



Hydropower histories and narrative injustice: state-owned energy companies' narratives of hydropower expansion in Sápmi

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Abstract

For over one hundred years, hydropower expansion has taken place in Sápmi, the land of the Indigenous Sámi people in Northern Fenno-Scandia and the Kola Peninsula. In modern energy company narratives, certain parts of history remain unmentioned. Among these are the narratives belonging to Sámi people who were negatively impacted by hydropower expansion. Thus, the aim of this article is to analyse three state-owned energy companies' narratives about their hydropower expansion in Sápmi and compare them with challenging voices or counter-narratives. The sources used are the companies' websites and the official documents and material found there, as well as other documentary sources, literature, and research spanning a time period of 1910 to 2021. The overall questions are: To what extent and in what ways are Sámi experiences regarding hydropower expansion part of the companies' narratives. This study uses counter-narrative and narrative justice as conceptual framework and shows that the full impact that hydropower expansion has had on Sámi people's situations is insufficiently communicated in the companies' narratives. Instead, the companies mainly construct their narratives as hydropower expansion in Sápmi being a phenomenon located in history without connection to ongoing consequences on Sámi lands and lives.

Keywords Energy companies · Counter-narratives · Indigenous Sámi people · Corporate narratives · Hydropower

Introduction

Sápmi is the land of the Indigenous Sámi people spanning the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Large-scale hydropower expansion in Sápmi began in 1910–1915, with the power plant in Bårjås/Porjus. It is located in Sweden and lies within the areas of Sirges and Unna tjerusj reindeer herding Sámi communities. Only a few years after the plant was completed in 1919–1923, its reservoir upstream at

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Suorvvá, was constructed (Lantto 2003). During the 1910s a hydropower plant was planned on the Norwegian side at Glomfjord, located within Saltfjellet reindeer grazing district. On the Finnish side, the hydropower expansion in the Sámi areas was initiated in 1939 with the power plant in Jäniskoski, situated in the upper reaches of the river Báhčveaijohka/Paččjokk/Patsjoki, and as a result regulation of Lake Anarjävri/Aanarjäu'rr/Inari began in 1942 (Huttunen et al. 1995; Paasilinna and Tuuri 1999). Five Sámi reindeer grazing associations, called paliskunta in Finnish, have lands in immediate relation to that lake district (Lehtola 2003).

The ongoing generation of hydroelectric power in Sápmi has historically led to loss of land, rights, and culture (Össbo 2014; Hermanstrand and Kosmo 2009; Mustonen et al. 2010). It still causes both physical and emotional distress among Sámi (Össbo 2021; Syrjämäki and Mustonen 2013; Meriläinen-Hyvärinen et al. 2012; Kauhaunen 2014) and is, alongside industrial forestry, mining, wind power, and tourism, one component of the many cumulative impacts that threaten reindeer herding and Sámi culture (Skarin et al. 2021; Sehlin MacNeil et al. 2021).

This article examines the narratives presented by three state-owned energy companies, all of which operate in Sápmi. The aim is to analyse the companies' official current narratives about their historical hydropower expansion in Sápmi, and to compare them with counter-narratives to examine the extent to which Sámi experiences of hydropower expansion and the societal and environmental price they still pay are being recognised.

Analysing hydropower narratives

In this study, I interpret narrative as meaning “a communication where events are woven together in a structure that connects the past, the present and the future” (Adamsson 2020, p. 4). In short, a storyline. An important point of departure is the fact that narratives or stories are “embedded in a network of relations that is sometimes astounding in its complexity” and that “we do not anticipate them is usually because we do not attend to the network of relations in which a story resides” (Cobley 2014, p. 2). At the same time, history itself is often narrated in the historiographical way of organising material into an ordered and comprehensible history where some elements are highlighted and others are left in silence (Fulda 2014).

Company histories and in particular the company histories of hydropower have been highlighted by, among others, Eva Jakobsson (2008) and Malin Tjørhøm (2015). Tjørhøm studied the history writing in anniversary books of Norwegian hydropower companies. Commissioned research does not develop the same method and problem as is the case with professional historical research, but at the same time the anniversary book constitutes a section of history we otherwise would not have known. One reason for company narratives is to highlight the social significance of the organisation which is, of course, coupled with the commercial aspects. What kind of stories, or whose stories, will fit within that framework? Research has addressed state energy companies in both Norway (Thue 2006; Skjold 2006; ** Nilsen and Thue 2006 2006) and to a certain degree in Finland (Säynäjäkangas 2013). Although the politics guiding Swedish hydropower have been researched (Jakobsson 1997; Vedung and Brandel 2001; Össbo 2014) the Swedish state administration that was turned into state business has not yet been subject to any comprehensive historical attention.

In recent decades, narratives have become essential tools in organisational communication where narrative, “often conceptualised as ‘storytelling’, has been used in both marketing and PR.” (Hansen and Lundholt 2021, p. 32). In research on organisational communication “the dominant narratives of companies have been approached as ‘master narratives’ while special attention has been paid to secondary narratives, or ‘counter-narratives,’ that rejects or dissociate from master-narratives” (ibid). The counter-narrative is the story of those who oppose a dominant story, often “members of outgroups” or marginalised groups whose perspectives have been suppressed, ignored and devalued. The narratives of these groups help to tell the story, documenting and even validating a “counter-reality”. As Andrews (2004) points out, counter-narratives are created in relation to master narratives but they do not have to be dichotomies. Instead, they reveal the story that the master narrative’s voice will avoid talking about (Andrews 2004, pp. 2–3). Hansen and Lundholt (2021) discuss the dynamic of counter-narrative in business communication as performed within the organisation. In the case of hydropower companies, the challenge to the authoritative story is most likely to be posed by actors that are affected by the companies’ operations and could be positioned as external actors.

Counter-narratives and narrative justice

In company narratives certain parts of history remain unmentioned or inadequately represented. Among these are the narratives belonging to Sámi people who were negatively impacted by hydropower expansion, as will be presented below. Studies on interactions between extractive industries and reindeer herding Sámi communities show that Sámi voices have been and continue to be ignored or trivialised (Sehlin MacNeil 2017, 2018). These situations can be explained as asymmetric conflicts or power relations and need to be addressed as such (Sehlin MacNeil 2019). When energy companies create narratives that omit specific voices, such as the Sámi, those voices become a form of counter-narratives. Their narratives—created in some relation to specific parts of the companies’ operations or the companies’ narratives—tell a deeper story, that the company narratives will avoid talking about (Andrews 2004).

Within Environmental humanities and Environmental justice, the concept “narrative (in) justice” is proposed (Barca 2014) to further articulate how the stories of certain communities’ problems due to extractive industries are silenced, made invisible, and erased from the collective memory (Nachet et al. 2021; Armiero et al. 2018). The urge to tell “the right story” (Barca 2014) is important to challenge or nuance the story of Nordic exceptionalism in energy and environmental issues, which tells the tale that these countries in some ways are acting better than others, and that their doings can represent a model that could be applied elsewhere (Tunkrová 2008). Another aspect is the colonial history in the three countries, which has not been addressed by research until the last few decades. Colonial narrative and discourse have facilitated ways for both states and companies to take over land in the name of society’s “greater good” (Össbo 2014).

In this study, I examined counter-narratives from many genres. These sources include documentation made by a community impacted by hydropower (Hanes 2001), works by journalists with an insider perspective of a Sámi community (Aikio), and the writings of journalists on behalf of the energy company (Lie 2005). Research that departs from or is sensitive towards counter-narratives can be seen as a form of complicit counter-narrative (see Bamberg 2004).

Methods and material

Three state-owned energy companies, Vattenfall AB (Sweden), Statkraft A/S (Norway) and Kemijoki Oy (Finland) are the objects of this study. The Swedish and Norwegian companies are quite comparable in age and activity, and both operate practically throughout the entire countries. The Finnish example becomes a little more difficult to compare, as Kemijoki Oy is a younger, local company with activities exclusively in the area around the Kemijoki river.

These companies operate in different organizational terrains depending on how the countries have built their legislation and administration with regard to, among other things, permit authorities. As a first data gathering method, I studied the hydropower companies' narratives through each company's website and the narratives found there at a particular time (2020–2021), then the search was broadened to include other types of materials. In the case of Finnish Kemijoki Oy, the information and the historical narratives were too scarce on the website. Instead, an anniversary film representing the company's historical narrative in 2014 was used. This means that the materials from Finland were different to the other two countries, however, the content was similar. The reader should be aware of this, yet it is more important to include Finland in this study than exclude it. Similar to the Kola Peninsula, Finland is a part of Sápmi less often included in comparative studies due to differences in the languages compared to the kindred Norwegian and Swedish languages.

Findings and analysis

In this study, energy company narratives concerning Sámi issues are compared with narratives about the same events that appear in publications by other authors and research literature that concern the companies' activities in Sámi areas. The results of the study are presented below with an overview of each company and a brief outline of the country's hydropower expansion, followed by a presentation of the company's narrative and how the narrative is challenged by both complicit and external countering voices.

Swedish Vattenfall AB

For Sweden, the state-owned company *Vattenfall* is investigated. Prior to the formation of the company in 1992, Vattenfall operated as the public enterprise Statens vattenfallsverk [*State Waterfall Service*], governed by the Kungliga vattenfallsstyrelsen [*Royal Waterfall Board*], which was also the managing authority for the significant waterfalls owned by the Swedish state. The Waterfall Board was established 1909 (Vedung and Brandel 2001).

As early as the 1910s and 1920s, two large-scale hydropower projects were established in the Stuor Julevädno/Grand Lule River which affected the livelihoods of Sámi people living in the area of Upper Stuor Julevädno. During the Second World War, Sámi in Jämtland and Norrbotten counties in Sweden experienced the application of the Swedish Crisis Act for temporary hydroelectric power production. Although no new lakes were to be dammed according to the Crisis Act, a total of 20 lakes that had no former regulation were exploited for hydropower in the reindeer herding area on the Swedish side (Össbo 2014).

In the 1950s, nature conservation and outdoor organizations in Sweden began significant work to draw attention to and form popular opinion against continued hydropower

expansion (Anshelm 1992). Two organizations submitted a letter to the government to investigate rivers worthy of protection, and in 1954 the Co-operation Committee for Nature and Landscape Conservation, consisting of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, the Swedish Tourist Association, Fjällklubben and the Society for Homeland Care, submitted its list of rivers worthy of protection (Vedung and Brandel 2001).

In the mid-1950s, the first regional plan—although unofficial—was passed by Vattenfall (for Dearnna/Tärna area in the upper reaches of Ubmejeiednu/Ume River and was soon followed by requirements for plans for each river where state-led hydropower expansion was planned, including the Julevädno. An agreement between parts of the nature conservation interests and the developer interests was concluded in the so-called Peace treaty in Sarek in 1961, where certain waterways were sacrificed to protect others from energy production. The national association for Sámi in Sweden, Sámiid Riikasearvi, did not support the Sarek-agreement. In contrast to the conservationists who only were interested in unexploited watercourses, Sámiid Riikasearvi believed that already regulated lakes needed protection as well since the lakes were of importance for Sámi communities (Össbo 2014). After the battle over the Vidduoljiennuo/Vindel River in the 1960s and the decision not to expand in 1970, political attention was drawn to the need for national planning for all forms of community development, which led to a design for national planning, a new planning and building law, and the development of the concept and planning tool *National Interests*. When the Water Act was revised in 1983, certain rivers and part of rivers became legally protected. The river protection was further upgraded with the Natural Resources Act 1986 (Vedung and Brandel 2001).

The company narrative of Vattenfall AB

On the Vattenfall website, several sources from more than a 100 years of company history are accessible. The narrative begins by positioning the company in the history of electricity, as one of the world's first, state-owned, hydropower producers. Swedish engineering and technology are also emphasized (Vattenfall, *The history and heritage of Vattenfall*). When the construction of one of the first power plants is mentioned, Bårjås, which was also the first large-scale hydropower plant in Sápmi, the facility is described as situated in the wilderness and not as part of a Sámi settlement, which it actually was in 1910. Under the headings “New communities in the wilderness” and “Pioneer power stations”, the early hydropower expansion is portrayed in more detail.

Vattenfall's modern website-based narrative is largely based on a book series that the author Nils Forsgren made together with Porjus' Archive Committee and Vattenfall during the 1980s and 1990s which included the books¹: *Porjus—Pionjärverket* [Porjus—the Pioneer Power Station] (1982), *Suorva—Dammygget i ödemarken* [Suorva—The Dam building in the wilderness] (1987), *Den effektfulla älven—stänk från Luleälvens kraftfulla historia* [The effective river—splashes from the powerful history of the Lule River] (1989), *Krafttag i norr—en krönika om energin från Vattenfall Mellersta Norrland* [Vigorous efforts in the North—a chronicle about the energy from Vattenfall Mellersta Norrland] (1992) and *Harsprånget—storverket som aldrig höll på att bli av* [Harsprånget—the masterpiece that was almost never done] (1995). Although the books yield some attention to negative consequences of hydropower and critical voices, the

¹ The English titles are my translation from the Swedish titles.

consequences for the Sámi communities are absent and the importance of industry in building the welfare state, progress and technology is the dominant perspective.

Neither does the website mention the joint proposal by Vattenfall and the Swedish Hydropower Association for a new water law at the outbreak of the WWII, which made possible the rapid expansion rate. In the article called “Colonial blindness”, the crisis legislation is mentioned—and that is also the only article that discusses Sámi. The specific mention of Sámi in relation to the crisis legislation is noteworthy as the Crisis Act applied to the whole country. However, for various reasons the law had most impact on hydropower expansion in the north—a fact not mentioned in Vattenfall’s narrative. This is how Vattenfall describes the situation:

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, energy supply became an important national issue. As a result, a crisis act was passed, a virtual emergency powers act for power plant construction. This lifted the burden of responsibility significantly for the power companies. Water regulation was permitted before diverging interests had time to be weighed up and the damage assessed. After the war the crisis act was extended, so that it was easier for power companies to get permission for power plant construction. (Vattenfall, *Colonial blindness*)

Furthermore, Vattenfall describes that:

The Water Act of 1918 already had a shortcoming. It had ignored the plight of the Sámi. They did not count as residents, as they did not own the land they used. This proved to be a financial loophole for power companies such as Vattenfall when they had to pay compensation to the Sámi who were affected by power plant construction. (Vattenfall, *Colonial blindness*)

The trial at the Water Court included a balancing of the financial admissibility, which meant that the forecasted profit from the hydropower project would be weighed against the loss of property belonging to other stakeholders three times, and for property belonging to the developer only two times (SFS 1918: 523, Chapter 2, para 3). Since Vattenfall was the developer for the Crown, and most of the reindeer grazing lands impacted by hydropower dams were located on Crown land, the grazing lands as well as the Sámi residences were considered to be owned by Vattenfall. This resulted in a low projected loss for the Sámi which meant that it was much cheaper for Vattenfall to build dams on lands exclusively used for reindeer grazing and herding than for example on privately owned farming lands. All that remained for the Sámi was compensation for movable property, which was also estimated very low. In the narrative, there is an awareness of the uneven power distribution between smaller stakeholders and the Vattenfall organization, which invested a lot of resources to reduce the compensation to the opposing parties.

Vattenfall spent huge sums of money on investigation to prove that higher levels of compensation were not justified. Sometimes the levels of compensation offered were painfully small. However, the water-rights court was responsible for setting the compensation levels. (Vattenfall, *Colonial blindness*)

This shows an insight into mismanagement, through the admission that what was offered were “painfully small” compensations. But the citation also points to the company disclaiming responsibility as they underline that it was the court that determined the compensation. The continuation of the story is described in terms of a “More generous policy in the 1950s”.

In 1958, during the court case regarding the third regulation of Suorva, a crucial part judgment [“The Löwing judgment”] was issued. The right of use of the Sámi was equated with ownership rights, and the loss of reindeer grazing land was compensated as if they actually owned the land. Compensation for buildings was also paid directly to those affected. A judgement that personal compensation had to be paid for impaired livelihoods was something new. (Vattenfall, *Colonial blindness*)

Vattenfall’s narrative gives the impression that the expansions in Sápmi cease after the 1950s or that the price that the locals had to pay for the expansions was not as high in the 1960s. In the introduction to “Colonial blindness”, the narrative states: “The development of hydropower was not a golden age for everyone. Many people had to pay a high price during the 1940s and 1950s, when the Norrland power was exploited, including the Sámi.”

Challenging voices against Vattenfall AB’s narrative

Documentation in the form of interviews reveal the omission in Vattenfall’s narrative of how the Sámi have been affected by Vattenfall’s hydropower expansion (Hanes 2001). If Vattenfall’s narrative is based on the book series of Nils Forsgren it is important to mention that these books are not referred on the website. The book that mentions the Sámi and reindeer herding the most is the chronicle from Vattenfall Mellersta Norrland and deals with southern parts of Sápmi (Forsgren 1992). Despite this, Vattenfall’s website makes invisible the fact that expansions in other parts of Sweden than the Suorvvá dam also affect the Sámi.

Vattenfall’s narrative focuses on the period from World War II and the 1950s and the Crisis Act but excludes the fact that the law was Vattenfall’s own proposal with the support of the Swedish Hydropower Association. However, the Crisis Act became more restrictive than the proponents had wanted: the law only allowed temporary regulation in existing dams. But in practice, the handling in the courts was still in accordance with the wishes of the developers. More than 20 completely new dams were built in reindeer herding areas with the help of the Crisis Act and that practice was used only for the northern part of the country (Össbo 2014).

Vattenfall’s narrative reflects insight into the discriminatory disadvantage that reindeer herding Sámi were in. But it is not stated that those who were not “counted as residents” applied to reindeer herding Sámi; Sámi who owned agricultural properties had the same protection for their properties as others. The problem was the prevailing view which Vattenfall nowadays expresses in the writing “as they did not own the land”. It is beyond doubt that in the 1940s, Vattenfall failed to recognize the Sámi as stakeholders (Hanes 2001). Regardless of whether the reindeer herding Sámi were considered as landowners, collective owners of reindeer grazing land or, as the state saw it, tenants on the Crown’s land, “other” tenants were entitled under the Water Act to personal compensation for loss of their leasehold land (SFS 1918:523, Chapter 9, para 52; Össbo 2014).

Although the Water Court became more accommodating through the Löwing judgement on Sámi as stakeholders and the right to compensation (Hanes 2001), the assessments of damages and losses were still at a non-reparative level. Perspectives from people with experience from the Suorvvá area testify to a continued approach from Vattenfall to minimize compensation as much as possible, resulting in a completely unreasonable situation for those who were to be compensated (Hanes 2001). According to previous research, the reindeer herding Sámi community became obliged to pay in theory because of the legal process for the third dam of Suorvvá—an untold story in Vattenfall’s company narrative.

Vattenfall calculated that the benefit that the access road and other installations that the community could use due to the third damming meant much more than the compensation that the community would receive as a result of the regulation. In the company's perspective the community had gained from the damming. To avoid the experience and the loss of not receiving any compensation from the third damming, the community board tried a different strategy in the permit process concerning the fourth damming. It is described by a research participant as no free choice, Vattenfall almost demanded the community to sign an agreement with the company. The community received a sum of money and some of the members wanted to save a larger sum for future needs, but in the end the majority of money was distributed to individuals which later led to a huge residual tax for them and several had to take loans to pay their tax debt (Össbo 2021; Hanes 2001).

An overview of Vattenfall's narrative suggests that Sámi issues are given minimal space in relation to how intensely Sámi areas have been affected and still are affected by Vattenfall's operations. Today, 34 of the 51 reindeer herding Sámi communities in Sweden have at least one hydropower dam or plant on their lands, but 28 of them host three or more such facilities (Össbo 2021).

The situation for the Sámi is only mentioned in the special article "Colonial blindness". Nowhere else, neither in the initial articles with Bårjås (Vattenfall, *New communities in the wilderness; The pioneer power stations*) nor in the critique of hydropower with environmental protection and the battle of Vidduoljiennuo (Vattenfall, *Environmental protection in the early days; Raging protests against river exploitation*), nor in the article describing the company's situation during and after the Second World War (Vattenfall, *Massive investment in Hydropower*) are Sámi mentioned.

Norwegian Statkraft A/S

Statkraft is the Norwegian example and can be seen as a counterpart to Swedish Vattenfall. From 1921, the *Norwegian Water Resources and Electricity Directorate* (NVE) was responsible for the construction and operation of the state-owned power plants but also hydropower concessions and financing electricity plants for municipalities or community associations. The *State Power Authority* (today Statkraft) was a commercial governmental owned company within NVE and in 1986 Statkraft was separated from NVE to become an independent management company under the *Ministry of Petroleum and Energy* (OED). In the same vein, NVE changed its name to the *Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate* (still abbreviated NVE) and handles the permit examination for hydropower and the supervision of electricity production (NVE History).

After the Second World War, the so-called Northern Norway plan was implemented and public actors made heavy investments in the expansion of hydropower. One of the many county-initiated projects was the project of the Namsen watercourse which included regulation of Lake Tunnsjøen in 1942 and Lake Nåamesjenjaevrie/Namsvatnet in 1948. A decade later, in 1959, the 'great transfer' was carried out, including a tunnel between the aforementioned lakes and the lakes Vuaktere, Lyjmede, and Dåtnejaevrie to a number of power plants, including power plants and watercourses on the Swedish side of the border. Lyjmede was already regulated in 1953 by Faxälven River's (today Ängermanälven River's) regulation company on the Swedish side (NVE, Audit document 2018, pp. 9–10). In the 1960s, reindeer herders in the area pleaded to the court for compensation. A judgement finally awarded compensation to reindeer herding for the regulation conducted during the

1950s, but rejected the demands the herders had made on compensation for damage in the case of Nåamesjenjaevrie (Hermanstrand and Kosmo 2009).

The Lower Røssåga power plant was initiated by the Norwegian state in 1946–1947. Additional dam projects were implemented from 1953 to 1958 that raised the water level and connected the lakes Reevertse/Røssvatnet and Tustervatnet, and another power station called Upper Røssåga (Skjold 2006). The damming of the lakes was forced: initially the dam was planned to be filled in the summer of 1958, but damming began already during the summer of 1957, which violated the condition of the permit and put the population around the lake in great trouble (Lie 2005; Lorås 2016). In the case of Lake Reevertse, reindeer herding was severely affected and the dam contributed to local groups being pitted against each other in increased competition for resource use. The Sámi fishing rights were never reimbursed in the legal process and many other consequences such as migration routes and swimming passages for reindeer were only reimbursed with lump sums as it was considered a problem that would diminish over time and disappear. However, after many rounds in court, the sums were changed. The reindeer herders still had to go through the Lapp Bailiff to get funds to support their activities (Lorås 2016). The Norwegian practice was the same as on the Swedish side where the colonial authority called the Lapp Administration was supposed to argue and act on behalf of the Sámi in court cases. This practice was in force until the end of the 1950s when the national organization for Swedish Sámi, Sámiid Riikkasearvi, gradually received acceptance from the authorities (Lantto 2003; Össbo 2014). Statkraft also projected the regulation of Álddesjávri/Altevatnet opened for operation in 1960 and affected the grazing rights of the Saarivuoma reindeer herding Sámi community in Sweden. In a Norwegian Supreme court ruling from 1968, Saarivuoma was granted compensation for the lost grazing due to the regulation (Høyesteretten 1968).

When it came to public resistance to hydropower expansion, Norway underwent a similar development as Sweden. In both countries, academics had already during the beginning of the twentieth century criticized hydropower expansion for destruction of scenic waterfalls. Nevertheless, this early protection movement did not reach any broad masses of people. National parks were established and several waterfalls protected, still some of them eventually were harnessed for hydropower (Berntsen 2011; Anshelm 1992). In 1960, the Gabriel committee was appointed to investigate which watercourses were to be protected and to strike a balance between energy production interests and nature conservation interests (Stm 37 2000–2001; Haagensen 1984; Berntsen 2011). The actions around Mardöla in 1970 and Alta in 1979–1981 contributed to the need for Norwegian authorities to work out an overall plan for future hydropower in 1981. The first comprehensive plan was considered by the Storting, the Norwegian Parliament, in 1986 (NVE 2013).

The company narrative of Statkraft A/S

Norwegian Statkraft begins its company narrative with “The start of the power adventure”. A purchase of a fall right in 1895 laid the foundation for what would become the *Statkraft-verkene* within the *Norwegian Water Resources and Electricity Authority* (NVE), which was formed in 1921. One of the first power plants that the Norwegian state built and operated was the previously mentioned Glomfjord in Norway. The facility was initiated by a private company that went bankrupt and the construction was then taken over by the Norwegian state in 1918. Located in the fjord, the Glomfjord power plant took its water from the regulation reservoir in Stuorra Klupmajávrrre/Storglomvatnet and Nábárvjávre/Nedre Navarvatnet, situated within Saltfjellet’s reindeer grazing district. The plant was not fully developed until the 1950s

with a regulation amplitude in Storglomvatnet of 23 m. It is unclear and not described what impact this power plant has had on the Sámi culture in the area. Today, Svartisen power plant has taken over most of the electricity production and since 1997, Storglomvatnet is a giant reservoir, Norway's largest water volume, and also the highest dam with 125 m in amplitude—the difference between highest and lowest water level (SNL, *Storglomvatnet*).

In 1977, the new regulation of Storglomvatnet included a reduction from 498 to 460 m and an increase in the water level from 521 to 585 m. According to the 1987 royal resolution on Svartisen's power plant, it was determined that the power plant owner would pay NOK 200,000 to the reindeer husbandry fund (NVE, Provisions for regulation at Storglomfjord). Information like this is not visible in the narrative of Statkraft and “The beginning of an energy success story” (Statkraft, Our history, 1895–1945).

As in Vattenfall's narrative, the impact on Sámi society and culture is summarized in one section. In Statkraft's narrative it is the Alta-Kautokeino expansion. However, Vattenfall has a more pronounced section on Sámi issues, while the Sámi issues in Statkraft's narrative are intertwined with nature conservation and the protests that yielded the Alta-case attention. The fact the Sámi rights and Sámi protests impacted the final design of the power plant is unmentioned in the company narrative:

A key argument against the development was the Sami people's indigenous rights to land, water and grazing areas for reindeer. Norway's Supreme Court dismissed the claim that this issue had been inadequately addressed, and the Alta power plant was finally built and put into operation in May 1987. The intensity of the environmental protest led to more stringent standards for river system development, and the final design of the power plant was impacted by the new principles that emerged from the debate over its construction. In retrospect, the Alta campaign stands as the prime symbol of resistance to Norwegian hydropower development, even more so than the Mardøla campaign ten years earlier. (Statkraft, *Alta development*)

NVE is currently involved in an online exhibition, the Battle of Alta, which provides a deeper perspective also from the Sámi side (<https://www.nve.no/om-nve/vassdrags-og-energihistorie/fullfoerte-prosjekter/kampen-om-alta/>). Since NVE and Statkraft were once part of the same authority, Statkraft's website-based company narrative could benefit from this by linking to the online exhibition. But as of the time of publication of this article no link had yet been established to Statkraft's website.

Norwegian Statkraft has, however, through journalist Anne Lene Lie's book *De som bygde vår velstand. En fortelling om menneskene som skapte Røssåga-anleggene* [Those who built our prosperity. A story about the people who created the Røssåga facilities] (2005) which will be discussed below, among other things, contributed to disseminate an in-depth narrative about its power expansion in other ways. Still, Lie's book is not mentioned on the company's website, not even in relation to the special section on the Røssåga facilities. In that section, the focus is instead on the technical advances and societal changes that the facilities represented during their construction period 1955–1958. Among other things, the facility “featured the country's first female tipper truck operator” (Statkraft, *Historien vår*, 1945–1970: 1955–1958).

Challenging voices against Statkraft A/S's narrative

The consequences of Norwegian state hydropower expansion for the Sámi have been noted by research (Paine 1982; Dalland 2005; Hermanstrand and Kosmo 2009; Lorås 2016). Statkraft is responsible for the Røssåga expansion 1955–1958, where the lake Reevehtse

was dammed and became Norway's third largest lake. Reevhtse is located in the area where the now well-known Sámi political actor Elsa Laula Renberg's family conducts reindeer herding. On Statkraft's website, the reindeer grazing districts are not mentioned. But the Sámi history appears in the anniversary book about the Røssåga power plants and the damming of the lakes Reehvtse and Tustervatnet written by journalist Anne Lene Lie and published by Statkraft, Lie illuminate consequences for local reindeer husbandry as well as for Sámi who led a more settled culture around Lake Bleikvatnet, which was regulated in 1961 for the benefit of the Røssåga power plants (Lie 2005). Statkraft financed the book, but neglects to highlight the book on the particular website article for these facilities. It shows that some stories are not made available too easily.

The residents and the homeowners received compensation for "pain and suffering" but not for lost fishing. Reindeer herders demanded compensation for a number of losses and additional work also in connection with the regulation of Bleikvatnet, but only received compensation for lost grazing and migration routes (Lie 2005). Additionally, the court had decided in 1953 that reindeer husbandry in the area of Reevhtse would suffer damage and be made more difficult as a result of the damming of the lakes, for which they would be compensated. Pastures were dammed, calving, marking, and slaughtering sites were submerged, migration routes were also to be rerouted with bridges and new swimming places arranged. However, when compensation was determined in 1955, the court considered that the damages were of a transitional nature and would be corrected over time, and the fishing losses were not compensated either (Lie 2005).

As mentioned above, the narrative of Vattenfall summarizes the impact on Sámi society and culture in only one section. In Statkraft's narrative the focus is on the Alta-Kautokeino expansion, and Sámi issues are given two sentences: the first acknowledges that Sámi rights had been a key argument against the development, while the other retracts the statement by referring to Norway's Supreme Court decision to dismiss the claim from the opposing side that the issue had been inadequately addressed. The original idea was to inundate an entire Sámi village, but due to popular resistance the project was changed (Paine 1982; Dalland 2005). Furthermore, Statkraft neglects to mention that due to the Alta conflict Norway fundamentally changed its attitude towards Indigenous issues and was the first country to establish a Sámi Parliament in 1989 and in 1990 was the first to ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples convention (ILO 169). Research has pointed out that this was a direct consequence of an attempt to repair a state abuse towards the Sámi with the Alta-Kautokeino expansion (Dalland 2005).

Finnish Kemijoki Oy

For Finland, I analysed *Kemijoki Oy* which is the company with the most operations in the Sámi part of Finland. Kemijoki Oy was founded in 1954 and is jointly owned by the Finnish state and Fortum, which is another partly state-owned energy company. Other actors also own shares in Kemijoki Oy, built on a model called a Mankala company. The purpose of such a company is to generate affordable electricity for shareholders instead of making profit. Shareholders sell their share of electricity further or use it in their own processes (Puikkonen 2010).

Hydropower expansion in the Sámi areas in Finland was initiated with the power plant in Jäniskoski in 1939, situated in the upper reaches of the Báhčeveaijohka, and as a result of the power plant at Jäniskoski, regulation of Lake Anarjyri began in 1942 (Paasilinna and Tuuri 1999). Five Sámi reindeer grazing districts, or paliskunta, have lands in immediate

relation to the lake district. The construction of the reservoir lakes Lokka and Porttipahta was planned during the 1950s and the dams were completed in 1967 and 1970 (Mustonen et al. 2010; Martikainen 2011).

Hydropower resistance became apparent in the mid-1970s and early 1980s when local environmental activism arose against the planned construction of the Vuotos reservoir east of the Kemijoki River in a wetland area, Kemihaara, and south of the Sámi homeland area. The Finnish government decided in 1982 to not approve the reservoir and the river Ounasjoki was protected by a special law in 1983. Due to worsening economic development in northern Finland in the early 1990s, the project reappeared on the hydropower agenda and in 1992 the Finnish government gave permission to build the reservoir (Suopajärvi 2001). The Supreme Court rejected the extension application in 2002 (Koivurova 2004) and once again in 2019, which led to nature conservation actors concluding that a nearly 50-year struggle must have come to an end (European Rivers Network 2019).

The company narrative of Kemijoki Oy

Kemijoki Oy's and Fortum's online company narratives are briefer than those of Vattenfall AB and Statkraft A/S. According to Kemijoki Oy's narrative, Tampere and Imatra were early Finnish power plants, built in 1891 and 1930, respectively. After the Finnish Winter War in 1944, Finland lost one third of its developed hydropower resources in territorial shifts to the Soviet Union and at the end of the war, war damages were imposed on the country. These factors led to the need to initiate large-scale expansion of hydropower and the rivers in the north then came into focus with Isohaara at the mouth of Kemijoki river as the first stop, then followed by the Oulujoki and Iijoki rivers. Some decades after the war, 80% of the country's electricity was generated from hydropower (Kemijoki Oy, *Hydropower History*).

Kemijoki Oy started the construction of its first power plant in Petäjäsoski 1954, one year before the actual company was founded. During the 1950s and 1960s, power plants were built in Kemijoki approximately every two years. Lake Kemijärvi was regulated in 1966 and the following year saw the completion of the Lokka reservoir, and then three years later the Porttipahta reservoir was completed. The short historical narrative, in the form of a timeline of 66 active years, includes the construction of power plants but also renovations of existing power plants, moving the head office from Helsinki to Rovaniemi, and technology development that provides more electricity from the same amount of water.

Neither Fortum nor Kemijoki Oy mentions Sámi peoples on their websites. Kemijoki and Fortum have a Code of Conduct where human rights and conventions are mentioned, but at the same time the companies do not mention Indigenous peoples or Indigenous issues. In Kemijoki Oy's Code of conduct the environmental issues are mentioned on the last pages. The company states:

We know the environmental effects of our operations. Responsible and long-term care of the environment is a central part of our operations. We prevent and mitigate the harmful environmental effects related to our operations. [---]

[W]e as a company want to do more than the permits and obligations demands. [...]

We continuously interact with local residents and other stakeholder groups. [---]

We work together with our stakeholders.

On Kemijoki Oy's website, there is a link to a short version of the company's own film *Dammed Power* from 2014, which was made for the 60th anniversary. The long version

of the film largely tells the story of Finland's situation after the Second World War and the importance of industrializing Lapland. It is a narrative with industrial-friendly terms, but negative aspects are also highlighted, such as the impact on salmon fishing in the river. Sámi persons can be seen in the archival films and reference is made to other documentary films, but in general the impact on the Sámi as a specific group or people in this film is omitted.

In *Dammed Power*, a movie clip from a documentary, Allasevakot (1970) [Reservoir evacuees], is used. The clip includes some short comments from a Sámi reindeer herder, but it is not made clear who he is and that he is Sámi. The herder Oula Aikio is presented by name in the documentary, but not in the company's film narrative, he talks about powerlessness in regard to the special exemption law that was used in the case of the Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs. An official in the environmental administration states that this form of damming would never have been carried out if they had realized at the time what lasting consequences it would have for the local population. While the importance of and consequences for forest reindeer husbandry are mentioned, the Sámi as a people or group is not mentioned. This is possibly explained by the fact that in Finland reindeer herding is not an exclusively Sámi livelihood as it is in Sweden and Norway.

The company narrative in the film places more emphasis on nature conservation's struggle with the following planned dam in Vuotos, which is also located within the Lapland county but a bit south of the Sámi homeland as defined by the authorities. Here, a communications manager from the company states that in the fight against the new dam plans, the opposition "could very effectively use the images [films/pictures from the Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs where large peat bogs floated around on the water surface between the dammed treetops] of water forests and peat rafts that eventually rose from the lake floor to the surface" (*Dammed Power*, 2014).

Challenging voices against Kemijoki Oy's narrative

In Finland, the Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs are two examples of the impact from hydropower expansion on the Sámi population (and on local population as well): four villages were destroyed, of them one was inhabited exclusively by Sámi. The village population consisted of 600 persons, who had to move whether they wanted to or not, to the surrounding area or even further away (Mustonen et al. 2010; Martikainen 2011). In Kemijoki's narrative, the expansion was justified by the need to industrialize the Lapland region (*Dammed Power*, 2014) but it neglects to bring forth the ongoing problems and trauma that has been visible through research and documentation by external actors.

On the other hand, there are documentary films such as *Reservoir evacuees* (1970), *Reindeer grazing in transformation* (by, among others, Sámi scholar Pekka Aikio), *The Sámi lived for 1000 years in harmony with nature....but then the water rose* (1976) and a later documentary *Submerged land* (2014) about the effects of the Lokka and Porthipahta reservoirs. These films, together with research and documentation (Pyhjärvi 2011; Meriläinen-Hyvärinen et al. 2012; Mustonen et al. 2010; Kauhaunen 2014; YLE 2018) show that the perception of the consequences of these interventions differs widely from what is reported or told by the companies. Among other things, the Lokka and Porttipahta dams meant that 11% of the reindeer grazing land was submerged (Magga 2011) and that the maximum permitted number of reindeers had to be reduced by one fifth (*Reindeer grazing in transformation*).

Narrative injustice: hydropower expansion in Sápmi as a singular event that happened in the past

In terms of scope and character, the materials differ markedly between the three companies compared. However, they have one thing in common—the company materials do not sufficiently document or explain how hydropower expansion affected the Sámi. The fact that these companies often operate on Sámi lands is not mentioned at all in the companies' own narratives can be considered as narrative injustice. Swedish Vattenfall deals to a certain extent with guilt in relation to the Sámi stakeholders in their historical permit processes, while the other companies hardly mention it. Environmental justice research has shown the tendency of mainstream narratives on European post-war development to emphasise the need for industrialisation to accomplish economic growth, democratisation, and social welfare. The same themes are significant for these company narratives. Under-representing or re-phrasing environmental problems and human sacrifices as positive progress and according to the logic of the greater good is a form of silencing and narrative violence (Barca 2014).

In Statkraft's narrative, the Alta case is the only project mentioned that affected Sámi culture and reindeer herding and in Vattenfall's narrative it is the Suorvvá case. This results in similar narratives: that the Sámi people were affected only at that point, as a singular event. Kemijoki Oy does not mention consequences for Sámi at all. Even the repercussions of the Alta case in Norwegian politics and constitutional law are omitted in Statkraft's narrative. The company could, instead, have made connections to the establishment of the first Sámi Parliament and how this authority has become involved in issues of energy production.

In the company-funded narratives that have a particular local focus, Sámi presence is mentioned, as in Lie's book about Røssåga on the Norwegian side, but the book (Lie 2005) is not referred to on the company website. Vattenfall has also published books with local focus that address the consequences for the Sámi in other parts of the country, but the book (Forsgren 1992) is not referred to on the website.

In Vattenfall's narrative, the company admits that the compensation that the Sámi were offered was "painfully low", but at the same time Vattenfall's narrative abdicates responsibility by referring to the fact that it was the court that determined the compensation levels. With all facts on hand today, this appears to be a narrative strategy as nothing prevented the company from offering higher remuneration once the financial balance had been implemented in favor of the project. Continuing the narrative, Vattenfall articulates that a more generous policy was the result from the "Löwing ruling". At the same time, nothing is told about the subsequent processes such as, for example, the fourth damming at Suorvvá which, according to counter-narratives, created severe problems for reindeer husbandry in the area and not least for the Sámi community members' financial situations. The story about the "colonial blindness" of the company ends in 1958 when the policy from Vattenfall was that "[t]here was a desire to settle cases, as far as possible, in a spirit of cooperation. Both parties gained from reaching a voluntary agreement." (Vattenfall, *Colonial Blindness*). Documentation (Hanes 2001) and research (Össbo 2014, 2021) remind us that there are other stories here as well, and there are ongoing problems for reindeer husbandry and the residents along the waterways. In addition, research shows that the Sámi have been seriously affected by hydropower in many more places in Sweden than in the Storlule area of Norrbotten county, such as the counties of Jämtland, Västernorrland, Västerbotten and in other parts of Norrbotten county (Lantto 2003; Össbo 2014).

Kemijoki Oy is a fairly local company, unlike Vattenfall and Statkraft, which operate throughout their respective countries. In Kemijoki Oy's narrative the consequences for the Sámi are embedded with the impacts on the local community. In Finland, reindeer herding is not an exclusive livelihood for the Sámi which could contribute to the fact that the Sámi are made invisible in company reports of effects on culture, such as reindeer herding culture. On the other hand, it could be an argument that the consequences for specifically the Sámi should be made more visible in addition to impacts for reindeer husbandry.

Key persons from the Kemijoki company acknowledge social and environmental impacts and, in a way, reformulate the story of how these projects could have been implemented. But no verification of what actually happened to the Sámi, connected to or verified by existing research (e.g. Mustonen et al. 2010) in the field, is done. In such a setting, the narrative becomes a history of yesterday's less considerate handling of hydropower expansion, in contrast to how it is done today with stakeholder involvement. Furthermore, it adds to the invisibility of Sámi experiences from the company's story of hydropower expansion. The uneven power balance between state company Vattenfall and reindeer herding communities is articulated in the Swedish narrative, but at the same time this is narrated as *history*. In Vattenfall's narrative, it seems as if the hydropower expansion on Sámi lands ends in the early 1960s, which is actually when many large-scale power plants were built while the resistance towards the hydropower expansion increased.

For the Finnish company, hydropower expansion has been an ongoing operation well into the 2010s and Kemijoki Oy reports that they constantly streamline existing hydropower and work in close relation to stakeholders. But still, the consequences for the Sámi as an Indigenous people are not recognized, nor is the connection between historical and contemporary processes.

Statkraft is also continuously involved in hydropower expansion, both at home and internationally. None of these companies' narratives pay attention to the relation between historical and contemporary processes. The omission of Sámi history as well as the fact that Sámi currently are experiencing consequences, stands in contrast to the companies' Codes of Conduct (Vattenfall 2020) and their purported stakeholder engagement (Kemijoki 2020). Vattenfall explicitly states, in its Code of Conduct for suppliers (2020), that their "suppliers shall respect the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples (...) including their connection to land and other resources" and follow the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, FPIC.

In summary, the company narratives treat their hydropower expansion in Sápmi as, at best, a singular event that happened in the past like in Vattenfall's and Statkraft's narrative. At worst, as in the case of Kemijoki's narrative in the anniversary film and on their website, the Sámi is not mentioned in words, at all.

The story that could have involved Sámi experiences and the destroyed Sámi lands and altered livelihoods remain untold, instead the fact that these lakes have been created is treated like a prologue to the evolving opposition against hydropower, or a history for the environmental struggle to use in the opposition to other hydropower projects.

The outcome of such narrative injustices is that the cumulative loss and impact for reindeer herding is erased and back to square one when the present-day wind power expansion is under both legal review and individual projects are under permit review (Össbo 2018). If the consequences of hydropower expansion in Sápmi were presented as an ongoing impact that demands attention, it could create difficulties to expand wind power in the same areas. Although, "the price these communities have paid for progress and economic growth" (Armiero et al. 2019, p. 8) has not been completely erased from collective memory, it has

been altered. The continuing price Sámi communities pay for welfare and growth for the society at large, is still not recognised.

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