Naturresurser, sågverksbolag och bönder
Konflikter i Västernorrland
1863-1906

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt förvar i L 212, Lärarhuset fredagen den 5 oktober, kl. 13:15. Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

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Abstract
During the nineteenth century, competition over forestland and waterways grew in Northern Sweden. This increased the pressure on existing institutions of natural resource governance. It culminated with a ban on private acquisition of woodland from smallholders in 1906. This thesis deals with how the local communities handled the institutional challenges of this process. I study two geographical areas connected to different stages in the chain of production, from the inland of standing timber to the downstream sawmills. Previous research states that the sawmill industry in this region used its position in local governments to gain economic advantages. The number of votes were related to the value of one's property and income, which put forest and factory owners in a favorable political position. Another claim from previous works is that the local courts, in general, constituted a place for settling local natural resource conflicts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The two research questions extracted from this are: What role did formal political and legal institutions play in managing conflicts about natural resource use? What disagreements occurred in the different parts of the sawmill industry's production chain? The aim is to better understand natural resource conflicts between the local community and the sawmill industry, across the production chain, in the county of Västernorrland, 1863-1906. To capture the regional differences, I study one industrial municipality – Gudmundrå, and one raw material municipality – Junsele. An iterative methodological approach is used. I find that the local government was not a significant arena for natural resource matters, in contrast to what could be intuitively expected from the literature. Sawmill companies did use their politically dominant position to influence the local community, however not in matters of resource management in this case. The local court was more important. These conflicts were often about property rights regarding contracts and the use of waterways and forestland, and damages imposed by this. Local farmers often initiated cases. This is in line with what the literature suggested on the role of local courts as the arena for settling private economic matters among locals. However, the nature of the conflicts changed over time and differed vastly between the two geographical areas. The results show that the conflict types were different in Gudmundrå and Junsele due to their geographical location, which provided a ground for different links of the sawmill value chain. The results also reveals that key institutional changes were characterized of both top-down and bottom-up processes. One example is local farmers who were involved in the processes of setting the terms for log driving routes. They served as an important link of the value chain that connected the raw materials to the sawmill industry's production.

Keywords
Economic history, sawmill industry, industrialization, conflict resolution, natural resources, local district court, 19th century Northern Sweden