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Are Reindeer the New Buffalo?

Climate Change, the Green Shift, and Manifest Destiny in Sápmi

Abstract: In the nineteenth-century prairies, the buffalo was nearly exterminated as the result of the European economic and ecological invasion. Today in Scandinavia, reindeer are being threatened by the renewable energy transition, also known as the Green Shift. The Green Shift has led to an explosion of the wind industry in many countries, including Norway. Many of the onshore wind development projects have been built in areas central to reindeer herding. This article asks whether reindeer have become the new buffalo that are being sacrificed in the race to build green energies. It considers the view of reindeer herding as a vanishing livelihood and the pervasive colonial discourse of manifest destiny, which sees Indigenous peoples as disappearing in the process of natural selection and progress. The article also examines the Feminist Green New Deal (FGND) as an example of a policy framework calling for a broader intersectional approach that places race, unequal relations of power, and Indigenous rights at the heart of policy making. It considers whether the FGND is able to tackle and engage with the trajectories of settler colonialism, including manifest destiny and green colonialism. The article focuses specifically on Norway for its leading role in the energy transition and wind energy development in the Nordic countries.

In 2016, well-known Sámi artist Máret Anne Sara, from a reindeer herding family, created an art installation called *Pile'o Sápmi* with two hundred reindeer skulls as a protest against and a symbol of the Norwegian government's decision of forced slaughter of reindeer to reduce the size of herds in

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Finnmark, which were considered unsustainable. *Pile'o Sápmi* references the extermination of the buffalo in North America, where piles of buffalo skulls were a common sight at the height of the buffalo hunting era in the late nineteenth century. Sara sees similarities between the two countries' policies; in the United States it was the white settlers' political strategy to destroy Indigenous peoples' source of living and in that way, devastate them in order to access their lands (Skum 2021).

In the nineteenth-century prairies, the buffalo was nearly exterminated as the result of the European economic and ecological invasion. For Indigenous peoples, the buffalo provided sustenance as the main source of food and clothing. Tools and weapons were made of buffalo bones. The same could be said about the reindeer for the Sámi people. Reindeer herding remains the backbone of Sámi culture even though not all Sámi are reindeer herders or own reindeer. In the past hundred years, the pressure of the settler colonial project of perpetual territorial acquisition has intensified in the Nordic countries. The reindeer pastures have continuously shrunk as reindeer herding is forced to make space for "competing land use practices" or "land use conflicts," as the common euphemisms go. Today, one of the threats to reindeer herding comes from the Green Shift and renewable energy transition, including the European Green Deal (2019), which aims to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. The Green Shift has led to an explosion of wind industry in many countries, including Norway. Many of the onshore wind development projects have been built in areas central to reindeer herding.

With a pledge to "leave no one behind," the European Green Deal includes mechanisms such as the Just Transition and Social Climate Fund that seek to mitigate the negative effects of decarbonization in the most-impacted regions. Generally, these measures fall short, however, on upholding Indigenous peoples' rights to their territories, livelihoods, and resources. Unlike the standard Green Deal proposals, the Feminist Green New Deal makes a number of important, critical interventions by calling for a broader intersectional approach that places race, unequal relations of power, and Indigenous rights at the heart of policy making. This article examines the strength of the Feminist Green New Deal as an example of feminist climate policy through the case of Sámi reindeer herding in Norway. I argue that a central shortcoming of feminist climate policy is its failure to account for green colonialism; that is, the development of extractive industries in the name of "greening" the economy while

disregarding the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples and local communities, including the norm of free, prior, and informed consent (see Vanclay 2017). To fully grasp the trajectory of green colonialism and recognize just energy transition as a potential form of green colonialism, I consider whether reindeer have become the new buffalo that are being sacrificed in the race to build green energies. My point is not a detailed comparative analysis but instead, I will limit myself to drawing loose parallels between the nineteenth-century buffalo hunt in the Great Plains and today's reindeer herding in Norway, which will demonstrate the persistence and constancy of settler colonialism's logic of elimination across time and space. My focus is on Norway because it is at the forefront of the Green Shift and has been most aggressively pushing for wind energy on reindeer herding territory.

The article begins by providing background on reindeer herding in Sápmi and the Green Deal policy framework. After a discussion of wind energy development and reindeer herding in Norway, I suggest that the current circumstances bear a resemblance to the discourse and policies of manifest destiny in the nineteenth-century United States where the destruction of buffalo was a deliberate approach to force Native Americans to the reservation system. This section draws parallels between policies of the two states and demonstrates how reindeer herding has long been viewed and treated as a vanishing livelihood. It suggests that the intersectional feminist analysis of neoliberal, masculinist techno fixes of climate change is pertinent but largely fails to connect the critique of renewable energy with an understanding of historical and ongoing settler colonialism. The article argues that settler colonialism is not only a structure of perpetual disappearance of Indigenous *bodies* (Wolfe 2006) but also of perpetual disappearance of key sources of their physical and cultural *sustenance*.

Scholarship on wind energy on Indigenous peoples' territories is relatively sparse but growing rapidly. Previous research on Sámi reindeer herding and wind industry in Norway and Sweden has focused on the historical continuities of the state's failure to recognize Sámi land rights (Lawrence 2014), Sámi resistance to and representations in the wind industry (Ellingsen 2020; Normann 2021), impacts of wind energy development on reindeer behavior (Skarin et al. 2015; Skarin, Sandström, and Alam 2018), and cumulative effects and inadequate planning processes and impact assessments (Österlin and Raitio 2020). Other research has examined wind energy conflicts globally, including Indigenous defense of

their territories in opposing wind development, as a form of civic engagement about the ways in which energy transition ought to occur (Avila 2018). The conflict between the wind industry and Indigenous peoples in the coastal isthmus in Oaxaca, Mexico has been studied through the lens of colonialism and the "genocide-ecocide" nexus (Dunlap 2017b) and as a distortion of implementing free, prior, and informed consent (Dunlap 2017a).

The Nordic countries have not been conventionally considered settler colonial states but as I have argued elsewhere, not only is settler colonialism as a structure of replacement a historical and contemporary fact in Scandinavia but also settler colonial theory helps to understand the Nordic states' sometimes oppositional policies and procedures that amount to Sámi dispossession (Kuokkanen 2020b, 2020a). An example of settler colonialism's logic of elimination is the historical restructuring of Sámi reindeer herding *siida* structure (Magga 2018), a process that has been deeply gendered. The scope of this article does not allow a detailed discussion of settler colonialism in reindeer herding. Suffice it to say, the historical drivers in the capitalist mode of production that led to ecological destruction are the same that have caused climate change (cf. Crook and Short 2014: 299).

Reindeer Herding in Sápmi

Approximately a quarter of the population (one million people) in the Arctic belong to over forty different Indigenous peoples, half of whom are reindeer herding peoples. In the circumpolar region, there are approximately 2.5 million semi-domesticated reindeer and 100,000 reindeer herders, most of them in Scandinavia and Siberia. In Scandinavia, first wild and later domesticated reindeer have been an important source of sustenance since the end of the last ice age. The roots of reindeer herding go back at least one thousand years and in Scandinavia, it has been among the most significant livelihoods for at least four hundred years. The social and cultural significance of reindeer herding for the Sámi and many other Arctic Indigenous peoples cannot be overstated. For reindeer herding families, reindeer are their livelihood, way of life, identity, and culture.

In Sápmi, reindeer roam relatively freely in small herds for most of the year. Reindeer herders' tasks include keeping the herds within their *siidas* or reindeer herding districts. The siida system is a traditional Sámi social, political, and legal institution. The Sámi territory was historically divided into local autonomous territories called *siidas* that internally governed their

own affairs. Gradually this system was eroded and finally superimposed by state administrative structures such as municipalities. Reindeer herding in the Nordic countries is governed by reindeer herding acts that date back to the late nineteenth century and are amended periodically. Since the first legislative measures, the states have controlled reindeer herding, often contrary to reindeer herding traditions, practices, and knowledge. The internal autonomy within reindeer herding has been incrementally eroded and state control intensified, which is evident in the ever-increasing and accelerating encroachment of various industries and infrastructure initiatives onto territories central to reindeer herding.[1]

In Norway and Sweden, only the Sámi people have the right to own reindeer and practice reindeer herding. In each country, there are approximately 200,000 reindeer and 2,500–3,000 reindeer owners. In some parts of Sápmi, reindeer herding districts continue the traditional practice of annual migration with their herds between winter and summer pastures. Typically, reindeer are rounded up once or twice a year for calf marking, separating herds of different districts, and slaughter, although regional variations exist. Each reindeer is owned by a reindeer herder and ownership is indicated by a specific ear mark, each being a unique combination of small cuts based on a family line (Näkkäläjärvi 1996). In principle, reindeer are able to find their own food year-round, but increasingly reindeer herders have had to provide supplementary feed especially when grazing conditions have deteriorated in the winter due to the warming climate. People can control reindeer only to a degree. Herds follow learned migration routes and movement corridors that can be difficult to radically alter (Eira 1994; Oskal and Sara 2001).

In Norway, the reindeer herding region extends from Finnmark county in the north to Trøndelag county in the south, covering approximately 40 percent of Norway's landmass. As a result of the cumulative, long-term effects of various forms of development (hydro, forestry, mining, tourism, infrastructure), reindeer grazing areas have been radically reduced and fragmented in the past century. In Norway, reindeer herding districts are today part of the public administrative system created by the Norwegian Reindeer Herding Act. The reindeer herding region is divided into seventy-seven districts with set boundaries and boards elected by herders.

Reindeer herding is a highly resilient and adaptive traditional livelihood that extensively draws on very sophisticated intergenerationally accumulated knowledge of ecosystems, weather, snow and ice conditions, and

animal behavior. Throughout history, the principal adaptation strategy has been the flexible use of reindeer pastures (Brannlund and Axelsson 2011). At the same time, due to its dependency on large areas of good pastures and on grazing conditions, reindeer herding is vulnerable to environmental, socioeconomic, and land-use changes that have been taking place for well over a century, including the loss of authority over traditional Sámi territories and the imposition of state reindeer management regimes in which the Sámi herders have had a limited say (e.g., Laula 1904; Magga 2018; Eira et al. 2018; Labba 2015).

Climate change is seen as particularly threatening to the future of reindeer herding for two main reasons. First, as the climate is warming in the Arctic much faster than the global average, environmental changes in many northern regions have been rapid and extensive, making it difficult to rely on previously acquired skills and knowledge of the land and weather (e.g., Bodenhorn and Ulturgasheva 2017). Second, the global transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies means a growing pressure to expropriate the remaining reindeer pastures for green development and infrastructure projects. Recent scholarship has focused particularly on examining the impacts of climate change on and resulting challenges to reindeer herding (Jaakkola, Juntunen, and Näkkäläjärvi 2018; Näkkäläjärvi, Juntunen, and Jaakkola 2020), and the resilience, vulnerability, and adaptation strategies of reindeer herding practices to changing circumstances (Eira et al. 2020). Others have, however, suggested that the impact of climate change on reindeer pastures is a combination of negative and positive factors, whereas the impact of human intervention is invariably negative (Tyler et al. 2021).

Green New Deals

Solar and wind energy have been presented as a solution for climate change. The European Commission has established a set of policy initiatives aimed at making Europe climate neutral by 2050. Known as the European Green Deal, tabled in 2019 and approved by the European Parliament in 2020, the initiative is considered the roadmap to a sustainable and resource-efficient economy. With the motto "Transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future," it is regarded as a response to climate change and, in its own words, as "turning an urgent challenge into a unique opportunity" and "a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and

competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use" (European Commission 2019). To achieve this, the European Union needs to radically increase its ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, for the existing measures will amount to only 60 percent by 2050. Currently, 75 percent of the emissions result from the production and use of energy across various sectors. In the energy transition, renewable sources play a pivotal role and offshore wind production is slated as particularly essential (European Commission 2019).

The U.S. Green New Deal resolution was also introduced in 2019 by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey (Galvin and Healy 2020). An extensive program combining climate change mitigation and the reduction of economic inequality, it advocates a "just transition" to renewable energy by 2030. Although the resolution was not advanced in the Senate in 2019, the Green New Deal continues to animate climate and domestic policy discourses in the United States. In 2021, in the wake of the racial reckoning and the subsequent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020, the Green New Deal has morphed into a number of initiatives and platforms grounded in intersectionality and calling for racial and climate justice. Among the most well-known is the Feminist Green New Deal (FGND) that welcomes the basic premise of the Green New Deal but argues for a stronger cross-cutting approach and feminist principles to tackle historical oppressions such as the intergenerational effects of colonialism and anti-Black racism. The FGND calls for the leadership of women, particularly from disadvantaged communities, as well as of Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, LGBTQIAP+ people, people from the Global South, migrant and refugee communities, and youth.

The FGND outlines ten principles of engagement such as mainstreaming intersectional gender analysis, confronting institutional patriarchy and racism, centering Indigenous rights such as free prior and informed consent, confronting unsustainable and exploitative systems of production, advancing reproductive justice, promoting local democracy and decision-making, and creating regenerative feminist economies. The eighth principle calls for rejecting false and harmful responses and solutions to climate change that "fail to address root causes" and enable drivers of the climate crisis to keep going while greenwashing their damages. Drivers include carbon trading, capture, and storage; biofuels; nuclear power plants; natural gas extraction; mega-dams; geo-engineering; and

bioenergy. Such "technofixes" permit industries to "pay to pollute," displace smallholder and subsistence farmers, and destroy biodiversity, food sovereignty, and livelihoods (Feminist Green New Deal, n.d.).

Overall, the Feminist Green New Deal's goals are laudable and welcome, considering the deeply ingrained hegemonic masculinity in the dominant climate change discourse, evident in progress narratives of controlling the future; the language of distanced scientific objectivity, efficiency, and performance; and even militaristic "muscle-flexing" (MacGregor 2009). In my view, however, there is a major unaddressed contradiction in the FGND. On the one hand, the FGND calls for a swift and just energy transition. On the other, it demands "binding legal recognition of Indigenous land rights, real enforcement of the vital framework of Free, Prior and Informed Consent" (Feminist Green New Deal 2019).

The recent transition from fossil fuel resources to "clean" or "renewable" energy and investment in environmentally friendly technologies is commonly known as the Green Shift. Norway has been at the vanguard of this energy transition and Norwegians take pride in being among the most environmentally friendly people in the world. The Norwegian government was among the first to tackle the greening of the transport sector and today, nearly 80 percent of new cars purchased in Norway are electric (Klesty 2021). The energy transition may decrease the dependency on fossil fuels but it establishes new dependencies on raw materials, such as rare earth metals, that are needed for electric car batteries, wind turbine rotors, and solar panels. In short, the production of "clean" energy does not eliminate pollution and negative environmental and social impacts but merely relocates them to other regions rendered as "sacrifice zones." This article suggests that reindeer grazing areas in Norway can be considered as such.

Wind Energy Development and Reindeer Herding

Globally, the wind industry has produced electricity for over one hundred years, but in Norway it became more common at the end of the 1990s. At the time, few reindeer herders knew much about the wind industry, marketed as a clean and benign energy source. Initially, impact assessments on reindeer herding were hard to come by, and still today, consultants and others conducting the assessment typically have very little knowledge of reindeer herding, no Sámi language skills, and their interaction with reindeer herders is inadequate. To properly assess the impacts requires not only extensive knowledge about the landscape, topography, and ecology, but also about the ways in which reindeer use the terrain (Lund, Gaup, and

Somby 2020: 17, 33–4). There is also a fundamental problem with legally required impact assessments by the industry-hired consultancy firms: it is not desirable to find reasons *not* to carry out the development project, given that money has already been invested in planning, surveying, and so on. Identifying major environmental impacts or discovering valuable ecosystems in need of protection may jeopardize the permit. A number of reindeer herding districts have reported conflicts with consultants and their inadequate or even incorrect impact assessments. As a recent example, the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE, Norges vassdrags- og energidirektorat) had conducted an impact assessment of a mega powerline construction in central Finnmark, one of the main reindeer herding regions in Norway, with minimal consultation of reindeer herders along the route, and using as the basis of assessment information from *unrelated* cases involving *wild* reindeer in southern Norway and Alaska (Balto 2021). There are also cases where the NVE has admitted failures in their assessments and nevertheless provided a permit without requiring a new assessment (Lund, Gaup, and Somby 2020: 41).

In 2020, wind energy construction was booming in Norway. Over one hundred wind industry initiatives had been granted permits by the government of Norway and nearly half had been constructed. According to a recent report, wind energy construction represents the biggest ever encroachment into the environment in the country's history (Lund, Gaup, and Somby 2020: 3). The encroachment has been very rapid with new actors and often unsystematic regulations and procedures. About half of the wind energy construction in both Norway and Sweden is taking place in the areas central to reindeer herding, largely without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Sámi people (cf. Österlin and Raitio 2020). Cases where reindeer herding districts have agreed to wind energy development in their pastures fall into two main categories: those who were first confronted with the wind industry and did not perceive the full scope of its impacts, and those who felt they would not be able stop the entry and would be better off agreeing to construction rather than going through involuntary expropriation. Many of those who did not know the full impact have regretted it later. In a number of cases, wind development has ended up being considerably larger scale than initially planned. In regions with no previous wind industry, unexpected consequences have arisen that were not foreseen in the assessment process. In others still, many wind energy developments have been given licenses to expand their operations (Lund, Gaup, and Somby 2020: 24).

Wind energy is not as environmentally friendly as has been commonly suggested, particularly when preserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and habitats is considered. This applies to where raw materials for wind turbines, rotors, cables, and generators are extracted *and* where they are installed. Wind industry on its own is extremely area-intensive. When considering the entire industrial system involved (roads and other infrastructure), the scale is even more sizable. When installed in remote, previously uninhabited areas, roads and infrastructure need to be built, damaging ecosystems (e.g., by draining marshlands) and scarring the land. In the Sállir reindeer district of the Troms region, Sámi woman and reindeer herder Risten Turi Aleksandersen points to the energy consumption and the carbon footprint of wind energy construction. During construction, heavy machinery and detonations create excessive noise, bright lights, and dust. The cement foundations of the average seventy-meter towers require several-meter-deep chambers that are either excavated by diggers or detonated. According to Aleksandersen, the continuous construction traffic (including trucks delivering fifty thousand liters of diesel per week) to the site for several months was incredibly disruptive to her family's livelihood. As sixty-eight wind turbines and a service road have been completed, her family and others have lost large tracts of their winter pastures and calving areas (Anti 2021).

Wind turbines emit a distinctive noise, generated by the machinery and rotation of the blades through the air. The turbines also emit low-frequency infrasound, the effects of which on human or animal health are yet to be systematically studied. According to a study from Finland, 15 percent of residents living in the vicinity of wind turbines (within 2.5 kilometers) reported symptoms with infrasound. The cause of the symptoms, however, has not been conclusively established (Turunen et al. 2021). Counter to industry arguments about the coexistence of reindeer and the wind industry, studies show that wind turbines in operation frighten the reindeer—whether due to the sound, the movement, or the shadows of the turbines on the terrain—and that the roads present an impediment for movement. When reindeer see moving blades, they usually turn away, which means that pastures on the other sides of the development are not used, putting more pressure on diminishing pastures (Skarin, Sandström, and Alam 2018). Wind turbines are also expensive to operate and less durable than many other energy generators. The turbines occasionally break or catch fire. Once in operation, the fifty-meter-long rotating blades kill birds and

insects. In winter, the blades may freeze, followed by loosening of ice that poses danger to wildlife and humans alike. Regulations regarding the disposal or recycling of rotors and other materials after their lifespan are lacking. This has led to simply leaving discarded blades lying on the ground (Lund, Gaup, and Somby 2020: 18; Pérez and Pitron 2020).

The intrusion of various forms of development has resulted in the loss of pastures and/or closure of migration routes. Restrictions and closures of migration routes may result in the loss of reindeer, particularly during the spring migration before calving. With the diminishing pastures, there is a greater likelihood of herds moving to pastures belonging to the neighboring districts and merging with other herds. This in turn leads to increased work for reindeer herders and interference on the land, such as additional roundups, additional herding, or fencing. It also often leads to increased conflict between different communities and districts (Vistnes and Christian 2001; Skarin et al. 2015).

There have been several court cases brought by Sámi reindeer herding districts against the wind industry in Norway. The most well-known case involves the South Sámi community of Fovsen Njaarke in the Trøndelag region, which has been confronted with nearly thirty wind industry projects, considerably more than other districts. The first wind development project was approved in the north of the district by Sámi herders under the impression that it would also be the last. In the west of the district, herders have ceaselessly opposed any construction and have criticized the impact assessments as flawed. They have appealed licenses given to a number of wind initiatives, including to the UN Committee against Racial Discrimination. The committee requested a halt to construction while the case went through the court system but Norwegian authorities turned a blind eye. The construction was completed and the wind plant was opened in May 2020. Six plants in the region make up an initiative known as Fosen Vind, the largest wind development in Norway (Nellemann 2017; Lund, Gaup, and Somby 2020: 25–26).

Somewhat unexpectedly, in October 2021 the Fovsen Njaarke reindeer district won their case against Fosen Vind energy company in the Norwegian Supreme Court, which unanimously concluded that the expropriation of reindeer grazing areas by the energy firm, and licenses granted by the state in 2013, were against the law. Specifically, the expropriation violated the right of the Sámi people to enjoy their culture under Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[2] As the Sámi demand

the demolition of the wind turbines, the company plans to apply for new permits, and the government is unwilling to follow the Supreme Court decision. At the time of writing, it is unclear what will happen to the 151 wind turbines already in operation in the region.

Another court case involves a neighboring South Sámi community and reindeer herding district, Jillen Njaarke, which has filed a lawsuit against the Øyfjellet wind industry initiative that is in the process of constructing of a seventy-two-turbine development in the Nordland region. In Norway, the Reindeer Husbandry Act protects migration routes. The Jillen Njaarke district argues that Øyfjellet violates the Reindeer Husbandry Act by disrupting the biannual migration and blocking a migration route. Without access to their winter pastures, the reindeer herders are forced to reduce the size of their herds to potentially unviable levels.

The two key points Sámi reindeer herders emphasize repeatedly relate to compensation and cumulative impact. It is not possible to compensate for the lost pastures because money cannot buy new ones; there are no "extra" lands or available pastures. The cumulative impact of multiple resource developments amounts to a "death by a thousand cuts": in the Jillen Njaarke case, the only remaining migration route was closed by the wind development *after* all the others had already been destroyed by previous developments such as mining, hydro industry, or forestry. Finally, the pivotal cultural significance of reindeer herding is rarely taken into consideration in impact assessments. Besides being a livelihood, reindeer herding is the backbone of Sámi culture, inseparable from language preservation, especially in the South Sámi regions such as Fovsen and Jillen Njaarke where the history of colonization and state assimilation policies have operated the longest and radically reduced the number of Sámi language speakers.

For Indigenous peoples, environmental harm frequently causes cultural harm, yet courts seldom recognize this (Tsosie 2007). For this reason, the Norwegian Supreme Court decision in the Fosen Vind case came as a surprise to all parties. *Cultural harm* refers to circumstances where Indigenous peoples' access to their culture and practices is prevented. Moreover, the loss of opportunity to practice one's culture is not compensable, another issue not well understood by courts (Tsosie 2007). Cultural harm is closely connected to the psychological impact of the continuous and growing threat to one's livelihood. Particularly in the southern regions of Sápmi, suicide among younger reindeer herders has been on the rise for some time, due in part to the insecurity of reindeer herding in the future (Nellemann 2017; Kaiser 2011).

Buffalo, Reindeer, and Manifest Destiny

For a long time, the Sámi were considered a primitive people destined to disappear through explicit and implicit assimilation policies and practices targeting the Sámi language and cultural practices. Concomitantly, reindeer herding was seen as an antiquated practice not viable in modern society and economy and also fated to dissipate. From the late nineteenth century until the 1970s, the Norwegian state viewed reindeer herding as a vanishing livelihood and way of life. This period was called the "cession of reindeer herding" and coincided with formal assimilation policies toward the Sámi. According to policy established by court decisions, in land-use conflicts between reindeer herding and other livelihoods, reindeer herding was required to give way. No other livelihood was treated this way by the state (Lund, Gaup, and Somby 2020: 42).

The first Reindeer Herding Act in Norway was passed in 1933 to manage land-use conflicts between reindeer herders and farmers by regulating pastures (Bjørklund 2016). The key objective of the 1978 Reindeer Herding Act was to "rationalize" reindeer herding by "optimizing meat production and increasing the income and welfare of pastoralists" (Johnsen, Mathiesen, and Eira 2017). By further entrenching the division into reindeer herding districts that was established in 1933, the new legislation radically undermined Sámi social organization, norms, and practices based on the *siida* system (Labba 2015). The 1978 act also introduced controls to the number of herders and reindeer in each reindeer herding region and established a national administration to educate and advise herders on "best practices" (Landbruksdepartementet 1976). Since its establishment, the reindeer herding administration has employed detailed studies and mathematical models that correlate reindeer weight and density of pastures for optimizing meat production and setting targets for optimal numbers. These targets must be met in order to qualify for subsidies and/or avoid fines (Johnsen, Mathiesen, and Eira 2017).

During the era of "cession of reindeer herding," many reindeer-herding Sámi were actively discouraged from continuing their family livelihood. Some of them still feel the pain of losing the connection to not only the livelihood but their language and culture. John Einar Eira, now in his sixties, relates how his teachers considered him "too smart" for reindeer herding and convinced his parents that, given there is no future in the livelihood, it would be better for Eira to continue his studies. The decision changed his life at the age of eleven, as he had to move to another town away from his family and friends. Nevertheless, his heart has always been

in reindeer herding. He still feels deep sorrow for not being able to fulfill his childhood dream of becoming a reindeer herder and for the broken connection to his language, culture, and reindeer herding skills. At the same time, it has been difficult for him to find his place in life outside reindeer herding (Anti and Anti 2021).

In the United States, white society's perceptions of Native Americans also changed drastically during the nineteenth century from noble savages living in harmonious, egalitarian societies to an inferior race destined for extinction. The Darwinian ideology of the survival of the fittest provided the settler colonial society with views according to which nature sanctioned the disappearance of the weak, while the real causes—colonialism, racism, and dispossession—that resulted in the demise of Native American societies and economies were overlooked and dismissed.

Closely related to the survival of the fittest ideology was the idea of manifest destiny: the divinely ordered fate of white settlers to expand and bring "progress" and "civilization" westward across the continent, while Native Americans' lot was to perish in the process of natural selection. These ideologies and representations of disappearance have played a critical role in eliminating Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination (Rifkin 2017: 5). They were also extended to the market. On the Great Plains, the market was heavily regulated in order to "open up the region's natural resources to economic development at the expense of Native Americans" (Isenberg 1992: 234). In this violent process, many Great Plains Indigenous societies switched their main source of living from agriculture to nomadic buffalo hunting, which made the disappearance of bison particularly devastating.

In the late nineteenth-century U.S. plains, Native American and European hunters slaughtered millions of bison for the growing domestic and international markets. The large-scale hunting of bison was greatly facilitated by several factors, including the introduction of the horse and the rapidly changing political economy: competition, appropriation of natural resources for economic development, the growth of industrialization, and the emergence of global markets. The near-extinction of the bison, however, was not a simple failure of resource management, driven by economic greed. The extermination of the buffalo was a means of domesticating Indigenous nations on the Plains. It was also a punishment for losses in the Sioux wars, such as Colonel George Custer's defeat at the Battle of Greasy Grass (Nichols 2020: 2). Andrew C. Isenberg (1992: 227) notes:

> The eradication of bison from the Great Plains was not unforeseen, but purposeful. In order to pacify the Plains Indians, the federal government sought to exterminate the buffalo. As early as the 1830s, Indian agents on the upper Missouri River had warned that the numbers of bison were declining precipitously under the pressures of Indian and white hunters. . . . Despite mounting evidence that commercial hunters would soon render the North American bison extinct, state and federal authorities acting on the recommendations of the Department of Interior and Army did not pass protective legislation until after the number of buffaloes had been reduced to a few hundred—that is, until so few buffaloes remained that nomadic Indians of the Plains abandoned the hunt and surrendered to the reservation system.

Anticolonial writers have pointed out how one of the primary colonial strategies has been to target women in the process of colonizing non-Western societies. Early colonizers recognized the crucial role of women in reproducing societies, not only through giving birth, but just as importantly through collective identity, culture, and language. Frantz Fanon (1967: 37–38) noted the constitutive element of gender in the colonial conquest by identifying the crucial strategy of targeting women in the consolidation of colonial control: "If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society [and] its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women." "Conquering the women" as a well-established practice of colonial settlers exposes the fundamentally gendered character of the colonial project from the start. The subjugation of Indigenous peoples sought by ideologies of manifest destiny was also gendered both structurally and in terms of its effects. It created a new set of gendered hierarchies and divisions of labor and redrew private/public distinctions. It particularly domesticated Indigenous women while placing men in dominant political and economic positions that in many cases were previously occupied by women (see Kuokkanen 2011). It also radically restructured traditional livelihoods, including bison hunting and reindeer herding.

In the Plains, the emergence of the large-scale bison robe market led to a range of gendered social and cultural changes in Native American societies such as among the Blackfeet, where polygamy became common and the marrying age declined among women who were increasingly needed to prepare bison robes for trade. Buffalo leather was in high demand, especially for making belts for industrial machinery (Isenberg 1992). The

"modernization" of reindeer herding that began in the 1960s has also meant a growing mechanization and masculinization of the livelihood. In this process, reindeer herding Sámi women have been rendered invisible and marginalized. The 1978 legislation eliminated women's traditionally held right of reindeer ownership. Reindeer-owning women were registered under their husband's names. This had ramifications ranging from the recipients of subsidies and grants to the status and recognition of women within the livelihood (Sámi Instituhtta 1979; Sara 1990–91, 2003; Amft 2002).

Policies that effectively amounted to shutting many women out from reindeer herding have led to a number of women moving to other livelihoods and occupations. Moreover, viewing reindeer herding only as a meat industry rather than a traditional livelihood deeply embedded in culture and language makes women's roles in and contributions to reindeer herding invisible (Joks 2001). This has resulted in a situation where reindeer herding is often regarded as synonymous with men's activities, while in reality, women continue to "stand for much of the production and . . . for a versatile management of the resources" (Eikjok 1992: 7; see also Buchanan, Reed, and Lidestav 2016).

The Reindeer Herding Act in Norway was amended in 2007 to reinstate women's status in the livelihood and to increase the internal autonomy and decision-making within reindeer herding districts. At the same time, state control continues to disregard Sámi herders' knowledge and management practices and skills and overlook the Sámi herders' right to be heard and consulted, a minimum standard codified in the legislative and policy framework in Norway (Johnsen, Mathiesen, and Eira 2017; Eira et al. 2020). In 2017, the government's white paper on reindeer herding was strongly criticized by the Sámi Parliament, the National Sámi Reindeer Herders' Association, and a number of districts for actively continuing the assimilation policies that began with the reform in the 1970s (Johnsen, Mathiesen, and Eira 2017).

The history of the struggle for Sámi land and resource rights goes back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first national Sámi conference in Tråante (Trondheim) in 1917 was organized largely due to the efforts and vision of Elsa Laula (1877–1930), a midwife from a South Sámi reindeer herding family who later married a reindeer herder. In 2017, the Sámi gathered again in Tråante to celebrate the centenary of Sámi organizing as well as discuss current challenges, such as shrinking reindeer pastures. A hundred years later, some young Sámi reindeer herders suggest

that not much has changed since Laula's times and struggles. Jovsset Ánde Sara (artist Máret Ánne Sara's brother from Guovdageaidnu) and Ina Therese Sparrok from Njaarke note the importance of celebrating one hundred years of Sámi resistance but question the achievements: they and their families continue to struggle with the exact same problems as Laula and her contemporaries; that is, the dispossession of their traditional territories (NRK 2017).

As broad policy frameworks, the Green Deals do not explicitly advance manifest destiny ideologies but they also do not reject them. While the Feminist Green New Deal repudiates false or harmful climate change responses and solutions and demands binding recognition of Indigenous land rights, including enforcement of the norm of free, prior, and informed consent, it nevertheless calls for a "swift and just energy transition." This article has shown the difficulty of squaring the conflicting goals of Indigenous land rights and a "swift and just energy transition" in Sámi reindeer herding.

Dispossession through Green Deals?

Henrikke Sæthre Ellingsen (2020) suggests that Norway's policies disenfranchising the Sámi are a result of the state's ignorance of reindeer herding. In my view, the ignorance argument is not only far too benign but also overlooks the basic premise of settler colonialism: the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of access to land. Ellingsen does not disregard colonialism in Sápmi; she recognizes how its long existence continues today in the form of green colonialism. She further suggests that a large part of the problem is that there is not "enough knowledge of how the reindeer herding works in the NVE or OED"[3] (Ellingsen 2020: 92–93). It is beyond the scope of this article to assess the degree of reindeer herding knowledge of Norwegian authorities in charge of natural resources, but evidently, the question of dispossessing the Sámi of their reindeer pastures is not new. Since Laula's time, there have been countless studies, reports, white papers, and other information about reindeer herding circumstances, more than probably anybody is able to keep track of. For this reason alone, it is hard to accept that the dispossession of Sámi territories boils down to ignorance by the key government agencies.

A more plausible explanation is willful disinterest combined with a neoliberal, technocratic cost-benefit calculation involved in all economic development initiatives, including the Green Shift: which is more

important, electrifying Norwegian society in the name of addressing the climate crisis or an Indigenous Sámi livelihood and its accompanying language and culture? Considering the history of viewing reindeer herding as a vanishing livelihood and the pervasive colonial discourse of manifest destiny, it is not difficult to see which one loses in the calculations. What is more, the idea that knowledge or facts alone will prompt people or institutions to "do the right thing" has long been debunked in several fields, some suggesting that the core problem is not a deficit of information but an excess of power (Kearns 2021; Climate One 2021).

In the scramble of addressing the climate crisis, reindeer appear to have become the new buffalo. In the nineteenth-century United States, the buffalo was sacrificed to industrialize the new nation and gain full access to the land the Plains peoples governed. Today, the livelihood of reindeer herding is being sacrificed for the energy transition. Settler colonial ideas of vanishing Indigenous peoples and manifest destiny have never ceased. They have shapeshifted into contemporary expressions of "giving way" and the "price we have to pay" in building a carbon-neutral society. The Green Deals, including the FGND, disregard the reality of conflicting policy objectives and the ways in which that reality is inextricably linked to the past policy making and racist ideologies that continue to animate contemporary legislators. Such an oversight is not due to ignorance but a combination of refusal and incapability to tackle and engage with settler colonialism and the ways in which it informs the basic premises of contemporary societies and economies.

In the Plains, the buffalo was nearly exterminated because the central authorities deliberately turned a blind eye to calls to prevent the slaughter. Extermination was also a deliberate strategy of undermining Indigenous sovereignty. Today, the authorities in Norway turn a blind eye to calls to prevent the elimination of the already fragmented reindeer pastures. Some may argue that the destruction of reindeer herding is not deliberate but "merely" an unfortunate casualty of green energy development. In both cases, the sacrifice is driven by policies and legislation informed directly or indirectly by manifest destiny, the core ideology of settler colonialism according to which Indigenous peoples and their livelihoods are seen as perpetually disappearing as part the natural law of progress. This process has always been gendered in terms of its structure and effects.

Moreover, looking through the prism of multiple trajectories and ideologies of settler colonialism, the difference between a purposeful destruction and "casualty of development" is ultimately not that significant

because the end result is the same: the dispossession and the elimination of Indigenous peoples. As this article has argued, settler colonialism is not only a structure of perpetual elimination of Indigenous bodies but also of key sources of their material and cultural sustenance.

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Notes

1 For examples of similar processes of industry encroachment elsewhere in the reindeer herding region across the Arctic, see for example Degteva and Nellemann 2013; Stammler and Ivanova 2016; and Sidortsov, Ivanova, and Stammler 2016.

2 For the main national and international legal frameworks and consultation requirements in Norway regarding wind industry vis-à-vis reindeer herding, see Ellingsen 2020.

3 The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate, and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, respectively.

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