



# Master Thesis

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## Enactments of the Arctic Railway

A case study of an environmental justice conflict between the Sámi and the Finnish state

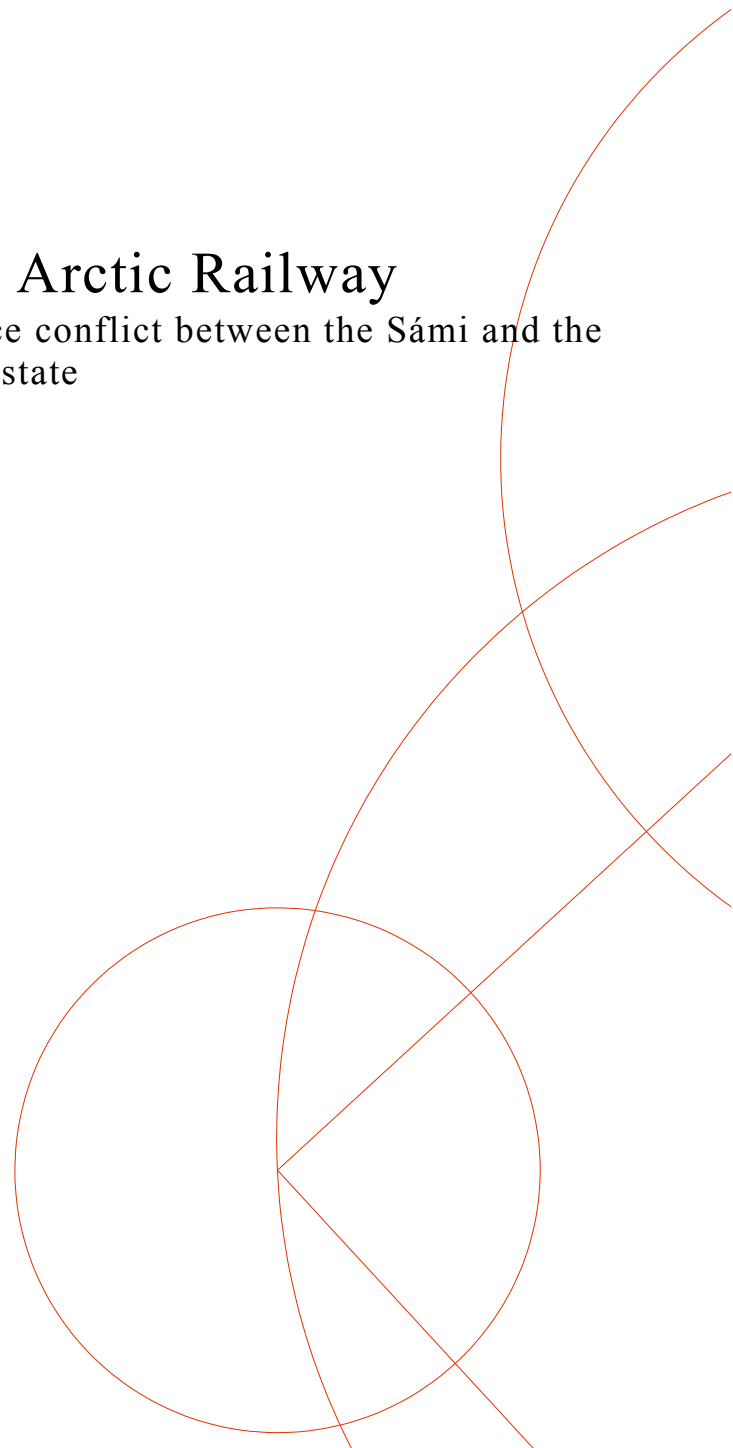
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## **Abstract**

Due to global warming, the Arctic natural resources have become accessible and exploitable. Determined to profit from the Arctic natural resources, the Finnish state has been promoting the construction of the Arctic Railway – a railway between northern Finland and the Arctic Ocean in Norway. The Sámi, who have increasingly found themselves in competition and conflicts over land with other interests, have been opposing Finnish state's ambition to construct a railway between Rovaniemi in Finland and Kirkenes in Norway, mainly because the railway would cut through and destroy land that the Sámi have traditionally used and occupied.

Based upon qualitative fieldwork in Finnish Lapland, including semi-structured interviews and the collection of secondary data, this thesis examines the conflict over the Arctic Railway between the Sámi and the Finnish state. In particular, this thesis aims at understanding how the costs and benefits of infrastructural development as well as the cultural and environmental concerns are enacted by the Finnish state and Sámi representatives in the conflict over the Arctic Railway.

Adopting a conceptual blend of political ecology and environmental justice perspectives and using the concept of enactment, which describes the process by which a certain reality is constructed, this thesis shows how the Arctic Railway belongs to different, contradictory realities. For the Finnish state, the Arctic Railway is a promise of improvement and progress as well as an opportunity for sustainable development. For the Sámi, the Arctic Railway is however an issue of cultural assimilation and environmental injustice as they have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to their cultural survival and as an environmentally harmful project that would remove their ability to function fully. This thesis therefore concludes that the conflict over the Arctic Railway between the Sámi and the Finnish state is essentially a struggle over who has the power to make the dominant reality of the Arctic Railway, meaning who has the power to influence decisively how the Arctic Railway is publicly perceived.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Setting the scene

The Arctic region is witnessing change of global significance. Due to global warming, new transport routes and in particular the Northeast Passage are opening, energy resources and minerals have become accessible and tourism has been growing (Prime Minister's Office 2013). In recent years, the Arctic region has therefore been subjected to increasing interest from various actors all around the world (ibid.) and the exploitation of Arctic natural resources has increased (UN Human Rights Council 2016). Finland, one of the eight Arctic states, has been determined to position itself as "an active and responsible Arctic actor" (Prime Minister's Office 2013, p. 7). While promoting sustainable development and stability in the Arctic region, Finland has also been engaged "in the general efforts to exploit the economic opportunities emerging in the northern regions" (ibid., p. 8).

As a direct consequence of this recent interest in Arctic resources and growing tourism, the Sámi, the indigenous people of northern Fennoscandia, have increasingly found themselves in competition over land with other interests, including forestry projects, tourist infrastructure, mines, windmills, hydroelectric dams and oil and gas installations (UN Human Rights Council 2016). According to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, "the natural resource extraction currently under way in the Sápmi region has created an unstable atmosphere of social conflict" (ibid., p. 4). In Finland, since 90% of the land within the area that is legally defined as Sámi homeland is owned by the state, mainly conflicts over land-use between the Sámi and government authorities have arisen (ibid.). In the last two years, one conflict over land-use between the Sámi and the Finnish state has been particularly dominant – the conflict over the Arctic Railway.

The objective of this study is to understand the conflict over the Arctic Railway between the Sámi and the Finnish state. In particular, **I set out to understand how the costs and benefits of infrastructural development as well as the cultural and environmental concerns are enacted by the Finnish state and Sámi representatives in the conflict over the Arctic Railway.**

In order to answer the problem statement, I have three research questions, which guided data collection and the analytical process:

- 1) What acts do the government and Sámi representatives take to promote or prevent the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 2) How are the arguments framed and enacted, for example as an issue of sustainability, forest protection, indigenous rights, growth and development?

- 3) How is the conflict affecting the economic, cultural and political dimension of justice and what are the effects for Sámi-government relations?

This thesis uses a qualitative case study and fieldwork that includes semi-structured interviews and secondary data. In this thesis, I show that the Arctic Railway is part of several, conflicting realities. The Finnish state has enacted the Arctic Railway as a promise of progress and improvement and as an opportunity for sustainable development. The Sámi have however presented the Arctic Railway as a threat to their cultural survival as well as an environmentally harmful project that would remove their ability to function fully, thereby turning the conflict into a matter of self-determination and justice. I further conclude that the conflict over the Arctic Railway is essentially a struggle between the Finnish state and the Sámi over who has the power to decisively influence whose reality of the Arctic Railway gets recognised by the wider public.

## **1.2 Presentation of the field and the why of the study**

In *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013*, the Finnish government has argued that the foreseen growth of tourism, the mining industry and the energy industry in the Barents Sea as well as the opening of the Northeast Passage have highlighted the need to establish new transport routes in the Arctic (Prime Minister's Office 2013). In this context, the Finnish government has proposed to construct a railway from northern Finland to the Arctic Ocean. The idea to build a railway to the Arctic Ocean, often referred to as Arctic Railway, is not a new one. Actually it dates back to as early as the 1920s (Cepinskyte 2018). Today, the Arctic Railway is again politically and publicly discussed as the interest of both states and the private sector in the exploitation of the Arctic natural resources has increased (Vars 2019). According to President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Tiina Sanila-Aikio, the idea has been floating around for a decade, but when Finland became leader of the Arctic Council in 2017, the discussion about the Arctic Railway acquired new force (Arctic Deeply 2017). In July 2017, the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications (LVM) requested the Finnish Transport Agency (FTA) to assess all potential routes for a railway to the Arctic Ocean (LVM 2017). Based on the commissioned study, the Ministry of Transport and Communications decided in March 2018 that the routing to the Arctic Ocean via Rovaniemi and Kirkenes will be the one further examined (LVM 2018a). It explained that this routing would improve Finland's logistical position, accessibility and security of supply as well as the conditions for many industries in northern areas (ibid.).

Finnish government's ambition to construct a railway between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes, henceforth referred to as the Arctic Railway, has provoked strong opposition from the Sámi, mainly

because the Arctic Railway would cut through and destroy land that the Sámi have traditionally used and occupied (The Barents Observer 2017). About half of the 500 km long railway would run through a part of Lapland that is legally defined as Sámi homeland (ibid.). Already before, but especially since the Ministry of Transport and Communications' decision to further examine the Kirkenes routing, Sámi representatives have articulated in various different ways their disapproval with the Arctic Railway and have called on the Finnish state not to construct the Arctic Railway (Saami Council 2018). For example, in a video published by Greenpeace Nordic, Osmo Seurujärvi, head of the Muddusjärvi reindeer herding cooperative, stated that the Arctic Railway would be a catastrophe for the Sámi (Greenpeace International 2018a). He explained that the railway would split the reindeer herding area into two, thereby disturbing reindeer roaming patterns and undermining Sámi's ability to herd reindeer (ibid.). Pirita Näkkäläjärvi, Sámi of the Year in 2017, argued in a newspaper that the Arctic Railway would endanger the entire Sámi culture because the railway would put Sámi traditional livelihood into jeopardy (Benzar 2018). During a week of protests against the Arctic Railway in September 2018, Petra Biret Magga-Vars, member of the Executive Board of the Sámi Parliament in Finland, criticised the Finnish government for planning an infrastructural project in Sámi homeland without respecting Sámi representative bodies in a proper manner (Greenpeace International 2018b, n/a). In other words, since the Finnish government decided on the Kirkenes routing in March 2018, a conflict over the Arctic Railway between the Sámi<sup>1</sup> and the Finnish state has evolved. Since the Finnish state and the Sámi have essentially been disputing about how land within the Sámi homeland should be used, the conflict over the Arctic Railway is an environmental conflict between the Finnish state and its indigenous people.

All over the world, indigenous people are disproportionally harmed by infrastructural development projects such as the Arctic Railway. Indigenous people are involved in over one third of all in the Atlas of Environmental Justice documented cases of environmental justice conflicts (Martinez-Alier et al. 2016) even though indigenous people constitute only about 5% of the world population (UN 2019). Environmental justice conflicts include conflicts over infrastructural projects, resource extraction and waste disposal (ibid.). The Sámi are unfortunately no exception. Out of 22 documented cases of environmental justice conflicts in Sweden, Norway and Finland, the Sámi have been involved in eight (Temper et al. 2015). This is remarkable considering that the Sámi are a very small minority

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<sup>1</sup> The Sámi Parliament in Norway also criticised the idea to construct the Arctic Railway (The Barents Observer 2019). The Arctic Railway is however especially a concern of the Sámi living in Finland as the railway would mainly affect the Sámi homeland in Finland. Throughout this thesis, if I write about 'the Sámi' in connection with the Arctic Railway, I therefore only refer to the Sámi community in Finland.



in all three countries. In Norway between 1.06% and 1.38%, in Sweden 0.22% and in Finland 0.16% of the total population are Sámi (Vars 2019). Since development projects disproportionately affect indigenous people, including the Sámi, I see it as the responsibility of researchers to pay particular attention to how indigenous people are affected by development projects and to make their arguments and demands heard in both research and in the public debate.

The Sámi are likely to be negatively affected by the construction of the Arctic Railway (cf. FTA 2018). According to the joint working group between Finland and Norway on the Arctic Railway, the Arctic Railway “is (...) the most significant land-use project ever that has direct impact on the Sámi Homeland in Finland” (LVM 2019a). Since the Arctic Railway is a huge infrastructural encroachment on Sámi land, but especially since negative impacts of the Arctic Railway on the Sámi can already be anticipated, it becomes even more acute to investigate on how exactly the Sámi expect the infrastructural development project to affect them. To document Sámi’s claims might help ensuring that Sámi’s interests are not overlooked in the public debate and in the decision-making process regarding the Arctic Railway. Research and more information on the interests and concerns of the conflicting parties can furthermore enhance the understanding of the other’s opinion and thereby contribute to the finding of compromises and to the settlement of conflicts.

So far the particular conflict over the Arctic Railway is under-explored. With the exception of one study published by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs on governments’ duty to consult with the Sámi over the construction of the Arctic Railway (Cepinskyte 2018), the conflict over the Arctic Railway has not yet been researched. This study aims at contributing to fill this particular gap in research literature, provoking questions about the ecological and social sustainability of infrastructural development and resource extraction as well as about the persistence of internal colonialism in settler-colonial states such as Finland.

### **1.3 Theoretical framework**

The conflict over the Arctic Railway is an example of an environmental conflict between indigenous people and the state. I will approach the conflict through the lens of environmental justice and political ecology. I employ the concept of enactment (Law 2004) to unpack the performative aspects of the conflict.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (2018) defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws,

regulations and policies”. In essence, environmental justice is “justice among humans on environmental issues and risks” (Schlosberg 2007, p. 1). The concept arose from the fact that some population groups are subject to a disproportionate level of environmental risk (Bullard 2000). In the 1980s, growing evidence of unequal spatial distribution of environmental harm led to the emergence of a grassroots civil rights campaign for environmental justice in the United States (ibid.). The concept was taken up by academia in the 1990s (Bauler 2019). The academic field of environmental justice is an interdisciplinary field that draws on theories and concepts from various academic disciplines, such as environmental science, moral and political philosophy, and development studies (Lund 2017). Environmental justice research focuses on how environmental benefits and burdens are distributed, on how environmental phenomena are experienced differently by different social groups and on how justice claims are mobilised in conflicts over resources (ibid.). There is no universal definition of environmental justice since what it means is context-dependent (Walker 2012). Theory and practice of environmental justice however necessary include a conception of justice defined as the fair distribution of goods in a society (Schlosberg 2007). Besides a distributive conception of justice, environmental justice movements and contemporary theories of justice also embrace notions of justice as recognition, participation and capabilities necessary for individuals to fully function. Movements often use multiple conceptions of justice at the same time and apply those not only to individuals, but to communities as well (ibid). This study does not solely proceed from Rawls’ (1971) conception of justice defined as the fair distribution of goods in a society. To discuss environmental justice, I also draw on Fraser’s (2010) three-dimensional definition of justice as redistribution, recognition and representation and on the capabilities theory of justice that focuses on the capacities necessary for individuals to function fully in the lives they choose for themselves (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010).

Political ecology shares with environmental justice research an emphasis of the uneven spatial distribution of the causes and effects of environmental problems (Keeling & Sandlos 2009). There are three assumptions that guide political ecology (Bryant & Bailey 1997). Firstly, costs and benefits associated with environmental change are distributed unequally within society. Secondly, this unequal distribution of environmental costs and benefits can either reinforce or reduce existing social and economic inequalities. Thirdly, the unequal distribution of environmental costs is formed by power relationships and they thus have political implications (ibid.). Taken together, political ecology highlights the factors that cause environmental inequities in particular places and the conflicts that arise from those inequalities (Keeling & Sandlos 2009) and as a consequence, the condition and

change of environmental systems is addressed analytically with explicit consideration of power relations (Robbins 2012). Political ecologists ask who has the power to benefit from environmental change and who has the power to externalise the costs of environmental change to others (European Network of Political Ecology 2014). Political ecology does not only situate the origin of inequality and environmental conflicts within local power relations, but also identifies large-scale societal, cultural and economic processes, such as colonialism, underdevelopment and capital accumulation, as factors producing unequal local power relations in the first place (Keeling & Sandlos 2009). Political ecology thus situates its object of study both geographically and historically and investigates the linkage between local and global processes. In short, it evaluates how local decisions are influenced by regional politics, which might in turn be directed by global politics and economics (Robbins 2012). This study of the conflict over the Arctic Railway relates to one of the five big themes political ecology is according to Robbins (2012) generally interested in, namely access to the environment and exclusion from it. This study shows how imminent increasing scarcity of land produced through appropriation by state authorities and private firms accelerates the conflict between the Finnish state and the Sámi (cf. Robbins 2012).

Guided by the perspectives of political ecology and environmental justice, I identify the regional history and power relations the conflict over the Arctic Railway is embedded in, how the conflicting parties perceive the Arctic Railway and whether the Sámi mobilise justice claims in their struggle against the Arctic Railway.

I will use various theories and analytical concepts to analyse the gathered data. However, the concept of “enactment” is the analytical concept that I will use throughout my thesis to unpack the conflict over the Arctic Railway. Law (2004) argued in his article *Enacting Naturecultures: a Note from STS* that “reality is not a fixed thing out there. (...) The natural, the real, is not a gold standard” (p.3), but rather “different interests produce different accounts of nature” (p. 2.). Aiming at understanding the process by which “realities get made and remade” (p.2), he drew on the term “inscription device” talked about by Latour & Woolgar (1979) in their article *Laboratory Life*. Law argued that an inscription device, defined as “a patterned set of arrangements for producing inscription” (p. 6), does also exist outside of laboratories. He subsequently identified inscription devices as “technics for producing naturecultures” (p.7). He concluded that these technics or practices, which produce nature, are scientific inscription, but that “there are [also] enactments of nature in practices that have little to do with science or technology” (p.8). In sum, for Law, natures are enacted through various patterned practices, which are formed by relations of power. Enactment thus describes the process by which a

certain reality is constructed. I use the concept of enactment to analyse how different realities of the Arctic Railway get made.

The conflict over the Arctic Railway is, at least at first glance, about the construction of infrastructure. Infrastructures has been studied in various different ways. Scholars have, for example, approached infrastructures through the concept of technopolitics in order to study infrastructures' material contribution to the constitution of subjects and to explore what forms of political rationality infrastructures reveal (Larkin 2011). Other scholars have highlighted that infrastructures exist separate and autonomously from its material manifestations and technical function, for example as expressions of individual and societal desires or as embodiments of historical forces (ibid.). In this thesis, infrastructure is discussed as a manifestation of modernity and progress (cf. Harvey & Knox 2012) and as holding promises towards the future (cf. Moran 2009). I further use the concept of enactment to think about different, co-existing infrastructural realities.

This study contributes to the theoretical discussion of environmental conflicts, in particular environmental conflicts between indigenous people and the state. I suggest a conceptual blend of political ecology and environmental justice perspectives in order to understand why and how an environmental conflict around the Arctic Railway has emerged. The main theoretical contribution of this study is however the combination of both political ecology and environmental justice perspectives with the concept of enactment. With the help of the concept of enactment, I show that the Sámi have agency in making their own reality of the Arctic Railway, even though the Finnish state has subjected the Sámi and the relationship between the Finnish state and the Sámi remains to be a colonial one. By using the concept of enactment, I am further able to show how the Sámi have made claims to environmental justice and turned the conflict into a matter of justice.

### *1.3.1 Key terms: indigenous, Sámi, Sápmi*

My understanding of the term “indigenous” is derived from the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) definition of indigenous people. In Article 1 (1b) of the ILO Convention no. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, indigenous people are defined as “peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.” (ILO 1989, p. 2). Article 1 (2) identifies self-identification as indigenous as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to

which the term indigenous shall be applied (ibid.). To a significant amount, it is therefore up to the peoples themselves to evaluate whether they regard themselves as indigenous although the convention does not grant them the right to form independent states.

The Sámi are the indigenous people of the northern parts of Fennoscandia and live in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia (Vars 2019). They see themselves as a distinct people with its own culture, language and history (ibid.). There are many different spellings of Sámi that have been used in texts written by Sámi and non-Sámi (Lehtola 2004). I have chosen to use ‘Sámi’ throughout this thesis, since it is their own name for themselves in their own language (ibid.).

Sápmi is the region traditionally inhabited by the Sámi (Nordregio 2015a). It stretches over four countries, namely Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Sápmi: Estimated area traditionally occupied and used by the Sámi (Nordregion 2015a).

## 1.4 Methodology

### 1.4.1 Philosophical underpinning and methodological approach

This study builds on a relativistic worldview, namely the view that there are multiple constructed realities, rather than one true reality (Pearce 2015). Following, I will take what is said by an informant

about his or her reality without judging it as the truth and I approach an informant's reality as indeed real, but also as socially constructed.

According to Law & Urry (2011), research methods help to make social realities. They are performative in the sense that they do not just describe the world as it is, but "they enact whatever it is they describe into reality" (ibid., p. 403). Law & Urry further argued that if social investigations help to make the realities they describe, researchers have to think about the realities they want to help to make more real, and which less real. Researcher should ask themselves, how they want to interfere, and choose the methods accordingly (ibid.). Even though I set out to understand the perceptions of both parties involved in the conflict over the Arctic Railway on the railway project, I am particularly interested in the Sámi's point of view. As argued above, I understand it as the responsibility of researchers to investigate on how indigenous people perceive to be affected by infrastructural development projects that are taking place within the borders of the land traditionally used and occupied by them. Thus, with this study, I particularly aim at helping to enact Sámi's reality of the Arctic Railway, because it is under-studied and less salient in the public debate. In order to both describe and enact Sámi's realities of the Arctic Railway, I needed to gain in-depth knowledge about Sámi's perspective on the Arctic Railway. I therefore chose a qualitative case study approach. The case study approach is a research method that produces in-depth and context-dependent knowledge as it explores a temporally and spatially bounded set of events (Flyvbjerg 2006). Another advantage of the case study approach is its flexibility with which data is gathered. It does not stipulate one specific method, but rather it is up to the researcher to decide which mix of methods are best suited to answer the research questions (ibid.)

The realities imparted by this thesis do not exist independently from me as its writer. Pearce (2015) observed that if there is not one objective truth, the researcher has to take a subjective point of view in observing and listening to informants. Consequently, I approached research participants and read academic and newspaper articles and interview transcripts through a lens that is specific to me and my analytical approach. My research is furthermore inductive as I gained knowledge on the basis of one singular event and I followed the lead of the data (cf. Pearce 2015). In this thesis, I examine a singular case, the conflict over the Arctic Railway, and on the basis of the results produced by this examination, I engage in comparison and dialogue with already conducted and published research and use existing concepts to discuss and analyse my data. Finally, my research is ideographic since my research is aimed at understanding one particular case, the conflict over the Arctic Railway, in its own right (cf. Pearce 2015).

#### *1.4.2 The fieldwork methodology and ethical considerations*

The fieldwork consisted of two information gathering techniques, namely semi-structured interviews and the collection of secondary data on the Arctic Railway. Before I set out to formulate interview guides and to conduct semi-structured interviews, I did an extensive literature review. According to Thin (2014), a researcher can only know for what kind of primary information to look, if the secondary research is adequate. In this sense, I attempted at becoming acquainted with information and concepts relevant for my research topic. I read up on the Arctic Railway, Sámi's history, Sámi's nowadays situation in the Nordic countries, conflicts between the Sámi and the Nordic states and on environmental conflicts involving other indigenous peoples.

Before I approached potential interview participants, I further set out to contact the Saami Council and the Sámi Parliaments in Norway and Finland. Based on the analysis of thirteen different ethical guidelines, Tunón et al. (2016) identified six core ethical principles. Responsibility as a scholar is one core ethical principles. It deals, among others, with the principle of prior informed consent according to which prior to all activities a consent or an approval must be obtained (ibid.). Therefore, in November 2018, I sent my project description, which included the purpose and methodology of the project, to the three above-named Sámi institutions and asked them whether they practise any arrangements of giving consent to master theses. While the Saami Council advised me to contact the Sámi Parliaments of Finland and Norway, the Norwegian Sámi Parliament replied that they do not practise any arrangements of giving consent to research projects, but that they are confident that I would carry out my work with regard to adopted research ethics rules and international law principles applied to research on indigenous peoples. The Sámi Parliament in Finland unfortunately did not answer, also not after I wrote them for the second time. In consultation with my supervisor, I took their silence as consenting with my master thesis.

At the same time as I approached those three Sámi institutions, I also reached out to three Sámi representatives. Reyes-García & Sunderlin (2011) observed that local communities are often unable to promote research in cases where they want it done, but rather very often they have no say in the content of the research to be done. They suggested that one way to ensure that the research also serves the local community is to involve local people in the designing of the research (ibid.) In order to determine whether the Sámi have an interest in the conflict over the Arctic Railway to be researched as well as to include them into the designing process of my research, I wrote to representatives of the Sámi Parliament in Finland, the Sámi Youth organisation and Sámi 'artist' collective Suohpanterror. I invited them to give feedback on my research topic and design, and offered them the possibility

to make suggestions on what else I should investigate on with regards to the Arctic Railway. I approached those three Sámi organisations because in some way or another they have all opposed the construction of the Arctic Railway. The representatives of the Sámi Parliament in Finland and the Sámi Youth organisation expressed their approval of the topic, while the representative of the collective Suohpanterror explained that they are not interested in participating in my research project. Reyes-García & Sunderlin (2011) further suggested that another way to ensure that the interests of the local community are served is to share the knowledge generated through the research with them. Following this advice, I sent the final draft of my master thesis to all my interview participants and asked them to comment on it. I will also send them the revised end version of my thesis to give them a full account of what I have found through the research.

After I obtained Sámi's consent (cf. Tunón et al. 2016) to conduct research on the conflict over the Arctic Railway and my attempt to include Sámi representatives into the designing process of my research project, I approached potential interview participants. I started by contacting Sámi representatives who I assumed to be particularly knowledgeable about the conflict and representatives of different sub-groups, such as Sámi reindeer herders, the Sámi Parliament in Finland and the Sámi Youth organisation. That way I managed to arrange two interviews, one with the President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Sanila-Aikio and one with Sámi reindeer herder Jussa Seurujärvi. These two representatives recommended other Sámi I could talk to and thus I was able to sample the rest of my informants through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to a non-probability sampling methods where research informants recruit other informants for a study (Heckathorn 2011). This way of sampling enabled me to talk to Sámi representatives, which were knowledgeable about the Arctic Railway and actively engaged in resisting the construction of the railway. After a period of two months of fieldwork, I had spoken to eight Sámi representatives.

While conducting interviews with the Sámi, my interest in how proponents of the Arctic Railway perceive the railway project and assess its effects on Sámi traditional livelihoods and culture grew. I therefore attempted to conduct interviews also with officials at the regional and municipal level. I decided to talk to officials at the regional and municipal level rather than to officials at the state level out of two reasons: One the one hand, state officials' perceptions on the Arctic Railway I could access through governmental documents published on the Arctic Railway. On the other hand, Sámi representatives had highlighted during the interviews that municipal and especially regional politics play a role in whether the Arctic Railway is going to be constructed or not. I consequently contacted representatives of the three municipalities that would be affected by the Arctic Railway,



namely Rovaniemi, Sodankylä and Inari, and officials at the regional level, namely representatives of the Regional Council of Lapland. Unfortunately, only two officials got back to me and out of those two, one surprised me by taking a position against the Arctic Railway. From reading the newspaper, I had mistakenly assumed that Toni Laine, mayor of the municipality of Inari, was supporting the construction of a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. After conducting those two interviews, I was again able to snowball sample. However, I only managed to arrange one more interview this way and this particular interview partner was not an official, but the CEO of Lapland Chamber of Commerce.

I can think of two possible reasons why it was harder to access local and regional officials than Sámi representatives. On the one hand, I stated in my project description, which I sent to all potential interview participants, that the purpose of this study is to make Sámi's claims regarding the Arctic Railway heard and that, among others, I am interested in whether the conflict over the Arctic Railway is related to the persistence of internal colonialism. This framing of my research might have discouraged proponents of the Arctic Railway from talking to me. On the other hand, while Sámi have an interest in making their claims heard and therefore in talking to me, proponents of the Arctic Railway might rather want to silence talks about the conflict over the Arctic Railway instead than further stimulating the debate about the project.

After conducting interviews with both Sámi and proponents at the regional and local level, I concluded that I further have to talk to Greenpeace Nordic. During the interviews with Sámi representatives, they expressed that Greenpeace Nordic has been an important ally in the conflict over the Arctic Railway. I was wondering on Greenpeace's perception on the railway project and the nature of the collaboration between Sámi and Greenpeace. In addition to the eight interviews with Sámi representatives, the two interviews with officials and the one interview with a proponent outside the realm of the state, I thus also conducted an interview with a representative of Greenpeace Nordic.

Interviewing was the primary tool employed to collect data on Sámi's and proponent's perception of the Arctic Railway. Bernard (2011) classified interviews into unstructured, semi-structured or in-depth and structured interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews. According to Bernhard (2011), a semi-structured interview is open ended, but it is based on the use of an interview guide, which is a list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order. A semi-structured interview should be build on an interview guide so that reliable, comparable data is produced (ibid.). I developed three interview guides – one guide for Sámi representatives, one for proponents of the Arctic Railway and one for the representative of Greenpeace Nordic (see Appendix). I formulated the

interview guides with my three research questions in mind – the interview questions should yield data usable to answer the larger and more abstract research questions. The questions were characterised by a low level of abstraction and I avoided to ask questions that could have been answered with yes or no. Bernhard (2011) further highlighted that even though the researcher exercises control over the participant's answer through the interview guide, semi-structured interviewing leaves both the researcher and the interview participant room to follow new leads (*ibid.*). Semi-structured interviews thus come with the advantage of structure and flexibility. The method of semi-structured interviewing allowed me to ask follow-up questions about some specific answers and to compare the response from my interview participants and to draw conclusions.

According to the ethical considerations listed by the American Anthropology Association (AAA)'s code of ethics, anthropological researchers have to obtain in advance the voluntary and informed consent of the research participants (AAA 2012). Prior to the interview, the informant and I had agreed on either meeting in person or to conduct the interview via Skype. In line with the principle of free prior informed consent, I highlighted at the beginning of every interview that the informant would not be obligated to answer questions he or she would not like to answer and that he or she could withdraw from the interview anytime. Moreover, I asked whether he or she wished to be anonymised in my thesis and assured that anything they said would only be used for academic purposes. Consequently, I have given a pseudonym to one informant that wished to be anonymised. At the beginning of an interview, I also sought for consent to record the interview. To be allowed to record all the interviews enabled me to be fully present during the conversations. I later transcribed all interviews. According to O'Reilly (2012), a researcher should provide its research participants with as much information as possible in order to ensure their informed consent to the research. Following this advice, I sent my detailed project description to all of my interview participants already at the time I requested an interview with them. Most of the interviews were conducted in English. However, in three cases, Sámi representatives explicitly wished to hold the interview in Finnish. The presence of a translator during those three interviews allowed me and the interview participants to have meaningful and complex conversations and helped me in ensuring the comfort of my interview participants.

In addition to interviews, I had planned to do participant observation. I had hoped that during February and March 2019, I could witness Sámi protests or other events related to the construction of the Arctic Railway. Already at the beginning of my fieldwork in northern Lapland, I realised that I would not be able to collect data through participant observations. The Sámi had announced no further protests against the Arctic Railway and no information events or other public events on the

railway project had been planned. Therefore, in consultation with my supervisor, I decided to gather secondary data on the Arctic Railway from many different sources. Initially, I had intended to just collect government publications on the Arctic Railway so I could analyse what kind of documentary realities (cf. Atkinson & Coffey 2004) those publications belong to and create, and how those documentary realities help the Finnish government in enacting a particular reality of the Arctic Railway. Besides governmental documents on the Arctic Railway, I also collected online newspaper articles reporting on the Arctic Railway and on Sámi's resistance to it published in English from 2015 onwards. This provided me with insights into how the infrastructure project was enacted in public media by the Sámi and the Finnish state and whose reality of the Arctic Railway prevailed in public debate. I further collected the campaign material Greenpeace has produced on the Arctic Railway, including videos, press releases and articles. Finally, I also collected blog entries and articles Sámi representatives had written as well as official statements published by Sámi organisations on the Arctic Railway. The secondary data produced by Greenpeace Nordic and the Sámi enabled me to see how national politics affected the local context and how the Sámi simultaneously challenged Finnish state's particular enactment of the Arctic Railway and its sovereignty over land within the Sámi homeland. In sum, the collected secondary data has four different authorships: The Sámi, the Finnish government, Greenpeace Nordic and newspapers publishing in English. For every documentary record, I wrote out its key information, including direct quotes made by Sámi representatives or proponents of the Arctic Railway. I continued to gather secondary data, in particular newspaper articles, after I had finished my two-months long fieldwork so I would stay informed with the development of the conflict over the Arctic Railway.

#### *1.4.3 Coding of the data*

Prior to analysis, it was necessary to code the interview data in order to create an overview over that data. In a first step, I read through all the interviews to familiarise myself with the data. In a second step, I subjected the interviews to a detailed sentence-by-sentence reading and identified the topic of a sentence or a sequence of sentences. I used Excel to note down the sequence of sentences and its identified topic and code respectively and to allocate it to the informant who had made the statement. The codes consequently emerged from the data itself. In total, I identified 41 codes. In a third step, I assigned each code to at least one out of nine categories. These nine categories I had derived from my research questions. This way of coding allowed me to search for a particular information either on the basis of an informant, a code or a category.

I refrained from coding the secondary data, but decided to approach the secondary data differently. I first organised my notes on the various documentary records. I grouped them according to the four authorships and sorted them chronologically. Thereafter, I read through the notes and highlighted important information, thereby manually coding for main themes. On the one hand, I highlighted sentences that confirmed patterns, which I had identified while coding. On the other hand, I highlighted sentences that contained information on the Arctic Railway not mentioned in the interviews, but still relevant for answering the research questions.

#### *1.4.4 Limitations of the study*

My investigation on the conflict over the Arctic Railway was first and foremost limited by my lack of knowledge of the Finnish language. Since I do not understand Finnish, it is likely that I missed out on relevant secondary data on the Arctic Railway published only in Finnish. Moreover, I was not able to fully assess how the Arctic Railway has been perceived and discussed by the Finnish public. I did talk with several Finns on how the Arctic Railway is publically perceived, but I am aware that to draw conclusions from only a couple of informal conversations is risky. Further knowledge about how the Arctic Railway has been publically perceived would have enabled me to assess more comprehensively how successful the Sámi have been in their attempt to make their particular reality of the Arctic Railway prevail.

### **1.5 Outline of the thesis**

This thesis is structured in six main parts. This chapter has focused on introducing the research topic, on defining the theoretical framework applied to answer the problem statement and on describing the research approach adopted to gather the relevant data. In the next chapter, Chapter Two, I embed the conflict over the Arctic Railway within the historical context of Sámi-state relations in order to understand the contemporary situation that gave rise to the conflict over the Arctic Railway. In the third, fourth and fifth chapter, I present and analyse my data. In Chapter Three, I show how the cost and benefits of infrastructure and of the Arctic Railway respectively have been enacted by the Finnish government and by the Sámi. I argue that the Arctic Railway is part of two co-existing, but conflicting infrastructural realities and that the conflict is essentially a conflict over land. In Chapter Four, I turn my attention to how the Sámi have enacted their concerns regarding the effects of the railway project on their culture and show that the Sámi perceive the Arctic Railway as a neo-colonial project that threatens their cultural survival. In Chapter Five, I show that the Finnish government and the Sámi

judge the impact of the Arctic Railway on the environment differently. While the Finnish government has enacted the Arctic Railway as a sustainable development project, for the Sámi, the Arctic Railway constitutes an environmental injustice. In Chapter Six, I summarise and conclude my findings. I conclude that the Arctic Railway is part of several, but contradictory realities and that the conflict over the Arctic Railway is a struggle between the Finnish state and the Sámi over who has the power to make the dominant reality of the Arctic Railway. I further conclude that the Sámi have turned the conflict into a matter of self-determination and justice.

## **2 Historical relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this section is to describe the conflict over the Arctic Railway within a broader historical context of Sámi-state relations. This is important not only because conflicts are always rooted in certain local histories and social relations (Le Billion 2015), but especially because the Sámi have interpreted the conflict over the Arctic Railway within their historical relations to the Finnish state, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. A historical reading thus enables the understanding of the contemporary situation that gave rise to the conflict over the Arctic Railway. In the following, I therefore set out to analyse the character of the relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state. I show how the state has subjected the Sámi through processes of colonisation, sedentarization and cultural assimilation and, as a consequence, deprived them of the control over land and resources. I conclude that the relationship was and still is characterised by a power imbalance in favour of the state.

This section is structured as follows: First, I set out to outline the history of the Sámi. I thereby focus on events which happened within the part of Sápmi that today belongs to Finland. Second, I explain the current situation of the Sámi in Finland. Third, I discuss two current processes, namely the increasingly conflicting relation between the Finnish state and the Sámi and the continued cultural assimilation of the Sámi, which shape the time and space in which the conflict over the Arctic Railway is occurring (cf. Li 2008).

### **2.2 Sámi History**

The Sámi are the descendants of the people who first populated the northern regions of Fennoscandia around 8'000 BC (Sámediggi 2008). The Sámi as an ethnic group came into existence around 2'000 BC when the Sámi languages and Finnish became two separate languages. From around the year 1 to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the expansion of the Sámi settlement area, Sápmi, was greatest: it stretched from the Arctic Ocean to Lake Ladoga and from Central Scandinavia to the White Sea (ibid.). During that era, Sámi's livelihoods included hunting, fishing and gathering and were based on seasonal migration (Lehtola 2004). The hunting of the wild reindeer was especially important as reindeer furs were the basis for Sámi's trading activities. The Sámi were organised in 'siidas'. Each village or siida owned a defined area wherein the village members had usage rights. The siida system experienced various changes from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. One of the first changes the siida system underwent was caused

by an intense change in livelihood. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, the wild reindeer population dropped significantly due to overhunting. With the decrease of wild reindeer stock, Sámi started to keep reindeer. Since the lichen vegetation within one siida did not provide enough fodder for a reindeer herd, it became necessary to travel large distances with the herd and to move along with it. In the centuries to follow, nomadic reindeer herding became the main livelihood of the Sámi (ibid.).

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Sámi society increasingly underwent changes caused by outsiders as the governments of Sweden<sup>2</sup> and Denmark-Norway attempted at including Sápmi into their state formation of nations (Lehtola 2004). From the beginning, Sweden considered Christian missionizing as a way to establish state's claim to rights of possession of Sámi homeland areas. As a consequence, Sámi spiritual traditions underwent changes or faded into obscurity. In addition, Sweden attempted at converting their northern sphere of influence into a fixed part of the state by exercising social control and through settler-colonialism. Over centuries, the siida system got increasingly replaced by the state's administrative system and since a change in law in 1673, the land previously used and occupied by the Sámi no longer belonged to the members of the siida, but to the state.

The situation of the Sámi worsened decisively in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Sápmi was split into four by the national borders. The demarcation had an especially big impact on reindeer herding as the traditional annual migration routes were dramatically shortened and pasture was diminished (ibid.). Besides the closing of the borders, other developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century forced many Sámi to abandon their nomadic lifestyle and to become farmers. In Finland, the government issued laws promoting a sedentary lifestyle and took possession of land traditionally used and occupied by the Sámi through new decrees, the development of transport infrastructure and the reinforcement of administration (Lehtola 2015). According to Lehtola (2015), the way the original lifestyle of the Sámi was changed into settlement is fully consistent with the characteristics of most processes of colonisation. The decisions affecting the lives of the colonised people, the Sámi, were made by colonial rulers, the Nordic countries' governments, in order to serve interests defined in distant centres (ibid.).

The colonisation of Sápmi and the cultural assimilation of the Sámi into Finnish majority society continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. World War II brought death and destruction also to Sápmi (Kent 2018). In the Lapland War, centuries old Sámi settlements were deconstructed and much of Sámi's material culture was lost (ibid.). The reconstruction after the war only aggravated this sit-

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<sup>2</sup> The geographical area that is now Finland had been under Swedish rule from the 14<sup>th</sup> century until 1809 (this is Finland 2019). In 1809, Russia conquered Finland and governed Finland until its independency in 1917 (ibid.).

uation (Lehtola 2004). This because the reconstruction followed solely contemporary Finnish practices and people from outside, which came in large numbers to participate in the reconstruction, also changed Sápmi greatly. Another mayor element in the assimilation of the Sámi was the schooling system. In 1946, school attendance became mandatory and residents of remote areas such as the Sámi became obligated to send their children to boarding schools. At those institutions, the instruction language was Finnish, Sámi languages were not heard nor read, and Finnish cultural values were stressed. Consequently, Sámi were estranged from their cultural background – Sámi languages and centuries old traditional skills were forgotten or never learned (ibid.).

The assimilation process as well as the increased exploitation of Sápmi's natural resources after World War II did however cause a backlash (Lethola 2004). A Sámi movement, encompassing the whole of Sápmi, fighting for self-determination<sup>3</sup> and against the destruction of the natural environment emerged in the 1950s. After World War II, cooperation between different Sámi communities was extended across borders and a feeling of ethnic community and solidarity emerged. The Sámi came to see themselves as a distinct people with its own history, culture and language. In the 1960s, Sámi culture experienced a renaissance, which boosted the development of Sámi politics, media, arts, education and research – a development that is still continuing today (ibid.).

## **2.3 Current situation of the Sámi in Finland**

It is estimated that the Sámi number today between 50'000 and 100'000 (Vars 2019). While the vast majority lives in Norway, around 8'000 live in Finland (ibid.). Among the traditional livelihoods, reindeer herding still functions as a cornerstone and a marker of Sámi culture, providing material for clothing, food and handicrafts and by setting a frame for the use of Sámi languages (Sámediggi 2008). The Nordic states have all recognized the Sámi as indigenous people and hence as protected by major United Nations (UN) human rights instruments addressing the rights of indigenous peoples (UN Human Rights Council 2016). In Finland, the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people was recognised in the 1995 Constitution (Sámediggi 2008). Since 1996, the Sámi have had constitutional self-government regarding their language and culture in the Sámi homeland, which is legally defined as the municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki as well as the Lappi reindeer herding district in the municipality of Sodankylä (see Figure 2) (ibid.). Culture has been understood to include traditional Sámi livelihoods, namely reindeer herding, hunting, fishing and gathering (Lawrence & Raitio 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> According to the United Nations, “[a]ll peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (UN 1960, n/a).



The cultural self-government is exercised by the Sámi Parliament, which represents the Sámi living in Finland and deals with issues concerning Sámi language, culture and their position as an indigenous people (Sámediggi 2008).

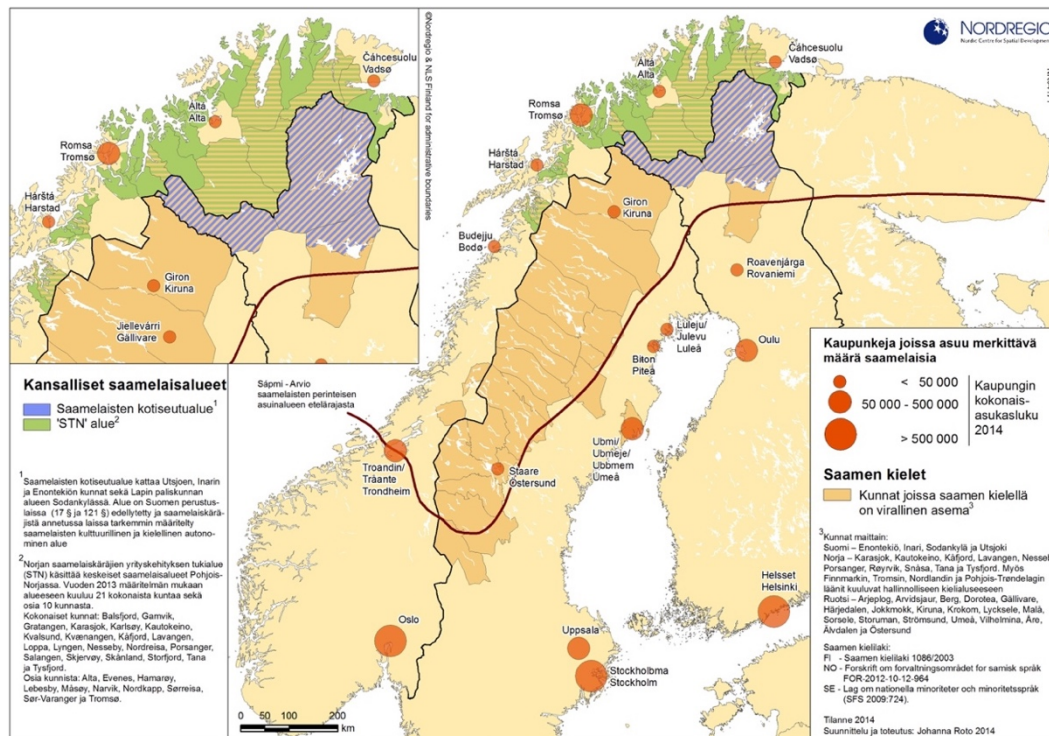


Figure 2: Sámi homeland in Finland (marked in violet) (Nordregio 2015b)

The Sámi Parliament in Finland is deeply concerned about the land rights situation of the Sámi in Finland (Yle Sápmi). This because Sámi's rights over the land within the Sámi homeland and related resources are not enshrined in national law (ibid.) Since Finland has not ratified the ILO Convention no. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, Finland is not obligated to provide legal recognition and protection to the land that the Sámi have traditionally used and occupied (UN Human Rights Council 2016). The Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples appointed by the UN recorded that for the Sámi, rights over their lands and resources are a prerequisite for their long-term well-being and are of fundamental importance for them to be able to continue to exist as a distinct people. She assessed that those rights are however not sufficiently established, implemented or judicially protected. She criticised that the Nordic countries fall short to adequately reflect and safeguard Sámi's rights over land and related resources in their legislations. She therefore recommends to adapt

the national legislations accordingly (ibid.). The legal status of the land that the Sámi have traditionally used and occupied remains however unsolved in Finland as well as in Sweden and Norway (Vars 2019).

## **2.4 Processes**

Due to the increased interest of both states and the private sector in the exploitation of Arctic natural resources, the Sámi have increasingly found themselves in competition over land with other interests (UN Human Rights 2016). In many cases, development projects, such as the construction of wind power parks or the opening of a mine, have led to Sámi losing land through state expropriation (Vars 2019). Both imminent and already carried out state expropriations of land traditionally used and occupied by the Sámi gave rise to conflicts between the Sámi and the state all over Sápmi (ibid.).

Besides conflicts over land-use, the Sámi and the Finnish government are in conflict with each other over several other issues. For example, there is disagreement over the Sámi definition and the criteria according to which a person should be accepted into the electoral register of the Sámi Parliament in Finland (Fáktalávvu 2018). The Finnish government and the Sámi Parliament in Finland are also in conflict over the fishing rights in the river Deatnu (Equal Times 2017) as well as over the ratification of ILO Convention no. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (UN Human Rights Council 2016). These and many other conflicts have strained the relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state in recent years. In several interviews, Sámi representatives have emphasized that the conflict over the Arctic Railway does worsen an already tense relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state; a relationship that according to the Sámi, has suffered from empty promises, ignorance and misrecognition.

As outlined above, the Sámi have endured centuries of forced cultural assimilation. According to the Sámi, their cultural assimilation and the colonising of Sápmi has however not halted, but is an ongoing process. For example, in the opinion of Sanila-Aikio, the acceptance of 97 persons into the electoral register of the Sámi Parliament in Finland against its will violates Sámi's right to self-determination and amounts to forced assimilation of the Sámi into the Finnish majority society (Yle Sápmi 2016). In relation to the conflict over the fishing rights in Deatnu river, Sámi politician Áslat Holmberg argued that by making the traditional Sámi way of fishing illegal, the governments of Finland and Norway have denied Sámi the right to their culture (Equal Times 2017). Sámi have also argued that logging activities within Sápmi have forced Sámi reindeer herders to culturally assimilate

because logging diminishes reindeer grazing area and, as a consequence, forces reindeer herders to abandon reindeer herding (Greenpeace International 2017).

## 2.5 Conclusion

The conflict over the Arctic Railway is embedded in a context defined by an unequal relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state. The Sámi have always lived in an environment influenced by diverse cultures (Lehtola 2004). However, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the history of the Sámi is in large part a history of foreign domination. The Sámi were subjected to the state through processes of colonisation, sedentarization and cultural assimilation. The colonial powers dictated the fate of the Sámi –Sámi's own language, cultural heritages, and social systems received no protection and they were deprived from their land and resources.

Cross-border cooperation between the different Sámi communities and international human right instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have empowered the Sámi. The inequality in power between the Sámi and the Finnish state does however persist. The national legislation does not sufficiently protect Sámi languages, traditions and livelihoods nor is the Sámi Parliament in Finland sufficiently powerful to influence Finnish state's decision concerning their land and livelihoods (UN Human Rights Council 2016). Even though Finland recognised the Sámi as indigenous people, the character of the relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state has not changed. The Finnish state does not protect the Sámi from further cultural assimilation, but rather continues to deprive Sámi from their land and resources, for example by facilitating the exploitation of Arctic resources. The Sámi continue to be subjected to the state what increasingly leads to conflicts between the Sámi and the Finnish state.

Consequently, the conflict over the Arctic Railway is to be understood as a conflict that arose from the unequal relationship between the Sámi and the Finnish state that has existed since centuries and persists until today.

### 3 The Arctic Railway – The Conflict

#### 3.1 Introduction

In early September 2018, in the midst of Lappish autumn landscape, there were people dressed in red standing side by side forming a line. They were holding red banners saying “Our Land Our Future” and “No Access Without Consent”. This demarcation was a message from the Sámi to the Finnish government. It was triggered by Finnish government’s intention to build a railway line from Rovaniemi in Finland to Kirkenes at the Arctic Ocean in Norway. Since the railway would run through Sámi homeland and consequently impact Sámi traditional livelihoods and culture (FTA 2018), the Sámi have positioned themselves against the railway project. Jenni Laiti, a Sámi activist, clarified: “We are standing here for our present and future and drawing the red line. We are the guardians of our land and we will take care of it in a sustainable way as we have done for thousands of years. This is a message to the Finnish government that you do not cross the red line without our consent” (Greenpeace International 2018c, n/a). Finnish government’s intention to build a railway through Sámi homeland has not only provoked a singular act of dissent by the Sámi, but they have repeatedly and in various different ways articulated their disapproval with the railway. The planned railway line between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes thus constitutes a conflict between the Finnish state and the Sámi.

This chapter explains why and how the conflict over the Arctic Railway has emerged. In particular, I set out to analyse the different practises by which Sámi representatives and proponents of the Arctic Railway have enacted the cost and benefits of infrastructure and of the railway project respectively and thus how the two conflicting parties have promoted or delegitimised the construction of the railway connection. In order to describe and discuss the conflict, I draw on Tanja Murray Li’s (2008) framework proposed for analysing resource conflicts. According to Li, conflicts over natural resources are made up of different, conflicting projects. Those projects are made concrete through various practices and positions, which are taken by or assigned to the conflicting parties and are defining for both the projects and the practices (*ibid.*). My analysis is further guided by the concepts of enactment (Law 2004). Enactment denotes the process through which a particular reality is created (*ibid.*). I show that there is not only one infrastructural reality in Finland, but rather realities which contradict each other. I argue that while for the Finnish state infrastructure is a promise of progress and improvement, for the Sámi infrastructure is a threat to Sámi traditional livelihoods, culture and

self-determination and to the Arctic environment. Overall, I argue that the applied practices and assigned positions reveal that the conflict over the Arctic Railway is essentially a conflict over land.

Guided by Li's framework, the chapter is structured as follows: First, I outline the different projects that constitute the conflict. Second, I describe the practices applied by the proponents of the railway and the Sámi to foster their respective project. Third, I discuss the positions, which have been taken or attributed to the conflicting parties. Section four concludes.

### 3.2 Frontier project vs. political project

There are different options for a railway link between Finland and the Arctic Ocean. Therefore, in 2017, the Ministry of Transport and Communication assigned the Finnish Transport Agency (FTA) to assess five different routes to the Arctic Ocean, namely Rovaniemi–Kirkenes, Kolari– Narvik, Tornio–Narvik, Kolari–Skibotn–Tromsø, and Kemijärvi–Murmansk (FTA 2018) (see Figure 3). Based on this assessment, the Ministry of Transport and Communications (LVM) decided in 2018 that the railway routing to the Arctic Ocean via Rovaniemi and Kirkenes will be the one further examined (LVM 2018a).



Figure 3. The five alternative routes (FTA 2018, p. 8)

The 465 km long Arctic Railway would rearrange the landscape of Finland's northernmost region, Lapland, since it would cross through the municipalities of Rovaniemi, Sodankylä and Inari (FTA 2018). The Arctic Railway is thus a governmental project. According to Li (2008), governmental projects seek "to rearrange landscapes, livelihoods and identities according to technical criteria and the logic of improvement" (p. 195). The Finnish government has advertised the construction of the Arctic Railway and the rearrangement of the landscape of northern Finland respectively by invoking arguments highlighting the improvements the railway would bring. The Finnish Transport Agency, for instance, suggested that the connection of Finland to Kirkenes would improve Finland's position and supply security and Lapland's accessibility (FTA 2018). The Region of Northern Lapland (2012), a joint municipality association of Sodankylä, Inari and Utsjoki, further argued that the Arctic Railway would improve the business opportunities for various industries, such as the mining, forestry and tourist industry. This reasoning has been shared by former Minister of Transport and Communication Anne Berner (Reuters 2018) who also highlighted that the railway would speed up the development of the Arctic region and promote growth and employment (LVM 2017).

According to the Sámi, the 465 km long railway would however not merely constitute a rearrangement of the landscape, but it would also rearrange Sámi livelihoods and identities. Since about half of the railway would cross through parts which are legally defined as Sámi homeland, the Arctic Railway would impact Sámi traditional livelihoods and culture (FTA 2018). President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Sanila-Aikio expressed Sámi's fear that since the Arctic Railway would alter the landscape within the Sámi homeland, Sámi might not be able to continue practicing their traditional livelihoods and to reproduce their cultural traditions. She explained:

*"You have to understand that when the nature is influenced, the animals and fish are changing their habits or are dying. The Sámi, which are practising the traditional Sámi livelihoods like fishing, reindeer herding, hunting and so on, we have to change our ways to do that. And if it is not possible, if we cannot do it anymore, we have to change, but then it remains the question if it is Sámi culture anymore."* (Sanila-Aikio, Interview)

The Sámi are especially concerned about the impact of the Arctic Railway on reindeer herding. The railway would further diminish the area available for reindeer herding as the railway would split the reindeer pastures into two (Saami Council 2018). Since Sámi culture is deeply intertwined with reindeer herding, the Arctic Railway would affect not only the Sami reindeer herders, but the whole Sámi



community (ibid). According to Kirsti Kustula, Sámi reindeer herder and member of the Sámi Parliament in Finland,

*“(...) if the reindeer herding culture is affected, it would also directly affect the handcraft culture of the Sámi people because reindeer is an important ingredient of what is used for handcrafting, and then also the handcrafting culture would diminish. Another example is the language. If the reindeer herding culture is affected, then there would be less reindeer herding and less use of the Sámi reindeer herding vocabulary, and then, when the language is not used, the whole language is weakened, less used and diminishes.”* (Kustula, Interview)

The Sámi have perceived the Arctic Railway as a threat to their traditional livelihoods and to their culture since the Arctic Railway would change and reduce the land area on which Sámi depend to practise their traditional livelihoods. Ever since the Ministry of Transport and Communication announced that the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes routing will be further examined, the Sámi have therefore been opposing the railway project.

At the core of the Arctic Railway as a governmental project is the construction of infrastructure. Infrastructures like roads and railway are, according to Harvey & Knox (2012), an exemplary technology of modernity. The pooling of expertise, political power and economical ambition for the purpose of constructing standardised infrastructure is a modern ambition. They further argued that nowadays, this modern ambition of producing standardised infrastructure is mainly driven by processes of neoliberalization, including commodification (ibid.). Commodification entails the creation of economic goods to enable the sale of those goods at a price determined through market exchange (Bakker 2005). Indeed, the construction of the Arctic Railway can be identified as a neoliberal project. The Arctic Railway would improve the business opportunities for various industries (The Northern Region of Lapland 2012) and thus it would become more profitable for the extractive industry to move further North. As a consequence, goods formerly outside the markets would be subjected to the logic of money and Lapland, including Sámi homeland areas, would be turned into a frontier zone. According to Rasmussen & Lund (2017), frontier zones arise when “a new resource is identified, defined, and becomes subject to extraction and commodification” (p. 391). Frontier zones are marked by dynamics, which dissolve the existing social orders, since only “by unmaking previous orders of property and authority, land and resources are “freed up” for new forms of appropriation” (p. 391) and can be turned in commodities. Frontiers are therefore often conflict zones – conflict between the

state or the corporations that wish to make use of new resource and the original inhabitants of the frontier zone might emerge (ibid). Laura Meller, polar advisor for Greenpeace Nordic, actually expressed that the Arctic Railway should be understood as a frontier project as it is part of the ambition to bring resource extraction further North. She explained that

*“[the Arctic Railway] is one of the very concrete illustrations of the vision of the future of the Arctic where it is a new frontier for extractive industries, where you can go to pristine areas to look for oil, where to take fishing fleets further North and where the melting ice is seen as a business opportunity while we know that your climate can’t take any more oil.”* (Meller, Interview)

The Arctic Railway as a governmental project is hence not only situated within the governmental field of power in which politicians try to rearrange the landscape, identities and livelihoods according to scientific criteria and expert knowledge (cf. Li 2008). The Arctic Railway, more precisely the Arctic Railway as a frontier project, is also situated within a logic of sovereignty, where the land-owning state possesses the right to use, allocate and profit from natural resources and can expropriate individual and collective property and use coercive power to that end (cf. Li 2008). It is the Finnish state that can decide how and by whom the land within the Sámi homeland is used. By constructing the Arctic Railway, the Finnish state would lay the foundation for extractive industries to also make profit from land that is nowadays, among others, used by Sámi to practise traditional Sámi livelihoods.

When talking about the Arctic Railway as an infrastructure project, it is more than just the railway tracks. Infrastructures are more than just technical objects, but they also exist separate from their material manifestations (Larkin 2013). According to Moran (2009), infrastructures are promises towards the future. In the case of the Arctic Railway, the railway instantiates various promises. As outlined above, the proponents of the Arctic Railway promise an improvement in Lapland’s accessibility and in Finland’s logistical position and supply security, improved business opportunities for local industries and, as a consequence, the promotion of growth and employment in Lapland. The Arctic Railway does however not dazzle the Sámi with the possibilities it holds, but rather the developments the Arctic Railway promises go against Sámi’s perception of a good life as Pirita Näkkäläjärvi, Sámi business woman and journalist, explained:



*“(...) developing means something very different than having a railway and so called improving the accessibility of Sápmi and having the industrial scale operations in Sápmi. Because for the Sámi, development is not the same concept as the Western concept of development where industrialisation is considered development. But for us, good life and good development is when we can continue working with our traditional livelihoods, when our language stays alive, the natural environment for the language remains and continue living in our culture.” (Näkkäljärvi, Interview)*

Consequently, for the Sámi, the Arctic Railway does not instantiate promises towards the future, but rather threats towards the future. The Arctic Railway is perceived as a threat to Sámi's livelihoods, culture and to the Arctic environment and eventually as a threat towards a good life. This because the Arctic Railway itself, but also the industrial activities, which the Arctic Railway would facilitate, would diminish the land available for Sámi to practice traditional livelihoods (The Guardian 2019). The conflict over the Arctic Railway is thus a clash of ideas; a conflict over whether to boost economic development in Lapland and to enhance Finland's competitiveness or to respect Sámi's traditional livelihoods and to protect their living environment.

In sum, the construction of the Arctic Railway is a governmental project. The Finnish government has been advertising the construction of the rail connection and the consequent rearrangement of Lapland by invoking arguments about the improvements the Arctic Railway would bring for both Lapland and the whole of Finland. At the core of the governmental project is the construction of infrastructure, which would serve the commodification of Arctic natural resources so far out of the reach of the national and global market. Since the Arctic Railway would bring the frontier of resource extraction further North, it can be classified as a frontier project. The Sámi have been opposing the Arctic Railway and thus the hegemony of government rationality and sovereignty. They have been fighting both the reconfiguration of their living space and the Finnish government's intention to make Lapland's natural resources accessible for extraction. Sámi's resistance against the Arctic Railway can therefore be classified as a political project. According to Li (2008), political projects intend to contest governmental interventions or resource appropriation and question the hegemony of governmental rationality and sovereignty. The conflict the Arctic Railway is thus constituted of a governmental project and a political project.

### 3.3 Document practices and acts of dissent

To further understand how the conflict over the Arctic Railway unfolded, I now explore the practices that have accompanied both the governmental project, the Arctic Railway as a frontier project, and the political project, Sámi's opposition against the Arctic Railway. I discuss the various practises – including document practices – in a chronological order. I identify three practices, namely the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report*, the *Final Report of the Joint Working Group Between Finland and Norway on the Arctic Railway* and the regional land-use plan 2040 for Northern Lapland, that have made the governmental project concrete and various practices which have manifested the political project.

#### 3.3.1 Arctic Ocean Railway Report

In July 2017, the Ministry of Transport and Communications made a request to the Finnish Transport Agency and the Norwegian transport authorities to explore the possibilities of constructing a railway from Finland to the Arctic Ocean (LVM 2017). Sámi representatives reacted alarmed to this request. Sanila-Aikio even went so far as saying that to construct a northbound railway “might be a kind of decision that will make Sámi people go extinct” (The Barents Observer 2017). The Sámi Parliament in Finland, disappointed that it only learned through media about the government's intention to build a railway to the Arctic Ocean (Yle Sápmi 2018), asked for negotiations with the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Asian Pacific Foundation of Canada 2018). Negotiations took place on the 18th of January 2018, only about one month before the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report* was published (FTA 2018).

Beginning of March 2018, the requested study, the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report*, was published. Based on the report, the Ministry of Transport and Communications announced instantly that the railway routing between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes will be the one further examined and appointed a joint working group between Finland and Norway for this purpose (LVM 2018a). The *Arctic Ocean Railway Report* is one of the first practices that has made the governmental project concrete. The report concludes that the lines terminating in Kirkenes or Tromsø would lead to a clear improvement in Finland's logistical position and supply security and in Lapland's accessibility (FTA 2018). Compared to the other routes, the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes and the Kemi-Tromsø routes would however have the greatest impacts on the Arctic environment, Sámi's livelihoods and culture and reindeer husbandry. They would also be the most expensive options; the line to Kirkenes would cost €2,9 billion and the line to Tromsø €7,4 billion. The report further suggests that the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes line has the biggest transport potential of all alternative routes. The railway could be used to transport mining

products, raw wood and wood industry products, fish products and products to be transported in the future via the Northeast Passage. However, even though the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes route has the biggest transport potential, it is “equally unprofitable” as all other routes (ibid).

According to Atkinson & Coffey (2004), documentary records are social facts in that they are produced, shared and used according to socially defined rules. Documentary records therefore often present a distinctive social reality and create documentary realities (ibid). Thus, it makes little sense to ask whether the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report* is a true or valid account of reality but to think about the function of the text itself (cf. Atkinson & Coffey 2004). The Ministry of Transport and Communications claimed that based on the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report*, it decided that the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes line should be the one further examined (LVM 2018a). However, already long before the report was published, government officials had promoted the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes line on various occasions. For example, in 2015, then Minister of Economic Affairs Olli Rehn argued for a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes to boost Arctic developments (The Barents Observer 2015). In 2016, then Prime Minister Juha Sipilä openly expressed interest in a railway connection from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes and announced to make it a priority issue for the upcoming chairmanship of Finland in the Arctic Council (The Barents Observer 2016a). Finally, former Minister of Transport and Communications Anne Berner brought up the connection between Rovaniemi and the Arctic Ocean coast of Norway at a meeting of the Nordic Council in 2016 (The Barents Observer 2016b). The function of the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report* has thus been to provide the Finnish government with the data and scientific authority needed to legitimately favour the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes line over the other routes. Although the report indicates that the Kirkenes routing is socio-economically unfeasible and that it would affect the Arctic environment, reindeer herding and Sámi culture and livelihoods negatively, the report has provided sufficient scientific proof to the government that the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes route is superior to the other routes.

Finnish government's decision to further examine the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes line triggered various acts of dissent by the Sámi. Sámi have challenged the narrative of the Arctic Railway as a promise of improvement and progress by highlighting the costs the construction of the Arctic Railway would impose on the Sámi. Sámi have, for example, voiced their concerns about and critique of the Arctic Railway through media. Piirita Näkkäläjärvi, for instance, argued in her column that the Arctic Railway would need a lot of land and would also bring other forms of land-grabbing (News Now Finland 2018). She especially feared that mines would be opened in the Sámi homeland in order to

pay for the socio-economically unfeasible railway (ibid). On a different occasion, Näkkäljärvi highlighted that the Arctic Railway would contribute to climate change (Benzar 2018). She speculated that “[t]here will be more pressure for drilling and searching for natural resources in the Arctic region. The Arctic Railway would cut right through the Sami homelands and introduce heavy infrastructure to the vulnerable area near Lake Inarijärvi.” (ibid., n/a). In an interview with the Asian Pacific Foundation of Canada (2018), Sanila-Aikio explained that the railway route from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes would cross through seven Sámi reindeer herding districts and split their pastures into two. She argued that the Arctic Railway would therefore affect Sámi reindeer herders, but also Sámi culture tremendously because reindeer herding is defining for Sámi culture (ibid.).

In September 2018, the Sámi Youth organisation, the Sámi ‘artist’ collective Suohpanterror and Greenpeace activist demonstrated against the Arctic Railway (Greenpeace International 2018c) (see Figure 4). During five days, they formed a red line in five different Sámi reindeer herding districts (The Barents Observer 2018b) – a line the Sámi do not want the government to cross without their consent (Greenpeace International 2018c). Representatives of the Canadian First Nation and the Maori community in New Zealand took part in the demonstrations to express their solidarity with the Sámi (ibid.).



Figure 4. Demonstration against the Arctic Railway in September 2018 (Greenpeace International 2018d)

During these protests, Sámi activists especially highlighted that the Arctic Railway would further fragment the forests that are essential for traditional Sámi reindeer herding (Greenpeace International 2018c). Further protests against the Arctic Railway took place later in September at a meeting of the Regional Council of Lapland in Sodankylä and in October 2018 at the Biodiversity Congress in Rovaniemi (Sámi activist, Interview).

Contemporaneously with the first Sámi protests, Greenpeace launched a petition *Protect forests. Protect life* (Greenpeace International 2018e). The petition's content was a letter written by Sámi representatives in which they highlighted that already for centuries, their land has been exploited and that the Finnish government is now constructing the Arctic Railway because "they want more pulp mills, more logging, more mines" (n/a). They further called on the Finnish government to respect their rights as indigenous people and thus not to access their land without their consent (ibid). Since September 2018, Greenpeace has repeatedly published videos and articles in which Sámi were explaining how their lives would be affected by the Arctic Railway and why they are opposing it. Laura Meller, polar advisor for Greenpeace Nordic, highlighted that the Sámi "are the right holder in that conversation" and Greenpeace is just supporting the Sámi "through giving them the possibility to use Greenpeace's communication channels" (Meller, Interview).

Shortly after the red line demonstrations, the Saami Council (2018), an organization representing Sámi interests from Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia, issued a statement on the Arctic Railway. The Saami Council voiced that the governments of Finland and Norway are about to force a large-scale industrial development in Sámi homeland areas without respecting Sámi interests and representative bodies properly. They explained that the Arctic Railway would not only have major negative impacts on reindeer herding, but also on fishing, hunting and gathering, which all together constitute the foundation of Sámi culture. The Saami Council further criticized the failure of the governments to fulfil the rights of the Sámi to participate in the decision-making process of the Arctic Railway. Like representatives of the Sámi in Finland, the Saami Council has accused the governments of breaking international law because they failed to obtain Sámi's free, prior and informed consent (ibid).

### 3.3.2 *Final Report of the Joint Working Group Between Finland and Norway on the Arctic Railway*

The report of the joint working group between Finland and Norway was published in February 2019 (LVM 2019a). The report discusses possible finance models and the permissions and planning that would be needed in both Finland and Norway in order to build the Arctic Railway. It further suggests

how to evaluate the impacts on nature and the Sámi and how to ensure the participation of the Sámi in the project. The report records that due to the high investment costs of almost €3 billion and a low projected use capacity, the Arctic Railway would not be commercially viable with any of the financing models examined (ibid.). The report nevertheless highlights the importance of a rail connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes for Finland: “A connection to the Arctic Ocean’s deep, ice-free ports would open up a connection to the Atlantic and Northeast Passage and thereby significantly increase Finland’s transport capacity and improve its logistical position and accessibility. Thanks to this connection, Finland’s significance as one of Northern European transport routes would increase.” (LVM 2019a, p. 14). The report further underlines the significance of the Arctic Railway for regional development and argues that the rail connection would have a clear climate impact since it would contribute to transfer traffic, especially freight traffic, from lorries and airplanes to trains (LVM 2019a.). Like the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report*, this report mainly focus on the benefits the Arctic Railway would bring Finland and Lapland and does refrain from discussing the costs for Sámi livelihoods and the Arctic environment. Both reports have thus enacted infrastructure and the Arctic Railway respectively as a promise of progress and improvement.

In the press release of Ministry of Transport and Communication (2019b) on the joint working group’s report it says that “for the time being, [the report] does not present any further measures for promoting the railway project” (n/a). The report does however present recommendations for follow-up actions to the governments. The report argues that if the governments of Finland and Norway decide to continue with the planning of the Arctic Railway, the next stage would be a cross-border study on how to integrate the planning processes of both countries (LVM 2019a). Thus, even though the Arctic Railway is not an economically feasible project, the working group has left the door open for the governments to decide to continue with the project.

Based on the Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament, the Sámi Parliament requested negotiations on the draft version of the working group’s report (LVM 2018b). Negotiations between the Sámi Parliament and the Finnish government took place on December 21st 2018 and on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2019. The President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Sanila-Aikio was however anything but satisfied with these negotiations:

*“[The negotiations] were kind of technical. We pointed out the problems in the report, but because the study group had already finished their job, we could give technical [feedback], like this*



*has been misspelled, but not to the subject. We couldn't influence it anymore. I think this shows also that this process hasn't been handled in a proper way.*” (Sanila-Aikio, Interview)

Since the publication of the working group's report, the Finnish government has not taken any further steps to promote the Arctic Railway. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the project has been put aside. Beginning of March 2019, Finland's entire government resigned because it had failed to push through a healthcare reform (BBC 2019). Therefore, it needs now to be awaited how the new government, which was formed after the parliamentary election on 14<sup>th</sup> of April, will take up the Arctic Railway project.

### 3.3.3 Regional land-use plan 2040 for Northern Lapland

While the national authorities remain passive at the moment, the Regional Council of Lapland, a joint municipal board of the 21 Lappish municipalities responsible for the regional development and regional land use planning (Lapinliitto 2015), is still pushing for the Arctic Railway. As early as the Ministry of Transport and Communications requested the examination of all possible rail routes to the Arctic Ocean, the Regional Council of Lapland has worked on drafting the regional land-use plan 2040 for Northern Lapland, which includes Sodankylä, Inari and Utsjoki (High North News 2017). The regional land-use plan defines the areas that are significant for the development of Northern Lapland and it includes the Arctic Railway, i.e. the railway between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. The regional land-use plan is of importance to the railway project since the actual construction of the Arctic Railway could only start after the legally binding land-use plan had been approved (LVM 2019a). The regional land-use plan is estimated to be ready by the end of the year 2019 (ibid).

According to Rasmussen & Lund (2017), spatial planning is a central governance instrument. Land-use planning is used to determine what kind of activities are permitted or illegal and who is allowed to live where. Thus, it is a central instrument to exercise control over the state's subjects and to make claims over how the land should be arranged and used. Similarly, Lassila (2018) argued that “mapping has the power to articulate and create new realities” (p. 2). In her study on Sámi mining resistance in Utsjoki, she showed how the mapping of scientific data about natural resources defines areas as mineral rich and creates the vision of resource exploitation (ibid.). Following this line of reasoning, the inclusion of the Arctic Railway in the regional land-use plan 2040 for Northern Lapland can be read as an attempt by state authorities to make a particular reality. A reality of which

a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes is part of. The drawing of the railway in the land-use plan is a claim over how the land in Northern Lapland should be used.

The Sámi have challenged this particular claim-making move. Sanila-Aikio explained that the Sámi aim at having the Arctic Railway removed from the plan (Sanila-Aikio, Interview). Therefore, Sámi voiced their opposition to the Arctic Railway during the consultation process. According to Timo Lohi, development manager for the Region of Northern Lapland, by the end of February 2019, the Regional Council of Lapland had received 60 statements on the first draft of the regional land-use plan and most of those comments had come from Sámi organisations (Lohi, Interview). For example, seven Sámi reindeer herding cooperatives gave official statements and demanded that Arctic Railway should be taken out from the regional land-use plan (Greenpeace International 2019a). Jussa Seurujärvi, Sámi reindeer herder, argued that by including the Arctic Railway in the regional land-use plan, the Regional Council of Lapland is “committing to sacrificing our land, livelihoods and forgetting the Indigenous people of the country, to promote the interests of the Finnish state” (Seurujärvi 2019).

#### 3.3.4 *Conflicting infrastructural realities*

Practices of research and planning can be associated with the governmental project, namely the rearrangement of Lapland to facilitate the extraction of Arctic natural resources. The Finnish state conducted two studies on the feasibility of a railway connection to the Arctic Ocean and has included the railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes in the land-use plan for Northern Lapland. The political project of the Sámi, namely their opposition against the construction of the Arctic Railway, has manifested itself through words and action. The Sámi have fought against the construction of the Arctic Railway through various practices. The Sámi Parliament in Finland has demanded and conducted negotiations with the Finnish government over the two, by state authorities issued reports. Sámi activists have publically protested against the railway several times. Sámi representatives have written letters and statements to officials. Moreover, they have sought media coverage to voice their concerns with the Arctic Railway and to level criticism at the Finnish government for disregarding their opinion in the decision-making process over the Arctic Railway. Through these various practices the Sámi have enacted an infrastructural reality different from the one Finnish government's practices have facilitated. Rather than a promise of progress and improvement, the Sámi have articulated the Arctic Railway as a threat to their traditional livelihoods, culture and self-determination and to the Arctic environment.



Since the Arctic Railway is still only a possibility with an undetermined future, who has the power to make and define the dominant reality of the Arctic Railway becomes important. Whether the Arctic Railway is constructed or not might significantly depend on whether the Arctic Railway is publically conceived as a promise to progress and improvement or as a threat to Sámi livelihoods, culture and self-determination and to the Arctic environment. The Finnish government is thereby at an advantage over the Sámi. According to Cruikshank (2004), there is an uneven relationship between scientific and indigenous knowledge. Scientific knowledge is often pitted against indigenous knowledge, i.e. specific forms of knowledge indigenous peoples hold of the space and places they inhabit that are reproduced in everyday behaviour and speech. Locally embedded indigenous forms of knowing are often interpreted as being opposed to modernity and thus they carry less weight in decision-making processes than scientific data (ibid.). Similarly, Nadasdy (1999) highlighted that indigenous knowledge exists as a distinct epistemology from scientific knowledge. Since in our modern world, nature is assigned to scientific representation (De la Cadena 2010), indigenous knowledge about nature “fall outside the established categories of scientific resource management” (Nadasdy 1999, p. 7). In the case of the Arctic Railway, it might thus be that the scientifically founded arguments of the state authorities’ reports are considered legitimate interventions in the public debate while the arguments of the Sámi, which are based on life experiences, are not considered as valid. Further, it can be expected that Sámi’s indigenous knowledge regarding how the Arctic Railway would influence the Arctic environment and, as a consequence, their view on how the Arctic Railway would affect Sámi’s traditional livelihoods and culture will not be broadly considered.

### 3.4 Positions

According to Li (2008), people take and are assigned positions, rather than fixed identities. She argued that to identify adopted or assigned positions of people involved in a conflict helps to better grasp that conflict. Thus, I discuss three positions in the following.

Sámi have positioned themselves in opposition to the Arctic Railway. They have positioned themselves against the Arctic Railway in view of the fact that the Sámi as indigenous people should have the right to decide how ‘their land’ – the land that has traditionally been used and occupied by Sámi – is used. In various statements, Sámi representatives highlighted their connectedness to their land and their dependency on their land. For example, Laiti proclaimed during the demonstrations in September 2018 that the Sámi “(...) are the guardians of our land and we will take care of it in a sustainable way as we have done for thousands of years Sámi.” (Greenpeace International 2018c,

n/a). “This is our land, Our future. It’s us who decide” was one of the main demands Sámi representatives made on the government in a letter (Greenpeace International 2018e, n/a). Or Seurujärvi declared that the Finnish government is trading away their rights and their land (Greenpeace International 2019a). The Sámi have positioned themselves as the rightful decision-making body over how the land within the Sámi homeland should be used and have taken action against the Arctic Railway from this position.

Throughout the course of the conflict, Sámi have assigned the Finnish government the position of a lawbreaker. Sámi have criticised that despite the consultation duty in national and international law<sup>4</sup>, the Finnish government did not consult the Sámi before it requested a study on the possible railway lines and before it decided on the Kirkenes routing (Arctic Deeply 2017). Propelled by this injustice, Sámi have been opposing the Arctic Railway.

Repeatedly, state officials have accused the Sámi of overreacting and being blinded by their fears. For example, Mika Riipi, country governor of Lapland, criticised Sámi’s reasoning that the Arctic Railway would threaten their cultural survival. He said “(...) Sami culture has survived even though roads have been there. This is another road – except it goes a long way in tunnels.” (The Guardian 2018, n/a). Similarly, Timo Lohi, development manager of the municipalities Sodankylä, Inari and Utsjoki, stated that “the Sámi are being quite emotional, possibly because there has not been enough information on the railway. There are already roads crossing the reindeer herding area.” (Sputnik International 2019, n/a). In the interview I conducted with Lohi, he elaborated:

*“(...) the Transport Ministry, they have promised to fence the railway and to build bridges for reindeer so that Sámi can keep on herding. And also this it is not very wide, it is about 20 meters wide, this railway area. So totally, it would need land for about 10 square kilometres and, for example, in Inari, there are 17’000 square kilometres. So, it is very small, it is only 0.3 ‰ of the land area. (...). So, I think it is overreaction, the effects are not at all that big as Sámi people say.” (Lohi, Interview).*

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<sup>4</sup> Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament obligates Finnish authorities to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament in Finland in measures that affect the Sámi as indigenous people and that concern certain matters in the Sámi homeland (Ministry of Justice 2003). ILO Convention no. 169 (ILO 1989) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2007) enshrine state’s duty to consult with indigenous peoples before making any decisions that might affect them in the international law.

By positioning the Sámi as emotional, state officials can continue promoting the railway project with a clear conscience. Since the Sámi are apparently overreacting, they neither have to react nor reflect on Sámi's critique.

Li (2008) argued that practices follow from projects and positions. While this is certainly true, I argue that positions themselves are practices. The Sámi have positioned themselves as the true sovereign over the land within the Sámi homeland. Thereby, the Sámi have challenged Finnish government's power to use, allocate and profit from exactly that land and hence, the Finnish government's legitimacy to facilitate the extraction of Arctic natural resources. The Sámi have further challenged the lawful ground of the governmental project since they have accused the government of breaking both national and international law. State officials have in turn attempted to take the ground from Sámi's political project by positioning them as emotional. They have claimed that Sámi are irrational actors and that therefore their critique of the Arctic Railway is unfounded.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The conflict over the Arctic Railway consists of two projects, namely a governmental project and a political project. The Finnish government has set out to plan the rearrangement of the landscape of Lapland through the construction of a rail connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. The government has legitimised its ambition by appealing to what Li (2008) called the logic of improvement. With the construction of the Arctic Railway, Arctic natural resources, which today still remain out of the reach of the national and global markets, could be turned into commodities. In other words, the Arctic Railway would move the frontier of resource extraction further North and can therefore be classified as a frontier project. The governmental project has so far been made concrete by two reports drafted by state authorities and by the regional land-use plan 2040 for Northern Lapland. The two reports highlight the benefits of infrastructure and confirm that the Arctic Railway would improve Lapland's accessibility and Finland's supply security and logistical position. Thereby, these two reports have enacted a particular reality – a reality that has also been articulated by government officials in the media –, namely the Arctic Railway as a promise of progress and improvement.

The Sámi have challenged both the governmental project and the by the Finnish state promoted infrastructural reality. Through various practices, including demonstrations, protest letters, video messages and the positioning of the Finnish government as a lawbreaker, the Sámi have simultaneously opposed the construction of the Arctic Railway and enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi traditional livelihoods, culture and self-determination as well as to the Arctic environment.

While the Finnish state has highlighted the benefits the Arctic Railway would bring to both Finland and Lapland, the Sámi have articulated the costs the construction of the railway would impose on the Sámi. They have argued that since the Arctic Railway would alter the landscape of Lapland, it would reduce or even remove the possibility to practise traditional Sámi livelihoods. Since the traditional Sámi livelihoods and especially reindeer herding constitute Sámi culture, Sámi have also seen their cultural survival threatened by the Arctic Railway. It is this particular argumentation as well as the positioning of the Sámi as the legitimate decision-making body over the land within the Sámi homeland that reveal that the conflict over the Arctic Railway is essentially a conflict over land. On the one hand, it is a conflict over how the land would be changed by the construction of the Arctic Railway and how that in turn would affect traditional Sámi livelihoods. On the other hand, it is a conflict over who should have the right to decide over the use of the land within the Sámi homeland. The conflict over the Arctic Railway persists because of two main reasons. First, government officials have waved Sámi's arguments about the impact of the Arctic Railway on traditional Sámi livelihoods aside. They have assigned Sámi the position of irrational actors and have so far refrained from assessing the impacts of the Arctic Railway on traditional Sámi livelihoods and culture in detail. Second, the Finnish state has already claimed the right to decide how the land within the Sámi homeland should be used. The Regional Council of Lapland has drawn the Arctic Railway into the regional land-use plan.

The conflict over the Arctic Railway is furthermore a conflict over worldviews. Finnish state's worldview is the one of the modern state (De la Cadena 2010). The modern state is based on the ontological distinction between human and nature, which "created a single natural order and separated it from the social" (p. 342). In the modern state, the representation of nature belongs thus solely to science and the representation of humans belongs solely to politics (ibid.). The practices of the Sámi have however challenged this particular worldview. Through their various practices, the Sámi have expressed a relationship to nature and their land for which the ontological distinction between human and nature does not work (cf. De la Cadena 2010). They have argued that since their traditional livelihoods depend on land, their culture does as well. The Sámi do thus not exist separate from nature, but with nature. The fact that the Finnish state and the Sámi have different worldviews does partially explain why state officials have so far not taken Sámi's critique of the Arctic Railway into serious consideration. In order to fully comprehend Sámi's argument, the Finnish state would have to acknowledge that there is not one universal worldview and that Sámi's worldview is different from the Western one.

## 4 The Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi's cultural survival

### 4.1 Introduction

*“It has been the model of the state for centuries to make Sámi assimilate. We see this [the Arctic Railway] as the final step. First, they have prohibited our religion. Then they have destroyed our community model. Then they have stolen our lands and waters. Then they have started to wash the language away and now, they are making it impossible to live the Sámi life. So this development for centuries is still going on (...).”* (Sanila-Aikio, Interview)

This statement has been made by President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland and it is a remarkable one. With this statement Sanila-Aikio has classified the construction of the Arctic Railway as the continuation of the colonising process of Sápmi and as the endpoint of the assimilation process Sámi have endured for centuries. In the interview, she accused the Finnish government of still having colonial aspirations in Sápmi and has condemned the Arctic Railway not only as a colonial project, but as an undertaking that would eliminate the Sámi as a distinct group.

In this chapter, I set out to analyse how the Sámi have enacted their concerns regarding the effect the construction of the Arctic Railway would have on Sámi culture and whether the Arctic Railway is indeed the continuation of the colonising process of Sápmi. Additionally, I outline how the proponents of the railway project have reacted to Sámi's cultural concerns. The concept of enactment (Law 2014) allows me to identify how Sámi have constructed a particular reality, namely the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi's cultural survival. My analysis further draws on theorizations of the relationship between a settler colonial state and the indigenous peoples, on Marxist political economy and on two analytical concepts, namely securitisation as a speech act (Buzan et al. 1998) and the logic of equivalence (Li 2015). I show that while the Sámi have enacted the Arctic as a threat to their cultural survival, the proponents have rejected this particular reality as they are convinced that the Arctic Railway would not impact the Sámi any different from a road. I further argue that the Arctic Railway is rooted in the colonial relationship between the Finnish state and the Sámi and that it involves the risk of being a colonial project.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, I identify Finland as a settler-colonial state and place the Arctic Railway in the historical context of settler colonialism. Second, I show how Sámi articulate their cultural concerns with the Arctic Railway and thereby enact the Arctic Railway as a

threat to their cultural survival. Third, I outline how and why proponents do not perceive the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi culture. The last section concludes.

## 4.2 Settler colonialism in Finland

Colonialism is generally defined as “the establishment, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory” (Lehtola 2015, p. 25). Settler colonialism refers to the process whereby the colonising society is build on the territory of the previously free, but now colonised indigenous people (Tully 2000). As a territorial project, settler colonialism depends on the obtaining and maintaining of territory what makes the elimination of the owner of that territory – the indigenous people – necessary (Wolfe 2006). Settler colonial states do not necessary aim at the physical elimination of the indigenous people, but seek to erase them as culturally, politically, economically and legally distinct people from the rest of the society (Coulthard 2014). Consequently, the dissolution of the indigenous people takes on many forms and does not necessarily involve conventional forms of killing (Wolfe 2006).

Finland can be classified as a settler-colonial state. While the government included Sápmi into a fixed part of the state and erected a society on the land of the Sámi, the Sámi faced elimination. As previously discussed, during centuries, state policies marginalised the Sámi and dissolved their cultural, political, economical and legal distinctiveness. Sámi were deliberately converted to Christianity (Lehtola 2004), dispossessed of their traditional property rights and forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle as a direct consequence of policies favouring a sedentary lifestyle. Their economic vitality was erased by the division of their land through demarcations and by the transformation of the ecosystem through state’s extractive activities. Their governance system, the siida system, was replaced by the state’s administrative system and in boarding schools, Sámi were desocialised away from their own culture and resocialised to Finnish culture (ibid.). According to Sámi, the assimilation process and therefore, the elimination of Sámi as a distinct people from Finnish society is continuing today. As previously outlined, the acceptance of 97 persons into the electoral register of the Sámi Parliament in Finland against it’s will, the denial of the right to fish in traditional Sámi fishing waters and logging activities within the Sámi homeland are all perceived as examples of how the Finnish state does still nowadays willingly risk the cultural elimination of the Sámi.

Settler colonialism is further characterised by an unequal relationship between the colonist and the indigenous population (Lehtola 2015). By drawing on Marx’s theoretical concept of primitive

accumulation, Glen Coulthard (2014) established dispossession not only as constructive of capitalism, but as the dominant structure that has shaped the character of the relationship between the indigenous people and the settler-colonial state. He argues that the relationship between the indigenous people and the state has been one where power has been structured so as to facilitate the continuing dispossession of the indigenous people of their land (ibid.). Since “land is life” (Wolfe 2006, p. 387) – indigenous people depend for their economical and cultural survival on the land (Coulthard 2014) – to dispossess indigenous people of their land does eliminate them (Wolfe 2006).

The relationship between the Finnish government and the Sámi is a colonial one. As previously established, the relationship between Sámi and the state was and still is characterised by a power imbalance in favour of the state. The state has subjected the Sámi by processes of colonisation, sedentarization and cultural assimilation. As a consequence of those policies, the Sámi have been deprived of the control over land and resources. Today, the power is still structured so as to facilitate the dispossession of the Sámi. On the one hand, the Finnish government does not recognise Sámi land rights (UN Human Rights Council 2016). On the other hand, the Sámi Parliament in Finland does only have cultural autonomy (Sámediggi 2008) and hence not enough power to influence Finnish state’s decision concerning their land.

Then as now, the dispossession of the Sámi was partially motivated by resource extraction. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Sweden and Denmark-Norway first attempted to include Sápmi into their state formations of nations (Lehtola 2004), the aspiration to gain access to the Arctic resources propelled the colonisation of Sápmi (Lehtola 2015). Resources such as minerals and fur were important to fund state’s administration and expansion. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when large-scale industrial development took hold in the Nordic states, the exploitation of Sápmi’s natural resources became ever more important (ibid). The Nordic states thus colonised Sápmi, not merely to convert land into agricultural land and to erect a new society on Sámi’s land, but also to exploit the natural resources. Today, natural resources are still of key importance for the Finnish economy (UN Human Rights Council 2016). Especially Lapland’s economy is dependent on natural resources. The mining, metal and wood industries and tourism are the industrial beacons of Lapland (Regional Council of Lapland 2018). According to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, in order to facilitate resource extraction, the Finnish government continues to disrespect Sámi land rights and to deprive Sámi of the control over their land (UN Human Rights Council 2016). In recent years, the Arctic region’s natural resources have increasingly become exploitable due to climate change (Prime Minister Office 2013). But most importantly, for the purpose of natural resource extraction, the state has



expropriated land, including land that has traditionally been used by the Sámi (ibid.). Over years, the Finnish state has thus made accumulation by dispossession possible.

The concept of accumulation by dispossession was formulated by David Harvey (2003) and refers to the neoliberal capitalist policies, which aim at transferring public wealth into an increasing private sector. The concept highlights that primitive accumulation is an ongoing process: producers get dispossessed of their means of production, land, and capital needs get hold of the land to further accumulate capital (ibid.). The Finnish legal framework has been set so that industries, including the wood and mining industries and tourism, are able to profit from land that has traditionally been owned and until the appropriation by industries been used by the Sámi.

The Arctic Railway would dispossess the Sámi of land and promote further accumulation by dispossession. On the one hand, the Sámi would be dispossessed of the land that would be needed to construct the railway. On the other hand, the construction of the Arctic Railway would improve the accessibility of Lapland (FTA 2018), thereby enhancing the possibilities for industries to make further profit from the land that was traditionally used and occupied by the Sami (cf. Region of Northern Lapland 2012). In the previous chapter, it has been established that by constructing the Arctic Railway, the Finnish government hopes to propel the further commodification of Arctic resources. The dispossession of the Sámi is thus also in the case of the Arctic Railway motivated by resource extraction. The construction of the Arctic Railway and the consequent dispossession of the Sámi is in turn only a realistic scenario since the colonial relationship between the Finnish government and the Sámi is continuing until today.

In a nutshell, the Arctic Railway is the continuation of the colonisation of Sápmi driven by the Finnish state's aspiration to benefit from the Arctic region's natural resources and it is rooted in the colonial relationship that has facilitated the continuing dispossession of the Sámi. How the dispossession of the Sámi would effect the Sámi is assessed differently by the Sámi and the proponents of the railway project as shall be demonstrated in the following.

#### **4.3 “This means the end of the Sámi people”**

In the previous chapter, I documented that the Sámi are, among others, against the construction of the Arctic Railway as they perceive it as a threat to their cultural survival. In this section, I investigate in more detail how exactly the Arctic Railway is enacted as a threat to Sámi culture.

All eight Sámi I conducted interviews with argued that by dividing the reindeer pastures into two parts, the Arctic Railway would make it very difficult if not impossible for the reindeer herders



to continue practising the traditional Sámi way of reindeer herding. Jussa Seurujärvi, Sámi reindeer herder, stated with concern: “In this area, the reindeer herding is based on the free moving of the reindeers. So they can move from pasture to pasture and that moving would be interrupted.” (Seurujärvi, Interview). He explained that if reindeer cannot follow their natural migration paths through forests, there will not be enough food to feed them all (The Guardian 2019). Sanila-Aikio highlighted that if the conditions of the land change, the livelihood reindeer herding would change as well. She explained that in order to cope with the fact that the reindeer cannot move freely anymore, Sámi reindeer herders would have to keep reindeer in a manner it is nowadays done in the middle parts of Finland, namely to fence them in small areas (Sanila-Aikio, Interview). This would however mean to abandon the traditional Sámi way of reindeer herding (ibid.). Seurujärvi summarised the impacts of the Arctic Railway as follows: “The Arctic Railway would mean the end of our way of life. (...) the railway would destroy my past, my future and my identity” (Greenpeace International 2019, n/a). Thus, according to both Seurujärvi and Sanila-Aikio, the dispossession of the land needed to construct the Arctic Railway would spell the end of the Sámi reindeer herding practices and rob the affected Sámi reindeer herders of their livelihood.

The Arctic Railway would however not only affect the Sámi reindeer herders, but the whole Sámi community. All eight Sámi I had the chance to talk to highlighted that the forced abandonment of the traditional Sámi way of reindeer herding would impact Sámi culture since the traditional livelihood reindeer herding constitutes Sámi culture to a fundamental part. Ida-Maria Helander, member of the Sámi Youth Organisation, described the importance of reindeer herding for Sámi culture as follows:

*“It is one of our main traditional livelihood. (...). Inside the Sámi reindeer herding culture, there is so much of our knowledge. It is such a big part of our culture. We use reindeer for everything. We eat it, we make handicrafts, Duodji, and we use everything from the reindeer. (...) If you endanger the reindeer herding culture, you also endanger the whole Sámi culture. It is so big part of it.”* (Helander, Interview).

Reindeer are revered by the Sámi because since thousands of years, reindeer have provided them with food and material for clothing, tents, tools, handicrafts and weapons (The Guardian 2019). The importance of the reindeer for Sámi culture is also reflected in the language: there are about 1’000 words describing reindeer appearance, behaviour and habits (ibid.). Since “without the reindeer, the Sami

people wouldn't be" (The Guardian 2019, n/a), as Seurujärvi put it, Sámi have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi culture and not just as a threat to the traditional Sámi livelihood reindeer herding. In the following, I outline how Sámi have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi's cultural survival by framing the railway as a security issue. According to Buzan et al. (1998), security is a performative speech act – by calling out something as an existential threat, an issue is presented as a security threat and a special right to use whatever means necessary to block the security threat is claimed. Thus, an issue becomes a security issue not necessarily because a real existential threat exists, but because the issue is presented as an existential threat (ibid.). In order to achieve the immediate termination of the railway project, the Sámi have presented the Arctic Railway as a societal insecurity. According to Wæver (2002), a societal insecurity occurs when a significant group within a society feels its identity endangered. Identity is the ultimate criterion of a society and thus a society, that loses its identity, fears that it will no longer exist as itself (ibid.). The Sámi, which have perceived the Arctic Railway as a threat to their cultural identity, have attempted at securitizing the railway project. For example, Seurujärvi tried to securitized the Arctic Railway by highlighting that

*"[The Arctic Railway] is a huge danger to our culture and language and to the whole Sámi area, not just to the area where the railway will be. It would bring very big damage beyond repair for Sámi reindeer herding culture and for other Sámi livelihoods."* (Seurujärvi, Interview).

Similarly, Näkkäläjärvi presented the Arctic Railway as an existential threat to Sámi culture by arguing that the railway would change the conditions for reindeer husbandry, thereby endangering the very foundation of Sámi culture (Näkkäläjärvi, Interview). To reinforce her argument and to illustrate how imposed changes on the livelihood reindeer herding change Sámi culture, she made the connection to the past:

*"We have seen this before when the national borders came and broke the Sámi land into four, Sámi had to stay in one country. They could not migrate anymore with their reindeers from the forests to the coast. (...) we have lost many of the traditions related to that activity of migrating with the reindeer."* (Näkkäläjärvi, Interview)

She further stressed how detrimental the consequences of the Arctic Railway on Sámi culture would be by arguing that the construction of the Arctic Railway *"is continuation of the colonising politics*

*and policies of the Nordic countries.*” (ibid.). Likewise, both Sanila-Aikio (Interview) and Seurujärvi (2019) have articulated the Arctic Railway as an existential threat to Sámi culture since, in their opinion, the construction of the Arctic Railway would be the continuation of the colonisation of Sápmi and the assimilation process the Sámi have endured for centuries.

In addition to the impact the Arctic Railway would have on reindeer husbandry, the Sámi fear that all traditional Sámi livelihoods, namely hunting, fishing, reindeer herding and gathering, would suffer from the land grabbing of other industries that the Arctic Railway would make possible (News Now Finland 2018). According to the President of the Saami Council Åsa Larsson-Blind, based on Sámi’s experience in other parts of Sápmi, they know that when large encroachments like the Arctic Railway are established, it is likely that there are more industrial activities to come (The Barents Observer 2018c). She explained that “accessibility is crucial for large scale industrial activities, and plans of a large railway like this is likely to attract attention from the mining industry and others.” (The Barents Observer 2018c, n/a). Already today Sámi livelihoods are challenged by industrial expansion into their homeland area (The Barents Observer 2019). Sanila-Aikio recounted that

*“All the time there are cases that little by little they make our way of living impossible, for example by giving new areas to tourism. There are so many different competitive land-use models in the Sámi homeland area. For example, gold panning, car testing, infrastructure, mass tourism, large villages, forest logging, husky safaris, military testing and so on.”* (Sanila-Aikio, Interview).

She added that the Arctic Railway would aggravate this situation as “the Arctic Railway will bring mines to the Sámi homeland areas, more logging and more tourism” (ibid.). This assessment that the Arctic Railway would boost industrial activities in the Sámi homeland area and that, as a consequence, there would be less land available for the traditional livelihoods, has been echoed by all other Sámi I conducted interviews with. Consequently, Sámi have presented the Arctic Railway as an existential threat to Sámi culture not only because of the effects the railway would have on reindeer husbandry, but also since the railway would enhance the chance that Sámi land is handed over to outside industries. Näkkäläjärvi expressed the link between traditional Sámi livelihood and Sámi culture particularly clearly and framed the existential threat to Sámi culture as follows:

*“The Arctic Railway is a great threat to the Sami culture, because it puts the traditional Sami livelihoods in jeopardy. The Sami culture is based on proximity with nature. If the traditional livelihoods of reindeer herding and fishing remain strong, it means that the Sami culture and language will also flourish.”* (Benzar 2018, n/a)

Sanila-Aikio securitized the Arctic Railway in a similar manner by arguing that “this [the construction of the Arctic Railway] means the end of the Sami people, because there are no possibilities to practise traditional livelihoods. Then the Sami are extinct.” (n/a).

In sum, Sámi have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi’s cultural survival through a securitizing move: Sámi have presented the Arctic Railway as an existential threat to Sámi culture. The Arctic Railway has been presented as a social insecurity, since Sámi have seen their cultural identity threatened by the Arctic Railway and by the consequent dispossession of land (cf. Wæver 2002). According to the Sámi, the Arctic Railway would lead to the dispossession of access to land on which Sámi traditional livelihoods depend. Since the traditional livelihoods are the fundament of Sámi culture (Sámediggi 2008), the Arctic Railway would eliminate the Sámi as a culturally distinct people. Sámi’s argumentation resonates with both Coulthard (2014) and Wolfe (2006) who argue that indigenous people depend on their land to maintain their cultural distinctiveness.

#### *4.3.1 Is the Arctic Railway a settler-colonial project?*

Based on how the Sámi have assessed the impact of the Arctic Railway on their culture, the Arctic Railway could be classified as a settler-colonial project. As outlined in the previous section, Wolfe (2006) argued that the logic of elimination is specific to settler colonialism. Only by eliminating the indigenous people of a territory, a settler-colonial state will be able maintain control over that territory (ibid.). Based on Sámi’s argumentation, it could be concluded that the Arctic Railway would guarantee the Finnish state control over land that has traditionally been used and occupied by Sámi precisely by eliminating the Sámi. However, since the Arctic Railway is not yet constructed, it cannot be known how the railway would affect the Sámi and therefore, whether the Arctic Railway would indeed culturally eliminate them. Past experiences have however shown that both infrastructure projects and resource extraction can have detrimental consequences on Sámi livelihoods and thus on Sámi culture. For example, in all Nordic countries, the construction of hydropower dams has been a tragedy for Sámi reindeer herders (350.org 2017). Sámi have lost reindeer herding pastures through flooding.

Moreover, hydropower dams have blocked traditional reindeer paths – since dams change the condition of the water flow in rivers, they have made it unsafe for reindeer to cross iced rivers in winter. As a consequence, many Sámi reindeer herders were forced to abandon reindeer herding (ibid.). Reindeer herding has also been fundamentally influenced by forestry. Forestry-related activities, such as tree harvesting, soil scarification and road construction, diminish, deteriorate and fragment lichen grounds, decrease the possibility for reindeer to graze freely and cause additional work for reindeer herders (Lawrence & Raitio 2006). According to reindeer herders, once a forest is taken into commercial use, it will never regain its original status and value as a grazing area (ibid.). As a consequence of forestry-related activities, Sámi reindeer herds had to be diminished or reindeer herding had to be abandoned (Greenpeace International 2018a). Consequently, the impact of the Arctic Railway on Sámi culture should be carefully assessed not only because Sámi have claimed that the railway would be devastating for Sámi culture, but also considering how other infrastructural projects and extractive activities have undermined the ecological conditions required for the Sámi to exercise their traditional livelihoods and culture.

#### 4.4 “One railway won’t kill the Sámi”

The Sámi have tried to securitise the Arctic Railway by presenting it as an existential threat to Sámi culture. Whether an issue is a security issue and whether actions are tolerated not otherwise legitimised – in this case the immediate termination of the Arctic Railway project – is however decided by the audience of the security speech act (Buzan et al. 1998.) In this section, it is shown that proponents of the Arctic Railway, which are part of the audience at which Sámi’s speech act has been directed, have not considered the Arctic Railway as a security issue. They have not perceived the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi’s cultural survival.

Mayor of Rovaniemi Esko Lotvonen has been convinced that “one railway won’t kill the Sámi” (Bennett 2018, n/a). According to him, the continuation of the Sámi culture is rather premised on the continuation of Sámi’s oral tradition (ibid). Country governor of Lapland Mika Riipi also disagreed with Sámi’s presentation of the Arctic Railway as an existential threat to Sámi culture. To him, it is clear that Sámi culture would survive the Arctic Railway since it has survived even though roads are leading through Sápmi and since the Arctic Railway would be just like another road (The Guardian 2019). In a similar manner, Timo Lohi argued that “there already are roads across the Sámi reindeer districts (...) and to me, that railway would be quite similar than a road” (Lohi, Interview).

This opinion has been vehemently disputed by the Sámi. For example, member of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Kustula argued that the Arctic Railway would affect Sámi not just like a road because a railway would require more land than a road (Kustula, Interview). Other infrastructure, such as rescue roads, overhead wiring and places to put snow, would have to be constructed (ibid).

When I confronted Lohi with Sámi's criticism about how the railway would affect reindeer herding, he explained that the Ministry of Transport and Communications had promised to fence the railway and to build bridges so that the affected Sámi reindeer herders would be able to continue with reindeer herding (Lohi, Interview). Similarly, Timo Rautajoki, CEO of Lapland Chamber of Commerce, argued that by building bridges and tunnels the negative impacts of the Arctic Railway on reindeer husbandry could be minimised (Rautajoki, Interview). In this matter, Sámi have also disagreed. According to the Sámi reindeer herders Kustula and Seurujärvi, bridges constructed for the reindeer to cross the railway would not solve the issue. Kustula explained that

*"(...) the reindeer is a wild animal and it grazes where it is good to graze. It moves around uncontrolled and it doesn't know where the bridges are, where there is a good place to cross. (...) also every year, there are different conditions in nature (...) and the reindeer can have different routes, different places for grazing depending on the year."* (Kustula, Interview)

Lohi further assured that the government would compensate the affected reindeer herders for the negative impacts of the Arctic Railway on reindeer husbandry. He explained that today reindeer herders receive compensation for roads and protected animals that hunt for reindeer (Lohi, Interview). In his opinion, it would be the responsibility of the Finnish government to pay the by the Arctic Railway affected reindeer herders "compensation for land and compensation for negative impacts on reindeer herding and other things" (ibid.). Apparently, Lohi has been convinced of what Fabiana Li (2015) called "logic of equivalence", namely that land dispossession and the railway's negative impacts on reindeer herding could be levelled out by money as the monetary compensation would be equivalent to the damage inflicted by the Arctic Railway. According to Li (2015), the term 'equivalence' refers to the scientific and technical tools used to make something quantifiable and comparable and it also describes a political relationship, which involves the negotiation over what counts as authoritative knowledge. To determine how much compensation Sámi are entitled to, the Sámi and the Finnish government would thus need to agree on how exactly land dispossession and the negative effects on reindeer herding could be made quantifiable. Since the relationship between the Sámi and

the Finnish government has been characterized by a power imbalance in favour of the government, it can be expected that the Finnish government would define the scientific and technical tools to quantify the Arctic Railway's negative effects on reindeer herding. Even if the Sámi would be able to define what counts as authoritative knowledge and how the damage of the Arctic Railway is quantified, it is difficult to image that compensation would settle the conflict between the Sámi and the Finnish government over the Arctic Railway. Since the Sámi have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to their cultural survival, to pay compensation for land loss and negative impacts on reindeer herding might hardly be a satisfactory solution to the Sámi.

Proponents of the Arctic Railway have obviously assessed the impacts of the Arctic Railway on Sámi culture differently than the Sámi. In their opinion, Sámi culture could cope with the Arctic Railway, mainly because the negative effects of the Arctic Railway would be levelled out by fences, bridges and money. The difference in assessing the impacts of the Arctic Railway on Sámi culture stems from different understandings of culture. For the proponents, Sámi culture survives changes and can be reinvented, among others by money. However, for the Sámi, Sámi culture is continuity with the past and the continued practise of the traditional Sámi livelihoods, including reindeer herding, fishing, hunting and gathering. Sámi understand culture in a holistic way. It includes "everything in our way of life, from the language to the livelihoods, like reindeer herding and fishing and so on" (Näkkäläjärvi, Interview).

#### 4.5 Conclusion

The construction of the Arctic Railway would dispossess the Sámi of access to land; land that has traditionally been used and occupied by the Sámi and that is still nowadays used to perform traditional Sámi livelihoods. The dispossession of the Sámi is motivated by the Finnish government's aspiration to economically benefit from the exploitation of the Arctic region's natural resources as the Arctic Railway would serve the further commodification of those resources. The Arctic Railway would thus take up the historic and colonial trend of dispossessing the Sámi in order to facilitate resource extraction. The Arctic Railway and the dispossession of the Sámi respectively would be made possible by the fact that the relationship between the Finnish state and the Sámi is still a colonial one. The relationship is characterised by a power imbalance in favour of the state that facilitates the continued dispossession of the Sámi. How the Arctic Railway and the dispossession of the Sámi respectively would affect the Sámi, is disputed.



The Sámi have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to their cultural survival. They have argued that Sámi's traditional livelihoods and in particular reindeer herding are the foundation of Sámi culture. Since the Arctic Railway would dispossess them of access to land and consequently of the possibility to continue performing traditional Sámi livelihoods, Sámi have presented the Arctic Railway as a project of eliminating consequences to Sámi culture and as the continuation of the assimilation of the Sámi into Finnish majority society. Sámi's argumentation highlights that Sámi culture and land are tight together and that the conflict over the Arctic Railway is a conflict over land as well as about the preservation of Sámi traditional livelihoods and culture. For the Sámi, the underlying problem of the conflict over the Arctic Railway is the continued misrecognition of their rights over land within the Sámi homeland by the Finnish state. Although the right of the Sámi to maintain and develop their culture is enshrined in section 17 of the Finnish constitution and even though the traditional Sámi livelihoods are officially considered preconditions for maintaining and developing Sámi culture (LVM 2019a), this does obviously not hinder the Finnish government from planning infrastructural projects, such as the Arctic Railway, which would restrict or destroy the possibility to practice traditional Sámi livelihoods.

The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169) highlights in Article 13 the special importance of the lands and territories occupied and used by indigenous people for their culture and calls upon governments to respect this special connection between land and indigenous culture (ILO 1989). Even though proponents of the railway project have argued that Sámi culture would survive the railway, the Arctic Railway would undoubtedly dispossess Sámi of access to land. Therefore, the impacts of the Arctic Railway need to be thoroughly assessed. Since for indigenous people "land is life" (Wolfe 2006, p. 387), there is indeed a risk involved that the Arctic Railway is a settler-colonial project, namely that the Arctic Railway would eliminate Sámi as a distinct people.



## 5 The Arctic Railway – Sustainable development and environmental injustice

### 5.1 Introduction

In the Arctic, the warming of the climate caused by anthropogenic emissions is two to three times greater than the global annual average and the Arctic ecosystems are at disproportionately higher risk of adverse consequences with global warming of 1.5°C and beyond (IPCC 2018). Combating climate change and mitigating its impacts are thus inevitable for the stability of the Arctic region. According to the Finnish government as well as other proponents of the Arctic Railway, the Arctic Railway would contribute to climate change mitigation (LVM 2019a). Sámi's perspective on the Arctic Railway's impact on the climate could however not be more different. During my conversations with Sámi representatives, they have expressed disagreement with the presumption that the railway project would be in line with Finnish government's climate policy. They have argued that the Arctic Railway would rather accelerate climate change and damage the fragile Arctic environment.

In this chapter, I set out to analyse how both proponents of the Arctic Railway and the Sámi have enacted their concerns regarding the effects of the construction of Arctic Railway on the Arctic environment. The concept of enactment (Law 2014) – which refers to “a patterned set of practices” (p. 8) that produce a particular reality – allows me to identify how the Arctic Railway is part of different, contradicting realities and how those realities are constructed. I outline that while the proponents of the Arctic Railway have enacted the railway as an opportunity for sustainable development, the Sámi have enacted it as an environmentally harmful project that would remove Sámi's ability to function fully. I argue that proponents' enactment is based on two documentary realities. By drawing on John Rawls (1971) and Nancy Fraser's (2008, 2010) conceptualisation of justice as well as on the capabilities approach Schlosberg (2010, 2011, 2013) has proposed to apply to environmental justice, I show that Sámi have used environmental justice language to make their reality. Taken together this chapter argues that the Sámi have turned the infrastructure project into a matter of justice.

This chapters starts by outlining how proponents of the Arctic Railway have been promoting the construction of the railway by appealing to climate change mitigation and have thereby enacted the Arctic Railway as an opportunity for sustainable development. Second, it is discussed through what kind of counter-narratives the Sámi have made their reality differently than that found in proponents' representation of the Arctic Railway as an opportunity for sustainable development. Section three concludes.

## 5.2 The Arctic Railway: A sustainable development project

Even though the Finnish government has acknowledged for the fact that “track construction always changes the natural environment” (FTA 2018, p. 12), proponents of the Arctic Railway have enacted the railway project as a sustainable development project.

On the one hand, Timo Lohi, who is development manager for the Region of Northern Lapland, has argued that to freight goods from Asia through the Northeast Passage and via Finland would be shorter and thus more environmentally friendly than to ship them through the Suez Canal to Rotterdam (Lohi, Interview). Lohi’s statement does not stand isolated, but rather it is part of a particular documentary reality, which describes the Arctic Railway as part of an environment-friendlier transport route for goods between Asia and Europe. According to Atkinson and Coffey (2004), documentary records do not stand alone, but refer, however implicitly, to other documents. Together they create a documentary reality (ibid.) that is closely woven together with the political reality they describe. In this sense, Lohi’s statement refers to the Arctic Business Forum Yearbook of 2018, where it is argued that the Arctic Railway would “offer an environmentally-friendly and faster transport alternative for goods between Northern Asia and Northern Europe via Finland by utilisation of the Northern Sea Route and development of Kirkenes as a hub port” (Rautajoki & Lakkapää 2018, p. 15). A description, which almost invisibly remains committed to resource extraction, the existing mode of production and global circulation of goods as well as the climate impact it entails.

On the other hand, proponents have argued that in times of climate change, there is a need for sustainable means of transport for both goods and people in Lapland. For example, Lohi recounted that nowadays, all mining products from Sodankylä are transported away from the mines by trucks and explained that to transport the minerals by train would be more environmentally friendly (Lohi, Interview). Rautajoki highlighted that there is not only need for “sustainable transport” for goods, but also for people, especially for tourists: “I think it is important that everybody who is traveling to Lapland has a feeling that they are not destroying the world, but that they are doing something good.” (Rautajoki, Interview.). Both Lohi’s and Rautajoki’s statements indirectly refer to the joint working group’s report on the Arctic Railway (LVM 2019a), where it is highlighted that “[o]n a global climate scale, the construction of a railway would have positive long-term effects. Railways are considered as an environmentally friendly way to travel and transport goods, and (...) the rail connection would cut transport CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as part of goods and passengers would shift to using a train connection thus helping to mitigate climate change” (LVM 2019a, p. 11). Moreover, Lohi emphasised that in the

future, when more goods from Asia will be unloaded in Kirkenes and transported south via Finland, goods should be transported south by train rather than by truck for the sake of the environment (ibid.) Similarly, it is explained in the joint working group's report on the Arctic Railway (LVM 2019a) that the Arctic Railway would have a clear climate impact since if the rail connection would not be built, "the increasing need of transport in the region would burden the current modes, principally lorries, coaches and airplanes, and would probably significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions" (p. 12). Together, Lohi's and Rautajoki's statements and the joint working group's report have created and belong to a particular documentary reality – a documentary reality which claims that the Arctic Railway would contribute to climate change mitigation.

Proponents of the Arctic Railway have made two claims regarding the impact of the Arctic Railway on the environment. First, the Arctic Railway would be part of an alternative global transport route, which would be environmentally friendlier than the existing one and second, it would help to mitigate climate change since it is a sustainable means of transport. Claims are enactment practices since they make and stabilise a certain reality (Walker 2012). Thus, by making those two claims, proponents of the Arctic Railway have enacted the Arctic Railway as a sustainable development project. To enact the Arctic Railway as a sustainable development project might help the proponents of the railway project to justify the construction of the railway through Sámi homeland areas. According to Lawrence (2014), by appealing to supposedly larger goods such as the environment, the expansion of industrial encroachment on lands traditionally used and occupied by Sámi has often been justified.

### **5.3 The Arctic Railway: An environmental injustice**

This section shows how the Sámi have contested the reality of the Arctic Railway as a sustainable development project and have instead enacted the Arctic Railway as an environmental harmful project that would undermine Sámi's community ability to function fully. The Sámi have constructed this particular reality by making a number of claims which shall be portrayed in the following.

#### *5.3.1 The Arctic Railway: The Arctic environment damaging project*

Sámi have rejected the narrative of the Arctic Railway as an environmentally friendly project and argued that the Arctic Railway would rather damage the fragile Arctic environment. According to Sámi, the construction of the Arctic Railway would have far reaching effects on the environment. For example, President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Tiina Sanila-Aikio argued that the Arctic Rail-

way “will change totally the circumstances of nature, both on land and on water” (Sanila-Aikio, Interview). She explained that by splitting the land, the Arctic Railway would degrade habitat crucial to Arctic wildlife and that swamps, rivers and small lakes would need to be drained and dried up in order that the railway could be constructed (ibid.). Sámi journalist and businesswoman Pirita Näkkäläjärvi also warned that by imposing the Arctic Railway, “a huge industrial infrastructure”, on the Arctic nature, the Arctic nature would be changed fundamentally (Näkkäläjärvi, Interview). Other Sámi have expressed the fear that the Arctic Railway could cause an environmental catastrophe. Sámi reindeer herder Jussa Seurujärvi, for example, explained that some years ago, oil was spilled during a railway accident elsewhere in Finland and highlighted that with the construction of the Arctic Railway the likelihood of a similar accident in Lapland would increase (Seurujärvi, Interview).

Sámi have further challenged proponent’s narrative of the Arctic Railway as an environmentally friendly project, by highlighting that the Arctic Railway would cause increased exploitation of Arctic natural resources and that it would therefore change and damage the Arctic nature (Greenpeace International 2018c). Seurujärvi criticised that

*“It [the Arctic Railway] has been marketed as an environmentally friendly project. But actually, it is not because there is going to be more logging along the railway tracks and new mines will be opened and also oil fields, which are under the ice, will be exploited.”* (Seurujärvi, Interview).

In this sense, the opponents of the project have highlighted that the building of the railway does not entail a reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from transportation nor is it a zero-sum-game, but that new infrastructure attracts and promotes new economic activities that has an impact on the climate.

While there is consensus between the Sámi and proponents that the Arctic Railway would indeed promote increased exploitation of Arctic natural resources, there is disagreement about whether the Arctic Railway would also cause growing interest in exploiting Arctic natural resources within the Sámi homeland and about how the Sámi would be affected. The Sámi are expecting that with the construction of the Arctic Railway the since centuries ongoing exploitation of their land by governments and corporations would continue. In the petition *Protect forests; Protect life*. Sámi argued that

*“For centuries, our land has been exploited by industry. (...) Now the Finnish government is planning to build an industrial railway across our land to the Arctic Ocean. (...) They want more pulp mills, more logging, more mines.”* (Greenpeace International 2018e, n/a)

While for the Sámi, it has been clear that with the construction of the Arctic Railway, “their lands would be divided and handed over to outside industries” (The Guardian 2019, n/a), proponents of the Arctic Railway have contested this particular claim. According to Timo Lohi, the Arctic Railway would only increase mining and forestry activities in Sodankylä, but not within the Sámi homeland as it is very difficult to log there and because there are no exploratory drillings going on at the moment (Lohi, Interview). Toni Laine, mayor of Inari municipality and critics of the Arctic Railway project, explained that at the moment, there is a moratorium on logging activities in Inari (Laine, Interview). Laine further emphasised that the municipality is not supporting any mining activities in Inari: “currently, we don’t want any mines,” he explained. At the present, there is indeed no mining, but only logging and gold panning taking place in the Sámi homeland, namely Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki and the Lappi reindeer herding district in the municipality of Sodankylä (The Guardian 2019). In 2018, 4’250 hectares of forest were set apart for logging and 253 gold extraction permits were already in place (ibid.). In the view of the Sámi representatives interviewed, it is however only a question of time before mines will be opened in the Sámi homeland. Sanila-Aikio pointed out that “there are mines all around the Sami area in Finland, Russia, Norway and Sweden” (The Guardian 2019, n/a) (see Figure 5). According to member of the Sámi Parliament in Finland Kirsti Kustula, since the mining law in Finland “is very flexible, (...) it is very possible that there will be mines opened after the construction of the Arctic Railway” (Kustula, Interview). Niila Rahko, member of the Sámi Youth Council in Finland, also criticised the Finnish mining law: “Finland has the worst mining law in Europe” and explained that it is very easy for companies to reserve land for mining (Rahko, Interview). Sámi’s fear that after the railway is constructed mines could be opened in the Sámi homeland is not without reason. Mining in the Arctic region is expanding in Finland and it was former Finnish government’s objective to attract foreign investments in the growing mining industry (Prime Minister’s Office 2013). Finland is already a very inviting country for the mining industry. Last year, Finland was ranked as the best place to invest by mining and exploration companies (The Guardian 2019). The Finnish government’s taxation regime encourages mining activities and investments (ibid.) and the free access to mineral data facilitated reservation and exploration processes (Lassila 2008). Lapland has proven to be rich in deposits and the Sámi homeland is probably not an exception



(Koivurova & Petrétei 2014). Therefore, a growing pressure to mine within the Sámi homeland can be expected (ibid.), and in the view of the Sámi representatives, the construction of the railway is increasing that pressure even though no new mining projects are currently envisioned.

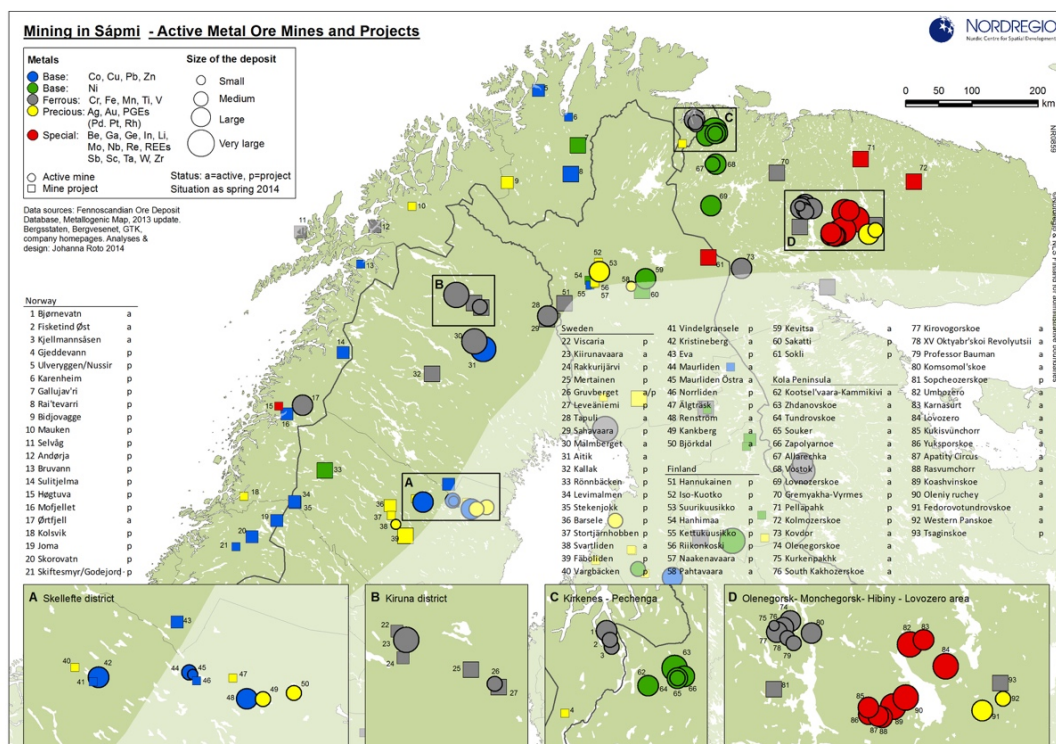


Figure 5: Mining in Sápmi: Active Metal Ore Mines and Projects (Nordregion 2013).

### 5.3.2 The Arctic Railway: A climate change accelerating project

The Sámi have further challenged proponent's claim that the Arctic Railway would contribute to climate change mitigation. Sámi representatives have pointed out the increased exploitation of Arctic natural resources, which the Arctic Railway would cause, would accelerate climate change. According to Sanila-Aikio, "it is ridiculous that the Finnish government is calling the railway project sustainable development because the things they would like to transport, they are making climate change faster" (Sanila-Aikio, Interview). In a similar manner, Näkkäljärvi argued that since the Arctic Railway would lead to more mining, logging and oil and gas drillings in the Barents Sea, the construction of the Arctic Railway goes against the targets of the Paris Agreement and the Finnish government's climate policy (Näkkäljärvi, Interview). In the joint press release of Greenpeace and Sámi organisations on the Arctic Railway, it has been stressed that logging in the Northern forests is especially harmful for the climate (Greenpeace International 2018c). The northern forests store large amounts

of carbon – the boreal forest that stretch from Alaska through Canada, Norway, Sweden and Finland to Russia is the largest terrestrial carbon store – and the carbon sink can be lost for a century after logging as trees grow slowly in the Arctic climate. Therefore, the Sámi and Greenpeace Nordic have argued that northern forests should be protected to save us all from climate change rather than to fall victim to the Arctic Railway (ibid.) During her speech at the Arctic Biodiversity Congress, Sanila-Aikio (2018) also highlighted that the preservation of the northern forests as a necessity to mitigate climate change:

*“(...) to build a Railway to connect the Arctic sea and rest of Europe to transport natural resources, even oil, of the Arctic are not environmental friendly choices. We need our forests to store carbon, maintain biodiversity and for the traditional livelihoods of the Sámi. We don’t need a railway to cut through our forests and territories that benefits of the warming Arctic.”* (Sanila-Aikio 2018, n/a).

The Sámi thus question and delegitimise the Arctic Railway not only by claiming that the Arctic Railway would contribute to climate change, but also by emphasising the importance of the northern forests for climate security. In her speech, Sanila-Aikio (2018) further suggested that if governments really want to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, not only should natural terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems be protected, but also should the rights of indigenous peoples to govern their land and waters be recognised and safeguarded. This, she argued, because indigenous peoples are effective stewards of over 80 per cent of earth’s biodiversity and precious natural environments (ibid.). Similarly, Laiti has emphasised the role of the Sámi as stewards of the Arctic environment. During the demonstrations against the Arctic Railway, she said that the Sámi are the guardians of their land and that they will take care of it in a sustainable way as they have done for thousands of years (Greenpeace 2018c). These statements by Sanila-Aikio and Laiti can be interpreted as a further attempt to delegitimise the Arctic Railway and the proponent’s claim about the Arctic Railway as an environmentally friendly project. By emphasising their role as stewards of the Arctic environment, the Sámi have tried to give authority to their claim about the Arctic Railway as a climate change accelerating project.

The Sámi are concerned with climate change since they “will be the first ones to be influenced by climate change” (Sanila-Aikio, Interview). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (2019), climate change does not only affect the Arctic disproportionately, but also some indigenous people are “at disproportionately higher risk of adverse consequences with global warming of 1.5°C and beyond” (p. 11). The close relationship of some indigenous people with their natural environment makes them especially vulnerable to global warming and climate change (Baid 2008). In fact, Sámi’s traditional livelihoods are already under pressure because of climate change. The warming of the climate has reduced Sámi’s access to economically and culturally important plants and animals, such as berries, salmon and moose. Sámi reindeer herder Olav Mathis-Eira explained that in some years, there are a lot of starving reindeer in winter. Higher temperatures and increased rainfall are making it difficult for the reindeer to reach the lichen since now the lichen are often covered by ice. Moreover, the thinning of the ice on rivers and lakes has made reindeer herding tracks more dangerous and has forced Sámi to abandon traditional migration routes. Since many aspects of Sámi culture are linked to reindeer herding, Olav Mathis-Eira argued that “climate change is threatening the entire Sami, as a people” (ibid., p. 4).

### 5.3.3 *The Arctic Railway: A project destroying Sámi’s basis of life*

Based on the claims that the Arctic Railway would damage the Arctic environment and accelerate climate change, the Sámi have made another claim. They have argued that the Arctic Railway would be a direct assault against the Sámi, their cultural traditions and Sámi’s ability to reproduce those traditions. Sámi have articulated that their traditional livelihoods and culture depend on a healthy environment and that by damaging the Arctic nature and accelerating climate change, the Arctic Railway would undermine Sámi’s basis of life. For example, Sanila-Aikio explained that

*“[w]hen the Arctic Railway comes, Sámi people will extinct because the impacts to the nature are so huge and we have to change our habits and the way to practise our traditional culture”* (Blanc 2018, n/a).

Seurujärvi highlighted in a similar manner that Sámi’s way of life and culture is defined by nature. He further expressed that the Arctic Railway would undermine Sámi’s ability to continue and reproduce their ancestral traditions:



*“We, the Sámi, have always lived with nature. It has provided everything we need. If the Arctic railway is build, our language, culture and our way of living would be lost. I want to follow my ancestor’s traditions. This land is our life.”* (Greenpeace International 2019b, n/a).

As Seurujärvi, Sámi activist Laiti (2018) also emphasised that Sámi’s survival depends on nature. She especially stressed Sámi’s dependence on the forests within the Sámi homeland and how detrimental the impact on Sámi culture would be, if the Arctic Railway would cut through and fragment those forests:

*“These forests are not just made up of trees, they are the backbone of our culture and identity. Our reindeer rely heavily on large areas of intact old forests for their survival. These forests and the old trees provide shelter and food. Without the forests, the reindeer will disappear. Without the reindeer, Sámi culture will disappear.”* (Laiti 2018, n/a).

Laiti’s statement elucidates that Sámi culture is based on the proximity with nature. If nature remains intact, traditional Sámi livelihoods can remain strong, which means that the Sámi culture will flourish.

The statements made by Sanila-Aikio, Seurujärvi and Laiti all reveal the deep relationship Sámi have with nature. The Sámi are represented as having lived with nature and they have been able to make a living of what is provided by nature. Their ability to continue and reproduce their ancestral traditions depends on the preservation of nature. It becomes thus evident that Sámi’s ontology of the world is, contrary to the modernist ontology, not based on the strict separation of society and culture from nature (cf. De la Cadena 2010). For Sámi, the ontology of the world is rather a relational one where society and nature are interconnected, nature is alive and human and non-human beings hold mutually dependent lives (cf. Lassila 2018). By making the claim that through damaging the Arctic nature and through accelerating climate change, the Arctic Railway would remove Sámi’s ability to exercise traditional livelihoods and to reproduce cultural traditions, the Sámi also challenge the allegedly universal distinction between nature and culture.

#### 5.3.4 The Arctic Railway: A distributional injustice

The Sámi have enacted that Arctic Railway as an environmentally harmful project by making two claims: The Arctic Railway would damage the Arctic environment and it would accelerate climate change. Assuming that the Arctic Railway is indeed an environmentally harmful project, the Sámi

would be disproportionately harmed by the construction of the railway. First, the Sámi would disproportionately suffer from the negative impacts on the Arctic environment caused by the construction of the railway as well as by the consequent increased exploitation of Arctic natural resources because Sámi would live in close proximity to the railway and the extraction sites. Second, the Sámi would feel the effects of accelerated climate change disproportionately, since climate change both affects the Arctic ecosystems especially much (IPCC 2018) and threatens Sámi's livelihoods and existence (cf. Baid 2008). The Arctic Railway is thus an issue of distributional equality (cf. Walker 2012): The benefits and burdens of the Arctic Railway would be unequally distributed among the population of Finland.

Walker (2012) has pointed out that the unequal distribution of burdens between different groups of people is not always considered as unjust. A normative argument has to be made about the difference of something. A judgment or a claim about, for example, the severity, consequences or morality of an inequality has to accompany the description of the unevenness of something (ibid.). Walker thereby builds on John Rawls (1972) conceptualisation of justice as the fair distribution of benefits and burdens. To Rawls, justice is an interpretation of the principles of justice, which are agreed upon in an initial situation that is fair and that "(...) define the appropriate distribution of benefits and burdens of social cooperation" (p. 4).

Based on this understanding of justice, the Arctic Railway can be classified as a matter of distributional environmental justice because the Sámi have made a normative argument about the uneven distribution of environmental harms caused by the Arctic Railway among the Finnish population. They have clearly articulated that the fact that they would be disproportionately affected by the construction of the Arctic Railway is undesirable and morally wrong.

#### 5.3.5 *The Arctic Railway: A procedural injustice*

The Sámi have seen their ability to continue practicing their traditional livelihoods and to reproduce their cultural traditions endangered by the Arctic Railway, since the railway project is in Sámi's opinion an unsustainable encroachment on Arctic nature. They have however enacted the Arctic Railway as a project that would undermine Sámi's ability to function fully through a second claim. They have argued that they have not been properly included in the decision-making process concerning the Arctic Railway and that the Finnish government has denied them a say in deciding how their land – the land on which their survival depends – is used.

The Finnish government is not unaware of Sámi's dependence on nature. In *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013*, the Finnish government has explicitly called for considering "[t]he significance of the natural environment in the effects to safeguard indigenous cultures, living conditions, traditional livelihoods and language" in all operations causing changes to the environment (Prime Minister's Office 2013, p. 39). The Finnish government therefore recognises "the need to consult indigenous peoples and to offer them adequate opportunities to be involved in various actions, particularly when they have a direct impact on their living conditions" (Prime Minister's Office 2013, p. 22). The Finnish government's duty to consult with the Sámi on matters that affect the Sámi homeland and Sámi culture and language is enshrined in the Act on the Sámi Parliament. In this document, Section 9 obligates the Finnish government to "negotiate with the Sámi Parliament in all far-reaching and important measures which may directly and in a specific way affect the Sámi as an indigenous people and which concern (...) the management, use, leasing and assignment of state lands (...)" (Ministry of Justice 2003, p. 3).

According to the Sámi, their claim that the Arctic Railway would undermine their basis of life did however not make the Finnish government sit up and take notice, but rather Sámi's claim has been ignored. The Sámi have expressed their dissatisfaction with the negotiations the Finnish government held with the Sámi Parliament in Finland based on Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament. Sanila-Aikio explained that the Sámi Parliament in Finland could neither influence the *Arctic Ocean Railway Report* nor the *Final Report of the Joint Working Group Between Finland and Norway on the Arctic Railway* through negotiations with the Finnish government (Sanila-Aikio, Interview). She claimed that their feedback has not been taken into consideration and their demand to conduct a cultural, social, economic and environmental impact assessment of the Arctic Railway project has been ignored (ibid.) Both a Sámi activist I spoke to and Seurujärvi have shared Sanila-Aikio's view that "the Sámi Parliament has been heard, but not listened to (Sámi activist, Interview). Seurujärvi highlighted that the Sámi "have not been involved in the planning process at all" (Seurujärvi, Interview). Näkkäläjärvi explained that Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament generally fails to guarantee Sámi a say in the decision-making process and that it does therefore not come as a surprise that the Sámi have again been overlooked. She said that:

*"(...) even though according to the Sámi Parliament Act, the Sámi Parliament should be consulted and heard when there are decisions that impact Sámi language and culture, and that have major impacts in the Sámi region, then what actually happens is that the Sámi Parliament gets to*

*give a statement or gets to come to Helsinki and tell their opinion, but the Finnish government does not actually have to take that in account, they don't even have to listen. So, that is what happens every time. (...) It is always the outsiders, always the Finnish people, Finnish politicians and the member of Parliament of the Lapland region that are listened to. And that is a big problem and it is happening again with the railway."*

To Ida-Maria Helander, member of the Sámi Youth organisation, the negotiations the Finnish government conducted with the Sámi Parliament regarding the Arctic Railway were 'a farce'. According to her, the Finnish government did not fulfil its consultation duty, but did only negotiate with the Sámi Parliament in order to be able to "cross it from the list" (Helander, Interview).

The Sámi Parliament further criticised that, despite the provision in the law regarding negotiations, the Finnish government did not consult with them on the chosen routing of the railway (The Barents Observer 2018d). Sanila-Aikio explained that the Ministry of Transport decided that the railroad would be routed from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes and set up a joint working group with Norway to conduct further research without any consultations (Asian Pacific Foundation of Canada 2018).

Moreover, the Saami Council (2018) argued that to fail "to fulfil the rights of the Sami to participate in the decision-making process of an industrial project of such dimensions is (...) a clear breach of international law" (n/a). Sanila-Aikio clarified that Sámi's right to free, prior and informed consent has not been fulfilled (Pacific Standard 2019). She explained that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which Finland has signed, obligates governments to "establish bottom-up participation and consultation of an indigenous population before beginning any development on ancestral land, or utilizing resources within their territory" (n/a) and to conduct consultations in good faith respectively in order to fulfil the right to free, prior and informed consent (ibid.).

In sum, the Sámi have articulated a procedural injustice and a misrepresentation respectively in the context of the Arctic Railway. According to Nancy Fraser (2010), "[m]isrepresentation occurs when political boundaries and/or decision rules function wrongly to deny some people the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction – including, but not only, in political arena" (p. 35). The Sámi have claimed that Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament does not provide the Sámi the possibility to participate on a par with the Finnish government in the decision-making process over matters concerning Sámi culture, Sámi language and the Sámi homeland. On the one hand, it is the Finnish government who decides over which matters to conduct negotiations with the Sámi Parliament in Finland. On the other hand, even if the Finnish government consults with the Sámi

Parliament in Finland, the Finnish government is not obligated to take Sámi's concern into account. Furthermore, the current national decision-making rules do not obligate the Finnish government to fulfil the in international law established right of the Sámi to free, prior and informed consent. According to the Sámi, the Finnish government did not consult with the Sámi Parliament in Finland in good faith over the plan to construct a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes through Sámi homeland.

### 5.3.6 *A language of environmental justice*

The language of the Sámi regarding the effect of the Arctic Railway on the Arctic environment and on Sámi's livelihoods and culture as well as the claim that Sami have not had the possibility to participate in the decision-making process regarding the Arctic Railway fits with the capabilities approach to environmental justice. Thus, the Sámi have enacted the Arctic Railway as an environmentally harmful project that would remove Sámi's ability to function fully through an environmental justice language.

The capabilities approach to environmental justice can be traced back to Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum whose theory of justice focuses on the capabilities necessary for a human to fully function in the life chosen for itself (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010). Sen and Nussbaum have argued that the focus of justice should not be the distribution of various goods, but rather on the capabilities needed to transform those goods into the potential for individuals to flourish in life. This conceptualisation of justice thus "gives ethical significance to human functioning and flourishing, and finds harm – injustice – in forces that limit that potential" (p. 15). Schlosberg & Carruthers (2010) have argued that the capabilities approach to justice can be applied not only to social injustices, but also to situations of environmental injustice. This because the capabilities theory includes a range of issues of environmental justice. Environmental justice is concerned with inequity in the distribution of 'environmental bads' and addresses recognition and authentic inclusion and political participation of, for example, the culture or races that have been at the receiving end of the inequity. Distributive justice, individual and cultural recognition and procedural justice are all identifiable as part of the variety of capabilities necessary to construct a functioning life (ibid.). In order to make the capabilities approach even more fitting to define environmental justice, Schlosberg & Carruthers (2010) suggested that the capabilities approach should be expanded to include capabilities important not just for the functioning of individuals, but for communities as well. They argued that contemporary environmental justice

movements do not understand injustice as faced only by individuals, but for them, environmental injustice takes away the ability of both individuals and communities to function fully (ibid.).

To the Sámi, the Arctic Railway is an environmental injustice. Based on the claims that the Arctic Railway would damage the Arctic environment and accelerate climate change, the Sámi could have framed the Arctic Railway as a distributional injustice. Rather than focus on the unequal distribution of environmental bads, the Sámi have however framed the Arctic Railway as a project that would remove other capabilities necessary for Sámi's ability to function fully. On the one hand, the Sámi have argued that the Finnish government has denied Sámi authentic inclusion in the decision-making process over the Arctic Railway and thus the possibility to decide or at least have a say in their future. On the other hand, the Sámi have claimed that the Arctic Railway would remove Sámi's ability to practise traditional livelihoods and to reproduce cultural traditions and the relationship with nature, since the Arctic Railway would damage the Arctic nature and accelerate climate change. They have expressed that they depend on a healthy environment to preserve their traditional way of life. Thereby, the Sámi have highlighted what Schlosberg (2012) called "the integrated reality of individuals within ecosystems" (p. 176). Sámi's potential to function is determined by the broadly functioning Arctic ecological system in which the Sámi are embedded and dependent on (cf. Schlosberg 2012). In the opinion of the Sámi, both the construction of the Arctic Railway itself and the consequent increase in resource exploitation and accelerated climate change would threaten the integrity of the Arctic ecosystems and thereby undermine Sámi's potential to function fully (cf. Schlosberg 2012).

## 5.4 Conclusion

The Arctic environment is extremely sensitive (Prime Ministers Office 2013). Thus, human action quickly results in permanent changes in the Arctic region and the effects of climate change are particularly fast and dramatic. According to *Finland's Strategy for the Arctic 2013*, in the Arctic, all activities need to be ecologically sustainable (ibid.). In the opinion of the proponents of the Arctic Railway, a railway connection from Rovaniemi to Kirkenes would meet the requirements in order to be considered an ecologically sustainable activity, which would furthermore contribute to climate change mitigation since trains are sustainable means of transportation.

The Sámi have however interpreted the effects of the Arctic Railway on the Arctic environment and climate very differently. They have therefore enacted a reality of the Arctic Railway contradicting to the one of the proponents, namely the Arctic Railway as an environmentally harmful

project that would undermine Sámi's community ability to function fully. They have created their reality of the Arctic Railway through a variety of claims, including by making reference to widely held views of the Sámi as dependent on nature for their livelihoods and to international human rights legislation. They have argued that both the construction and the increase in resource exploitation, which the railway would cause, would damage the fragile Arctic environment as well as accelerate climate change. These two claims established, they went on to claim that the Arctic Railway would strip the Sámi of their basis of life. They argued that since the Arctic nature is the basis for their traditional livelihoods and for their culture, the construction of the railway and the consequent destruction of the Arctic nature would undermine their ability to continue practicing their traditional livelihoods and to reproduce their cultural traditions and their relationship with nature. Finally, they highlighted that the denial of the right to be involved in the decision-making process concerning the Arctic Railway undermined their possibility to influence how the land on which their traditional livelihoods and their culture depends, is used. By making these claims, the Sámi have articulated three capabilities essential to the functioning and flourishing of the Sámi as a community. These are an intact environment, the preservation of Sámi traditional livelihoods and culture and political participation. Since the Arctic Railway would undermine these three, for community functioning essential capabilities, the Arctic Railway constitutes an environmental justice to the Sámi and the construction of the Arctic Railway becomes a matter of justice.

For the Sámi, the conflict over the Arctic Railway is thus not only a struggle over the use of land, but also a struggle for the health of the environment, for the preservation of traditional Sámi livelihoods and culture, for more political rights and for the recognition of the link between the environmental conditions and traditional Sámi livelihoods and culture.



## 6 Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have investigated on how the cost and benefits of infrastructural development as well as the cultural and environmental concerns are enacted by the Finnish state and Sámi representatives in the conflict over the Arctic Railway. I have examined this through a lens of environmental justice and political ecology and with the help of diverse analytical concepts – most importantly with the concept of enactment (Law 2004) that describes the process by which a particular reality is made. In this chapter, I summarise my findings to present an answer to my problem statement and reflect on whose enactment of the Arctic Railway prevails. I further discuss the findings with regard to two other environmental conflicts. I then move on to make some policy recommendations and finally, I discuss possible areas for future research.

### 6.1 Enactments of the Arctic Railway

I found that the Arctic Railway is part of several, but contradictory realities. The Finnish state has enacted the Arctic Railway as a promise of progress and improvement and as an opportunity for sustainable development. The Sámi have created their own, with Finnish state's reality of the Arctic Railway conflicting reality. They have enacted the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi's cultural survival as well as an environmentally harmful project that would remove Sámi's ability to function fully. The conflict over the Arctic Railway is thus not merely a disagreement between the Finnish state and the Sámi about whether the benefits or the costs of the infrastructural project outweigh. It is rather a struggle over who has the power to make the dominant reality of the Arctic Railway, meaning who has the power to influence decisively how the Arctic Railway is publically perceived. In this context, Sámi's enactment of the Arctic Railway as particular kinds of problems can be understood as a counterhegemonic scale-making project. Scale here refers to the qualitative framing of an issue and a scale-making project is thus a particular perspective on the essence of an issue (Krøjer 2019). The Sámi have challenged Finnish state's perspective, which is also the prevailing one, on the essence of the Arctic Railway. Rather than a matter of sustainable infrastructural development, the Sámi have attempted to scale the Arctic Railway as an issue of cultural assimilation and environmental injustice. This particular scaling of the Arctic Railway as an issue of cultural assimilation and environmental injustice has enabled the Sámi to make claims for self-determination and justice. The disagreement about which reality the Arctic Railway belongs to and about how the Arctic Railway should thus be scaled, would make the negotiation of a compromise between the Sámi and the Finnish government difficult.



As of today, it seems that the Sámi have not yet been successful in making their enactment of the Arctic Railway as a threat to Sámi's cultural survival and as an environmental injustice prevail. In communication with Finns, I came to the understanding that the wider Finnish public is rather fond of the idea to construct a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. In times of climate change, more environmentally friendly means of transportation are considered to be needed. Even though national and international media have reported more on Sámi's perspective on the Arctic Railway, Finnish state's reality in which the Arctic Railway is seen as an opportunity for sustainable development seems to be the dominant one. Furthermore, it is difficult to assess whether the Sámi have been able to influence Finnish government's actions regarding the Arctic Railway. Since the publication of the second report on the Arctic Railway in February 2019, the Finnish government has neither spoken on the Arctic Railway nor on Sámi's critique of the Arctic Railway. It is not known whether Finland's new government, which was formed beginning of June 2019, is supporting the by the previous government initiated and promoted idea to construct a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. In the government's programme released in June 2019, there is no word about the Arctic Railway (Finnish Government 2019). The programme however says that "[t]he Kemi–Laurila–Haaparanta line will be electrified. (...) The electrification will open up a connection via northern Sweden for freight and passenger transport to Europe and the Arctic Ocean. The rail line will provide a new transport route, serve the needs of industries and open up the potential for passenger transport across borders." (ibid., p. 118). This decision to electrify the Kemi-Laurila-Haaparanta line could be read as a decision to abandon the idea to construct a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. Not to mention the Arctic Railway in the government's programme could however also be interpreted as a sign for indecision, i.e. that the new government does not yet know whether to continue planning a railway between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes or to drop the plan, as well as an attempt to silence the conflict over the Arctic Railway. Several of the interviewed Sámi representatives highlighted that the Arctic Railway will continue to be a threat to the Sámi as long as the Finnish government has not decided to drop the plan to construct a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes once for all. Up to now, the Sámi have been waiting in vain for this particular decision.

## **6.2 Comparison to other environmental conflicts**

The Sámi have opposed the Arctic Railway since the Ministry of Transport and Communication requested the assessment of all possible routes for a railway to the Arctic Ocean in 2017. Through

various acts of dissent, the Sámi have criticised the Finnish government for planning a large-scale infrastructural project within the Sámi homeland that would impose serious consequences on Sámi traditional livelihoods and culture as well as for not properly involving the Sámi Parliament in the decision-making process over the Arctic Railway. By calling out the Arctic Railway as an existential threat to Sámi culture and by choosing environmental justice language, the Sámi have chosen to turn the conflict over the Arctic Railway into a matter of self-determination and justice. For the Sámi, the conflict over the Arctic Railway is about establishing their authority over decisions concerning the land Sámi have traditionally used and occupied and about preventing changes in their living environment that would undermine the possibilities to practise traditional livelihoods.

The Sámi could of course have resisted the Arctic Railway differently. They could have turned the conflict into a matter of economic livelihoods and money. Lora-Wainwright et al. (2012) showed that the local community of the Chinese village Baocun have learned how to live in polluted conditions. The authors argued that the local social and political economic context in Baocun required the villagers to value their environment in a largely economic fashion. Since Baocun's local economy depends on mining and processing phosphorous and since local officials have sided with the industry, the local population has learned to perceive pollution as inevitable and to secure compensation for the damage incurred (ibid.). In a similar manner, the Sámi could have asked for compensation for the damage the Arctic Railway would inflict on traditional Sámi livelihoods rather than to oppose the Arctic Railway in principle. They could have tried to quantify the expected losses of, for example, reindeer grazing land.

Sámi's way of resisting the Arctic Railway resembles however more Standing Rock Sioux tribe's resistance against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). From April 2016 to February 2017, the Sioux tribe tried to stop the construction of an oil pipeline that today connects the production fields in North Dakota to refineries in Illinois and crosses through tribal lands (Whyte 2017). Thousands of people – indigenous and non-indigenous alike – joined protest camps, which had popped up near the site where the pipeline today crosses the Missouri River (Archambault 2016). Similarly, the Sámi have opposed the Arctic Railway by protesting against its construction. Sámi's resistance does resemble the Sioux tribe's resistance even more when it comes to the language applied by the indigenous peoples in their opposition. The Sioux tribe justified its protests by arguing that the DAPL poses a risk to the water quality, their cultural heritage and to future generations. Indigenous women's associations went so far as to described the DAPL as contributing to the physical erasure of indigenous peoples (ibid.). David Archambault (2016), former tribal chairman of the Standing Rock

Indian Reservation, highlighted that the government has failed to meaningfully consult with the tribe and argued that the government has once again taken Sioux tribe's lands and resources without regard for tribal interests. Similarly, Sámi representatives have presented the Arctic Railway as a project of eliminating consequences to the Sámi as the railway would undermine the possibilities to practise traditional Sámi livelihoods, which constitute the foundation of Sámi culture. Moreover, just like Archambault, Sámi representatives have articulated a procedural injustice by claiming that Sámi's concerns about the Arctic Railway were not heard and that the Finnish government had failed to obtain Sámi's free, prior and informed consent. Finally, Sámi representatives have also drawn the connection to the past by highlighting that the Arctic Railway would be the continuation of the assimilation process Sámi have endured for centuries.

This short presentation of two other environmental conflicts highlights that how the environment is valued and what kind of action is taken against the destruction of the environment varies with places and thus depends on the local context. It is therefore no coincidence that the form and the language the Sámi and the Sioux tribe have chosen to oppose the Arctic Railway and the DAPL are alike as the respective local historical, political and social contexts are similar. Both the Sioux tribe as well as the Sámi are deeply connected with nature, suffered from settler-colonialism and cultural assimilation in the past and are defending their traditional land against continued industrial exploitation facilitated by the unequal relationship between the respective state and its indigenous people (Whyte 2017, Lehtola 2004). The answer to why the Sámi have turned the conflict over the Arctic Railway into a matter of self-determination and justice and not into a matter of economic livelihoods and money thus rests with the specific local context and in particular with Sámi's decade long struggle for self-determination and the fact that if nature is destroyed also Sámi culture is harmed.

### 6.3 Policy recommendations

It seems that the Sámi Parliament and the Finnish government do interpret *Section 9 – Obligation to negotiate* of the Act on the Sámi Parliament differently. According to Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament, the authorities shall negotiate with the Sámi Parliament over, among others, “the management, use, leasing and assignment of state lands” in the Sámi homeland (Ministry of Justice 2003, p. 3). Sámi representatives have criticised that despite this provision, the Finnish government did neither consult with the Sámi Parliament before requesting the assessment of all possible routes for a railway to the Arctic Ocean (Arctic Deeply 2017) nor before deciding on the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes route (The Barents Observer 2018d). I therefore advise the Finnish government to find an

agreement with the Sámi Parliament in which phase of a project that concerns the management, use, leasing and assignment of state lands in the Sámi homeland, the authorities have to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament and to specify Section 9 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament accordingly.

Considering the strong criticism Sámi have expressed towards the Arctic Railway, the Finnish government should first and foremost commission a cultural, social, economic and environmental impact assessment of the Arctic Railway if it is decided that the planning of the railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes should go further. I further recommend that as long as there is no clarity on how the Arctic Railway would affect the Arctic environment, Sámi traditional livelihoods and Sámi culture, no land should be reserved for the construction of the railway. As argued in Chapter Four, there is indeed a risk involved that the Arctic Railway is a settler-colonial project which would contribute to the elimination of the Sámi as a distinct people. I therefore advise the Regional Council of Lapland against the inclusion of the Arctic Railway into the regional land-use plan 2040 for Northern Lapland, but rather to await the impact assessment of the Arctic Railway.

#### **6.4 Areas for future research**

The conflict over the Arctic Railway will continue to be an interesting research topic. In May 2019, the Finnish company Finest Bay Area Development Oy (2019) communicated that together with a Norwegian development company, they will examine ways to implement a railway connection between Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. CEO of the Finnish development company Peter Vesterbacka said that the concerns Sámi have raised against the Arctic Railway can be ironed out through discussion – an opining which got immediately rejected by the Sámi (Yle 2019).

Sámi are increasingly competing with other interests over the land that has been traditionally used and occupied by them. A research project producing an overview over all current land-use projects in the Sámi homeland, such as tourist activities, forestry projects and gold mines, and their individual effects on traditional Sámi livelihoods, could help to secure the possibility for Sámi to continue practising traditional livelihoods. The impact assessment of a new land-use project, lets say the Arctic Railway, could then be done with regard to the already existing land-use projects. Rather than to assess the effect of the Arctic Railway isolated from all other land-use projects, the railway's effect could be added to the effects of the already existing projects and it could be decided based on this total effect on Sámi livelihoods, whether the project is socially sustainable or not.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview guide for Sámi representatives**

- 1) Could you please introduce yourself?
- 2) What are the Sámi's concerns in relation to the Arctic Railway?
- 3) What are Sámi's main arguments against the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 4) What are Sámi's main demands regarding the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 5) To what extent can the Sámi influence the decision-making process regarding the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 6) Is there need to change the laws in order to guarantee the Sámi meaningful and continuous influence in decision-making processes?
- 7) How does this conflict over the Arctic Railway influence Sámi-government relations?
- 8) What does the Finnish government say and do in reaction to Sámi's critique?
- 9) Why is the Finnish government, in your opinion, promoting the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 10) According to Finnish government, the Arctic Railway is crucial to Finnish government's plan to develop the Arctic Region. Do Sámi support Finnish government's ambition to develop the Arctic Region in this particular way?
- 11) What are the Sámi doing to prevent the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 12) How do the Sámi raise public awareness for their concerns and demands?
- 13) Does the media, both regional and national, report on government's as well as on Sámi's opinion on the Arctic Railway?
- 14) Have there been any similar conflicts between the Sámi and the Finnish state in the past? In what way are they similar?
- 15) How could future conflicts between the Sámi and Finnish state be prevented?
- 16) Also in Sweden (Gállok) and Norway (Forsen (Storheia) & Alta) there are conflicts between Sámi and the respective state over the utilization of natural resources and over ownership of land going on. Do you see any parallels to those conflicts and if so, what?

### **Interview guide for proponents of the Arctic Railway**

- 1) Could you please introduce yourself?
- 2) What kind of benefits do you expect from the construction of the Arctic Railway?

- 3) What are the main arguments for the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 4) What are you and other proponents doing to promote the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 5) Who and which organisations do support the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 6) The Sámi are against the construction of the Arctic Railway. How did the Regional Council of Lapland/the municipalities of Northern Lapland/the municipality of Rovaniemi enter into dialogue with the Sámi over the Arctic Railway?
- 7) The Sámi argue that the Arctic Railway would make it very difficult to herd reindeer and to fish in the traditional way and that the railway would even endanger Sámi's cultural survival. What do you think, how would the railway affect the Sámi?
- 8) The Sámi and also environmental organisations have voiced that the Arctic Railway would damage the Arctic environment and would contribute to climate change because the railway would improve the business possibilities for the mining, forestry, oil & gas and tourist industries. What do you respond to this criticism?
- 9) How does the conflict over the Arctic Railway influence the relation between Sámi and state officials?
- 10) Have there been any similar conflicts between the Sámi and the Finnish state in the past? In what way are they similar?
- 11) Apparently, the Ministry of Transport and Communication has dropped the plan to build the Arctic Railway for now. The railway is however still included in the regional land-use plan 2040. How optimistic are you that it will be constructed?
- 12) What were the consequences for Lapland and Finland, if the Arctic Railway would not be constructed?

### **Interview guide for representatives of Greenpeace Nordic**

- 1) Could you please introduce yourself?
- 2) What are Greenpeace's main concerns in relation to the Arctic Railway?
- 3) What are Greenpeace's main arguments against the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 4) What is Greenpeace doing to prevent the construction of the Arctic Railway?
- 5) Why is Greenpeace supporting the Sámi in their struggle against the Arctic Railway?
- 6) How has Greenpeace supported the Sámi in their struggle against the Arctic Railway?
- 7) How will the cooperation between Greenpeace and the Sámi in relation to the Arctic Railway continue?

- 8) Has there been similar cooperation between Greenpeace and the Sámi in the past? In what way has it been similar?
- 9) Last September, Greenpeace invited representatives of the Canadian First Nations, and a representative of the Maori community of New Zealand to join the Sámi's protest against the Arctic Railway. Why did Greenpeace invite them?
- 10) Why is the Finnish government, in Greenpeace's opinion, promoting the construction of the Arctic Railway?