A Colonization of the Future

How Swedish mining industries and policy-making processes

have led to the destruction of the future of the indigenous Sámi population.

Abstract

This thesis explores the complex relationship between the mining industry in Kiruna and its implications for the future of indigenous reindeer herders. Kiruna, located in Northern Sweden, is a region renowned for its rich mineral deposits, particularly iron ore, which has fueled a prosperous mining industry for decades. However, this economic growth has brought forth numerous challenges for traditional reindeer herding, a livelihood deeply ingrained in the cultural heritage and identity of the indigenous Sámi population.

By analyzing the historical legacies of colonialism and their enduring effects on the agency of the Sámi people in policy-making processes, particularly in relation to the mining industry and its destructive consequences, this study examines the interplay between (green) colonialism, senses of belonging, and the struggles faced by the Sámi people in their quest to sustain a future for their culture. During two-and-a-half months of fieldwork in early 2023, I experienced the deep-rooted influence of colonialism on the agency of indigenous people in policy-making processes, the complexities of green colonialism, and the profound lack of belonging experienced by the Sámi people as they navigate the destructive impacts of the mining industry in Kiruna. By critically analyzing these dynamics, this study emphasizes the need for decolonization efforts, the recognition of indigenous rights, and the inclusion of local voices in policy-making processes. By doing so, Kiruna can chart a path toward a more equitable and sustainable future that preserves the cultural heritage, self-determination, and overall well-being of the Sámi people.

Keywords: Green Colonialism, Sense of Belonging, Future, Sámi people, Sweden.

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Cover photo of Kiirunavaara in Kiruna taken by the author

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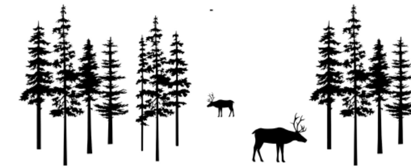
Figure 1: Holmajärvi. March 2023, taken by author.

Introduction



All illustrations in this thesis have been made by the author

Imagine standing on a big ski hill overlooking a small Northern Swedish city. In front of you, you see another big hill, with a few plumes of smoke coming from the top. Surrounded by lights, buildings, vehicles, and trains, the hill in front of you is an underground iron ore mine. When you turn around, there are snow-covered forests climbing on hills for as far as you can see. You notice a few lights across the forests in front of you. These are small research stations of the mining industry, where they check the ground for minerals and iron. You notice the fence at the beginning of the forest down at the bottom of the hill, to keep animals from coming too close to the mine. These animals will soon be losing more and more land, as the mining company is planning an enormous expansion of their mine. Animals that are particularly sensitive to this change, are

reindeer. In Northern Scandinavia, reindeer are an essential part of the Sámi culture, the only recognized indigenous people of Europe. The largest and most modern underground iron ore mine in the world poses a threat to the lives and livelihoods of these people.

In the city of Kiruna, Northern Sweden, the state-owned mining company Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag (LKAB) extracts iron ore. Next to the enormous iron ore mine, Kiirunavaara, LKAB announced the discovery of the Per Geijer deposit, containing one million tons of rare earth oxides at the end of 2022. These materials are needed to create, amongst others, car batteries and windmills, for the European Union's green transition and to decrease the continent's dependency on China (Nielsen 2023). However, the mining industry threatens the lives of the indigenous Sámi communities, as "in Sweden, around 98.5% of the value of mineral extraction" is situated in their traditional territories (Jääskeläinen 2020, 51). On these territories, Sámi people practice the tradition of reindeer herding. The grazing areas of the reindeer are already threatened by the existing mine, but will be even more threatened by the planned expansion of the mine, as it will "further squeeze an already narrow strip of the district for the reindeer to herd and graze" (Nielsen 2023). By using Sámi lands for extractive purposes, the Swedish government is denying the Sámi the rights to their land and is threatening the future of Europe's only indigenous community. Will the Sámi people's cultural heritage and land rights survive the relentless pursuit of mining development, or is their rich heritage destined to be overshadowed by short-term economic gains?

Sápmi, "which spans the northernmost parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia" is the native land and home for an estimated 80.000-100.000 Sámi (EJF 2019). About 20.000 Sámi people live within the Swedish borders (Sweden 2023). The Sámi have for a long time, "acquired the right to manage their territory and have the knowledge and cognizance of the conditions of life in these areas, which constitute the basis for the management of the area's resources" (ibid). However, the Swedish government does not recognize this right and underrates the knowledge and value the Sámi people have in managing the landscape's resources. By continuing with their search for, and the polluting extraction of, rare earth minerals, the Swedish government is threatening the traditional practices and standards of living in the Sápmi region, and endangering the continuation of the Sámi culture and their reindeer herding practices.

Reindeer herding is essential to the Sámi identity and culture (EJF 2019). It is the "cornerstone of Sámi culture," and for many "Sámi communities the only way to survive in the Arctic" (ibid). Most families have been reindeer herders for generations (ibid). The relationship of reindeer husbandry "represents a true connection between people, environment, and wildlife that has persisted with the Sámi for millennia" (ibid). The reindeer herders follow nature's seasons and their herds as they change grazing lands, and lead a nomadic life (Science Museum 2022). Sámi rights across Sápmi will decline due to a loss of the reindeer population (ibid). As the Swedish Reindeer Herding Act demands that "while all Sámi are entitled to basic rights as an indigenous people", to exercise the extent of these rights – including rights to land – "they must be part of a herding community and practice reindeer herding" (ibid). Thus, if a Sámi does not own reindeer, that Sámi does not have any rights to land.

The practices and lives of these Sámi people are at risk of disappearing due to the polluting activities of the Swedish Government. This raises questions about, for example, to what extent the reindeer herders can influence Swedish policy-making processes. Or, how does the mining industry affect the everyday life of a reindeer herder? And, at what cost can Europe feed its green transition with Swedish minerals? By exploring the agency of Sámi reindeer herders in making claims about the future of their traditional practices in Northern Sweden, this thesis will examine the interplay of settler and green colonialism, the mining industry, and the future of the Sámi culture. This thesis seeks to answer the following research question:

> *In the face of destructive mining practices and policies, how do indigenous reindeer herders in Sweden imagine, plan for, and participate in shaping their future?*

Addressing this question, I explore the everyday lives of Sámi reindeer herders in the municipality of Kiruna, in order to illustrate their agency in policy-making practices and uncover the dynamics of future-making practices amidst their struggle with their rights to land in the wake of the colonial past. During my two and a half months of fieldwork in 2023, I had the opportunity to engage with some of the Sámi people in Sápmi. This experience shed light on the fact that despite the government and media's portrayal of a seemingly straightforward situation, the reality is far more intricate and layered due to historical and ongoing conflicts. Therefore, this thesis will highlight the interplay of history, colonization, (internal) conflict, and

racism of the Sámi people, and how the Swedish government has, by systematically denying agency to the Sámi people, dispossessed them of a sense of belonging to both their own as well as the Swedish culture, and with it, destroyed their future.

According to anthropologist Winifred Tate (2020, 86) in his annual review of the anthropology of policy, anthropologists can use ethnographic inquiry to "interrogate contemporary institutional discourse of transparency and accountability" behind policy-making processes. In line with Tate (2020, 85), I understand policy "as a generative realm of cultural production, producing and shaped by values, norms, identities, and practices". By creating an understanding of how people at the local level experience and interpret state policies and government processes, anthropologists can help reveal the "broader logics and power structures in which particular institutional policies become naturalized", for greater attention to "the role of race, racism, and white supremacy" (ibid). During my fieldwork in Northern Sweden, I immersed myself in the social everyday lives of the Sámi people, exploring policies related to mining and reindeer herding. This experience has unveiled the significant impact of colonial history and the ongoing influence of green colonialism on the agency of the Sámi people within the policy-making processes that directly affect their land.

The Sámi people's history of exclusion from both their own and Swedish society has exerted significant pressure on their sense of belonging to either culture. Through, what anthropologist Aihwa Ong (1996, 737) identifies as cultural processes of 'subject-ification', "cultural citizenship is a process of self-making and being-made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes". Through years of assimilation programs, arbitrary regulations, and racism, the Sámi people have been made a subject of Swedish power. By amplifying the criteria in the form of policies the indigenous community had to conform to, to either belong to their own or the Swedish culture, I argue that the Sámi people find difficulty in feeling a sense of belonging to both cultures, never truly fitting in with one or the other.

This lack of sense of belonging and the arbitrary policy-making processes influence the ability of Sámi people to imagine, plan for, and participate in shaping their future. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2013), in his work on *The Future as Cultural Fact,* conceptualizes the future as a cultural fact, as not something determined by economic interests, but as humans, we are our own

future makers. Our imagination, anticipation, and aspiration influence our future-making processes. By using the concepts of anticipation, imagination, and aspiration, anthropologists can construct an understanding of the future. By engaging with these concepts, the everyday lived experience and the local systems of future-making practices within the Sámi community in Northern Sweden can be further and more deeply understood.

By engaging with these concepts, this thesis contributes to the lines of thinking within the debates on future-making processes, senses of belonging, and indigenous agency in policy-making. By situating these debates in line with the indigenous Sámi community in Northern Sweden, this thesis provides new insights into the position of the indigenous Sámi in their negotiation with the Swedish government regarding the mining and environmental policies, to try to maintain the access to their traditional lands and secure their cultural traditions for the future. However, as many cannot envision the existence of their culture in the future, this thesis also builds on the notion of what it means to not be able to imagine a future. Although Appadurai (2013) claims that humans are future makers of their own future, free from economic interest, this thesis underlines that it is not always within their agency to create the desired future for themselves. Several scholars have contributed to these discussions by researching the protection of Sámi rights in Sweden's minerals permitting process (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021), the social representations of green energy within reindeer herding lands and the role of green colonialism (Normann 2020), the legal struggles of Sámi people to improve land rights (Anderson 1997), and the senses of place and youth wellbeing in the Arctic region (Stammler and Toivanen 2021). However, these studies do not explore the combination of future-making processes, senses of belonging, and indigenous agency in policy-making. In this thesis, these are combined to offer new insights into the lives of the indigenous Sámi in Northern Sweden.

The Field

In exploring agency in policy-making processes, green colonialism, senses of belonging, and future-making practices, I conducted research in the city of Kiruna, a small mining city in northern Sweden. Kiruna is the northernmost city of Sweden, with around 17.000 inhabitants, originally built in the 1890s to serve Kiirunavaara, the iron ore mine. At the end of the 19th century, one of Sweden's oldest industrial corporations Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag (LKAB) started with commercial mining in Kiirunavaara. The underground iron ore mine in Kiruna is the biggest of its sort in the world. In Figure 1, the size of the current mine (yellow) in Kiruna can

be seen. The recently discovered Per Geijer deposit can be seen in blue. The enormous size of the mine as well as the deposit can be compared to the image of the Eiffel Tower in the left-hand corner.

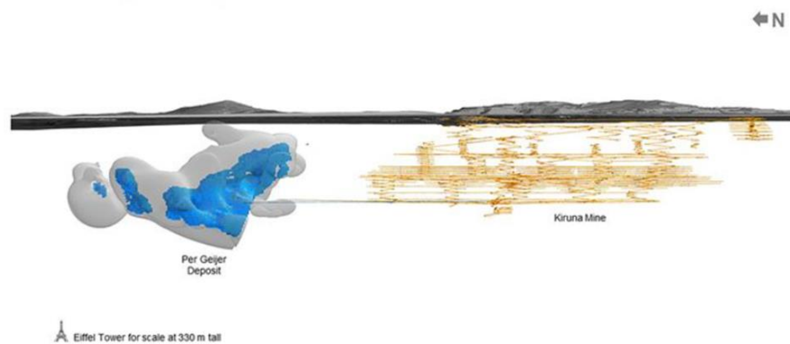


Figure 2: Size of the current iron ore mine (yellow) and the recently discovered deposit (blue) (LKAB 2023).

For Sámi people, reindeer herding is “a cultural keystone” and is tightly connected to the livelihood, culture, and way of living of local non-Sámi as well (Holand et al 2022, 9). The eternal reindeer herding right, as stated in the Swedish Reindeer Husbandry Act from 1971:437; establishes that “the right to pursue reindeer herding only belongs to the Sámi people” (Reindeer Herding n.d.). In Sweden, about 4,600 Sámi people own reindeer, whereof about 2,500 individuals have reindeer herding as their main source of income. These reindeer herders have been divided by the Swedish government into 51 Sámi villages, Sameby or Samebyar plural. These Samebyar are geographical locations, determining the reindeer grazing lands, as well as economic associations. Only reindeer herders and their families can be a member of a Sámi village. Those who are members of a Sameby possess the legal right to land, and thus the right to hunt and fish within their Sameby’s area, by Swedish law. By only granting these rights to Sámi who practice reindeer herding, the Swedish government excludes the majority of the Swedish Sámi, namely the other 15.000 individuals, who do not own reindeer, from “exercising their indigenous rights” (Löf 2015, 427). It creates a division between different Sámi right-holders; “those with herding as a livelihood and those with other livelihoods” (ibid).

Located around Kiruna, the Gabna Sameby is the first reindeer herding district in Sweden that has been facing the threats of Europe’s green future. The planned expansion of the Kiirunavaara mine with the Per Geijer Deposit is furthering the fragmentation of the land and migration routes of the reindeer (Franssen 2023). The reindeer migrate during the winter towards the coast, and during summer towards the mountains. Though, as they are very sensitive to noise and stress, the mining industry leaves very few routes for the animals to change pastures on. Thus, the threats to the future of the reindeer

herders in Northern Sweden are faced first by the people in the Gabna Sameby around Kiruna, and make this the perfect location to do this research.

Methodology and Operationalisation

In order to get access to the reindeer herding community, I lived together with a reindeer herder in his house near the new city center in Kiruna. Per, a 63-year-old reindeer herder was what O'Reilly (2012, 114) would conceptualize as a gatekeeper. As he himself was a reindeer herder, he already had a lot of contacts within the community. He was one of my key informants who enabled me access to other reindeer herders and Sámi people within the Samebyar around Kiruna. He also taught me about reindeer, reindeer herding, and the Sámi culture in general. Over the course of my fieldwork, I would go on many trips with him across the county of Kiruna to visit his cabins. This became a very opportune way to get to know the lifestyle of living in the North, where reindeer herders use these cabins, spread out across their sameby, to stay close to their reindeer year-round. Per introduced me to his family and friends, of whom some are also reindeer herders or own reindeer. During this time, I made use of the snowball effect, in which initial contacts are used to generate further contacts (ibid, 44). In the end, I conducted 8 semi-structured interviews with reindeer herders, representatives of the Swedish and Norwegian Sámi parliament, and Sámi people in and around Kiruna. I consciously interviewed a mix of different perspectives within the Sámi community of Kiruna; someone who works for the mining industry and has a tourism business with reindeer, another person who is against the mining industry, a politician for the Norwegian Sámi Parliament, a Sámi person with ancestors in Finland, a representative of the non-reindeer herding Sámi in the Swedish Sámi Parliament, and the wife of a reindeer herder. All the people mentioned in this thesis have been anonymized to respect their privacy.

Next to semi-structured interviews, I used participant observation. As the "foundation of cultural anthropology", participant observation is both "a humanistic method and a scientific one", in which the "researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (Bernard 2011, 256; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 12). The life of a reindeer herder differs from day to day, as most activities are dependent on the weather. During most of my time with Per, we decided early in the morning what we would be doing that day. The

weather in Northern Sweden can change very quickly. A sunny morning can drastically change into a snowstorm in the afternoon. Thus, 'go with the flow' became my life motto during my fieldwork, and being flexible and open to sudden changes in my daily schedule was a crucial part of doing participant observation. In several fieldnote diaries, I actively took notes of my participant observation encounters. Alongside my daily diary, I had a diary for "informal conversations" I encountered during the day and an "intellectual diary" in which I wrote down my analytical ideas or preliminary interrelations in relation to my research (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011; O'Reilly 2012, 104).

Alongside semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and informal conversations, I have chosen to conduct oral histories and use visual ethnography. Using visual ethnography has given me the chance to enhance my understanding of the everyday lives of Sámi reindeer herders influenced by the mining industry in Northern Sweden. As "images are part of how we experience, learn, and know as well as how we communicate and represent knowledge", I have been able to draw a narrative into the lived effects of the mining industry (Pink 2013, 1). By creating a tangible production of these lives lived in Northern Sweden, through images and videos, through the senses of space and the experience of it, I have been able to envision the imagination of Sámi people's future in the landscape. By conducting three oral histories, I have been able to gain a sense of the past of the community, which has given me the ability to understand the roots of the current decisions made regarding their futures.

Ethics and Role of Researcher

As Bernard (2011, 3k) argues, "there is no value-free science". All of your interests as a potential research focus "come fully equipped with risks to you and to the people you study" (ibid). As Scheper-Hughes (2000, 127) argues, there is "no 'politically correct' way of doing anthropology", to which O'Reilly (2012, 83) adds that ethnographic practice is "essentially intrusive". However, it is important to address and think about these topics before, by reflecting on "the place from which the observer observes" (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). Therefore, it is significant to note that this thesis is based on the indicative framework of me as a twenty-five-year-old, white, middle-class, Dutch, female student.

I do not remember the exact moment I came to learn of the Sámi people as the only indigenous population of Europe, but I do remember the time when their struggles to exist became clear to me. Around the end of 2021, I learned about a wind turbine park in the

Fosen-Halvøya in Norway that prevented Sámi people from herding reindeer in the area. The Norwegian Supreme Court determined in October 2021 that the wind turbines constituted a violation of indigenous rights and must be removed. They were illegally built on the land of the Sámi people, but yet, to this day, the Norwegian Government has not removed them. After reading about this situation, I began to follow the indigenous population in the most Northern part of Europe and came across the Per Geijer deposit and the threat it holds for the Sámi people in the area of Kiruna around the end of 2022.

Over the course of my fieldwork, and during the writing process of this thesis, I have been consciously aware of any presumed assumptions. After a period of having to choose between Norway and Sweden as the site of my fieldwork, the decisive moment came when Per offered me a place to stay in Kiruna. At the beginning of my fieldwork, my position as a researcher had some constraints, as me not being Sámi made it difficult to establish people's trust. Some were hesitant about the purpose of my research as most 'outsiders', according to them, are only interested in the mining processes, and the opportunities the industry creates for Europe's green transition. They lack concern for the consequences and threats the Sámi culture faces because of the industry. In contrast, my position as a researcher also opened doors, as some thought it was good to see an 'outsider' bring in a new perspective and study their community.

Alongside my position as a researcher, it is important to mention some topics that may have been perceived as invasive during my fieldwork. Reflecting on these topics once they arose in the field was important for me. These topics concern political opinions and the position of the Sámi people as the only recognized indigenous population of Europe. During my fieldwork, I have been looking into the agency of Sámi reindeer herders in political decisions taken by the Swedish State, regional, and local administration. I never asked my interlocutors specifically about their political opinions. However, when one of my interlocutors initiated the topic with comfort, I pursued it to some extent relevant to the scope of my research. Given the long history of subjugation in various forms of the Sámi people, I have been keeping myself aware of the effects of this on my position as a researcher. I made the intentions of my research clear to all of my interlocutors right from the start, as my intentions were and are not to invade their community or their culture.

I have anonymized all of my interlocutors by giving them pseudonyms to protect and respect their privacy. All the pseudonyms used are common names in Sweden, and there are no similarities to people's real names. Alongside pseudonymizing people, I wondered

repeatedly if I should, and if it would be possible to, pseudonymize Kiruna as well. However, I decided that my research cannot be viewed separately from the specific characteristics of the environment surrounding Kiruna. The interplay between the (future) mine, the Swedish state, and the continuation of the Sámi culture is so specific and interwoven with everyday life in Kiruna, that I could not identify a single possible way of pseudonymizing the location properly.

Outline

This thesis explores the agency of Sámi reindeer herders in Northern Sweden to illustrate and uncover the dynamics of future- and policy-making practices amidst their struggle with their rights to land in the wake of the colonial past. This thesis is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter focuses primarily on the Swedish government's attempt to regulate the Sámi people over the last centuries, to outline the context of the current relationship between the two. I explore the regulations and policies that were set in place by the Swedish government to assimilate the Sámi people into the Swedish culture. Furthermore, I explore the agency, or rather lack thereof, Sámi people have had during the policy-making processes of the past.

These explorations set the foundation for the current struggles of the Sámi people in Northern Sweden. In chapter two, I dive into the effects of past and current regulations and policies on local conflict. I explore how the mining industry is disrupting social relations and increasing local conflict as the sense of belonging to the Sámi culture for many is fading. I use Aihwa Ong's (1996) definition of cultural citizenship as a process of subjectification to emphasize how the cultural assimilation programs of the Swedish government have created a lack of belonging for the Sámi people to both their own as well as the Swedish culture.

In the third chapter, I show how the increase in local conflict and loss of sense of belonging due to the regulations and policies of the past, affect the imagined future of the Sámi people. By taking note of Appadurai's (2013) concepts of imagination, anticipation, and aspiration, I explore the envisioned future of the Sámi culture amidst the growing threat of destruction due to the mining industry. This will show that although Appadurai (2013) claims that humans are future makers of their own future, free from economic interest, it is not always within their agency to create a desired future for themselves.

Finally, I conclude by summarizing the arguments build up in this thesis, answering my research question, and discussing the possible implications and repercussions of my research.

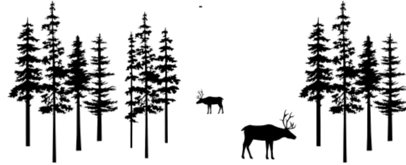
Mas amas diehtá maid oarri borra

How can a stranger know what a squirrel eats

The land above the Per Geijer Deposit, North of Kurravaara, March 2023. Photo taken by author.

Chapter 1

The History and Current Trajectory of Sweden's Colonial Regime of the Sámi People



The largest underground iron ore mine in the world, or "Sweden's Money Maker," as one of my interlocutors referred to it, is Sweden's major source of wealth, accounting for 13% of their total income. The mine's importance to the Swedish State became clear during my first morning in Kiruna when we were driving around the town.

The sun was shining brightly, but you could hardly feel its warmth, as it was still -25°C degrees. Whilst the mine was looming over the city, my host, Per, took me on a drive around the old city center next to the mine. The ground under the city is subsiding due to the underground mining activities there. Therefore, the west side of the city which is located on the border with the mine, will be or has been moved to the new city center that has been built on the east side of the city. Per showed me where the old main street went through the city, which has been moved to the Northside of the city, and where the railways and railway station were previously located in between the mine and the city, but are now North of the mine. We also passed the location of the old city hall, of which only the entrance was still standing. A new city hall has been built in the new city center. Per told me that around 20 buildings with historical value have been moved to this new city center. All other buildings have been or will be taken down. In Figure 2, the schedule for the relocation of areas of the city is shown. The buildings that stood in the orange areas have already been destroyed or moved to the new city center. The

Figure 3: the map of the relocation schedule of Kiruna, photo taken by author

demolition of the red areas started in 2022. Between 2026 and 2032, the blue and purple areas will also be demolished. The homes of 6,000 people have been or will be destroyed. Surrounding the new city center, the mining company LKAB pays (partly) for the construction of the new buildings. However, many citizens cannot afford these new houses/apartments. The houses or apartments are much more expensive than the money they received from their old houses that were taken down. The rent is in many cases much higher, as the new buildings have a higher value than the older rentals in the old city center. Therefore, many choose to move elsewhere, or back to their home villages outside the city.

An entire city is on the move, some have to forcefully move away from it, others wonder how long they will be able to stay, all for the continuation of the mine. Although the inhabitants of Kiruna have little choice in the move, one would think that they would be allowed to cooperate in the building process of the new city center. However, nothing could be further from the truth turned out during many conversations with my interlocutors. Many of my interlocutors mention that they do not like the new city center, and after visiting both centers during my first few days I understood what they meant. When Per showed me the old city center, the buildings were painted in soft colors, and decorated with dome-style awnings. Walking through it felt cozy, warm, and like the small town Kiruna is. In contrast, the new city center is filled with modern, sleek buildings, in grey tones, and due to the high height of the buildings, the wind can become quite strong when walking in between them, making it a cold place to be. It lacks the cozy feeling of a small town center. Per told me that this new city center was designed without any input from the community. I learned from my interlocutors that many of the local community would have liked it much more if they had copied the old city center into the space of the new city center.

The lack of local input into decision-making processes is common across Sweden. Particularly the indigenous Sámi have experienced a long history of exclusion and marginalization in Northern Sweden. In this chapter, I delve into this history and portray how it has shaped the agency, or rather lack thereof, of the Sámi people in regulating their traditional territories. Over time, the Swedish Government has systematically denied agency to the Sámi people by creating laws to hem them in, take away their voices, and assimilate them into the Swedish culture. By showing you historical examples that have created the basis of the present, I begin to unravel the complex livelihoods of the Sámi people, how the Swedish State

has consistently tried to prevent them from access to their rights, and how this deprivation has created a form of green colonialism. In examining this, I build on the concepts of indigenous agency in policy-making and green colonialism. By exploring these concepts, this chapter sheds light on the multifaceted ways in which indigenous perspectives and resistance efforts challenge and reshape the dominant discourse surrounding environmental governance.

Indigenous agency in policy-making processes has long been a struggle for many indigenous communities. For example, indigenous tribes are not allowed to participate in the Conference of the Parties (COP) to discuss the future of climate change and how to mitigate and adapt to it. Moreover, the UN has categorized "all indigenous peoples worldwide into one group", even though every indigenous community has different values, perspectives, and knowledge of their geographical area of the world (Lee 2017, 671-672).

The study of policy and policymaking is certainly linked with anthropology as it has a great influence on anthropologists and their research, because, as anthropologists Wedel et al. (2005) state in "Toward an Anthropology of Public Policy", policies are increasingly central to the organization and shaping of society. Anthropologists focus on the exploration of how the state, or the policymakers and professionals who are authorized to act in the state's name, relates to local populations. Understanding how state policies and government processes are experienced and interpreted by people at the local level, generates a better understanding of how policies can be formed by policymakers (Wedel *et al*. 2005, 34).

Even though policies may be clothed in neutral language, they are fundamentally political, shaped by the agency of both humans as well as nonhumans. Agency refers to the actions that individuals perform in shaping and reshaping a cultural identity. Both physical dynamics of ocean-atmosphere interaction and societal drivers of atmospheric composition and land use are drivers of natural and human agency in the shaping of environmental outcomes (Barnes 2015, 129). This can also be seen in the science of the Anthropocene, in which humanity has become a geological force that is transforming the planet in disruptive ways (Rojas 2016, 16). The Sámi communities in Northern Sweden who are environmentally, physically, and mentally affected by the mining industry, are a direct result of human agency in the Anthropocene. It is humans who are drilling for iron ore, and soon for other minerals, which are the causes

of the dispossession, assimilation, and disappearance of the Sámi people and culture.

Colonialism as Nice Green Finery

The dispossession and assimilation of the Sámi people and culture have been formed by a long history of colonial oppression of the Scandinavian States. Where today there are perhaps 80,000 Sámi in the four nations where they live; "some scholars suggest that up to ten times that number were assimilated" (Weinstock 2013, 411). In this chapter, I dive into some of the policies that, by lacking the indigenous agency in the policy-making process, have created and endorsed the colonial regime and oppression of the Swedish State on the Sámi people and culture. Settler colonialism "is a structure, not an event", established in place "not through a moment of conquest, but through an invasion that is a continual production of physical and discursive infrastructures that stabilize and secure settler states" (Wolfe 1999, 2; Erickson 2020, 111). In other words, colonialism is ingrained in the infrastructures surrounding everyday life, for example in policies, to secure and stabilize the position of the settler state and its people. It is a form, I would argue, of structural violence, as the Swedish regime has systematically tried to prevent Sámi individuals from achieving their full potential (Galtung 1969).

In contemporary society, settler colonialism has taken on different forms than the oppression of a community through direct violence, for example, the sterilization of Sámi women and the enforced enrolment of Sámi children in Swedish schools where it was forbidden to speak their mother tongue (Weinstock 2013, 416). Now, "ecological protection has come to shape the political life of colonialism", and has given the way for, as I would argue, Green Colonialism (Erickson 2020, 111).

Green discourses are renewing and intensifying colonial legacies, by focusing on technological innovation of a green society that 'will have been' (ibid). Through this vision, "the Anthropocene functions as a geophysical justification of structures of colonialism in the services of a greener future" (ibid). As the Anthropocene attempts to "place environmental collapse and change as the defining problem of all of humanity in the future to come", the discourse legitimizes the continuation of colonial assertions of jurisdiction through conservation, even though the effects of climate change, caused by the wealthy Global North, are placed on the marginalized communities across the world. As is the case in the North of Scandinavia for the Sámi people. The need for a continuation of the consumption culture of the Global North has created a demand for

iron ore and minerals to produce new 'green' products for the future, such as electric cars and windmills. These raw materials are and will be extracted in the LKAB mine and the new Per Geijer deposit around Kiruna, at the expense of the land and with it the culture of the Sámi people.

The current trends of a 'green' future can be linked with "historical processes of dispossession and subjugation inflicted on the Sámi", which the Norwegian Sámi Parliament's president, Aili Keskitalo identified as green colonialism (Normann 2020, 81). In Norway, there is a trend in wind energy development, however, this trend might "intensify colonial losses of land and rights in Norway" (ibid). Keskitalo argues that "colonialism has been dressed up in nice green finery and we [the Sámi people] are told that we have to give up our territories and our livelihoods to save the world because of climate change" (Arctic Circle 2020). Furthermore, she argues that "we [the Sámi people] are told that we have to allow mining mineral extraction in reindeer herding territories because the world needs our minerals, again to have a green change to have a shift in technology, again to save the world" (ibid). The Sámi people already carry the burden of past colonial regimes, and now, they are forced to carry the burden of the world's climate compensation as well.

The Sámi people around Kiruna feel as though they are in the process of being dispossessed and subjugated again, stripped of their land rights and reindeer. As one of my interlocutors pointed out, the minerals that can be found in the new Per Geijer deposit can also be found in the mountains of waste the current iron ore mine produces. On the front page of this thesis, you can see the enormous Kiirunavaara mine in Kiruna. The beginning of the commercial extraction of iron ore in 1898, started an enormous production of waste. The technology of extraction has of course immensely improved since 1898, however, since the beginning, the mine has been unable to extract all of the minerals present in the extracted material. The minerals that the Swedish government is after in the Per Geijer deposit, can be found in this waste. But the mining company, and with it the Swedish State, does not go for those minerals in the waste, but for the new place in the reindeer herding area. When I asked my interlocutor why she thinks this is, she said it was "to kill off the reindeer herding area, and then all this area will be free, and accessible, and the community here will win a lot of money". As many of my interlocutors claimed, "no winnings of the mine come back to the population that is most affected by the industry, here in the North, but goes South, where they [LKAB's board] all come from". The feeling of their land being exploited by the extractive

industries of the settler state, without their community benefitting or being compensated, at the cost of their cultural practices to serve the green future of Europe, has left the Sámi people with little hope for a bright future, but rather a fear of a repetition of the past.

An Alibi and a Playground

There is little governmental support for the Sámi people in Sweden. One of my interlocutors, Anna, who works for the Sámi Parliament in Norway told me that to her "The Swedish Sámi Parliament is an alibi and a playground. I mean like, what are you doing for the Sámi society? Nothing". A lot of money is involved in the capital of reindeer herding, but in the Swedish Sámi Parliament, there are people from outside the reindeer herding culture that decide, without the proper knowledge of reindeer herding. The main problem is that there is not a strong union for reindeer herding in Sweden. There are three parties with reindeer herders, but they are not prominent. The strongest is the Svenska Samernas Riksförbund (SSR) which is "a politically independent interest organization for reindeer husbandry and Sámi business and social issues" (SSR n.d.). It is a sister organization of the Norwegian Sámi Association but much less involved in reindeer herding areas. Anna told me, "The Norwegian Sámi association is much more into reindeer herding areas and rights than the Swedish party is. They are doing culture and school and piece-of-cake things for me. I am like why are you doing this? Some singers or artists and festivals, yeah so important, okay, but it is not the way of living, it is not the way". There is no chance for the community to fight back through the Sámi Parliament because the Parliament lacks control over decision-making processes. There is a long history of colonization and marginalization of the Sámi people by the Swedish State that dates back hundreds of years, during which, the need to control the Sámi people was always at the center of the incentive of the Swedish State.

It began around 1605 when the Swedish government introduced the Swedish Tax Law to form the first reindeer collectives and "establish fixed areas for the Sámi" (Sonniksen n.d.). With fixed areas for the Sámi, it was easier for the Swedish Government to assimilate them into the Swedish culture as they stayed in one place. Traditionally the Sámi reindeer herders led a nomadic lifestyle, following their reindeer as the animals change grazing pastures every season. The Scandinavian countries labeled *all* Sámi as nomads, even though only the reindeer herders were following a nomadic lifestyle. The label made them able to deny all Sámi people the rights to their land, as they were not fixed to a particular area of land and therefore

had no property in the eyes of the law. Even those Sámi who did not pursue a life as a reindeer herder but undertook other cultural carriers such as the Sea Sámi culture in Norway lost their land rights (ibid).

Around the same time, reindeer herding became to be seen as a non-viable economic venture which prompted the beginnings of the regulation for reindeer herding to increase it. The States were able to promote farming in the North, and later on, new outposts for modern industries, such as mining and forestry. These were deemed as work and industries that would be more economically valuable than reindeer herding (ibid). The Scandinavian States tried to assimilate the Sámi further, by basing the Sámi ethnicity exclusively on their economic activity (Forrest 1997, 5). Cultural protection was only given to those Sámi who were involved in reindeer herding. However, over time, by introducing and forcing modern industries into the North, the States took more and more space away from the Sámi, leaving more and more reindeer herders with not enough space for their animals. This caused the number of reindeer herders to decrease. Moreover, the rights to land and water became tied to reindeer herding, and other cultural carriers such as the hunting and fishing Sámi cultures lost the cultural protection of the State to continue with their traditions.

The cultural protection for the Sámi reindeer herders was based on the static view the Swedish government has of reindeer herding, and only given to those who “followed a separate and restricted development path based on traditional reindeer herding” (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 243). As many of my interlocutors told me during our conversations about the history of the Sámi, there was and still is a static view on reindeer herding that it is not allowed to change, but should stay the same traditional nomadic lifestyle. The idea that reindeer herders should not be allowed to use, for example, snowmobiles, but should follow their reindeer on foot, as in the old days was often mentioned during the conversations. The lack of change and progress, following modern technology, seems to be the main idea that both the Swedish state but particularly some of the Swedes, have concerning the practices of reindeer herding.

By trying to steer the Sámi into more modern economic pursuits, such as mining and forestry industries, and assimilating them into ‘modern’ society, for example, by forcing Sámi children to go to Swedish schools, and learn the Swedish language instead of the Sámi languages, the Scandinavian States have put great pressure on the Sámi culture. This increased when in 1867, the odlingsgräns was created by the Swedish government. Serving as a boundary between

the settlers in the South and the Sámi reindeer herds in the North, the boundary's ultimate goal was "to protect the forest and the reindeer herds, forbidding any settlement north of the line into Sámi herding areas" (Sonniksen n.d.). "'Lapp skal vara lapp' (Sámi shall be Sámi) became governmental policy, meaning that Sámi reindeer herders were to be isolated from the majority population" (Weinstock 2013, 415). However, what actually occurred, was a greater division between the Sámi territories, as the boundary was North of some herding areas leaving them in the settler territories. Moreover, "settlers/farmers felt free to hunt and fish on land reserved for Sámi", leaving the Sámi with little valuable effects of the boundary (Weinstock 2013, 415). The boundary remained, but with the "inevitable influx of settlers and the movement north of the railroads in Sweden, the line became little more than a symbol of failed policy" (Sonniksen n.d.). Now the boundary serves as yet another futile attempt of the Swedish state to give rights to the Sámi, without proper knowledge of what was and is needed for the Sámi.

Following, the Reindeer Herding Act of 1886 was "designed to regulate conflicts between the herders and farmers who had been sent North as homesteading agriculturalists" (Sonniksen n.d.). Farmers complained that reindeer were ruining their fields by overgrazing, whereas the herders complained that the farmers were catching too many fish. Serving as one of the few food sources for Sámi, fish are vital for their existence. Farmers were also burning forests to clear the land, leaving the reindeer with not enough food supply (ibid). These conflicts created a lot of tension between farmers and herders. With the Act, the Swedish government tried to establish more peace between the two communities. By dividing the Sámi into villages, promoting more intensive herding, and establishing liability for damages to the reindeer from predators or lack of food, the Swedish government made another attempt at making the Sámi more stationary and thus, more inclusive in Swedish society. The Sámi villages, sameby or multiple samebyar, are geographical locations as well as economic associations. The sameby a Sámi reindeer herder is a member of, determines the grazing areas their reindeer can be in. As of 1886, Sámi reindeer herders are limited in the land they can use and practice their traditions on. Moreover, other strange policies were put in place in this act, for example, the reindeer herders "were not to live in 'ordinary' houses but in traditional turf huts or tents" (Weinstock 2013, 415).

The Act of 1886 did allow *all* Sámi people to become a member of a specific sameby and decide on and vote for the village's

board. The board of a sameby is responsible for "ensuring that reindeer herding is conducted in the most effective way economically" and put the members' common interest in reindeer herding first (ICR n.d.). The addition to the Act of 1928 limited membership to a Sámi village to herders and their families, excluding a large number of Sámi people from the ability to become a member of a sameby, as most Sámi are not reindeer herders.

In 1971 the Reindeer Herding Act attempted "to establish the land use rights of the Sámi" (ibid). Its aim was to provide a stronger cultural identity for the Sámi, as land rights are tightly connected to the Sámi culture. Whilst the law did provide Sámi with rights to use the land and water for their herd and themselves, the law limited these rights to Sámi with a direct ancestor, such as a father or grandfather, who had been a herder. This law leaves those who wish to become a reindeer herder without a father or grandfather who had been a herder, unable to practice reindeer herding (ibid). Furthermore, the Act declares that any Sámi who spends more than 50 percent of his labor on other economic pursuits than herding, is no longer eligible for sameby membership. In the new Act, the hunting and fishing rights only belong to the members of the sameby. But as currently only about 4,600 of the Sámi in Sweden keep reindeer, most of the Sámi in Sweden do not have hunting and fishing rights on their land, and not even rights *to* their land (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 243). As reindeer herding is not economically viable, one would need at least 2000 reindeer to be able to survive, many Sámi people cannot pursue a life as a reindeer herder, leaving only about 2,500 individuals who have reindeer herding as their main livelihood (ibid). Thus, the Act is leaving many Sámi out of their right to be in a sameby, and crowds out the fishing and hunting communities.

The legal boundaries set for the number of reindeer a sameby is permitted to have, have over time disturbed the dynamic relationship between the pasture resources, the herd, and the herders (Holand et al 2022, 10). The environment is not only "a bio-physical but also a cultural landscape shaped by herders and their herds, where both play a role in assessing range quality and risks" (ibid, 11). Throughout history, Sámi people have balanced the relationship between herders and herd size according to pasture resources, with respect to one another's territory, through mutual agreements (ibid, 16). Transferred between generations through practice, the "herder's social-ecological knowledge and mutual understanding between them and their herd is the essence of their livelihood" (ibid). Creating a good balance between pasture resources and herd size ensures a calm

herd that is easy to control (ibid). In this sense, the pastoral relationships and their dynamic self-regulation are underlined. However, the continuous acts of Scandinavian governments to search and mine for fossil fuels and minerals, endanger these relationships of self-regulation.

These past policies demonstrate the lack of indigenous agency in Swedish policy-making processes. The Swedish State has systematically denied the Sámi voices in regulating their lands and cultural practices. These policies were deliberate; "though created through different means and with different ends in mind, they served to assimilate Sámi into their respective nations and cultures" (Weinstock 2013, 415). The settler colonialism that was present in the past, has taken on a new form that is green colonialism, leaving the Sámi with little to no choice but to accept the burden of Sweden's and the world's green discourse. With these discourses, that renew and intensify colonial legacies, Sweden has failed to protect its indigenous population. Although policies are increasingly central to the organization and shaping of society, Swedish policies have destroyed the Sámi culture (Wedel et al 2005). Sweden has not only failed the Sámi on a local, and national level but also on an international level, the country has neglected the rights of its indigenous community.

Sweden's Double Bind

On an international level, Sweden is a well-known advocate of promoting human and indigenous rights (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 240). However, one of the most important guiding documents on a state's responsibilities in regard to the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, the *Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO 169* 1989) is not ratified in Sweden (ibid). Sweden has created a double bind for itself, by on the one hand promoting human and indigenous rights on an international level, while on the other hand not ratifying and following through with international standards and conventions for the rights of the indigenous community within their own borders. The country has not yet ratified the convention as it is concerned about the land rights of the Sámi people, as the location of the land concerned and its borders are not known (Eng 2017, 18). As stated in the ILO of 1989, indigenous communities should have rights to their traditional lands. As the geographical locations were not known at that time, Sweden did not ratify the convention. However, after two reports presented in 2005 and 2006, both determining the location of Sámi land, Sweden could have ratified the ILO 169. That was 17 years ago. There is still no ratification today. The responsible minister's answers

to when and if the government ratifies the convention have been: "One cannot give answers that do not exist. These are ongoing processes, and that is also part of taking responsibility in a government", and "that politics - if one should be successful - also is about playing your cards right and in the right order" (ibid). But what about the human rights concerned with the ILO 169 and the land rights of the indigenous community within the Swedish borders? It seems to me that instead of dealing with the problems of the internal colonial system within the Swedish government, "small adjustments are being made in order to answer to the resistance", by pointing to the Sámi convention to protect the Sámi people, and keeping the internal colonialism intact (ibid).

Another international standard for a state's responsibility toward the rights of Indigenous peoples, is the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). Both standards "include several articles that relate to indigenous people's right to self-determination, and control of their lands and territories or resources that they have traditionally owned or occupied" (ibid, 241). In both documents it is stated that "no dispossession or relocation [of indigenous communities] may occur without just and fair compensation and redress" (ibid, 241). Furthermore, the concept of "free prior informed consent" (FPIC) in the UNDRIP demands that mining activities that may affect indigenous peoples can only go ahead when these peoples have given their free, and prior informed consent (ibid).

However, "FPIC is primarily a standard for states and to proceed with and/or give permission to a project without FPIC would require strong reasons" (ibid). Such reasons include "that it can be conclusively established that the activities will not substantially affect indigenous peoples' rights or where there is a valid public purpose, which in turn needs to be proportional to the limitations imposed, and must not include revenue-raising or commercial interests" (ibid). But what does it mean to 'substantially affect indigenous peoples' rights'? It seems to me that UNDRIP is clothed in elusive language. UNDRIP is not binding on nations, and on the contrary, it seems, that the FPIC is "increasingly becoming an expected standard for companies" (ibid). At the UN General Assembly in 2007, Sweden voted in favor of the UNDRIP, however, it seems that the state does not have to meet its requirements (ibid). As one of my interlocutors told me, "Here is mining, the other side is windmills, and the forest. They are taking the forest. They took the forest, and the people couldn't say anything because there is no ILO". Sámi people cannot practice their land and

hunting rights, because there is no (international) constitution in Sweden that would allow and support them to do so. When Sámi try to fight for their rights extended to them by international parties, conflicts occur between the international conventions and existing Swedish laws. However, "the latter prevails in Swedish courts", leaving the Sámi with few helplines to navigate and claim their rights (ibid, 243).

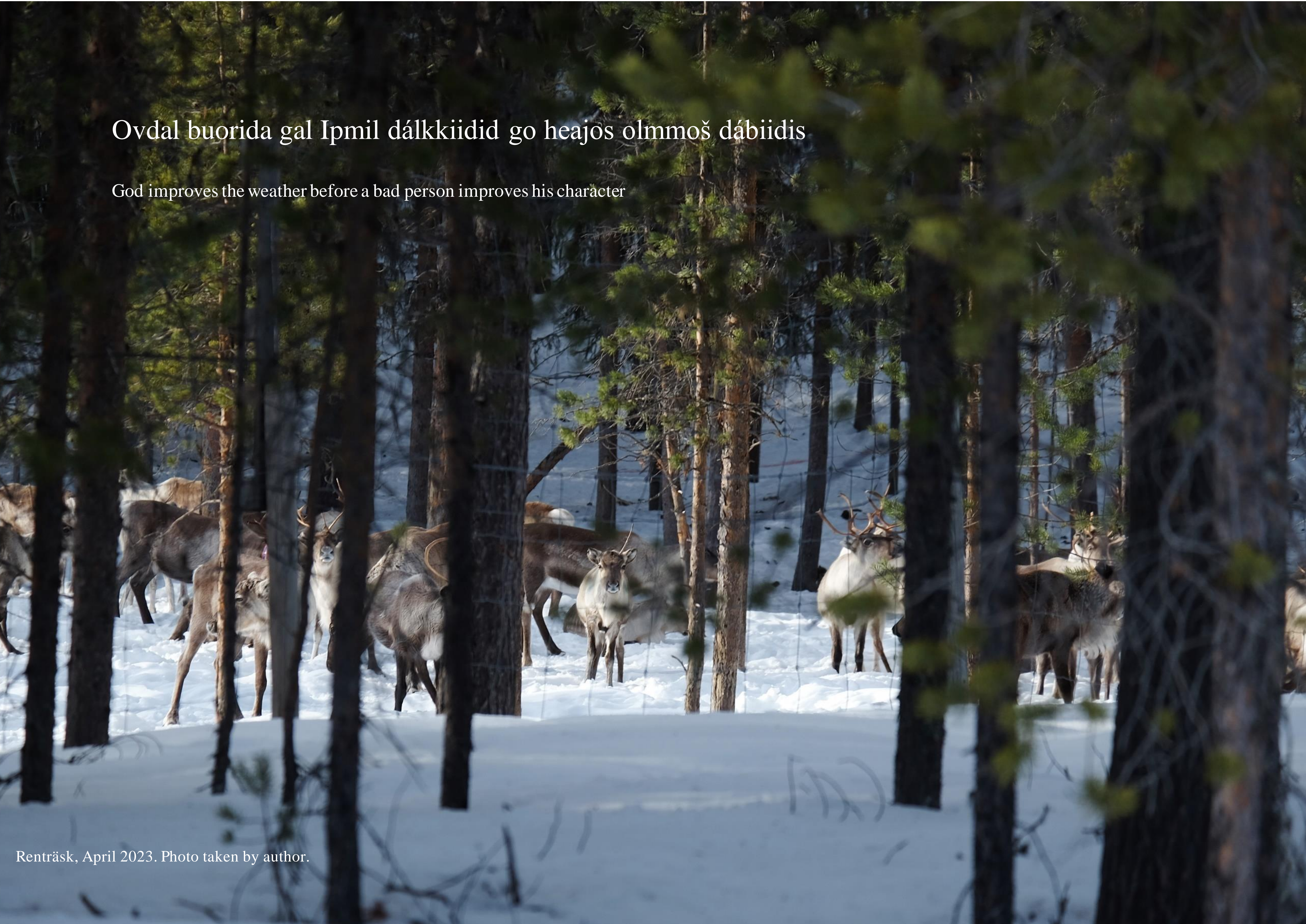
There have been international criticisms and concerns about Sweden's regulation of indigenous rights in general, but also in regard to mining specifically (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 245). There have been numerous recommendations from the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Human Rights Committee (CCPR), and the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR). These include a review from the Swedish nation on its laws and procedures which may impact Sámi interests including the Mineral Law, equal access to land for all Sámi, including non-reindeer herding Sámi, and for Sweden to consider ratifying ILO 169 (ibid). However, most of these recommendations are related to the FPIC, and what that requires, and there is some ambiguity present in these. For example,

> *"[R]eview existing legislation, policies and practices* regulating activities that may have an impact on the rights and interests of the Sámi people, including development projects and extractive industries operations, *with a view to guaranteeing meaningful consultation* with the affected indigenous communities *aimed at attempting to obtain their* free, prior and informed *consent*"
>
> (ibid, emphasis added)

However, as stated before, a state does not have to meet the requirements of the FPIC. Therefore, the Swedish state can easily avoid the repercussions of not obtaining a 'meaningful consultation with the affected indigenous communities'. Moreover, "activities that best contribute to long-term sustainable development should have precedence" above indigenous communities (ibid, 247). Meaning, the mining industry, specifically the new Per Geijer Deposit full of minerals needed for 'Europe's Green Transition', is of greater importance and contribution to the long-term sustainable development of Sweden and Europe. But what about the only indigenous community of Europe that has inhabited the North of the continent for centuries? It seems to me that the consumption culture of Europe's many will be paid by the few of the North.

Conclusion

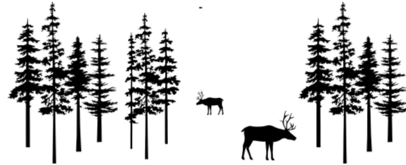
Throughout the last centuries, the Swedish government has tried with laws, acts, and regulations to control the Sámi culture, or rather, has tried to assimilate them into the Swedish culture. Although on paper "the government's general operations provide all Swedes, including Sámi, with the necessary public and/or other services, which are not dependent on negotiations or agreements with resources projects or developers", many Sámi have different experiences (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 247). Despite the fact that the Swedish government has stopped the assimilation programs for children in Swedish schools and the sterilization programs for Sámi women, children are still mocked when speaking the Sámi language at school and Sámi people are still laughed at when wearing their traditional clothes (Cats 2023). The Sámi people do not feel heard, as if their concerns for the future of their traditions do not matter. There is no legal system in Sweden that properly supports and fights for the rights of the Sámi people, leaving them with little legal reinforcement to fight against the threats to the future of their culture. The importance of Europe's green transition outweighs the human rights of the Sámi people. Through the extractive industries, the dispossession of their land, and the structural violence Sámi people face every day, they experience a form of green colonialism. Where they are governed once again by the settler regime, forced out of belonging and connecting not only to their own culture but also to the Swedish culture. They are left with no place in society, physically as well as mentally.



Renträsk, April 2023. Photo taken by author.

Chapter 2

The Sense of Belonging and 'Subject-ification' of the Sámi People



The following is an excerpt from the book Stolen by Ann-Helén Laestadius:

> "And then there were the others, the ones who wanted to take pictures, clueless about the hierarchies; those who had taken the night bus to Boden and changed buses there; those who had come on the tourist buses or driven in cars. The ones who only admired and likely never reflected. The ones who took pictures for Instagram.
>
> Maybe they had time to pet the reindeer that walked the streets of Jokkmokk. And what was it again, wasn't there some fight about a mine here? That was here, right? They seemed to recall some conflict that threatened to kill the reindeer industry in the area. But they didn't manage to finish thinking the thought and instead happily paid 1,550 kronor for a silver necklace that had leaves like the brooches for gákti [traditional dress]. Authentic Sámi handicraft, they said. The "authentic" part was important. And "Lapp", you don't use that word, they knew that. But sometimes they slipped up, especially if they were of an older generation and heard "Lappish" being spoken.
>
> "Come on, I want some new earrings," Anna-Stina said, tugging on her arm.
>
> Elsa knew that she was one of the confident ones, one of the women who could sew everything, from gákti to belt, who could weave shoe bands and fringe her own shawl. The only thing she had to buy were brooches and the round silver buttons sewn close together all around her belt. And the earrings Anna-Stina was looking through now.
>
> "Your clothes! So beautiful!" said an English-speaking voice.
>
> The woman who had pushed her way to them was dressed for a polar expedition; she sounded British.
>
> "Thank you."

"Absolutely amazing," she went on, unable to keep from gently touching the fringes.

Elsa took a step back, but it was crowded and she didn't get far. She nodded and turned away, clinging tight to Anna-Stina.

"I can't take much more of this. They're starting to *touch* me."

"But we look good," Anna-Stina said with a grin.

Right, now was the time to show themselves off. Today Jokkmokk was a proud Sámi community, and no one would acknowledge any hatred for the fucking Lapps who had protested the planned mine in Gállok.

"They're so ignorant."

"Come on, chill out, help me find some earrings."

Elsa wished she had slapped the British woman's hand away and told her about the villagers who had no qualms about threatening her, who drove their snowmobiles into her yard to demonstrate that they could do whatever they liked. That would wipe the smile off that woman's face. Elsa fantasized about shaking her, telling her how reindeer were tortured to death.

She knew that she should relax and feel secure. If ever they were in the majority, on their own terms for once, it was here. She understood why none of her friends wanted to talk about or be reminded of unpleasant topics during the best weekend of the year, and yet it was annoying that no one had even mentioned the article about the reindeer cadavers. Almost a month had passed now, and the police hadn't been in touch about those bags, and surely the gloves with their DNA had disappeared. Elsa couldn't bring herself to call Henriksson, couldn't handle listening to his feeble excuses."

(Laestadius 2023, 194-198)

The book 'Stolen' follows Elsa, a young girl who witnesses the murder of her reindeer calf by a Swedish man, known for hurting and stealing reindeer across their community in Northern Sweden. Whilst the murdering and harming of reindeer is a huge offense and outrage for the Sámi people, the Swedish police takes little effort to solve these crimes. Therefore, Elsa does not tell the police who the man she saw that night was. The crime she witnessed was not the first time her reindeer faced violence, and it definitely was not the last. Even though the book is fiction, most of the struggles Elsa and her community face,

are ever so existent in reality. It became clear to me, during several conversations with my interlocutors, that Sámi people still face racism on a daily basis, for example, Sámi are still insulted and faced with Lapps comments, harming reindeer, and people stealing from their property. Some Swedes do not like sharing lands with the indigenous community. Per, experienced this when Swedish teens repeatedly came onto his property and stole things, such as gasoline. Acquaintances of his found wounded reindeer on their property.

The opinions about the existing mines, the planned mines, and future discoveries of resources in the ground to extract and exploit, differ immensely in the whole community of Northern Sweden, but primarily between Sámi and Swedes. Elsa's thoughts about the fight of the Sámi against a mine in Gállok in the excerpt of 'Stolen' enhance the conversations I had with my interlocutors about these differences. Most of the Swedes in the North view the mining industry as economically very viable. To them, the Sámi are only obstructing the economic possibilities of the industry by keeping their reindeer on that land. These differences in the meaning of land, as well as other cultural aspects such as the value of reindeer and freedom, and the historical events discussed in the previous chapter, create a tense division between the Sámi and the Swedish people. Lacking a place in society, both physically as well as mentally, Sámi people struggle to feel a sense of belonging and connection in both cultures and communities. In this chapter, I delve into the consequences of the Swedish government's past policies, discussed in the previous chapter, that the Sámi people have had to face during the last decades. I argue that these consequences, such as the assimilation of the Sámi and the cultural erosion, have caused the Sámi people to lack a sense of belonging to both their own culture, as well as the Swedish culture. Therefore the Swedish citizenship of the Sámi people can be identified as what anthropologist Aihwa Ong (1996, 737) argues to be a cultural process of subjectification. Subjectification is the act of populations or individuals being made into a specific category or subject of power. The Sámi people in Sweden have been made into subjects as Swedish citizens through years of assimilation programs, arbitrary regulations, and racism. By focusing on experiences, court cases, and other examples, I disentangle the aftermath of the colonial past the Sámi have endured, and how poor policy-making from the Swedish government has aided in increasing the division between the Swedish and the Sámi cultures, where the Sámi people neither belong to one or the other.

To Be Sámi or Swedish

Throughout history, the Sámi people have freely moved across Sápmi, the borderless area in Northern Fennoscandia. Ranging between Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, the Sámi reindeer herders moved with their reindeer and families during the different seasons across the landscape. However, different historical events have prohibited the Sámi reindeer herders from this free movement. In the 18th century, the Sámi territory was divided between Denmark-Norway and Sweden (Labba n.d.). About 50 years later in 1809, Finland separated from Sweden and became part of the Russian Empire (ibid). The border between Finland and first Norway, and then Sweden, closed hereafter (ibid). One of my interlocutors, Nils, a 66-year-old man, whose ancestors came from Finland, told me that many Sámi people who traveled between the States before were forced to move with their reindeer from northern Finland into Northern Sweden when the borders closed in the early 19th century. In 1917, when Finland declared its independence, the border between Sweden and Finland opened again. However, the damage had been done, as most of the newer generations of Finnish ancestry had no memory of their ancestral homeland, and stayed in Northern Sweden. The Reindeer Herding Act discussed in the previous chapter further prevented the Sámi from moving freely across their Sápmi, and inevitably the view and meaning of land, and with it, the sense of belonging for Sámi people, in the Sámi culture shifted.

Social anthropologist Åse Ottosson in her article in *City & Society* on anti-social behavior and indigenous-settler forms of belonging argues that "residence in itself is not enough to create a sense of belonging" (2016, 158). In other words, living in a specific geographical space does not make it a home and does not create a sense of belonging to that space. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996), argues that even in the most intimate, spatially confined, and geographically isolated situations, it takes "hard and regular work" to produce "local subjects, actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbors, friends, and enemies" through the maintaining of houses, roads, and other physical structures, as well as various kinds of communal activities (179). It is not simple to belong to a community, even when one is already part of that community by birth. As Appadurai argues, even when one lives in the far north, in a small mountain reindeer herding village, it takes work to maintain the continuation of belonging to that community. Both through the physical maintenance of that community, as well as the emotional maintenance of that community such as communal activities, does an individual continue to belong to it.

As examples in the previous chapter have shown, the assimilation of the Sámi into the Swedish culture did arguably not provide a situated community where they belonged to either the Swedish or the Sámi culture but floated somewhere in the middle. The relentless efforts of the Swedish government to regulate and control aspects of the Sámi culture gradually eroded their sense of belonging, as vital cultural elements were systematically stripped away, leaving them with a diminishing connection to their own heritage. Therefore, I argue that the assimilation of the Sámi into the Swedish culture is an example of citizenship created as a cultural process of 'subject-ification' (Ong 1996).

In her article 'Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making' in *Current Anthropology,* Anthropologist Aihwa Ong views "cultural citizenship as a process of self-making and being-made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes" (1996, 737). Furthermore, she considers "citizenship a cultural process of 'subject-ification'" by power relations that "produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration" (ibid). Subjectification is the act of populations or individuals being made into a specific category or subject of power. An individual becomes subject to something, for example, a higher state, legal or cultural power. Although the higher power might not kill you, it demands you to live in a particular way. The Sámi people in Sweden have been made into subjects as Swedish citizens through years of assimilation programs, arbitrary regulations, and racism. Ong employs the term cultural citizenship to describe the cultural customs and convictions that emerge through the complex process of navigating the ambivalent and contested dynamics between the state and its dominant structures, which determine the parameters of inclusion within a nation and its territory (ibid, 738). Through the centuries of arbitrary regulations the Swedish government has put on the Sámi people, the state has continuously amplified the criteria the indigenous community had to conform to, to belong to either the Sámi or the Swedish culture. The Sámi people could only consider themselves Sámi if they were reindeer herders, whereas to belong to the Swedish culture, the Sámi had to fully remove themselves from their ancestral culture.

During dinner with Per and Lucas, it became clear to me that the relationship with the Swedish state is very much contested. Lucas is a 55-year-old reindeer owner, who works in the LKAB mine and lives in the old city center of Kiruna. With Per, I had spent the day putting up reindeer skins to dry and building an igloo. After, he invited Lucas to have dinner with us. Lucas had difficulty speaking English, but Per translated where necessary. After discussing Lucas'

reindeer and his background, we came to the topic of mining and bureaucracy. Although Lucas works in the mine, both his and Per's distaste for the mining industry and Swedish bureaucracy were clear. "They do not know what they are doing", "in the South they do not know what it is like to live in the North", and "These bureaucrats do not know anything", were some of the remarks that showed the contestation with the Swedish State that is very much present. Throughout their lives, Per and Lucas have had to deal with many of the regulations that are conceived to be necessary by the Swedish State for reindeer herding. Nowadays, reindeer herders need to fill out many papers in order to get access to compensation for reindeer losses, threats of predators, and other forms of reimbursement. But if there is one thing a reindeer herder does not want to do, is sit inside all day filling out paperwork. They want to be outside with their reindeer, and actually do the herding. However, sadly, I recall many days when Per was in his office all day to work on papers.

These contestations can also be identified in the mining regulations of Sweden, as Nils explained to me during the afternoon I spent with him in his house in a village close to Kiruna.

Long-Term Sustainable Development for Whom?

It was a Friday when I went to Vittangi, a village about one hour east of Kiruna. I had met Nils at a climate change demonstration in the new city center in Kiruna one week before. With his wife he lives along the river in Vittangi. Vittangi is a small village with about 750 inhabitants. I had passed it once before, when I went with Per to Karesuando, on the Finnish border. It is a dangerous road to the village, as every 7 minutes an enormous truck with two trailers full of iron ore passes you. These trucks transport the iron ore from the mine in Svappavaara to the trains in Gällivare, from where they get transported by train to the harbor in Luleå, on the coast of Sweden.

Before he retired, Nils worked most of his life for the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) which is the largest non-profit environmental organization in Sweden. For the Naturmedia UT he contributed to the writing of the "Guide Till Gruvor & Bruk I Norr", the Guide to Mines & Mills in the North. This guide explores the history of mining in northern Sweden. Therefore, Nils knows plenty about this topic. We spent the afternoon and evening talking about it. Most of the information I share in these next paragraphs I have learned from him.

In Sweden, the State is responsible for granting the rights to explore and exploit areas for mining purposes. These mineral projects are regulated by the Mineral Law. In this law, "mining is provided with the same priority as land uses of national importance – but without the associated and explicit legal reasoning which exists in the Law on Expropriation" (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 244-245). As some, or rather most, mineral deposits might be labeled to be of 'national interest', these areas can enjoy "some level of protection from other land use proposals that would make future exploitation of the deposit impossible" (ibid). When these areas of national interest for minerals overlap with reindeer herding areas, "the activity that best contributes to longer-term sustainable development should have precedence" (ibid, 247). But for whom? Although the mining interest has great "perceived socio-economic benefits" for a large community, the reindeer herding communities would be unable to perform their cultural traditions over an extended period of time (ibid). This has led to "difficult judgments", where the former usually prevails as the latter cannot perform their activities for an extended, but *limited* period of time (ibid).

Even though mining project proponents undertake consultative initiatives with the indigenous community whose land will be used for mining activities, this does not meet the FPIC requirements as discussed in the previous chapter, as "consent is not required" by Swedish law (ibid). Moreover, in the existing permitting process, only the relevant sameby is invited to take part in the process, but these "may not accurately reflect the opinions and wishes of the larger Sámi community", as only the reindeer herders are members of a sameby, and not the other cultural communities (ibid).

The lack of valuable regulatory aid has apprehended the local community around Kiruna about the mining industry. The older generations see how LKAB in Kiruna is recruiting their children to work in the mine straight after high school. During my conversation with Johan, a representative of the Sámi people outside the samebyar, he emphasized that the primary allure for young people to work in the mine is primarily the substantial salaries provided by LKAB. To them, it is much more rewarding in the short term to start working in the mine rather than going to college or university. Not only the youth, but all employees of LKAB earn a much higher salary compared to the average salary of the entire country. This leads to rising prices in Kiruna, compared to other remote cities in Northern Scandinavia, making it an expensive place to live in, when one is not earning the high salary LKAB offers.

However, many locals are dependent on the mine. The majority of the people who live in Kiruna work in or for the mine. It is difficult for many to demonstrate or disagree, as so many aspects of life in the city are dependent on or stem forth from the mining industry. The importance shows in the relocation of half a city so the state can continue its mining activities. At the end of the move, approximately 6,000 people will have moved to the new city center or away from the city. One would think that a forced move for so many, would lead to demonstrations or friction. However, LKAB presents itself as if that is not the case. With a tour guide and a group of people, I went down into the mine for a tour and presentation of the activities and the history of the mine. At the tourist information center, we were picked up by a big bus and driven into the mine. During the tour, another guest asked the tour guide if there were any demonstrations or disagreements with the moving of the city and the mining activities. The tour guide answered that everyone was happy with the mine and there were no demonstrations. She quickly moved on to the next part of the tour without giving any details or a deeper explanation. After the conversations with my interlocutors about the meaning of the mine in the city, it became clear to me that many do not have the ability to demonstrate, as "without the mine, this city would not exist", simply because the mine provides the jobs the people need to afford their lives in the city.

A Fly-In Fly-Out City

Nevertheless, the locals do feel that the mining industry is providing fewer life services in the city to the public outside of those who work in the mine. One of my interlocutors, Maria, an elderly woman who was a nurse in the local hospital, comes from the Girjas Sameby and lives in the old city center of Kiruna. She mentioned that "they [LKAB] do not actually provide people here [in Kiruna] with nursing facilities", as "there is only a private dental clinic and no access to affordable healthcare". She explained that the locals feel that the cut in services is to get everyone away from here. A lot of families are moving away from Kiruna because there is no future here. There is not a good school, "so they are moving and it is going to be a fly-in fly-out city". Maria predicts that in this city in the future, only miners will live and work, flying in and out from the South of Sweden and abroad. Maria told me that currently already "they earn a lot of money, and they spend a lot of money, and then they leave. But the taxes are not provided to this community, the taxes go to where they come from" According to her, the community does not really benefit that much, because the jobs here are not for the local people.

Through such conversations with my interlocutors, and the experiences and stories they shared, it became clear to me that LKAB within Kiruna is also fracturing the sense of belonging to the community for these people. As the local community does not benefit from the money earned, but only gets to experience the burden of living in a mining town, their sense of feeling a part of this place and belonging to this place is decreasing. Their concerns for the future of the area are not taken seriously by either the state or LKAB and are swept under the immense envisioned benefit of the Per Geijer Deposit for the country, and for Europe.

Working Day and Night

Not only in their relationship with the State and the mining industry does the indigenous community experience conflict, but also in their relationship with the Swedish community. Private Swedish land owners (Swedish settlers) are "taking the Sámi to court over the use of their lands for herding purposes" (Sonnisken n.d.). The private landowners, most often Swedish settlers, are attempting to prohibit the Sámi from using the land for grazing and seek compensation for apparent damage to their trees (ibid). There have been several court cases between reindeer herders and private landowners. One instance was in 2011 when the latter sued two samebyar in the municipality of Nordmaling for letting their reindeer graze on their land without prior agreement (Torp 2013, 44). The Swedish Supreme Court ruled in favor of the private landowners and set the ground for similar legal disputes to come in the future, leaving little chance for Sámi to win such court cases.

There is a different accordance for year-round grazing pastures and winter pastures. The year-round pastures are of the Sámi by immemorial prescription, it is a right if which the legal nature does not depend "upon a statute for its existence" (Allard and Brännström 2021, 58). Sámi people can access land rights when they can prove the long-term use of a certain area, of which the use "must have been sufficiently intensive, continuous, and exclusive", undisputed and unhindered, for such a long time "that no one remembers or on good authority knows how his ancestors or acquirers came to be" (Allard 2011, 167, 176). The winter pastures do not fit into the same category, as "there is no support in any law text or drafting history for the notion that the rules of the Old Land Code on immemorial prescription shall be applied to the right to winter pasture" (Torp 2013, 45). Meaning, that whereas the year-round pastures can be rightfully used by the Sámi due to immemorial prescription, the same right is not applied to the winter pastures in this court case as there is no support in any law

text. However, due to the expansion of the agricultural businesses, forestry, and mining industries, the Sámi reindeer herders have less and less grazing land available for their reindeer. Leaving them with little to no choice but to let the animals graze on private lands, sometimes without a previously discussed agreement. During a conversation with one of my interlocutors, Eva, a wife to a reindeer herder, it became clear to me that many reindeer herders try to prevent their reindeer from crossing into private lands, but are not always able to. "Day and night reindeer herders are working to keep their reindeer on the right land. There are too many reindeer for the grazing areas, as the mining keeps taking more and more grazing land, especially in the Gabna sameby". In the Nordmaling case, the trial ended up in the High Court, and the Sámi representatives "successfully proved customary use based on historic documents", that the reindeer herding Sámi have rights to land that are based from time immemorial, and did not have to pay the private landowners for damages to their trees and could use the land for their reindeer (Tarras-Wahlberg and Southalan 2021, 244).

Conflicts between Swedish settlers and Sámi people are not uncommon. As the excerpt of the book 'Stolen' at the beginning of this chapter also shortly addresses, reindeer still get harmed, murdered, and stolen. Many of my interlocutors have heard of or experienced similar incidents themselves. My interlocutors taught me that Swedish settlers feel that Sámi people get favored because of their indigenous status. Eva explained to me that to her it feels as if they are 'jealous' that the Sámi community can have access to land rights and hunting rights that Swedish settlers cannot. Eva found it ridiculous, given the abusive past the indigenous community has faced in order to obtain the little legal rights they have now. The few legal rights the indigenous community now has are based on whether one is an active reindeer herder or not. This also creates conflict within the Sámi community, as some belong legally more to the community than others.

The Fight To Survive

During a meeting with the Swedish Sámi Parliament, one of my interlocutors, Johan, a representative from the Sámi people outside the Sámi villages, gave a speech to members of the parliament. In his speech, he mentioned the following statement from members of a sameby that they presented to the Ministry of Justice regarding internal conflicts and criticism of how the Reindeer Husbandry Act can be used against their own:

> "We want the Sámi Parliament and SSR to review and start working on changes to the Reindeer Husbandry Act. You cannot have it this way. We have now lived under oppression and harassment from the beginning of the 20th century. By interpreting the Reindeer Act arbitrarily, one can use the law to work solely for one's own purposes and for one's own gain. Exercising oppression, making arbitrary decisions, crowding out and ratting at will".

The Reindeer Herding Act has crowded out the indigenous hunting and fishing communities for decades. By giving cultural protection to only the reindeer herding communities, the hunting and fishing communities were put on a lower scale, and have almost fully been assimilated. Moreover, through the notion of only allowing reindeer herders and reindeer herding families access to membership of a sameby, about 15,000 Sámi people in Sweden do not belong to a sameby. This has created a lack of a sense of belonging to the Sámi community for many.

In addition, the Act can cause internal conflicts as it creates competition between members of a sameby. There is a limited number of reindeer permitted per sameby, and as mentioned before, to be able to live economically sustainable, and not work another job next to reindeer herding, one would need at least 2000 reindeer. Naturally, this can create internal conflicts between reindeer herders within one sameby. More reindeer would mean more economic certainty for a reindeer herder, however, at the cost of another reindeer herder who will be able to keep fewer reindeer. So, to increase your own reindeer herding district, or sameby, one would need to step on others to do so. One of my interlocutors, Anna, who works for the Sámi Parliament in Norway and whose reindeer herding district bordered the Laevas district around Kiruna, told me a story of such a conflict. A time ago, the Laevas district was going to get their reindeer by helicopter from the mountains on the border with Norway. Their reindeer were merged with the reindeer of Anna's district, so they took all of the reindeer with them. The Laevas district called Anna's district to tell them they had their reindeer. Only one young reindeer herder in their district, Karin, was free to get their reindeer back. She went to them alone, as a young woman. Anna had remarked that she could not go alone, but the resources were not there for anyone else to join her. She learned to be tough and hard, and so she brought the reindeer back home. Although brave, she has no other choice. She is the reindeer herder in her family, her husband is at home with their kids. The reindeer are her income and her life. If she would have left them in

the Laevas district, they would have slaughtered her reindeer, or they would have remarked their ears and taken them into their own herd. But as Anna said, "It's actually the fight to survive because people don't survive anymore, so they take away land and reindeer from other reindeer herding areas".

Conclusion

The chapter explored the struggles and challenges faced by the Sámi people in northern Sweden, focusing on their relationship with the Swedish society, the issues surrounding the murder and mistreatment of reindeer, and the impact of mining on their land and culture. The story of Elsa in the book 'Stolen' serves as a representation of the real-life experiences of the Sámi community. It is evident that racism, insults, and theft directed at the Sámi people persist in contemporary society, creating a divide between them and the Swedish population. The conflicting perspectives on mining further contribute to this division, with many Swedes viewing it as economically beneficial while the Sámi see it as a threat to their land and way of life. The historical context of borders and assimilation policies has also shaped the Sámi people's sense of belonging, leading to a feeling of not fully belonging to either their own culture or the Swedish culture. This chapter contributed by creating an understanding of how the process of subjectification, as explored by anthropologist Aihwa Ong has influenced the Sámi people's transformation into subjects of Swedish citizenship through the implementation of assimilation programs, regulatory measures, and systemic racism.

This chapter highlights the contested relationship between the Sámi people and the Swedish state, as demonstrated by their dissatisfaction with bureaucracy and mining regulations. Despite the dependency of the local community on mining, there are limitations to expressing dissent due to the influence and significance of the industry. I emphasize here the challenges faced by the Sámi people in maintaining their cultural identity and connection to the land amidst societal division and external pressures, that have prevented the Sámi communities from creating a space and sense of belonging.

Conflicts between reindeer herding districts have created boundaries between Sámi communities where they should be working together. But when one is born to hate another community and does not know any better, it is difficult for an individual to shift their view on that community. I would argue that in such reindeer herding districts, the sense of belonging is not to the Sámi community as a

whole, but to their own specific reindeer herding district, creating a division between Sámi communities. Of course, an individual feels more connected to their own family with whom they have grown up, however, these communities have experienced the same colonial regime, have the same ancestral lands, and the same enemy. Should they not come together to work towards the immense threat to the existence of any of their futures?

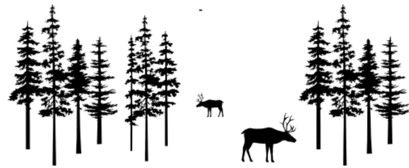
Eennâm Lii Ellim

Land is Life

Jukkasjärvi, March 2023. Photo taken by author.

Chapter 3

The Colonization of the Future of Reindeer Herding



"Gabna are standing on the 'afgrunde' [abyss], they are tipping over, and when that sameby dies, they will take the others as well. It is the first one the government wants to take. And when they get it, they will take Laevas, Girjas, Talma, and eventually the rest", Maria said. It was a sunny Sunday afternoon at the beginning of March. Several snowstorms had passed the area over the last few days, but that Sunday was the first calm day in a week. After I had spent the morning with Anna, talking about the Sámi culture and the importance of family for Sámi people, she took me to see her friend Maria. We sat at her yellow kitchen table with a cup of coffee in her one-bedroom apartment in the old city center of Kiruna. We spent the afternoon talking about the future of reindeer herding, the Sámi culture, and the threats the Sámi society faces. Anna added,

> "The Sámi culture is reindeer herding. It's the language, it's the way of living. It is my identity. And if the reindeer herding society for me is not there and it doesn't exist anymore, well, I wouldn't exist anymore either. How can I? My life is reindeer herding, it is my identity. And also the Sámi people that are around, and do not come from the reindeer herding society. It is still part of their identity, it is still the language. We use the meat, we use the skin for Duodji [handicrafts/applied art], it's a way of living". Maria added, "The reindeer herding is the circle of our life. But the families around are living with it, and do other things, fishing, duodji, and being politicians, like Anna. But I need to come home, I need to rest, I need to come home in my reindeer herding area. Of course, because that is where my family is, that is my life, that is where I come from. And if the reindeer herding areas are not there, where should I go? I would be alone, I would be lost."

The loss of reindeer herding would be detrimental to the Sámi people. As Maria and Anna explain, life without reindeer is unimaginable in the Sámi culture. The expansion of the mine with the Per Geijer deposit means the beginning of the end of the Sámi culture, as such an expansion would mean the end of the Gabna sameby as Maria said.

Both Maria as well as Anna fear that the end of the Gabna sameby will lead to the annihilation of other samebyar. When I asked my interlocutors about the visions they had of their futures, most of them do not know how or where they will be living in the future. They fear the collapse of their culture and see a dark future ahead.

As anthropologists, we can create an understanding of the imagined, aspired, and anticipated futures of communities. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2013) in his work on *The Future as Cultural Fact,* conceptualizes the future as a cultural fact, as not something determined by economic interests, but we, as humans, are our own future makers. Our imagination, anticipation, and aspiration influence our future-making processes. Although the discipline and its concept of culture "remain substantially shaped by the lens of pastness," anthropologists have not completely ignored the ways in which "humanity has encountered, managed, and anticipated the future as a cultural horizon" (ibid, 285). However, these understandings lack a "general point of view about humans as future-makers and of futures as cultural facts" (ibid). Appadurai argues that by using the concepts of anticipation, imagination, and aspiration, anthropologists can construct an understanding of the future. The concept of imagination focuses on how violence, disaster, and emergency become tolerable in the everyday life of the Sámi in Northern Sweden (ibid, 288). In this context, the Sámi reindeer herders have managed to sustain their livelihood through the notion of their imagination, amidst the destructive and environmentally harmful mining operations of the government. Their capacity to aspire for a better voice in these conditions is "distinctly local, and cannot be separated from language, social values, histories, and institutional norms" (ibid, 290). Through an exploration of the significance of the concept of a 'good life' within Sámi society, we gain insight into the cultural capacity of aspiration and the potential for shifting the terms of recognition the Swedish government currently prescribe the Sámi community. The aspiration for these changes can be identified in their anticipation of the future. With the anticipation of the future, Sámi people in Northern Sweden should be able to create different tomorrows, assuming that these are to be different from today and yesterday, however, can they? (Arbo et al 2013, 164).

This demonstrates that although imagination, anticipation, and aspiration shape the future, these are created in the present, as anthropologists Bryant and Knight argue in the introduction of their book *The Anthropology of the Future* (2019, 15). People's actions in the present are informed by the imaginations of their future. Bryant and Knight critique Appadurai's call for a more futuristic approach

within the discipline, using imagination, anticipation, and aspiration, as they state his work represents a "continuing tendency in the discipline" to, "on the one hand, call for a revitalized anthropology of the future," whilst on the other hand, "continuing to understand that future primarily through the histories of inequality that shape the present from which the future is imagined" (2019, 13).

I argue that understanding the historical entanglements of all actors in a specific environment is necessary for studying the future. The roots that underlie decision-making processes for the future are shaped by the utilization of historical experiences, analogies, and extrapolations of past and present trends (Arbo et al., 2013, 164). These experiences and trends profoundly influence the imagination, aspirations, and anticipations of what lies ahead. In the first chapter, I delved into these roots, highlighting historical instances of policy-making processes and how the Swedish government has systematically denied agency to the indigenous population in these processes. Moving on to the second chapter, I explored the detrimental impact of these historical examples on the Sámi people's sense of belonging to both their own culture and the Swedish society at large. Finally, in this concluding chapter, I aim to shed light on how the Swedish government, through mechanisms of green colonialism and subjectification, has effectively colonized the future of the Sámi people. The Sámi community has to adapt to a future, I argue, that is already destroyed due to the past and present power structures of the Swedish government. But what does it mean to envision an impossible future? In this chapter, I delve into what this impossible future looks like and how the Sámi people in northern Sweden try to navigate it.

Without Land, There Will Be No Sámi Culture

Although Appadurai (2013) argues that economic interests do not determine the future, I contend that in the context of the Sámi communities in Northern Sweden, they undeniably exert a significant influence on their future prospects. The economic interests of LKAB directly shape the future of the Sámi people as the mining industry seeks to appropriate their indigenous land for extractive purposes, driven by financial motivations. The mining industry forms the biggest threat to reindeer herders, as one of my interlocutors, Eva, underlined. "Without land, there will be no Sámi culture," she told me during our dinner together in the mountains close to the border with Norway. With a mutual friend, Johanna, we spent a night there to enjoy the snow and go skiing. During the day we had many talks about reindeer herding and the future of her husband's lifestyle as a reindeer herder. She mentioned that there were other threats to the

future of reindeer herding as well, such as tourism, wind parks, forestry, climate change, and hydrogen plants. However, “most of these are adaptable to”, but “the big scale of mining will destroy so much of the nature that the reindeer herding will not be possible anymore”.

Moreover, the economic interest the State has put in the reindeer herding practice also directly influences the future of reindeer herders. As one can only be an economically viable reindeer herder when one has 2,000 reindeer or more and is only by law allowed to be part of a sameby when at least 50% of their income comes primarily from reindeer herding, the ability to live a life as a reindeer herder decreases. Therefore, this economic interest constructs imagination and aspiration to have a negative impact on our anticipations. This is demonstrated in a study conducted by Jonsson et al. (2012), which focused on the perspectives of Sámi young adults residing in Northern Sweden regarding their envisioned futures. The findings revealed that nearly all of the young adults expressed apprehension about their financial prospects. Although most of them desired to work and live alongside reindeer, their concerns stemmed from the financial instability associated with relying solely on reindeer herding for their livelihoods. The young adults also perceived climate change as a significant threat not only to the reindeer population but also to their Sámi heritage. Since they require an additional job to attain economic security, their primary occupation would not revolve around reindeer herding. While many of them expressed a desire to engage in reindeer herding in the future, the necessity of a second job would hinder their ability to fully embody the essential cultural aspects of this practice, such as tending to the reindeer on a daily basis.

The toll it takes

The following is an excerpt from the book Stolen by Ann-Helén Laestadius:

> “Vuordde veahas.” [Hold on a sec.]
> He wasn’t sure she’d heard him. He waited for the shards of glass to come flying over the bed. Elsa was stronger than him. So he could go now, secure in the knowledge that she wanted to stay with the reindeer. He had watched her through the years; unna oabba [little sister] had been his shadow ever since she could walk. He had seen how she carried the lasso with a determined gaze - or rather, dragged it behind her those first few years. And he had seen how she always stood her ground when someone said her place was

anywhere but the reindeer forest. He was proud of her. He should have said so a long time ago. Why hadn't he? Because you didn't say stuff like that. You weren't supposed to praise and admire freely, for it came with a price, as Áhkku [grandmother] always said.

There was another knock, and he had no choice but to haul himself up. The latch was stubborn, but he finally got the window open, and cold air streamed in over his bare arms. Elsa's eyes were full of worry. he told her to climb in. She looked at him like he was an idiot but grabbed the windowsill and jumped up with her belly pressed to it, then swung her legs over. She noticed the bag immediately and kicked at it.

"Going somewhere?"

"I was thinking maybe."

He closed the window and she turned on the ceiling light, then sat on the bed. He had to keep his distance, so he leaned against the dresser.

"The police were here. They want you to give them a call."

He tried to look nonchalant. She dangled her legs and kicked at the bag again, harder this time. Then the dam burst and she was sobbing. In a way, he hadn't seen her cry for years. Snot flowing, tears spurting, and she seemed to have trouble breathing; the howls came in waves. Her fists hammered the bed.

She had to repeat herself several times before he could tell what she was saying.

"You were going to kill yourself. You were! Weren't you?"

He let his arms fall. He should feel something, but he was dead inside. She didn't wait for a response.

"You were going to put on the waders and drown."

She wiped her nose with the back of her hand and pulled up the bedspread to wipe the tears from her face.

"I was there! Don't you get it? I was there!"

He was still numb.

(Laestadius 2023, 357-363)

Suicide is a sad reality for many indigenous people living in Sápmi. The Sámi community faces unique challenges and pressures that can contribute to mental health struggles, including an increased risk of suicide. Factors that I have discussed in my previous chapters such as cultural erosion, loss of traditional practices, social isolation, discrimination, and the historical trauma associated with colonization have all been identified as potential contributors to the high rates of

suicide among the Sámi people. Although the situation among the Sámi people is better than among some other indigenous people, "suicide is still regarded as a major public health issue" (Stoor et al 2015, 1). It is mostly young men who commit suicide, of whom the majority tend to be reindeer herding Sámi (ibid).

The disruption of traditional ways of life have left some members of the Sámi community feeling disconnected from their cultural identity, which can have profound psychological effects (ibid, 2). Additionally, the pressures of acculturation, socioeconomic disparities, and limited access to mental health services further compound the challenges faced by Sámi individuals in terms of mental well-being (ibid). It is crucial to acknowledge that suicide is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by a combination of individual, cultural, and societal factors. The Sámi people, like any other community, possess diverse experiences and circumstances that shape their mental well-being.

Many of the Sámi people are in a fight over the right to their traditional lands to practice their traditions. These fights take mental and physical tolls on human beings. Anna once explained,

> "sometimes you are so used to fighting for legal rights, that you actually forget to be a human being, that's how I see it. A lot of people forget to be human beings in those fights because they are born to be a fighter. They are born into protecting land for the reindeer". There is a significant level of survival present in everyday life for many of the Sámi people, specifically the reindeer herders."

These wills to fight for their lands and to survive, seem to have grown into instincts, and thus grow with them from the moment they are born. As Anna said, "You do not sit down and cry, no, you just dry your tears and get up and go on".

In their study on the cultural meanings of suicide, psychologists Stoor et al (2015) employed open-ended use of focus group discussions (FDG) with 22 Sámi participants regarding suicide among Sámi in Sweden. One of the main themes discussed in the FDGs was the Sámi people's ongoing struggle to preserve their identity and culture. Participants expressed concerns that the surrounding society posed a threat to their Sámi heritage, and at times, even from within (ibid). Threats from the surrounding society included "exploitation of Sámi lands (by forestry, tourism, mining

activities, wind- and hydropower plants and societal infrastructure), conflicts with authorities and local communities that often involved what was perceived as discrimination" (ibid). Moreover, amongst the participants there was a common understanding of how living as a reindeer herder is "the best way to preserve Sámi identity and be able to pass the legacy on to new generations, but also to be standing in the middle of the Sámi fight" (ibid). The participants concluded that Sámi are like lemmings, with a fiery spirit, and refusing to retreat in the face of threats, to fight for their identity, regardless of the odds (ibid).

Many of my interlocutors personally know someone who has committed suicide from the reindeer herding community. A second cousin, a brother, a father, a sister, an uncle. Both my interlocutors, as well as the participants in the study of Stoor et al (2015, 4) framed suicide within normality in the cultural context as a way to "avoid the existential void that would have been the (perceived) consequence of life without reindeer herding". The continuous battle of trying to survive in a society that constantly works against you, takes a toll on a person's life, in which addictions and depression are not uncommon. Reindeer are the center of life as a herder, so much that life without them would lose its value of existence.

It is important to note that efforts are being made to address this issue by raising awareness, providing culturally sensitive mental health support, and promoting resilience within the Sámi community. Collaborative initiatives involving Sámi organizations, healthcare providers, policymakers, and community leaders aim to develop preventive strategies, early intervention programs, and holistic support systems. These include advocacy for sustainable and culturally sensitive mining practices, enhanced mental health support services, community empowerment, and initiatives aimed at preserving Sámi culture and traditional livelihoods while adapting to modern challenges. These endeavors strive to empower Sámi individuals, strengthen cultural pride, foster social connectedness, and create safe spaces for open dialogue about mental health.

It is crucial to recognize the unique cultural context of the Sámi people and tailor interventions accordingly, respecting their traditions, languages, and indigenous knowledge. By addressing the underlying factors contributing to mental health challenges and promoting a comprehensive approach to well-being, improvement can be made in reducing the incidence of suicide and supporting the overall mental wellness of the Sámi population. However, the Scandinavian institutions and governments that are responsible for

these initiatives should address the history of exclusion of the Sámi people, and the lack of agency the population has had in the policy-making processes regarding their own culture, to ensure that past mistakes will not be repeated.

Taking a Society Away

"The mining industry is taking the [Sámi] society away," is what Anna told me over dinner that Sunday afternoon. When the industry, and with it the State, take over the Gabna sameby when the Per Geijer deposit will open, the first reindeer herders will have to stop with their traditional practices. There will not be enough space for the reindeer to pass Kiruna from their winter to summer grazing pastures. The reindeer herders from Gabna who will have to quit with their tradition will not be able to join other samebyar, as there is not enough space to include more reindeer. But it is more than that. The fighting spirit of the Sámi will not accept the loss that Gabna is facing. They will be "the area that lost," "a loser," they did not fight hard enough," as Anna and Maria predict.

Those reindeer herders from Gabna that will have to quit with reindeer herding, will have to join the enemy. If they will not be able to make a living out of reindeer herding, they will have to work in the mine, as it is the only place one can have a job to provide financial stability. However, for the few reindeer that will be left in the Gabna sameby, there will not be enough reindeer herders present to continue the traditional way of reindeer herding. Moreover, there will not be space to move the reindeer from the winter to summer grazing pastures on foot. Maria mentioned that there have been rumors LKAB has said that the reindeer should be moved with trucks across the mining areas from the winter to summer grazing pastures. However, that will be impossible. As Anna explained to me, when you move reindeer with trucks, it stresses them. They start from a place, they arrive in another, and they did not follow the track. "Would they realize where they are? Will they settle down there? No they won't, because something is missing, and some days are missing. It will be stressful for them, and they have to figure out how did I come here".

Over time, the herd will lose its strength, as due to the stress they stop grazing. Moreover, if you move reindeer from one place to another, they learn to stay in one place and will not move. There will not be enough food, as they need to scavenge to find enough, and different kinds of, food. Therefore, a reindeer herder will have to feed his reindeer. But when they are fed, every reindeer survives. The herd will lose its genetic strength. I will not be able to tell you the difference between a reindeer that is fed, and one that is scavenging for its own food. Only a Sámi reindeer herder can. The Swedish

government and LKAB think they can too. The knowledge Sámi people have about reindeer, reindeer herding, and the environment is not recognized and valued by the government.

Present here more than ever, is the fact that “indigenous peoples’ aspiration for, as well as achievement of, self-determination is conditioned by state systems and the nature of the state’s relationship with indigenous peoples” (Broderstad 2011, 895-896). It is clear that the Swedish government does not want its indigenous population to achieve self-determination. As “self-determination comprises a right to self-government, autonomy, territorial integrity, and the exclusive enjoyment of indigenous land and resources”, it would limit the ability of the state to exploit that land and live of its winnings (ibid).

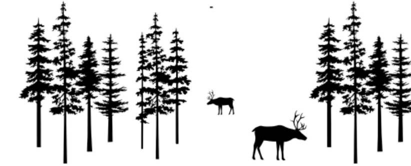
Conclusion

When LKAB will start with the extraction of minerals in the Per Geijer deposit, Gabna will be the first sameby to lose its reindeer, but most probably not the last. It is ever so evident that the Swedish government and the mining industries are lurking over the lands that are traditional Sámi territories.

Appadurai (2013) argues that by using the concepts of imagination, anticipation, and aspiration, anthropologists can construct an understanding of the future as these influence our future-making processes. Imagination focuses on how violence, disaster, and emergency become tolerable in social lives. The continuous struggles and threats to their culture the Sámi face every day, take a toll on a human being. I would argue that it is not absurd that these forms of violence and struggles can create suicidal thoughts. In the case of the Sámi people, imagination does not always make intolerable situations tolerable. However, as many reindeer herders still continue with their traditional livelihood, some have found a way to sustain themselves amidst the destructive and environmentally harmful mining operations of the government. Part of that reason would be because, as they believe, Sámi are born to be fighters and it is in their blood to never give up. But even Anna admitted that the anticipation many have for their future is not bright. Many fear that the start of the Per Geijer deposit will be the beginning of the end for the Sámi culture. Without the land, there is no culture. Thus, they might aspire to self-determination, but the State will do everything it can to prevent that from happening. As indigenous land rights would mean the end of the mining industry, and with it, the end of Sweden’s and Europe’s green dream.

Figure 4: Grundsel, April 2023. Photo taken by author

Conclusion



Through a triangulation of ethnographic methods, this thesis has depicted the lived reality of reindeer herders in Kiruna, Sweden's most northern city. I have examined the historical marginalization and exclusion of the indigenous Sámi people in Northern Sweden and the denial of their agency in regulating their traditional territories by the Swedish government. The policies implemented by the government have been aimed at assimilating the Sámi into Swedish culture and restricting their rights to land and resources. The Sámi people living in the area, particularly those affected by the mining industry, feel dispossessed and subjugated, with their land rights and reindeer herding practices being threatened.

I demonstrate that a pursuit of a 'green' future and environmental protection often perpetuates colonial legacies and further marginalizes indigenous communities. The demand for minerals for renewable energy technologies, such as electric cars and

windmills, leads to the extraction of resources on Sámi territories, impacting their culture and livelihoods. The lack of governmental support and limited agency for the Sámi people exacerbates their sense of dispossession and assimilation into Swedish culture.

I argue that through deliberate acts by the Swedish State to assimilate the Sámi, a profound sense of alienation now plagues the Sámi people, leaving them disconnected from both their own culture and Swedish society at large. Historical events, such as the territorial division of the Sámi and the implementation of assimilation programs, have significantly contributed to this division and cultural displacement. It is crucial to emphasize the multifaceted and complex challenges the Sámi people face, including racism, cultural displacement, mining regulations, and conflicts with the Swedish community. These challenges not only intensify their sense of not belonging but also create a relentless struggle for the Sámi people to preserve their cultural identity and traditional way of life.

Reindeer herding is integral to the identity of the Sámi culture. Many Sámi fear that the expansion of mining activities, driven by economic interests, poses a significant threat to their way of life. The economic interests of the state and the requirements for economic viability as a reindeer herder also play a role in shaping the future of the Sámi people. The need for a second job to attain financial security limits their ability to fully engage in reindeer herding and maintain their cultural practices. This economic influence creates negative impacts on their aspirations and anticipations of the future.

The constant struggle over land rights and the preservation of traditions also take a toll on the Sámi people. Suicide rates among the Sámi people, particularly among young reindeer herders, are a significant concern. The pressures of modernization, Western influences, and the disruption of traditional ways of life have left some individuals feeling disconnected from their cultural identity, leading to profound psychological effects. Factors such as cultural erosion, loss of traditional practices, social isolation, discrimination, and historical trauma contribute to these struggles.

Reflecting on the research question stated in the introduction, this thesis has put a step in the direction of broadening the knowledge of indigenous future-making processes amidst new forms of colonization, cultural erosion, and historical trauma. It has exposed the complexity of these processes for indigenous communities,

whereby the notion of 'humans as their own future-makers' is not always a free choice, but can be appointed to an individual.

The economic interests of the Swedish State, historical entanglements, and challenges faced by the Sámi people all contribute to their outlook on the future and their ability to navigate it. No one can deny that if there will be no drastic changes, the future of the Sámi is already destroyed. In this sense, the Swedish state has not only colonized the Sámi in the past, it has now also colonized its indigenous population's future. I emphasize here the need for decolonization efforts, the recognition of indigenous rights, and the inclusion of local voices in policy-making processes. By doing so, Kiruna can chart a path toward a more equitable and sustainable future that preserves the cultural heritage, self-determination, and overall well-being of the Sámi people.

This thesis makes a significant contribution to our understanding of indigenous agency in policy-making, 'subject-ification', and future-making practices by employing Appadurai's (2013) notions of imagination, anticipation, and aspiration. It addresses the dearth of indigenous agency in policy-making processes and examines the process of subject-ification through the insightful lens of anthropologist On (1996). By doing so, this research expands the academic discourse and enhances our knowledge of these crucial concepts.

On a final note, this research has been conducted by a non-indigenous, twenty-five-year-old, white, middle-class, Dutch, female student. Due to the limitations of the time of my fieldwork, I have only come so far in fully understanding the impact of colonial history on the current trajectory of the Sámi people's future. Moreover, other interesting topics were addressed by my interlocutors during my fieldwork, such as apprehension to pursue an educational career by reindeer herders. Within the scope of this thesis, unfortunately, there has been no room for further discussion on the topic of education within the reindeer herding practice. Therefore, for prospective studies on the future of reindeer herding and their agency in policy-making processes, I suggest taking this aspect into account and researching the Sámi lifestyle with extended background knowledge of their history, to create a larger time frame to examine the research topic. However, due to the detrimental consequences of the mining industry on the Sámi people, which encompasses profound suffering and compromised land rights, it is advised to research in the near future. As it is a bleak future the Sámi people face, overshadowed by environmental degradation and cultural loss.

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Appendix

These are some of the images I took in Northern Sweden to enhance your sense of the space I conducted fieldwork in.

Figure 2: A reindeer pen. In summer and winter all the reindeer of one sameby are brought into the big middle circle, and separated into the smaller pens of their reindeer herder. Nikkaluokta, March 2023, taken by author.

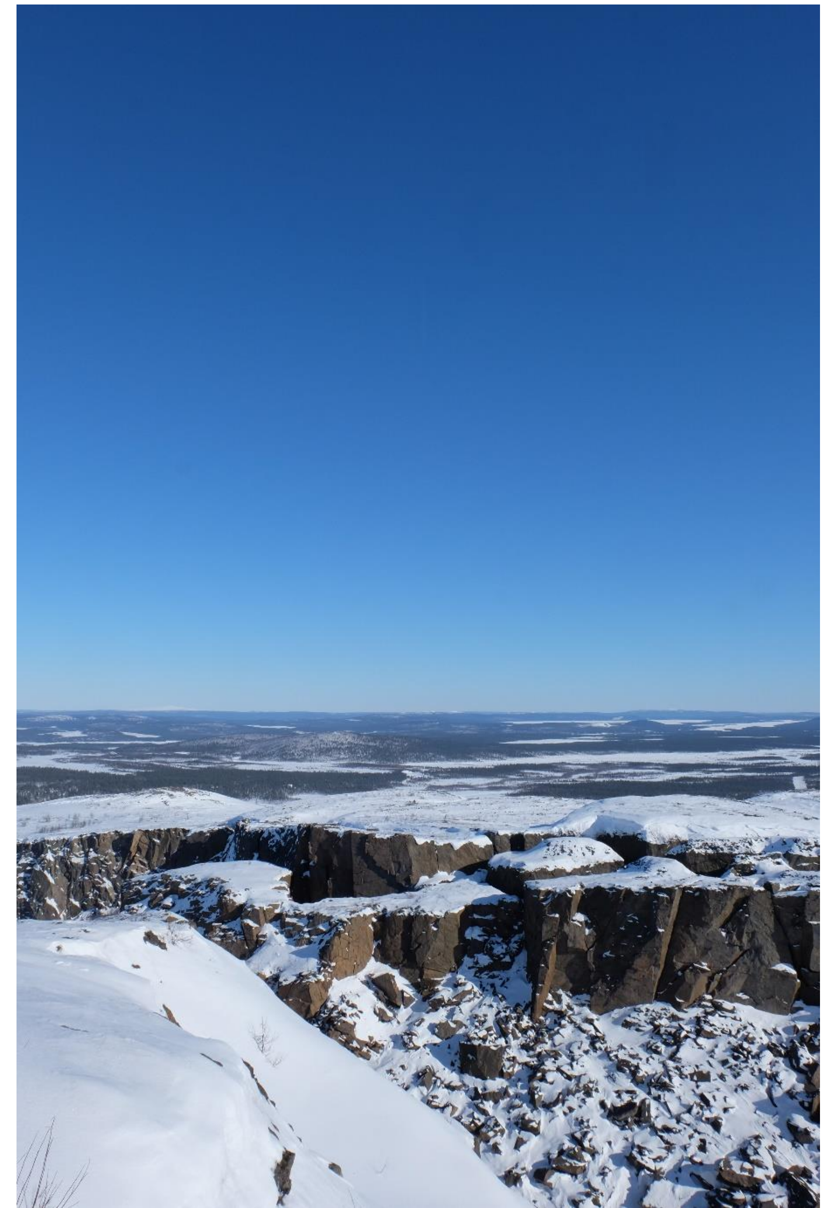


Figure 3: Standing on top of the old Luossavaara mine, North of Kiruna, which is now a ski hill. Overlooking the land that holds the Per Geijer deposit. Kiruna, April 2023, taken by author.

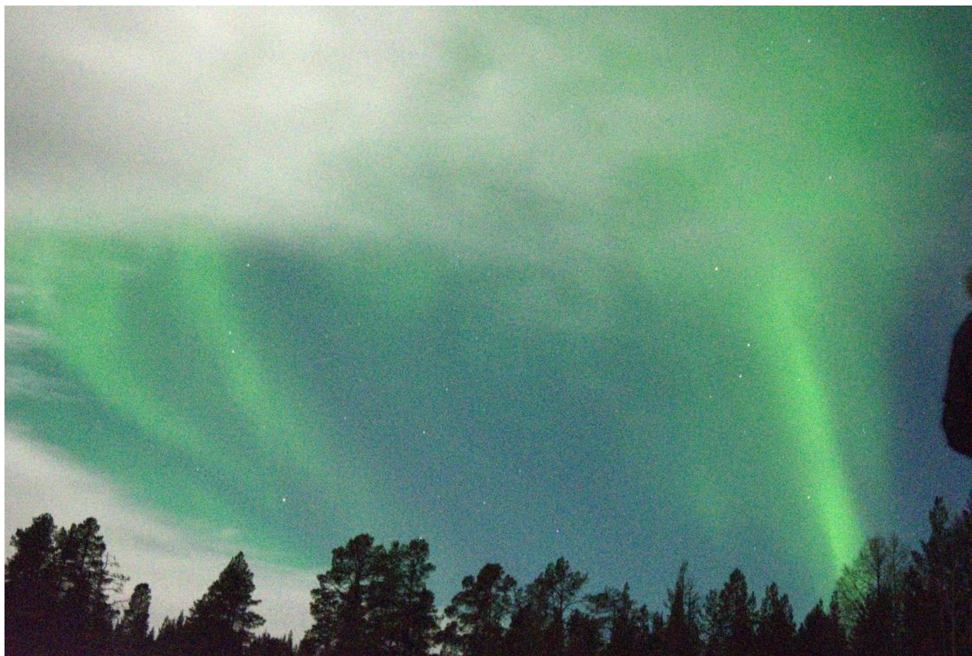
Figure 4: Standing on Luossavaara, the ski hill, overlooking the city Kiruna. On the right side, you can see the start of the Kiirunavaara mine. Kiruna, April 2023, taken by author.

Figure 6: Outside the city one can see reindeer in the forests, if one has the knowledge of a reindeer herder. Outside Kiruna, March 2023, taken by author.

Figure 5: The start of the mountain range on the border with Norway. Nikkaluokta, March 2023, taken by author.

Figure 7: Church of Kiruna. Inspired by Sámi churches, and voted most beautiful building of Sweden. Kiruna, February 2023, taken by author.

Figure 8: Reindeer eating. Jukkasjärvi, February 2023, taken by author.



A collection of images of the Northern Lights. All taken in the Kiruna Kommun. February/March/April 2023, taken by author.

Figure 10: The Harbour in Narvik, Norway. The red buildings on the right side are from LKAB. The extracted iron ore from Kiruna gets transported here by train, and is exported by ships across Europe. Narvik, February 2023, taken by author.

Figure 9: A lot of moose can also be seen just outside of Kiruna. During winter, they stay close to a horse farm, to steal hay. Outside Kiruna, March 2023, taken by author.