<sup>3</sup> This means that it draws on the material, administrative, political, institutional and methodological infrastructures of that machinery: that these 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 *ladden*. As it stands the latter is only marginally legal. Its rules are so restrictive that it is barely being practised.<sup>4</sup> And in what follows we tackle the issues of epistemic decentering and institutional decentralising by contrasting the *ladden* 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 *ladden* need to be read against the angry wounding weight of this colonial history.<sup>5</sup> 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 *árbeceahpit* (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.

---

<sup>2</sup> In Norwegian Guovdageaidnu becomes Kautokeino.

<sup>3</sup> 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 (*Miljødirektorat*) are centrally controlled government agencies.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Lehtola (2004 [1997]), Minde (2003), and Lantto (2010).

## 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, *giđasdálvi*, 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*. Skill-ful 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, fly<sup>6</sup>, settle<sup>7</sup>, swim<sup>8</sup> and dive.<sup>9</sup> They know that female diving ducks stay down longer than males<sup>10</sup>, 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.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> ‘The largest ducks may fly very low over the water and straight ahead. Grass ducks wobble when they fly.’ *Loddenutvalget* (2021, 30).

<sup>7</sup> Some, like the *čoadgi* (goldeneye) sit on the ice close to open water *Loddenutvalget* (2021, 28).

<sup>8</sup> *Fiehta*, tufted duck, prefer shallows while *čoadgi* like currents *Loddenutvalget* (2021, 29).

<sup>9</sup> Unlike *fiehta*, *goalsi*, red breasted merganser has long endurance. *Loddenutvalget* (*Loddenutvalget*, 29)

<sup>10</sup> *Loddenutvalget* (2021, 29).

<sup>11</sup> ‘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*. *Loddejeaddjit* talk about how this *giđasdálvi* 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 *loddet*, (*Loddenutvalget* 2021, 32-33). But, this is important, the social skills of *árbečeahpit* 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,<sup>12</sup> you *asked* it to come, and it gave itself of its own free will<sup>13</sup> (*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 (*sivdnidit*<sup>14</sup>) and protecting its skeleton by laying it under a tree<sup>15</sup>.

*Árbečeahpit*, 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 *árbečeahpit* 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, *sieidi*<sup>16</sup>. In short, the world for *Sámi árbečeahpit* is filled with lively and morally sensible beings, and ‘landscape’, *meahcci*<sup>17</sup> 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 *loddet*. People say: ‘*beaivvit eai leat badjálagaid, muhto manjálagaid*,’ 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 attributes<sup>18</sup>. 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 skuvvá* (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 - *gullojot sojiin go luoitilit*.’ *Loddenutvalget* (2021, 29).

<sup>12</sup> Ole Henrik Magga, Nils Oskal and Mikkel Nils Sara (2002,5), quoted in *Loddenutvalget* (2021, 40)

<sup>13</sup> The *Sámi* word *bividit* means both hunting or trapping, and requesting or asking for something.

<sup>14</sup> See Lovisa Mienna Sjöberg (2018) on *sivdnidit*.

<sup>15</sup> 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)

<sup>16</sup> See, eg, Oskal (2000, 179) and Porsanger (2012).

<sup>17</sup> See Schanche (2004), Porsanger (2012), Mazzullo and Ingold (2008, 32) and Joks, Østmo and Law (2020).

<sup>18</sup> 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 *meahccit*. 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 *ladden* 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 *ladden* draw and which they reproduce: that set its conditions of possibility. People become árbečeahpit by practising the *ladden*, 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 *ladden* 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 *ladden*, 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 *ladden* (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 *ladden*, 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.<sup>19</sup> The Norwegians call the *ladden* 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*.<sup>20</sup> 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 substantially textual. They worked with: files from the internet; legal and policy documents; historical accounts of the *ladden*; 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 ášši galgá leat čáhppat vielgada alde ovdal 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

---

<sup>19</sup> It would better be called the *vårwinterjakt*, but the season and the word do not exist in Norwegian.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

Committee needed to play this textual game.

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.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Introduction<br/>2 Method and knowledge base<br/>3 What is the <i>Lodden</i>?<br/>4 What is traditional knowledge?<br/>5 <i>The lodden</i> – a brief historical overview<br/>6 The <i>lodden</i> - Sámi custom and árbevirolaš máhttu (Sámi traditional knowledge)<br/>7 <i>Lodden</i> and learning<br/>8 The <i>lodden</i>, identity, language and the good life<br/>9 The <i>lodden</i> and ethics<br/>10 Stories, rituals and <i>yoik</i><br/>11 What threatens ducks and geese?<br/>12 <i>Lodden</i> in the northern regions of the world<br/>13 Public regulation of the <i>lodden</i><br/>14 The <i>lodden</i>'s independent legal basis<br/>15 The duty of the state to protect and apply traditional knowledge<br/>16 An evaluation of the current <i>lodden</i> scheme. Does it safeguard Sámi knowledge, customs and practices?<br/>17 Summary and conclusions<br/>18 The way forward - alternative strategies and proposals for requirements for future regulations.</p> | <p>But your text also needs to be <i>hierarchical</i>, highlighting the most important moves and backgrounding the smaller supporting stories (A <sub>a1, a2, a3</sub>.) And finally, your text needs to <i>loop back on itself</i> to close its narrative arc: problem, loop, problem solved, that's the logic.<sup>21</sup> 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.</p> |
|--|---|

Figure 1

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>11 What threatens ducks and geese?<br/>11.1 Autumn hunting<br/>11.2 Pollution<br/>11.3 Development<br/>11.4 Predators<br/>11.5 Fishing boats / trawlers</p> |  |
|--|--|

Figure 2

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 *lodden*; 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

---

<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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 Loddenuutvalget, 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 (*Loddenuutvalget 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 heterogenous infrastructures. So it draws on the knowledge of *árbečeahpit*, 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

---

<sup>22</sup> 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<sup>23</sup>. 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 *ladden* 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:

---

<sup>23</sup> For a brief introduction see Gaski (2012). For an English translation of the book see Turi (2012 [1910]).

Infrastructures	Loddén	Report
Material forms	<b>Embodied knowing:</b> Observation, sensitivity to context, talk, embodied, practical	<b>Textual knowing</b> , an alternative form of embodied knowing: crafting, organising and juxtaposing texts; the mobility of texts
Social/institutional forms	<b>Local and distributed</b> between experienced knowledge-holders or authorities, <i>árbečeahpit</i> and <i>loddejeaddjít</i>	<b>Specialist, hierarchical and centred;</b> division of labour between different authorities
Learning	<b>In practice;</b> from local authorities, <i>árbečeahpit</i> ; generational, observational	<b>Formal training;</b> specialist expertise, credentialled
Subjectivities	<b>Modesty;</b> knowing is only local	<b>Referential mastery</b>
Language	<b>Sámi</b> , verbs	<b>Norwegian</b> , nouns
Economic forms are	<b>Relations of respect</b> in a context of necessity	?
Narratives are ...	<b>Distributed and relational;</b> song; talk;	<b>Centred</b> , linear-hierarchical-loops, means-ends; often textual
Interventions	Contingent and <b>uncertain</b> , <i>birget</i>	The aspiration to <b>control</b>
Judgements	<b>Unfold</b> in practice, shifting; <b>meroštallen</b>	Formal and centralised <b>decisions</b>
Methods for knowing are ..	<b>Practical</b> , qualitative, and depend on experience	<b>Formal</b> , standardised, distanced, detachable, sometimes quantitative
Ethics	The world is an <b>ethical web</b> ; personal ethics respect that web and its inhabitants	The <b>world is ethically neutral</b> , a set of causal relations; ethics becomes detached into the social and political
Epistemologies are ..	<b>Practical</b> , situated, local, place-bound, modest, and about detecting limited forms of patterning	<b>Referential</b> or representational, about gaining satisfactory summary overviews; good ways of knowing are transportable
Metaphysics; realities are ...	<b>Relational</b> , a shifting web of ultimately uncertain ethically extended social and reciprocal relations	<b>Determinate and binary.</b> 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)
Spaces are	<b>Encounters</b> , negotiations	Events, objects and causal relations in a <b>space-time box</b>

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 *ladden* 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 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## References

- Agence France-Presse (2021), 'Norway court rules two windfarms harming Sami reindeer herders', *The Guardian* (online edition), 11 October 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/11/norway-court-rules-two-windfarms-harming-sami-reindeer-herders-turbines-torn-down>? (accessed 14 October 2021).
- Benjaminsen, Tor A., Hugo Reinert, Espen Sjaastad, and Mikkel Nils Sara (2015), 'Misreading the Arctic landscape: A political ecology of reindeer, carrying capacities, and overstocking in Finnmark, Norway', *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 69 (4), 219-229, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2015.1031274>

- Briggs, Chad M. (2006), 'Science, local knowledge and exclusionary practices: Lessons from the Alta Dam case', *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 60 (2), 149-160, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00291950600723146>
- Broderstad, Else Grete (2015), 'The Finnmark Estate: Dilution of Indigenous Rights or a Robust Compromise?', *The Northern Review*, 39, 8-21,
- CBC (2017), 'Sami artist protests Norwegian reindeer cull with unique public art piece', Toronto: CBC, Radio Canada, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/sami-reindeers-norway-1.4437517>.
- Cole, Peter (2002), 'Aboriginalizing methodology: Considering the canoe', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15 (4), 447-459, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518390210145516>
- Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff (2009), *Ethnicity*, Inc., Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Falch, Torvald, Per Selle, and Kristin Strømsnes (2016), 'The Sámi: 25 Years of Indigenous Authority in Norway', *Ethnopolitics*, 15 (1), 125-143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2015.1101846>
- Foucault, Michel (1976), *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception*, London: Tavistock.
- Gaski, Harald (2012), 'Foreword', in, *An Account of the Sámi*, 6-9, (Johan Turi), Kárásjohka,: ČálliidLágádus,
- Guttorm, Gunvor (2011), 'Árbediehtu (Sami traditional knowledge) – as a concept and in practice', in Jelena Porsanger and Gunvor Guttorm, *Working with Traditional Knowledge: Communities, Institutions, Information Systems, Law and Ethics*, 59-76, Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino: Sámi allaskuvla/Sámi Univerait College,
- Haraway, Donna J. (1988), 'Situated Knowledges: the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3), 575-599, <http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~ewa/Haraway,%20Situated%20Knowledges.pdf>
- Ingold, Tim (1993), 'The Temporality of the Landscape', *World Archaeology*, 25, 152-174,
- Joks, Solveig (2015), "Laksen trenger ro." *Tilnærming til tradisjonelle kunnskaper gjennom praksiser, begreper og fortellinger fra Sirbmá-området* ["The salmon needs peace". Approaching traditional knowledge through practices, concepts and stories from the Sirbmá area], PhD, Tromsø UiT, Norges Arktiske Universitet, Tromsø,
- Joks, Solveig, Liv Østmo, and John Law (2020), 'Verbing *meahcci*: living Sámi lands', in Annemarie Mol and John Law, *On Other Terms: Interfering in Social Science English*, *The Sociological Review*, 68 (2\_suppl), 45-61,
- Lantto, Patrik (2010), 'Borders, citizenship and change: the case of the Sami people, 1751–2008', *Citizenship Studies*, 14 (5), 543-556, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2010.506709>
- Latour, Bruno (1990), 'Drawing Things Together', in Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, *Representation in Scientific Practice*, 19-68, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press,
- Lehtola, Veli-Pekka (2004 [1997]), *The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition*, Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Press.
- Lehtola, Veli-Pekka (2018), 'Evasive strategies of defiance – everyday resistance histories among the Sámi', in Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Sanna Valkonen, and Jarno Valkonen, *Knowing from the Indigenous North: Sámi Approaches to History, Politics and Belonging*, 29-46, Abingdon: Routledge,
- Loddenutvalget (2021), 'Lodden – en samisk kulturbærende sedvane: En utredning om lodden i Guovdageaidnu', Guovdageaidnu: Guovdageainnu suohkan/Kautokeino kommune, [https://www.guovdageainnu.suohkan.no/\\_f/p1/i3380f0e8-2424-4ab6-a633-1240ccdbd82c/lodden-en-kulturbarende-sedvane-i-guovdageaidnu.pdf](https://www.guovdageainnu.suohkan.no/_f/p1/i3380f0e8-2424-4ab6-a633-1240ccdbd82c/lodden-en-kulturbarende-sedvane-i-guovdageaidnu.pdf) (accessed 9 August 2021).
- Magga, Ole Henrik, Nils Oskal, and Mikkel Nils Sara (2002), *Animal Welfare in Sámi Culture*, Guovdageaidnu: Sámi Allaskuvla.

- Mazzullo, Nuccio, and Tim Ingold (2008), 'Being Along: Place, Time and Movement among Sámi People ', in Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt and Brynhild Granås, [Mobility and Place: Enacting Northern European Peripheries](#), 27-38, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate,
- Minde, Henry (2003), 'Assimilation of the Sami – Implementation and Consequences', [Acta Borealia](#), 20 (2), 121-146, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08003830310002877>
- Nadasdy, Paul (2003), [Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon](#), Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.
- Ong, Walter J. (1988), [Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word](#), London: Routledge.
- Oskal, Nils (2000), 'On nature and reindeer luck', [Rangfer](#), 20 (2-3), 175-180,
- Østmo, Liv, and John Law (2018), 'Mis/translation, colonialism and environmental conflict', [Environmental Humanities](#), 10 (2), 349-369,
- Porsanger, Jelena (2012), 'Indigenous Sámi religion: General considerations about relationships', in Jose-Maria Mallarach, Thymio Papayannis, and Rauno Väisänen, [The Diversity of Sacred Lands in Europe: Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the Delos Initiative](#), 37-45, Gland, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Josep\\_Maria\\_Mallarach/publication/271851529\\_The\\_Diversity\\_of\\_Sacred\\_Lands\\_in\\_Europe\\_Proceedings\\_of\\_the\\_Third\\_Workshop\\_of\\_the\\_Delos\\_Initiative\\_-\\_Inari\\_Aanaar\\_2010/links/54d507400cf25013d02a5f1e.pdf#page=38](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Josep_Maria_Mallarach/publication/271851529_The_Diversity_of_Sacred_Lands_in_Europe_Proceedings_of_the_Third_Workshop_of_the_Delos_Initiative_-_Inari_Aanaar_2010/links/54d507400cf25013d02a5f1e.pdf#page=38)
- Rotman, Brian (2008), [Becoming Beside Ourselves: The Alphabet, Ghosts, and Distributed Human Being](#), Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sara, Mikkel Nils (2009), 'Siida and Traditional Sámi Reindeer Herding Knowledge ', [The Northern Review](#), 30, 153-178, <http://journals.sfu.ca/nr/index.php/nr/issue/view/2>
- Schanche, Audhild (2004), 'Horizontal and vertical perceptions of Saami landscapes', in Michael Jones and Audhild Schanche, [Landscape, Law and Customary Rights](#), Dieđut 3/2004, 1-10, Guovdageaidnu: Sámi Instituhtta,
- Scott, James C. (1998), [Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed](#), New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Sjöberg, Lovisa Mienna (2018), [Att Leava i Ständig Välsignele: En Studie av Sivndnidit som Religiös Praxis](#), PhD, Theology, University of Oslo, Oslo,
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2012), [Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples](#), London and New York: Zed Books.
- Turi, Johan Mathis (2012 [1910]), [An Account of the Sámi \[Muitalus sámiid birra\]](#), Kárášjohka: ČálliidLágádus.
- Uutiset (2017), 'Sámi activists occupy island in protest at Tenojoki fishing rules', 17 July 2017, [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/sami\\_activists Occupy\\_island\\_in\\_protest\\_at\\_tenojoki\\_fishing\\_rules/9717663](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/sami_activists Occupy_island_in_protest_at_tenojoki_fishing_rules/9717663) (accessed 13 August 2021).