



Deforestation
and nature loss.

PHOTO: UNSPLASH

THE *dynamics* OF THE **PERIPHERY**

The eastern forests
of the early 1990s from
a Swedish perspective

by **Janina Priebe** and **Toms Kokins**

abstract

The article explores how Sweden's engagement with the forests of the Baltics and Russia in the early 1990s was shaped by a discourse that cast these regions as peripheral. This discourse, we argue, revived historical narratives tied to 19th-century of Swedish forestry expansion toward the north, similarly, positioning the eastern forests a century later as underutilized spaces that could benefit from Swedish forestry expertise and modernization. We connect to historical phenomena and conceptualizations of center-periphery dynamics as a framework for our analysis. To identify narratives revolving around the forests in the Baltics and Russia under the center-periphery discourse, we conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of media sources from the Swedish

forestry organization Skogen [The Forest] and Swedish regional and national newspapers from 1991 to 1994. In this article, we outline two key narratives that surfaced from our empirical findings. One narrative focuses on the notion that forest resources in the Baltics and Russia were finite and increasingly contested due to growing demand and restricted availability. The second narrative presents optimized forest management and professional forestry knowledge as solutions to these constraints, framing the eastern forests as potentially limitless if managed with the right expertise. We conclude our analysis of the historical narratives with a brief outlook on the recent developments of Swedish forestry portrayals of forests in the Baltics and Russia..

KEYWORDS: Forestry, Sweden, baggböleri, logging, periphery.

Many differences can be observed when we compare the Baltic and Russian forests of the early 1990s with the forests in northern Sweden in the 19th century. However, as we argue in this article, there are also several similarities in how these forestry areas have been discursively constructed as “peripheral” from the perspective of the Swedish forestry industry. In both cases, the discourse conveyed perceptions that (i) large tracts of land were available, (ii) there was a lack of local expertise in forest management, and (iii) forest resources were being inefficiently used. These perceptions were in both time periods colored by ambiguous property rights in the midst of a move toward privatization.¹

In this article, we argue that the Swedish interest in eastern forests in the Baltics and Russia in the 1990s tied in with the discursive construction of these forests as peripheral, resurrecting the 19th-century discourse of Swedish forestry expansion and portraying these “peripheral” eastern forests as ready to be optimized through Swedish forest expertise.

In the late 19th century, northern Sweden was seen as a place on the periphery (of the rest of the country) that possessed an abundance of natural resources but did not seem to have the capacity to take care of these resources. From the perspective of forest industrialists at the center of the country, the northern region was viewed as an area requiring forest optimization and restoration and improved management. In times of industrialization, this perspective served as a justification for gaining control over resources and consolidating profits. The idea of a “forest periphery” thus emerged in a period of transition, in this case, the change from an agricultural to an industrial society in the late 19th century. During this period, the Swedish term *baggböleri* [illegal or unethical logging] was coined to refer to illegal logging on Crown lands. Furthermore, the term also aptly captured the behavior of forest industrialists who walked the fine line between what was legal, what was customary, and what, although not explicitly forbidden, was considered unethical.² Northern Sweden was seen as a place where the boundary between what was right and wrong could be stretched because this region fell outside the area where the usual rules applied. The territory was considered as something “other”.³

THIS ARTICLE ARGUES that Swedish forest actors’ interest in the forests of the Baltics and Russia during the 1990s was shaped by a discourse that positioned these forests as peripheral – echoing 19th-century expansionist narratives centered on northern Sweden, which were revived in the 1990s to portray the eastern forests as untapped resources to be managed and improved through Swedish forestry expertise. In the following, we examine how the eastern forests were characterized as a periphery

and expansion space for the Swedish industrial forest sector, mirroring the way northern Sweden was characterized a century earlier. We trace how, during and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, eastern forests were actively portrayed as available to Swedish forestry companies and industrial forest owners, both as a source of timber and as potential land acquisitions. We suggest that drawing parallels from the historical expansion of Swedish forestry toward the North offers an alternative interpretation of the dynamics behind the sector’s eastward orientation during the 1990s. Rather than viewing it as part of the opening of Eastern markets and resources to Western industries, we thus trace the forestry sector’s shift toward the East within a broader historical arc of its self-perception.

THE SUBJECT OF this article is not the eastern forests *per se* but, instead, how Swedish forestry actors have positioned themselves discursively as the “center” while simultaneously framing the forests in the East as “peripheral” following the Soviet Union’s collapse. As was its historical predecessor of *baggböleri*, this positioning was not solely characterized by exploitation but was accompanied by notions of “development”, “industrialization”, and the semblance of a “favorable arrangement”. Despite the

“EASTERN FORESTS WERE ACTIVELY PORTRAYED AS AVAILABLE TO SWEDISH FORESTRY COMPANIES AND INDUSTRIAL FOREST OWNERS, BOTH AS A SOURCE OF TIMBER AND AS POTENTIAL LAND ACQUISITIONS.”

historical parallels we draw, our aim is not to characterize Swedish forestry companies’ actions in the 1990s as *baggböleri*. Instead, we examine how historical patterns of center-periphery dynamics persisted and evolved during the expansion of the Swedish forestry industry in the early 1990s. We use our observations of the historical phenomenon of *baggböleri* as a starting point for our analysis of the reemergence of the discourse on forest peripheries and identifying the resulting narratives. As

we will demonstrate in this article, the narratives we identified underscore both the exhaustibility of forest resources and the scramble for them amid growing demand and declining access. At the same time, they also reveal how forest management and forestry expertise were seen as ways to overcome these limitations and create seemingly inexhaustible forests.

Material and method

The main empirical focus of this article is on the years between 1991 (the collapse of the Soviet Union) and 1994 (when the 1993 revision of the Swedish Forestry Act of 1979 came into force). On the one hand, this time period is marked by the privatization of land in the independent Baltic countries after the end of the Soviet-enforced collectivization. It was also the time when the forests in Russia came under the management of state-owned companies and more assertive regional authorities. On the other hand, it was a period of transition in the Swedish forestry sector towards a greater emphasis on environmental

values, leading up to the revision of the Swedish Forestry Act in 1993. As a result of increased environmental awareness and protests by environmental movements against the then-prevailing Swedish forestry practices during the 1980s, a committee was established in 1990 to propose an overhaul of the production-oriented and tightly controlled forestry sector.⁴ A result of this reconsideration was the revision of the Forestry Act in 1993 which then placed production values and environmental values on an equal level in forest legislation and introduced massive deregulation and an emphasis on market dynamics in the forestry sector. The notion that production, environmental, and social values could be pursued simultaneously – producing “more of everything”⁵ – was known as the Swedish model. However, it has been pointed out that, despite the legal enshrinement of environmental values in 1993, the Swedish model continued to value production more highly.⁶

While the revision was mostly welcomed – although it was also debated early on – by those who advocated for a stronger focus on environmental considerations, as well as by those who appreciated the deregulation of the sector, there were also concerns about potential shortages and reduced access to domestic forests. As we will illustrate, these concerns created an urgency in the Swedish forestry sector to secure access to forests elsewhere. While our empirical focus lies on the early years of the 1990s, we also contextualize this period within the long history of Swedish forestry expansion into forests that had not been accessed to a larger extent.

WE FOCUSED OUR analysis on contemporary debates in the Swedish regional and national print media and the specialist magazine *Skogen* between 1991 and 1994. The print media included Swedish national and regional newspapers that are available in digitized form in the MediaRetriever database. These print media were systematically searched for articles relating to forestry issues in the Baltic States and Russia. We used the Swedish terms “skogsbruk” (forestry) and “skog” (forest), as well as terms “Öst” (east) and the individual countries (all terms including asterisk) that recently became independent from the dissolved Soviet Union to conduct a search of regional and national Swedish print media between 1991 and 1994.

Our second empirical source, the Swedish magazine *Skogen* was (and still is) published by the association *Skogen*, an interest organization that focuses on rationalizing forestry practices and disseminates knowledge about forestry among forest owners and other forest stakeholders in Sweden. The organization is an expert body for forest management in Sweden, established in the early 20th century, and still reflects the overall objectives of the forestry sector. The Swedish magazine *Skogen* has been published monthly since 1981. In 1990, the magazine’s largest number of printed copies (23 500) was distributed.⁷ Past editions of the magazine are only available in print format and were manually searched for relevant material according to the same open selection as described above for the print media.

In these two types of sources, the regional and national newspapers and the magazine *Skogen*, the ideas of key actors in the



The Swedish term *baggböleri* [illegal or unethical logging] was coined to refer to illegal logging on Crown lands. Satirical illustration from a Swedish newspaper, 1867.

Swedish forestry sector are expressed in news items, interviews or more extensive reportages, including for instance managers of forestry companies, small machinery manufacturers but also representatives of environmental organizations. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the latter have established themselves as important counterparts to industrial forestry actors in shaping forestry discourse.⁸

WE NOTE THAT the voices, ideas, and concerns we highlight in this article were conveyed in specific contexts in the print media we refer to. Furthermore, we view representations in our media sources as *performative*, because they can change reality. For example, expectations may promote investment, while hesitation and skepticism voiced in the media can lead to cancelled deals and falling stock market shares. This media performativity has also been described as the result of an “orchestration” by newspaper editors, an active process in which they “intervene in the dynamics of public debate.”⁹ We acknowledge this performativity of media sources as a function of their capacity to represent, i.e., to reflect social realities and actively shape, construct, and mediate social realities. The framing of events, individuals, and issues in specific ways thus produces meaning and influences public discourse.

By analyzing headlines, editorials, articles in national and regional news media outlets, and the magazine *Skogen*, this article focuses on how language, imagery, and narrative structures used by these print media enacted and perpetuated specific ideologies, here defined as “sets of attitudes and ways of behavior which can be observed in the real world.”¹⁰ This analytic approach is based on the identification of specific narratives that are discernible (but not exclusively) in text and communication as bearers of ideologies. These ideologies inform the underlying reasoning used, for example, by economic and political spheres

and, in our analysis, assumptions about the existence of a forestry center in Sweden and a periphery in the eastern forests.¹¹

METHODOLOGICALLY, we employed a thematic analysis to identify the narratives surrounding actions and ambitions of the Swedish forestry sector in the Eastern forests. This approach involved analyzing the empirical material through a combination of deductive and inductive strategies. Thematic analysis, as defined by Boyatzis, is a process of identifying, analyzing, and classifying patterns within qualitative data.¹² While various interpretations of thematic analysis exist within qualitative research literature, they commonly emphasize an inductive starting point, the preliminary development of themes, and iterative cycles of refinement. These cycles help identifying coherent narratives of “peripheral forests” within a center-periphery discourse which constituted the guiding hypothesis at the outset of this article.¹³

Thematic analysis recognizes print media as a site of dynamic interaction where meaning is co-constructed by producers, texts, and audiences, thereby making it a critical source for the empirical study of socio-cultural phenomena. For example, in the context of historical colonialism, Tony Ballantyne argues that print media “had the power to recast the economic, social, and political relationships that conditioned the ways in which colonizer and colonized made sense of their place in the world.”¹⁴ Consequently, we read the sources used in the present study to make sense of the relationship between the Swedish forestry sector and the opening up of forests in the east. Sense-making takes place in a specific context, and thus, the process of contextualization that we employed using secondary literature is a vital part of our analysis of the contemporary media accounts (presented in the following section). This process of contextualization allowed us to assess their contemporary relevance. Furthermore, contextualization enriched our analysis and provided a comprehensive foundation for interpreting historical phenomena.¹⁵

Conceptualizing the forest periphery

In this section, we discuss the conceptualization of “the periphery in a forest and land context, which is the analytical lens through which we examine discursive representations of forests and identify narratives emerging within the center-periphery discourse. The periphery can be understood as a place dominated by the center yet is crucial to the center’s existence. The dynamic that connects distant places has been described in Immanuel Wallerstein’s analysis of European market development since the 16th century, which details the dynamics involved in creating “cores” and “peripheries”.¹⁶ Developed in the 1970s, Wallerstein’s theory has enjoyed a great deal of influence on political science and economic history. The theory proposes that a global capitalist economy, originating in Western Europe, expanded to exploit peripheral regions, directing resources to

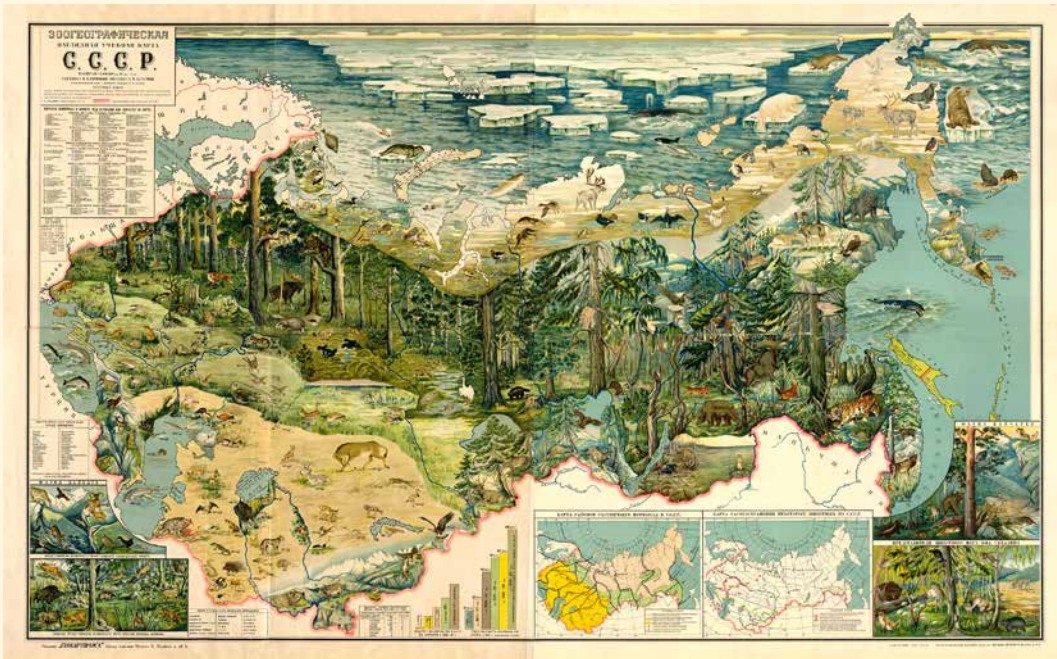
the core and thereby maintaining inequality. This dynamic of exploitation transcends political boundaries, suggesting that state borders do not limit the creation and expansion of this phenomenon. Thus, certain regions are conceptualized as “peripheries” within a capitalist system that centralizes power in a “core” whose control over resources may extend beyond state borders. While it may be tempting to attribute all center-periphery dynamics to a profit-driving imperative, such an interpretation obscures significant complexities inside an inaccessible “black box”.¹⁷ Just as the north of Sweden became an area of attraction for the center in the late 19th century—rather than being understood as a specific, delimited geographical area—we argue that the East experienced a similar dynamic in the 1990s. This shift was not driven solely by economic motivations; as we will elaborate in this article, other narratives also emerged that shaped the East as a target for Swedish forestry expansion and visions. To understand how these resource pulls create peripheries in Wallerstein’s sense, it is crucial to understand how land and forests became a form of currency in the capitalist system.

AROUND 1990, many world regions experienced a significant increase in the financialization of land and its resources, including resources that were expected to grow on said land. Financialization involves incorporating land as a currency in the capitalist market, allowing it to generate money.¹⁸ This trend was particularly evident in the East during the Soviet Union’s collapse, not solely due to the introduction of neoliberal capitalism. Financialization is performative in the sense that it acts as a creative force, similar to money.¹⁹ Money, like capital, is “a social relation, a symbolic system, and a material reality.”²⁰ For instance, the financialization of forest land and its future production establishes relationships between buyers, managers, users, and

“SWEDEN’S INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE MID-19TH CENTURY RELIED HEAVILY ON FOREST RESOURCES.”

sellers. Power asymmetries and unspoken motives between land buyers and owners can also influence land transactions, leading to significant changes in property sizes. In the 2000s, financial crises drove the phenomenon of large-scale acquisition of land for commercial purposes. It primarily occurred in Africa, Asia, and South America and came to be labeled “land grabbing”, often linked to colonial histories from previous centuries. Foreign actors, such as corporations and investors, often purchased plantations established during colonial times, only to reacquire them after decolonization.²¹ Similar dynamics have appeared in other historical and geographical contexts.²² As scholars have only recently recognized, events that could be interpreted as land grabs still occur in the United States and Eastern Europe today.²³ In the northern and Baltic contexts, the phenomenon is often referred to by the slightly euphemistic term of *gentle land grabbing* or simply as *land concentration*, which is a factual statement of the outcome of the phenomenon and avoids focus on the processes leading up to it.²⁴

A different and more ideologically led purpose lies behind



For more than half a century, from the 1940s to the late 1980s, the extensive forests of the occupied Baltic States and of other parts of the Soviet Union were seized by centralized, Soviet-run forestry collectives. Zoogeographic Map of the USSR, published in 1928, 12 years before the Baltic States were occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940.

the latest variant of the term, namely, *green grabbing*. This term emerged in the 2010s to describe the acquisition and accumulation of land for (seemingly) environmentally friendly purposes. This can include, for example, purchasing land to establish plantations for carbon sequestration and biofuel production or fencing off highly biodiverse land for conservation purposes.²⁵ Of course, the outcomes could be the opposite locally, as monoculture plantations often reduce biodiversity and may exclude local communities from lands they have traditionally relied on for their livelihoods.²⁶ Considering the contemporary phenomenon of “land grabbing” and its historical counterpart *baggböleri*, which we will explain further in the following section, we find a common thread: actors with substantial economic means acquire and consolidate land under the banner of a supposedly higher purpose. Their narratives invoke not only promised profits but also claims that the acquisitions advance global, state, or societal goals such as climate action, more efficient land management, or to secure a resource supply for an important economic sector. All the while, the governing actors are located elsewhere, at the alleged center.

Historical contextualization

We argue that the perception of the forests in the east as peripheral from a Swedish forestry perspective in the early 1990s is linked to the fundamental transition that the Swedish and the Baltic and Russian forestry sectors underwent, respectively, during the late 19th and 20th centuries. In both cases, this transition can be linked to privatization, centralization of assets, and concentration of land use and went hand-in-hand with the creation of a center and a periphery in terms of forestry as a resource system and a knowledge system.

Sweden’s industrialization in the mid-19th century relied heavily on forest resources. The nation’s “timber frontier” advanced northwards to fuel the needs of the expanding Swedish sawmill industry.²⁷ This increased level of exploitation raised concerns about deforestation and poor forest regeneration since (at the time) only large trees were harvested without considering the consequences this practice may have had for the natural landscape or reforestation. At the same time, a surge in privatization occurred, with forestry companies acquiring forest land that had been previously collectively used by villages and farmers who depended on the forest for their daily needs. In conjunction with several legal reforms regarding land ownership (*avvittringen* [land redistribution]) that aimed to codify a legal division between Crown land and private land, including northern Sweden in the 19th century, privatization and land concentration took place.²⁸ With changes in land ownership at the time, boundaries between properties were often unclear. In this context, companies contracted farmers to harvest timber in the northern forests but then cut timber on nearby land without knowing the ownership of the land. This led to accusations against the farmers and private companies of felling trees on Crown land. Moreover, several companies acquired land from farmers who were often unaware of its actual value or lacked knowledge of the precise boundaries of Crown land from which they harvested timber to sell to local sawmills. *Baggböleri* became the name for a type of forest exploitation that operated in a legal and ethical gray area, where actions were technically permissible but morally questionable. The term itself originated from a place name in northern Sweden, a sawmill located in Baggböle outside of the city of Umeå. The mill was owned by a Swedish lumber tycoon who flaunted his wealth in Stockholm, the nation’s capital far to the

south.²⁹ Eventually, small-scale farmers were protected by legislation in 1906 (*norrländska förbudslagen* [Norrland Land Acquisition Ban]), and large-scale purchases of forest land were halted.³⁰

THIS POLITICAL DECISION conserved the prevailing tenure system, which is largely intact today. Currently, approximately four-fifths of Sweden's forests are privately owned by individual forest owners and companies. Private individual forest owners own about half of the productive forest land in Sweden overall. However, in the north of Sweden, companies, including the state-owned company Sveaskog, now own the largest proportion of forest land, thus reflecting how the timber frontier and privatization moved northward during Sweden's transition under industrialization.³¹ During that period, there were extensive parliamentary debates about the deterioration of the northern forests because the extraction of timber, especially from large trees, from these forests proceeded with little consideration for their replenishment. Parliament subsequently introduced a national forest policy and Sweden's first Forestry Act of 1903, making reforestation and the planting of new trees after harvesting obligatory.³² The Act also reinforced the close ties between state control and the industrial forest sector by integrating forest owners into the economic interests of the industries as stable and reliable suppliers of timber.

THE HISTORICAL EPISODE described above is key to understanding the Swedish forestry industry's self-perception, which is frequently reflected in historiographical accounts. Forestry was the driver and catalyst of Swedish industrialization during the late 19th century. Rationalized forest management – "rationalized" here meaning optimized and made more effective – was not only represented to ensure timber supply in the future but also to sustain social progress. This understanding highlighted forests as manageable and optimizable resources. Consequently, agricultural practices were adopted in forestry, including tree planting, active forest regeneration, cultivating economically valuable monocultures, and clear-cutting, a practice that originated in Sweden during this period.³³ At a time when forests in other parts of the world were not as accessible as those in Sweden, the exploitation of the forests in the northern Swedish periphery accelerated research into and knowledge about optimizing forest management. This development led to Sweden being portrayed and recognized as a European center of industrial forestry and forestry expertise in the following century.³⁴ Once again, the early 1990s saw a push toward the privatization of forest land. The rapid sale of Domänverket illustrates this shift. Established in the mid-19th century to manage state forests, Domänverket functioned both as a commercial enterprise and as a tool for the state to acquire forest land in the public interest—supporting employment, particularly in northern regions, and generating returns.³⁵ It exemplified the Swedish mixed economy

“IT IS CURRENTLY ESTIMATED THAT BETWEEN 10–30% OF ALL RUSSIAN TIMBER COMES FROM ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES.”

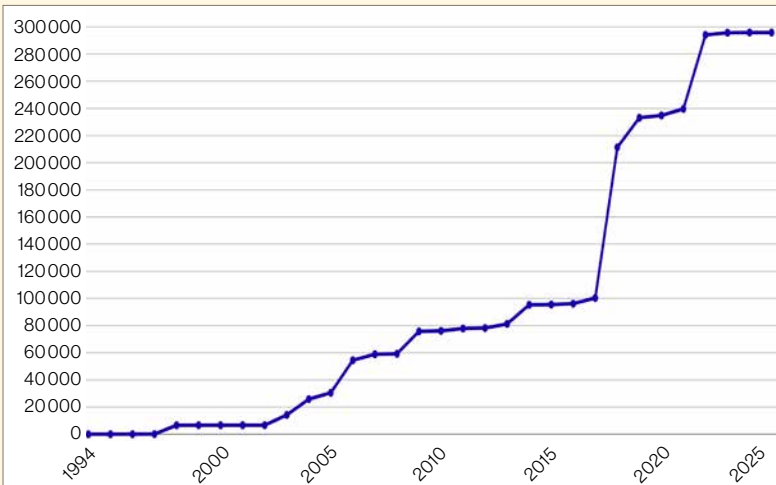
model, where private companies worked closely with state-run enterprises. In late 1991, Domänverket was transformed into Domän AB, which then owned nearly 4.5 million hectares of Sweden's 23 million hectares of productive forest land.³⁶ It is therefore important to recognize that Swedish forestry has long been shaped by both large industrial actors and small-scale private landowners. Their forest resources played a crucial role in advancing state objectives, including the development of the welfare state in the mid-20th century. In the 1990s, the state further withdrew from direct involvement in forestry, granting forest owners greater freedom to manage their land—provided they adhered to overarching goals of balancing production with environmental sustainability.

IN THE BALTIC REGION and Russia, the intensive forest exploitation and expanding forestry activities witnessed in northern Sweden in the late 19th century occurred later. However, they were also tied to changing property relations and societal transitions. From a historical perspective, the Baltic States, namely Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, have experienced a relatively short period of forest exploitation compared to Sweden. Intense over-exploitation took place during the First World War, and in the 1920s, forest cover was relatively low in the Baltics compared to today since only 21–29% of these territories' land surface was forested compared to today's 50%.³⁷ In the post-war decades of Soviet occupation and colonization, massive afforestation and, primarily, natural regrowth of forests was a result of uneconomic agricultural practices and forced population relocations. Statistics on existing forest resources were deliberately underestimated at the time to avoid detection by the occupiers, ultimately prompting massive reforestation efforts during Soviet rule.³⁸

The transition to privatization in the 1990s was linked to reinstating pre-World War II land ownership after the end of the Soviet occupation and colonization. At the outbreak of the war, the three Baltic states tried to remain neutral, but when the Soviet Union invaded, the defense of these territories was deemed untenable due to their lack of military resources and a lack of cooperation between the Baltic states.³⁹

In 1940, the Baltic States were occupied by the Soviet Union, marking the beginning of what has been described as *Soviet colonialism*, a term that highlights the profound cultural and political impact the Soviet Union had on the region.⁴⁰ For more than half a century, from the 1940s to the late 1980s, the extensive forests of the occupied Baltic States and of other parts of the Soviet Union were seized by centralized, Soviet-run forestry collectives. However, while the forests may well have been a casualty of Soviet oppression, they were also a source of strength for the local population.⁴¹ The Baltic forests became a place where resistance fighters against the occupying Soviet military could hide and carry out operations that were a "thorn in the side" of the superior power.⁴²

Figure 1. **Forest land in Latvia owned by Swedish companies.** Accumulated land (hectare) since 1994.



SOURCE: LTD LURSOFT IT

Figure 2. **Sweden's timber empire.** A speculative geography of Swedish-owned forests in the Baltic Sea region.



DRAWING BY TOMS KOKINS, 2021

DURING THE SO-CALLED perestroika period, a reform movement that began in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and allowed for more self-determination in Soviet-controlled states, the Baltic states began to distance themselves from centralized, state-controlled models. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, these reform processes were followed by attempts to privatize and return forest land to those who had owned the land prior to World War II or their immediate relatives.⁴³ The post-Cold War transition was thus associated with a situation where ownership of forest land (and, of course, other agricultural land) was left uncertain, coupled with a strong desire to privatize and streamline land management and use. In Russia, most forest land was still owned by the state after 1991, in the form of state-owned companies that took over the role of the previous Soviet authorities to both protect and exploit the forests. In Russia, this organizational structure and the conflicting interests that the companies are subject to have allowed logging to take place in formally protected areas. This logging is sanctioned by state companies, even decades after Russia's transition from a Soviet state. Consequently, it is currently estimated that between 10–30% of all Russian timber comes from illegal activities.⁴⁴

In the Soviet Union, forestry was not linked to economic profit. Instead, forestry was pursued as a driver of industrialization as an end in itself. Although the total amount of logging is often said to have been low compared to forest growth (notwithstanding the fact that the availability of reliable figures is a long-standing problem), massive logging activities did take place where suitable infrastructure existed to transport the timber; an activity that was often unsustainable, locally and regionally.⁴⁵ In particular, exports of birch wood from the Soviet Union, with its inexhaustible supply and low costs, constituted an important import good for the Swedish forest sector for many decades.⁴⁶ As we describe in the following sections, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent dissolution of the stable (and, for

importers, profitable) supply structures of the socialist system in the early 1990s comprised an important driver of center-periphery dynamics and constituted an attempt to incorporate eastern forests into the Swedish forestry sector.

The profound changes in Swedish forestry in the early 1990s are often framed within a national context, focusing on the revision of the Forestry Act and the emergence of environmental awareness.⁴⁷ However, it was also a period of rapid globalization and the expansion of forestry interests toward the east. Exports of Swedish forest products have extended beyond Sweden's borders for centuries. Around 1990, however, new questions were raised concerning *where* the Swedish forestry's resource base was located and *where* Swedish knowledge about forestry should be applied. It also led to an expansion of forestry activities that went beyond Sweden's borders. Today, the extent of Swedish-owned forests in eastern Europe is testimony to the development resulting from this episode (see Figures 1 and 2).

The novel paradigm that emerged around 1990 motivates our investigation into the production of a new forest periphery in the East by Swedish forestry actors during a transition that occurred both in Sweden and in the regions that subsequently became integrated into its forestry sector.

IN THE FOLLOWING section, we describe two narratives within the center-periphery discourse we identified in our empirical material. The first emphasizes the exhaustibility of forest resources and the competition for them in the context of rising demand and shrinking access. The second highlights how forest management and forestry expertise were viewed as means to overcome these limitations, portraying forests as potentially inexhaustible through proper intervention. Both narratives are described in detail, with direct quotes from the empirical material illustrating the variety of positions and arguments present in these narratives.

The scramble for the last forests

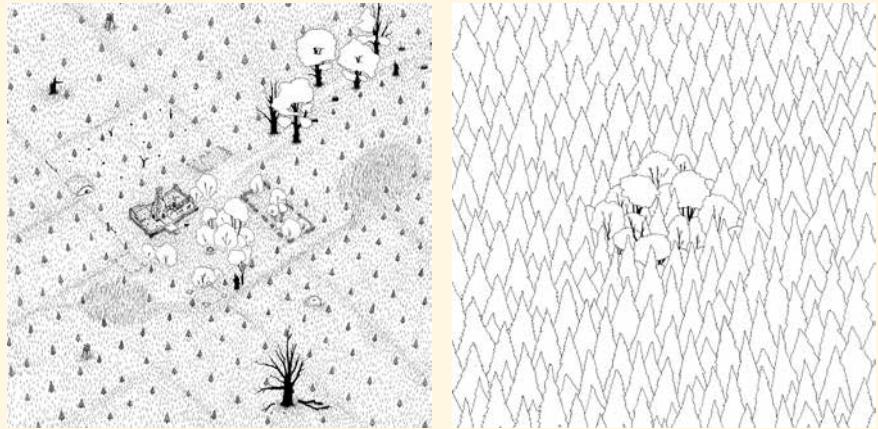
From a general perspective, the years around 1990 were a time of radical political and economic change in the East and, for the Baltic States, a time of restored independence. This period was characterized by overlapping systems that created a great deal of uncertainty with regard to forestry. We also observe variations in how the different countries involved managed the transition.⁴⁸ The collapse of the Soviet Union entailed rising living standards and consumption in many parts of the world. Demand for global forest resources at the time was expected to increase beyond what existing production capacity could supply. In 1991, *Skogen* informed its readers about a report published by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis that predicted a growing European and global shortage of timber in future decades.⁴⁹ Besides improving living standards, a major reason for this increase in demand for plantation timber was considered to be a function of a change in public environmental opinion regarding the felling of natural forests that were fueled by images of burning rainforests in South America and Asia. The realization of the negative environmental impact such forestry practices incurred led to two possible scenarios, both of which were realized. In a simplified and somewhat exaggerated way, demand had to be satisfied by the Baltic States and Russia.

On the one hand, establishing a supply of timber was a matter of expanding the area of available forests managed according to the Swedish “plantation model”, thereby increasing the area used to produce these resources in a manner that was informed by sound knowledge, technology, and experience (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). Timber production needed to be “located in plantation forests, which will take time to build up.”⁵⁰ On the other hand, this approach primarily focused on acquiring resources, but not in areas subject to the scrutiny of an environmentally conscious and highly critical public, which exerted pressure to incorporate environmental values into Swedish forestry legislation.

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian forests, especially those in remote Siberia, were described as a Wild West, or “a playground for fortune seekers and adventurers.”⁵¹ As *Skogen* reported at the time, international delegations were queuing up for logging rights in eastern Russia. However, because of the prevailing system based on state-owned companies, foreign investors were only allowed a certain amount of time to harvest specific forest areas. Under this system, the investors usually did not take responsibility for the management of the forests because they did not own the land:

The scramble for Siberia’s vast forest resources is now in full swing. First in line is Japan’s and Taiwan’s timber-

Figure 3 and Figure 4. **Swedish forests in Latvia today and in 100 years.** Representing the transition from a traditional cultural landscape to a monoculture, productive forest plantation.



DRAWING BY TOMS KOKINS, 2021

hungry forestry industry, which has a huge demand for imported raw materials. Swedish forestry technology and expertise will also be involved.⁵² (authors’ translation)

The Japanese government’s acquisition of a five-year logging agreement worth 9 billion SEK was highlighted as an example of shortsighted exploitation since the agreement focused on timber extraction rather than forest management:

[T]he Japanese will be allowed to harvest 6 million cubic meters of roundwood and 400,000 cubic meters of sawn timber over five years from the hitherto inaccessible eastern parts of Siberia and the Kamchatka peninsula on the Stalla Sea coast.⁵³

In the Swedish media reports covering this development, we note an underlying reference to Swedish forest management versus foreign exploitation. Swedish forestry technology was particularly in demand and increasingly used because, as Bengt Åke Alriksson described in *Skogen*, Soviet machines were too heavy to harvest forests on so-called “unforested land”. In the case of the eastern Russian forests, Swedish forestry technology and know-how became more prominent. Notwithstanding this, the Swedish forestry companies had a smaller presence in the region at first. During the early phase of the region’s opening up, it was observed that while international actors had “invaded”⁵⁴ the Russian forest, the Swedish companies were initially hesitant.⁵⁵ The main reason for this hesitancy seems to have been the lack of export credits available for Swedish companies in Russia. In contrast, in the Baltic States, the same export business was protected by state investment guarantees and other mechanisms.⁵⁶ In 1992 and 1993, a number of articles appeared in *Skogen* that highlighted the size of the previously underestimated forest reserves in Russia. These articles can be interpreted as a reaction to the initial hesitation shown by Swedish actors. They included

reports on the potential of the unexploited forests and insight into how to do business in the Russian regions, which were now authorized to do business with foreign companies without needing approval from Moscow. The message was: “Swedes must dare to invest!”⁵⁷

THE AMOUNT OF forest resources imported from the East that were incorporated into the Swedish forest industry was considerable. The largest Swedish buyer, MoDo, estimated in 1993 that about half of their hardwood pulpwood needs had to be imported from the East.⁵⁸ Therefore, the eastern reserves of forest resources were seen as vital to Swedish forestry. Several re-calculations were made to correct previous estimates of the size of the Soviet forests, where it was known that certain regions had underestimated the size of their forest resources. Furthermore, the assets contained in previously protected forest areas were revalued. It was estimated that about a quarter of the forest west of the Ural Mountains (generally described as accessible, with forest roads, and where transport to Sweden was manageable and profitable) had never been logged:

At least 40 million hectares of forest in European Russia are protected from clear-cutting [...]. [F]orests may never be cut closer than 250 meters to a major road or water source in Russia. Towards major rivers and cities, the protection zones are vast. For example, along the Volga River, the protection zone is 3–5 kilometers wide on both sides of the river!⁵⁹

In these areas that now became accessible, Swedish expertise in thinning, i.e., the selective removal of young trees to enhance the growth of the remaining trees, was seen to create value from these forests. The potential of the Russian forests as immense resource reserves was thus actively constructed and driven by a narrative that urged the Swedish forestry sector to maintain its international leadership position: “Developments in the East can have a price-squeezing effect on Swedish forest raw materials in the future. But it is also an opportunity for Swedish multinational forestry companies. But will they be able to keep up?”⁶⁰

This narrative was also informed by the notion of a “new frontier”, borrowing this expression from the historiography of the arrival of white settlers in the American West. The new frontier was the Russian forests, where, once again, a struggle to be first in line unfolded.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian forests were a frontier not only for Western corporations but also, and perhaps primarily, for the local governing elite who had acquired increased authority and control over these territories. Their newfound autonomy allowed them to facilitate foreign investment without the same level of oversight from Moscow that had existed during the Soviet era. The World Wildlife Fund,

in particular, and other environmental organizations included in our source material warned that uncontrolled logging in protected forests would result from such investments. The sale of logging rights for a low price and violence against regional inspectors investigating illegal logging were further consequences of this development.⁶¹ This prompts us to ask the question: Where did the timber from these forests go? With regards to Russia, it was difficult to obtain the relevant figures from the Swedish companies involved: “There is extensive barter between Swedish companies and the East, where, among other things, timber changes hands. The companies that trade with the East do not want to disclose the volumes of timber involved in the business for competitive reasons.”⁶²

The same lack of information applied to quantities of hardwood pulp that were imported into Sweden. *Skogen* referred to environmental organizations and environmental journals, among others, where this type of crime had been reported by first-hand observers.

“THE EASTERN RESERVES OF FOREST RESOURCES WERE SEEN AS VITAL TO SWEDISH FORESTRY.”

ENVIRONMENTAL considerations, which at the time were to be legally enshrined in Swedish forestry legislation, were not the focus of *Skogen*'s reporting on the eastern forests. The trade magazine's stance on this topic can be interpreted as a warning for companies to be careful about doing business in Russia, but they should still “dare” to work in the unexploited forests. The comment about logging in pro-

protected areas was only a sidenote to the words of praise directed toward the untapped forest resources near roads, towns, and rivers that had previously been protected. Swedish actors were thus encouraged to consider the potential of eastern forests. The trade press's focus was not on the fact that these forests were being logged but on how and by whom it was being done. Regarding which logging practices should be followed, a purportedly correct approach existed, namely the Swedish method. These observations regarding the Russian forest resources reveal a continuity and connection with the prevailing narrative and representation of the Baltic forests, where the primary portrayal was not one of an unregulated frontier and a Wild West but, instead, of the systematic introduction of Swedish expertise, albeit this introduction was being made in an atmosphere of “just before closing time”.

“Sweden is growing in Latvia”

In contrast to being portrayed as a frontier and a Wild West, the Baltic forests were construed as being an extension of Swedish forest resources that were merely waiting to be optimized in an orderly fashion. They were to be managed and re-modeled according to the Swedish forest management system using Swedish technology and knowledge. This narrative was based on the idea that a (supposedly) benevolent and more developed forest nation could offer advanced insights and lessons learned from past mistakes made in its own forest history.



Figure 5. Domänverket, Sweden's state enterprise responsible for managing state forests, organized a collection of chainsaws for Latvia. Newspaper clipping from *Skogen*, nr 2, page 62. Courtesy of Skogen. (Used under fair use for educational and research purposes.)

One prominent view on this matter promoted the idea that the Baltic forests could be exploited so as to compensate for the lack of access to Russian forests or for unstable supplies from Russia. Often, Swedish companies took matters into their own hands and focused on securing the chain of resource extraction in-house. As the largest user and importer of hardwood pulp, MoDo was a prominent example of this type of company. MoDo was frequently featured in the daily press and in the magazine *Skogen*. The following statement is attributed to Sverker Martin Löf, MoDo's director at the time:

According to the plans, Latvia will supply timber from a state-owned area of 60,000 hectares. We are also not averse to assisting the Latvians with resources such as chainsaws, machinery, and other equipment.⁶³

During this period, foresters from Latvia received training in forestry management at the company's premises in Sweden and returned with the necessary knowledge to manage their Latvian forests according to the Swedish model, Löf explained.

Domänverket, Sweden's state enterprise responsible for managing state forests, which was privatized in 1992, also took the initiative to collect chainsaws throughout the country and send them to Latvia to "help forest farmers in Latvia."⁶⁴ This initiative was publicized in the magazine *Skogen* and in local media, for example, in *Västerbottens Kuriren* (see Figure 5). The newspaper article highlighted the nature of the contact between forest owners in the Baltic States and forest owners in Sweden. This report created an image of solidarity among individual forest owners but also demonstrated a willingness to share a story about positive progress, even in material terms. Håkan Bjurén, who had just returned from renovating a Lithuanian sawmill, described to *Västerbottens Kuriren* how a small workshop in Tvärålund was engaged in rebuilding Swedish planers and sawmill equipment from the 1960s for subsequent export to Lithuanian and Latvian milling companies:

A rebuilt Swedish planer [a tool used by carpenters] from the 1960s is modern compared to what the eastern market has to offer.⁶⁵

However, it was repeatedly emphasized that these links between forestry actors in both countries were not acts of charity but were about doing good business:

Sweden is growing in Latvia [...]. Everywhere you turn, you see a Swedish businessman, often an entrepreneur from Småland [a region in central Sweden, A.N] – with a drawing in one hand and a mobile phone in the other.⁶⁶

It is important to note that the exchange of expertise and technology not only concerned the harvesting of trees but also included environmental considerations and forest legislation. As described earlier, Sweden was in the midst of its own forestry transition, which included an ongoing forest policy review from 1990 onwards. In 1994, a revised Forestry Act came into force, which formally defined environmental objectives as important as production objectives. This was an intense period during which the Swedish forestry sector and its focus on clear-cutting collided with the concerns of a growing environmental movement, both nationally and internationally. The revision of the Forestry Act was presented as a way to accommodate environmental interests that had become more influential. However, the reasons why environmental interests were accommodated in this way went beyond the mere appeasement of environmentalists; they were a function of changing markets and the prevailing geopolitical situation.⁶⁷ Sweden had found its forest identity in its perceived ability to create "more of everything",⁶⁸ namely, *more* timber and *more* environmental values.⁶⁹

THE SWEDISH MODEL was seen as a success story worth exporting to the eastern forests; a perception that is evident in the media discourse of the time. *Skogen* reported on projects initiated in several areas of forest management, where cooperation and knowledge transfer from Sweden to the Baltic States were the goals. Against the background of the Swedish emphasis on environmental values in forest legislation during these years, several forestry boards in Sweden took the initiative to share ecological knowledge and insights, for example, by translating and making available the training material on *Rikare Skog*, the Swedish Forest Agency's most extensive knowledge campaign on integrated forest management, to the Baltic states. A Forestry Agency representative emphasized that it was important to pass on this knowledge to Baltic forest owners so that they could learn from Sweden regarding how different forest sector interests could be managed:

If we export our nature conservation knowledge in forestry, the Baltic countries can avoid a number of conflicts.⁷⁰

Outreach to the Baltic environmental groups was another goal of this cooperative effort. The Swedes wanted to teach the Baltic

States' forestry actors how to be less confrontational and how to avoid the conflict between timber production and nature conservation that had developed and culminated in Sweden in recent years. The Swedish model of integration of production and environmental goals entailed engaging in "a constructive dialogue instead of creating conflicts, which can become an obstacle to the development of Baltic forestry."⁷¹ In this narrative, the origins of the conflict were clear, namely growing environmentalism, and dialogue was seen as necessary.

GIVEN HOW the positions of conservationists and forest owners were described in the Swedish forestry debate around 1990, where nature conservation practices had been reduced to a hindrance rather than a source of knowledge that could be used to create value,⁷² we are not surprised that the active dissemination of the Swedish forestry model and conservation knowledge also provoked criticism. Ulf von Sydow, then chairman of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and an expert for the Swedish forest policy committee, warned:

There is a great risk that Swedish forest management will spread to other countries" and that "unilateral exploitative forestry [is] being introduced at full speed in the Soviet Union and the Baltic States, among others."⁷³

The World Wildlife Fund had also funded the creation of maps of natural resources that would protect the rich wildlife from future exploitation.⁷⁴ However, the environmental organizations involved in mapping the environmental resources of the eastern forests were not interested in acquiring logging rights or land. Instead, they merely mapped what resources were on these territories. Unlike the industrial forestry actors, the environmentalists were not part of the financialization processes that reshaped the landscape.

In contrast to Russia, the Baltics were subject to more direct financialization of the land that transcended logging rights. In the early 1990s, financial capital came mainly from Finland and Sweden, which was primarily targeted at forestry: "So far, companies from 30 countries have invested capital equivalent to 200 million USD in Estonia. The biggest investors come from Sweden, Finland, and the United States."⁷⁵ However, in the terminology of center-periphery asymmetries, this was not a deal that was struck between equals. In 1991, Peter Kadhammar noted in an extensive article under the title "Plunderers from Sweden cheat the Balts out of their money" in the newspaper *Expressen* that "Latvia is facing a gigantic 'Baggböleri'."⁷⁶ The article went on to describe Kadhammar's visit to the country where Swedish currency could be easily converted into US dollars and could thus be used to buy anything in the country, including a great deal of forest land. Today, some three decades later, this dynamic is clearly manifested in land ownership statistics. In Latvia, the land area owned by Swedish owners totaled more than 170 000

hectares in 2017 and is several times larger than the area owned by other foreign owners.⁷⁷

Kadhammar's 1991 article reported the opinions of Latvian locals who claimed that Latvians who sell off their land at low prices should be ashamed. Instead, the article continued, saying that land prices should be raised. As the Swedish-born Latvian entrepreneur interviewed for the article argued, Swedish businessmen should show more respect to the Latvians and not buy cabinet doors for a fraction of the price at which they resell them in Sweden. The article is perhaps a confession of unethical behavior since the word *baggböleri* appears in the text and an admission that the predatory mentality described in the article could only take place in a society deprived of functioning infrastructure under decades of Soviet oppression. At the time, Latvia faced the stark reality of suddenly opening up to the world market while simultaneously suffering from a lack of stable political and economic structures to manage these sweeping changes.⁷⁸

While we refrain from discussing whether the behavior of the Swedish forestry actors in the 1990s can be labeled *baggböleri* or not, the media commentator at the time saw clear parallels between events that had taken place in Sweden a century

earlier and the events that were unfolding in Latvia. Although it seems contradictory, the fragmentation and creation of small-scale holdings that emerged with the privatization of land in the Baltics actually opened the door to land concentration by large companies, a foreshadowing of a process that has intensified since the Baltic states' entry into the European Union.⁷⁹ Once again, questions regarding self-determination were raised since land is not only property but is also national territory.⁸⁰

Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have identified two prominent narratives concerning Swedish forestry around 1990 and its relation to and representation of forests in the East. One narrative that emerged addresses the perceived risk that Sweden would lose its top position in the forestry sector during the economic upheaval of the early 1990s and presents the argument that the Swedish forestry sector needed to be part of the global scramble for resources and forests located in the Baltic States and Russia. These circumstances arose at a time when the fear of reduced access to resources informed future visions about the Swedish forestry sector. In this context, the forests in the East were viewed as a welcome compensation.

Another narrative we identified is concerned with portraying the Swedish forestry sector as a benevolent and superior actor, sharing its history, technology, and knowledge so that others could learn from it. Swedish forestry operators recognized the importance of the Russian and Baltic forests as a business opportunity and as a means of alleviating the lack of resources available in Sweden at the time, especially in terms of supplies of hardwood. The prospect of Sweden joining the European Economic Community (European Union after 1993) and the free movement of

**"A GREAT DEAL
OF FOREST LAND
WAS RETURNED
TO ITS PRE-SOVIET
OWNERS."**

people, goods, and money that membership in the EEC entailed resulted in a situation where the forests that the Swedish forestry industry could exploit did not have to be located in Sweden.

THE SOVIET UNION'S dissolution and the subsequent wave of privatization across Russia did not just open up forests for exploitation by private companies. In the Baltic countries, a great deal of forest land was returned to its pre-Soviet owners, while in Russia, state-owned enterprises retained forests, resulting in a scenario of overlapping state ownership and expanding capitalist structures. Financialization thus created new relational spaces where business could take place. In the Baltics, this led to Swedish-style forest access through subsidiaries and state guarantees. In Russia, financialization occurred via the sale of leases for logging rights, with Swedish involvement emerging later.

While the resources of the periphery are used to meet the needs of the center, the center also imposes a responsibility on the periphery. In the historical material we analyzed, the construction of the periphery involves the promotion of ideals regarding the development, improvement, and education of the periphery. Instead of describing a history of neocolonial exploitation of the Baltic region that was in desperate need of development after decades of Soviet occupation and presenting a perspective of the Russian forests as an untapped and overexploited timber reserve, the argument we put forth here demonstrates the discursive construction of a periphery and knowledge needs that were projected onto these places from the purported center.

Swedish forestry sector industrialists and forest owners played a crucial role in driving the transition process in the periphery by reviving stories about a specific historical episode that took place in northern Sweden at the end of the 19th century that resulted in the restoration of land that was previously viewed as unproductive. Legal deals were sometimes paired with questionable practices, yet they were consistently justified under the banner of rationalizing forestry. In the 1990s, this took place not in the northern (Swedish) periphery but in a new eastern forest periphery. The expansion of Swedish forestry interests into new territories supports Wallerstein's claim regarding how core regions maintain their dominance by continuously seeking new peripheral areas for resource extraction and economic gain. The process of rationalization of forestry activities in the eastern periphery echoes the historical patterns of resource exploitation and economic subordination that Wallerstein saw as an essential characteristic of the core-periphery relationship.

OUR ANALYSIS PROVIDES a new dimension to the historiography of the transition that occurred in the Swedish forestry sector around 1990 and encourages a broader perspective that goes beyond the nationalized narratives of progress that often characterize its historiography. Although this article does not present an exhaustive analysis of the empirical sources since only some selections of the sources are referred to, we have demonstrated how the media represented and reinforced the perception of Sweden as a center for forest technology and knowledge.

Today, well-established structures exist in Sweden for buy-

ing or investing in forest land in the Baltics. One example is Skogssällskapet, a foundation established in 1912 to promote forestry and nature conservation. Under the auspices of this foundation, several companies were among the first Swedish companies to buy forest land in the Baltics in the 1990s. Other Swedish companies with land holdings in the Baltics include Stora Enso, Foran, and Hedeselskabet. Swedish companies such as Latvian Forest and Skogsfond Baltikum now serve as platforms that facilitate access to forests in the East, presenting their optimization as a success story capable of generating attractive returns.⁸¹ In Russia, the transition to non-state companies began in the 2000s and remains an ongoing process. However, since the 1990s, Russian logging rights have also been rapidly sold to foreign companies, usually for 49-year leases, although *Skogen* has reported logging rights with five-year leases.⁸² The price for leasing forest land and felling rights remains low. Swedish companies like RusForest highlight circumstances for the forests of Siberia today similar to those that were present in the Baltics in the 1990s; namely, Siberian forestry would benefit from Swedish management practices.⁸³ In recent years, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine that began in 2014 and escalated in 2022, the links between Western forest sectors and the forests of the East are once again in a transition period. For example, economic sanctions have led to import bans on wood from Russia and Belarus, a situation that is reshaping international forestry relations, especially with respect to the export of hardwoods.⁸⁴ The export ban on Russian timber has impacted the situation for Baltic forests. We thus observe that the forestry periphery is moving.

The discursive construction of eastern forests as a periphery by Swedish forestry actors has a history that stretches back not only to the 1990s but includes the historical *baggböleri* of the 19th century and events that took place in the northern Swedish forests, forests that were once viewed as peripheral. While the events in northern Sweden may rightly be described with its own term, *baggböleri*, it also gave birth to *baggböleri* as a phenomenon that continues to exist in the tension between transient centers and mobile peripheries. ✖

Janina Priebe is an Associate Professor in History of science and ideas at Umeå University, Sweden.

Toms Kokins is an Architect and Lecturer at Umeå School of Architecture, Sweden.

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank Erland Mårald for his feedback on an early version of this article.

Priebe's research for this article was funded by Formas, the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development, as part of the "Route to Paris" project (Dnr. 2021-02145). Kokins' work for this article was supported by the Small Visionary Projects seed money grant (2022) provided by UmArts, the Research Centre for Architecture, Design and the Arts at Umeå University, and seed money grants by Future Forests, an interdisciplinary forest research and communication platform between the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Umeå University and Skogforsk.

references

- 1 Mats Lindqvist, "Colonizing Latvia?" *Ethnologia Europaea* vol. 41 no.2 (2011): 24–38; Emil Sandström, Emil, Ann-Kristin Ekman, and Karl-Johan Lindholm, "Commoning in the Periphery – The Role of the Commons for Understanding Rural Continuities and Change," *International Journal of the Commons* vol. 11 (1) (2017): 508–31.
- 2 Lars Kardell, *Svenskarna och skogen. Från baggböleri till naturvård* [The Swedes and the forest. From baggböleri to nature conservation] (Jönköping: Skogsstyrelsens förlag, 2004).
- 3 Anders Öhman, "Norrländ Som Identitet Och Periferi," [Norrländ As Identity And Periphery] *Tidskrift för Litteraturvetenskap* vol. 46 no 3/4 (2016): 25–34; Edward Wadie Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
- 4 Terrence Bush, "Biodiversity and Sectoral Responsibility in the Development of Swedish Forestry Policy, 1988–1993," *Scandinavian Journal of History* vol. 35 no. 4 (2010): 471–98.
- 5 Karin Beland Lindahl, Anna Sténs, Camilla Sandström, Johanna Johansson, Rolf Lidskog, Thomas Ranius, and Jean-Michel Roberge, "The Swedish Forestry Model: More of Everything?" *Forest Policy and Economics* vol. 77 (2017): 44–55, 44.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 "Föreningen Skogen" – "Historia" [History]. Accessed November 20, 2024. Available at <https://www.skogen.se/foreningen-skogen/historia>.
- 8 Per Simonsson, *Nature conservation in forestry – crucial events and important people behind the development* (Department of Forest Ecology and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, 2021).
- 9 Leslie Cowling and Carolyn Hamilton, "Producing Media Debate: Journalistic Practice and Public Discussion," *Equid Novi: African Journalism Studies* vol. 32 no. 3 (2011): 45–60, 45.
- 10 Martin Seliger, *Ideology and politics* (London: Routledge, 2019), 3.
- 11 Teun A. Van Dijk, "Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis" in *Language and Peace*, ed. Christina Schäffne and Anita L. Wenden (London: Routledge, 1995).
- 12 Richard E. Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. (London: Sage, 1998).
- 13 Mojtaba Vaismoradi, Jacqueline Jones, Hannele Turunen, and Sherrill Snelgrove, "Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis," *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice* vol. 6 no. 5 (2016): 100–10.
- 14 Tony Ballantyne, "What Difference Does Colonialism Make?: Reassessing Print and Social Change in an Age of Global Imperialism," in *Agents of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, ed. Sabrina Alcorn Baron et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 351.
- 15 Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* vol. 8 no. 1 (1969): 3–53.
- 16 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System. Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011 [1974]).
- 17 Stefan Ouma, "From Financialization to Operations of Capital: Historicising and Disentangling the Finance-Farmland Nexus," *Geoforum* vol. 72 (2016): 82–93.
- 18 Shaun French, Andrew Leyshon, and Thomas Wainwright, "Financializing space, spacing financialization," *Progress in Human Geography* vol. 35 no. 6 (2011): 798–819.
- 19 Ouma, "From Financialization", 83; Brett Christophers, "Follow the Thing: Money," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* vol. 29 (6) (2011): 1068–84.
- 20 Bill Maurer, "The anthropology of money," *Annual Review of Anthropology* vol. 35 no. 1 (2006), 15–36, 27.
- 21 Marc Edelman and Andrés León, "Cycles of Land Grabbing in Central America: An Argument for History and a Case Study in the Bajo Aguán, Honduras," *Third World Quarterly* vol. 34 no. 9 (2013): 1697–722.
- 22 Marc Edelman, Carlos Oya, and Saturnino M Borrás Jr., *Global Land Grabs: History, Theory and Method* (Routledge: London, 2016); Michael Ekers, "Land Grabbing on the Edge of Empire: The Longue Durée of Fee-Simple Forest Lands and Indigenous Resistance in British Columbia," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* vol. 50 no. 7 (2023): 2799–2828.
- 23 Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Jennifer C. Franco, and Saturnino M. Borrás Jr., "Land Concentration and Land Grabbing in Europe: A Preliminary Analysis," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement* vol. 36 no. 2 (2015): 147–62.
- 24 Janis Viesturs, Janis, Armands Auzins, and Inga Snore, "Indications of Gentle Forest Land Grabbing in Latvia," *Proceedings of the 2018 International Conference Economic science for rural development* vol. 47 (2018): 359–67.
- 25 James Fairhead, Melissa Leach, and Ian Scoones, "Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature?" *The Journal of Peasant Studies* vol. 39 no. 2 (2012): 237–61.
- 26 Pete Smith, Almut Arneith, David K. A. Barnes, Kazuhito Ichii, Pablo A. Marquet, Alexander Popp, Hans-Otto Pörtner, et al. "How Do We Best Synergize Climate Mitigation Actions to Co-Benefit Biodiversity?" *Global Change Biology* vol. 28 no. 8 (2022): 2555–77.
- 27 Carl-Anders Helander, *Forests and Forestry in Sweden* (Stockholm: KSLA, 2015).
- 28 Kenneth A. Erickson, "The Company Sawmill Town of Norrland, Sweden," *Habitat International* vol. 2 no. 5 (1977), 503–523.
- 29 Ewa Axelsson Lantz, "Naturresurser, Sägverksbolag Och Bönder. Konflikter i Västernorrland 1863–1906 [Natural Resources, Sawmill Companies and Farmers. Conflicts in Västernorrland 1863–1906]" (PhD diss. Umeå University, 2018)
- 30 Karl-Göran Enander, *Skogsbruk på Samhällets Villkor. Skogsskötsel och Skogspolitik under 150 År* [Forestry on Society's Terms. Forest Management and Forest Policy over 150 Years], (Umeå: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, 2007).
- 31 Skogsstyrelsen, *Fastighets- och ägarstruktur i skogsbruk 2020*, Statistiska meddelanden från Skogsstyrelsen [Property and ownership structure in forestry 2020, Statistical releases from the Swedish Forest Agency] (2020).
- 32 Stefan Dalin, "Ägandet Och Staten: Debatterna i Jämtlands och Västernorrlands Län om 1903 Års Skogsvärds lag [Ownership and the State: The Debates in Jämtland and Västernorrland County on the 1903 Forestry Act]," in *Den Nya Staten: Ideologi Och Samhällsförändring Kring Sekelskiftet 1900* [The New State: Ideology and Social Change at the Turn of the Century 1900], eds. Erik Nydahl and Jonas Harvard, (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2016), 243–68.
- 33 Ebba Lisberg Jensen, "Det Moderna Kalhyggesbruket: Från Framgångssaga till Förhandlingslösning [Modern Clearcutting: From Success Story to Negotiated Solution]," in *Jordbruk och Skogsbruk i Sverige Sedan År 1900*, eds. Hans Antonson and Ulf Jansson (Stockholm: KSLA, 2011), 402–19.
- 34 Hanna Lundmark, Torbjörn Josefsson, and Lars Östlund, "The History of Clear-Cutting in Northern Sweden – Driving Forces and Myths in Boreal Silviculture," *Forest Ecology and Management* vol. 307 (2013): 112–22.
- 35 *Statlig skogs och skyddad mark. Beskrivning av statens skogsmark. Del 1. Betänkande av Statsskogsutredningen SOU 2002:40* [State forest and protected land. Description of state forest land. Part 1. Report of the State Forest Inquiry SOU 2002:40], (Stockholm, 2002); Hans Ekelund and

- Gustaf Hamilton, *Skogspolitisk Historia* (Jönköping: Skogsstyrelsen, 2001).
- 36 Skogsdata 2023 (Umeå: Riksskogstaxeringen, 2023).
- 37 Kalev Jõgiste et al. "Imprints of management history on hemiboreal forest ecosystems in the Baltic States," *Ecosphere* vol. 9 no. 11: e02503; Girdziušas et al. "Forest Regeneration", 513–23.
- 38 Girdziušas et al. "Forest Regeneration", 513–23.
- 39 Andrejs Plakans, *A Concise History of the Baltic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- 40 Although it is not the primary focus of this text, we should mention that descriptions of the 20th-century history of the Baltic States as a history of "Soviet colonialism" have appeared only recently. Epp Annus (2012) notes that "for scholars in North America and Western Europe, the study of colonialism in the 1980s and 1990s was secured for the dark side of the civilized West. Colonies represented the bad conscience of Western civilization" (p. 24). The Soviet Union thus did not fit into this dichotomy. Consequently, referring to Soviet oppression and occupation as "colonialism" is a relatively recent development in the literature. Epp Annus, "The Problem of Soviet Colonialism in the Baltics," *Journal of Baltic Studies* vol. 43 no. 1 (2012): 21–45.
- 41 Pähl Ruin, "The Forest Brothers – Heroes & Villains of the Partisan War in Lithuania," *Baltic Worlds* vol. 3 (2026): 49–53.
- 42 Henn Avasalu, "Skogsbröder 1940–41, 1944–55: Motståndsmän i Estlands skogar [Forest Brothers 1940–41, 1944–55: Resistance Men in the Forests of Estonia]," *Handlingar och Tidskriftens Kungl. Krigsvetenskapsakademiens* vol. 2 (2017): 124–32.
- 43 Sigita Girdziušas, et al., "Forest Regeneration Management and Policy in the Nordic-Baltic Region since 1900," *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research* vol. 36 (7–8) (2021): 513–23.
- 44 Olga Ulybina, "Russian Forests: The Path of Reform," *Forest Policy and Economics* vol. 38 (2014): 143–50.
- 45 Ulybina, "Russian Forests," 143–50.
- 46 Jörgen Björklund, "Exploiting the Last Phase of the North European Timber Frontier for the International Market 1890–1914: An Economic-Historical Approach," *IUFRO Task Force on Environmental Change* (2000).
- 47 Bush, "Biodiversity and Sectoral Responsibility".
- 48 Vilis Brukas, "New World, Old Ideas: A Narrative of the Lithuanian Forestry Transition," *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* vol. 17 no. 4 (2015): 495–515.
- 49 Bo Lindevall, "Framtidsrapport visar europeisk virkesbrist och global [Future report shows European timber shortage and global]," *Skogen* vol. 10 (1991): 18–19.
- 50 Ibid., 19.
- 51 Bengt Åke Alriksson, "Skogsrikedomar på väg västerut? [Forest wealth heading west?]," *Skogen* vol. 12 (1992), 22.
- 52 Bengt Åke Alriksson, "Huggsexan om Sibiriens väldiga skogstillgångar är nu i full gång [The battle for Siberia's vast forest resources is now in full swing]," *Skogen* vol. 10 (1991), 19.
- 53 Bengt-Åke Alriksson, "Sibiriens urskogar exploateras [Siberia's primeval forests are being exploited]," *Skogen* vol. 10 (1991), 19.
- 54 Alriksson, "Huggsexan," 19.
- 55 "Ryssland en utmaning. Investorerare möter många hinder [Russia a challenge. Investors face many obstacles]," *Göteborgs-Posten*, September 19, 1994.
- 56 Alriksson, "Skogsrikedomar," 22.
- 57 Bengt Åke Alriksson, "Svenskarna måste våga satsa! [Swedes must dare to invest!]," *Skogen* vol. 1 (1993), 35.
- 58 Bengt Åke Alriksson, "Skogsindustrin ökar importen från öst [Forest industry increases imports from the East]," *Skogen* vol. 3 (1993), 36–37.
- 59 Bengt Åke Alriksson "En fjärdedel av skogsmarken skyddad! [A quarter of forest land protected!] *Skogen* vol. 12 (1992), 24.
- 60 Bengt Åke Alriksson, "Möjlighet för svensk skogsindustri? [Opportunity for the Swedish forest industry?]," *Skogen* vol. 12 (1992), 25.
- 61 Lars Davner, "Ryska skogar exploateras. Fem öre per hektar [Russian forests are being exploited. Five öre per hectare]," *Skogen* vol. 2 (1992), 62.
- 62 Ibid., 62.
- 63 "Modo vill köpa virke från Lettland [Modo wants to buy timber from Latvia]," *Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå*, January 23, 1992.
- 64 Ove Eriksson, "Domänverket," *Västerbottens-Kuriren*, January 16, 1992.
- 65 Ove Eliasson, "Maskin [Machine]," *Västerbotten s-Kuriren*, January 22, 1994.
- 66 "Sverige växer i Lettland [Sweden is growing in Latvia]," *Dagens Industri*, June 8, 1993.
- 67 Janina Priebe, "Skogsbruket – En betraktelse genom möjlighetsfönstret kring 1990 [Forestry – A view through the window of opportunity around 1990]," in *Grå reformer, gröna drömmar? Omregleringen i Sverige, 1988–1991* [Gray reforms, green dreams? Deregulation in Sweden, 1988–1991], ed. Andreas Hellenes, Martin Hultman, Per Lundin, and Anna Åberg (Göteborg: Kriterium, 2025, in press).
- 68 Beland Lindahl et al., "More of Everything?"
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 "Naturvård – Skogsbruk. 'Rikare Skog' i Baltikum [Nature conservation – Forestry. 'Richer Forests' in the Baltics]," *Skogen* vol. 1 (1992), 48.
- 71 Ibid., 48.
- 72 Per Simonsson, Lena Gustafsson, and Lars Östlund, "Retention Forestry in Sweden: Driving Forces, Debate and Implementation 1968–2003," *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research* 30 no. 2 (2015): 154–73.
- 73 "Kampanj ska skydda barrskogar [Campaign to protect coniferous forests]," *Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå*, September 17, 1991.
- 74 "Naturvård – Skogsbruk," 48.
- 75 "Estlands Regering: Ikeas bekymmer är ryska [Estonian Government: Ikea's concerns are Russian]," *Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå*, September 22, 1992.
- 76 Peter Kadhammar, "Plundrarna från Sverige [The Plunderers from Sweden]," *Expressen*, September 7, 1991.
- 77 Viesturs, Auzins, and Snore, "Indications of Gentle Forest Land Grabbing."
- 78 Sandra Berzups, "Privatisation at the Crossroad of Latvia's Economic Reform Notes and Comments," *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law* vol. 1 (1995): 171–96, 196.
- 79 Evelin Jürgenson, "Land reform, land fragmentation and perspectives for future land consolidation in Estonia," *Land Use Policy* vol. 57 (2016): 34–43.
- 80 Dace Dzenovska, "Good Enough Sovereignty, or on Land as Property and Territory in Latvia," *History and Anthropology* vol. 35 (2024): 415–33.
- 81 Daniel Svensson, "Latvian Forest: Favorit i Repris [Latvian Forest: A Favorite in Rerun]," *Affärsvärlden*. Accessed on February 28, 2023. Available at <https://www.affarsvarlden.se/kommentar/latvian-forest-favorit-i-repris>.
- 82 Alriksson, "Sibiriens urskogar exploateras," 19.
- 83 Lars Åkerman, "Rysk roulette i taigansk skogar [Russian roulette in the Taigan forests]," *Skogen*. Accessed on March 15, 2012. Available at <https://www.skogen.se/nyheter/rysk-roulette-i-taigansk-skogar/>.
- 84 Thomas Mortier et al., "A framework for tracing timber following the Ukraine invasion," *Nature Plants* vol. 10 (2024): 390–401.