

# Green development or green colonialism

Experiences of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line in Sámi herding areas in Riehpovuotna

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Human Geography  
60 credits

Spring 2023

Number of words: 45 302

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2023

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## **Abstract**

Addressing global climate change is a social and political process, producing varying impacts for individuals and communities based on their socio-economic and geographical position. Adapting to climate change can be understood as a socio-environmental conflict, with power asymmetries and different knowledges meeting. This thesis seeks to explore a key paradox in climate change adaptation processes and infrastructure development in indigenous areas; the contradictory relationship between green developments and green colonialism.

The thesis is a qualitative case study, using a triangulation of data; individual interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The data has been collected through a multi-sited fieldwork in Oslo and Finnmark. The conflict over the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line in Kvalsund is used to explore the pressure on Sámi reindeer herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts from so-called green developments. The study aims to contribute to an understanding of why renewable energy infrastructure can be experienced as green colonialism. Following Schlosberg's articulation of the environmental justice framework (2007), the analysis found perspectives of distribution, recognition and participation in the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line case. In addition, the thesis aims to further develop the analytical concept of green colonialism, meaning a continuation of colonial processes legitimated by climate change adaptation. The thesis suggests that so-called green developments of energy production and infrastructure in Sámi reindeer herding areas are experienced as green colonialism. Furthermore, the thesis argues that Sámi perspectives are willfully excluded from the Norwegian energy transition. This is due to unequal distribution of risks, superficial recognition and limited participation in processes concerning Sámi livelihoods. This results in a mutual lack of trust between Sámi stakeholders and Norwegian authorities. Moreover, the participants in this study are significantly concerned about the ability future generations may have to continue traditional Sámi reindeer herding due to climate change and land encroachments. This thesis argues that further dispossession of Sámi lands for large-scale development can represent a continuation of the period of Norwegianization. In conclusion, there is a need for decolonizing knowledges about the energy transition, and including Sámi perspectives effectively in decision-making processes.

## **Sammendrag**

Å adressere globale klimaendringer er en sosial og politisk prosess, som produserer varierende virkninger for individer og lokalsamfunn basert på deres sosioøkonomiske og geografiske plassering. Tilpasning til klimaendringer kan forstås som en sosio-miljømessig konflikt, der maktulikheter og ulike former for kunnskap møtes. Denne masteroppgaven søker å utforske et spesifikt paradoks i klimatilpasnings-prosesser og infrastrukturutvikling i urfolksområder; det motsettede forholdet mellom grønn utvikling og grønn kolonialisme.

Oppgaven er en kvalitativ casestudie, som bruker triangulering av data; individuelle intervjuer, deltakende observasjon og dokumentanalyse. Datamaterialet er samlet gjennom feltarbeid i Oslo og Finnmark. Konflikten over 420-Kv Skaidi-Hammerfest kraftlinjen i Kvalsund brukes for å studere presset på samiske reindriftsutøvere i Fiettar og Fálá-distriktene fra såkalte grønne utviklingsprosjekter. Studien søker å bidra til en forståelse av hvorfor fornybar energiinfrastruktur kan oppleves som grønn kolonialisme. Gjennom Schlosbergs rammeverk for miljørettferdighet (environmental justice), har analysen funnet utfordringer knyttet til fordeling, anerkjennelse og deltakelse, i 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest konflikten. Videre søker studien å bidra til utvikling av begrepet grønn kolonialisme, som beskriver en fortsettelse av koloniale prosesser legitimert av klimatilpasning. Oppgaven argumenterer for at såkalte grønn utvikling av energiproduksjon og infrastruktur i samiske reinbeiteområder oppfattes som grønn kolonialisme. I tillegg argumenterer oppgaven for at samiske perspektiver med vilje ekskluderes fra den norske energiomstillingen. Dette skjer gjennom ulik fordeling av risiko, overfladisk anerkjennelse og begrenset deltakelse i beslutningsprosesser som angår samiske næringer. Dette resulterer i en gjensidig mistro mellom samiske aktører og norske myndigheter. I tillegg er deltakerne i studien betydelig bekymret for muligheten fremtidige generasjoner vil ha for å fortsette tradisjonell samisk reindrift, på grunn av klimaendringer og arealinngrep. Videre argumenterer oppgaven for at videre tap av samiske områder til storskala utvikling kan representere en fortsettelse av fornorskingsperioden. Oppgaven konkluderer med at det er et stort behov for å dekolonisere kunnskap om energiomstillingen, og for å inkludere samiske perspektiver på en effektiv måte i beslutningsprosesser.

## **Acknowledgements**

Working on my thesis for the past year has been an incredible learning experience, and a chance to work with a subject that has taught me so much. The past year has also been hard, frustrating and challenging in many ways.

There are many people who have contributed to this thesis. First, I would like to thank the people who have contributed directly to the thesis by agreeing to be interviewed. “Lars”, “Andreas”, “Ole”, Annie Henriksen, Aili Keskitalo and Beaska Niillas. Ollu giitu - tusen takk for taking the time to participate. This thesis would not have happened without you generously sharing your time and knowledge. I will always be grateful for what I have learned from you. I would also like to thank “Morten” as well, for letting me tag along on the mountain and showing me how to slaughter.

Thank you to my two wonderful supervisors Jemima García-Godos at UiO, and Henrikke Sæthre Ellingsen at NTNU, for your generous encouragement and precise feedback. You have made this thesis much better, and you made me believe that I could do this project by taking the topic seriously both methodologically and theoretically.

Thank you to Natur og Ungdom, for teaching me so much and pointing me on this path. I would not be able to write this thesis without first learning how to be an activist.

Thank you to my fellow master students in the Human Geography program, for our long lunch breaks, discussion and fun. To Louise, for being my roommate and friend in Kvalsund during fieldwork. I’m proud of you all.

Friends and family, thank you for putting up with me during the months of writing. My friends at Anarres bokkafé, I can’t wait to come back again to our important space. Ane, Elin and Sara: thank you for reading and commenting on the thesis, and pushing me to be (a little more) confident in my writing. Especially Sara: you have provided so much support for your anxious sister. Thank you to my friend Erlend Hua Ly Kok, for listening to my rants, discussing the thesis and walking to campus together all through winter. Håkon, you have been there every day of this process. Your love and support mean the world to me.

Research is a collective effort, and I hope that my thesis can in some way contribute positively to the struggle. All mistakes and faults in this thesis are my own, and something that I hope that I can learn from in the future.

Tina Andersen Vågenes,

Oslo, May 2023



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## **List of abbreviations and acronyms:**

FPIC: Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

ILO 169: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)

OED: Olje- og energidepartementet / Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy

NSR: Norgga Sámiid Riikkasearvi / Norske Samers Riksforbund / Norwegian Sámi National Association

NVE: Norges Vassdrags- og Energidirektorat / Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate

SP 27: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27.

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Source: Multiconsult 2021.

## 1 Introduction

*“We Sámi are often accused of NIMBY politics, not in my backyard. Then I would like to say that this is not our backyard. This is our home. These encroachments are happening in the middle of our living room,”* Silje Karine Muotka, Sámi Parliament president in Kautokeino 15.09.2022. (Authors translation).

Efforts to mitigate and adapt to rising global temperatures demand increased access to what is termed “clean” energy and material resources; their development is referred to as “green development”. As with all resources, those used in green development, whether rare minerals, wind- or hydropower, have a geographical place of origin, and their extraction directly impacts the people living in and utilizing the resources in the same locations. The Arctic landscape is changing because of shifts in temperature, precipitation and snow cover. Unpredictable changes between freezing and thawing conditions create challenges for those practicing traditional Sámi reindeer herding, in particular access to lichen cover for grazing and safe migration routes between seasonal pastures (Oskal 2008, Mathiesen et al. 2018). While indigenous communities in the Arctic experience impacts of climate change (Eira et al. 2018), climate mitigation policies are driving an increasing interest in material resources and green energy development in the same areas where indigenous communities live (Kuokkanen 2022). This pressure can be considered a double burden for communities in Sápmi (Normann 2021).

Sápmi is the historical settlement area of the indigenous Sámi people, across the national borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. The land is considered the material basis for indigenous peoples to exercise their cultural rights. The implementation of the International Labor Organization’s *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention number 169* (ILO 169) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (SP 27) in Norwegian law protect these rights (Ravna 2020, Strömngren et al. 2021). Although legal recognition of Sámi rights has been strengthened over the past decades, the pressure on Sámi land is increasing, as developers invoke environmental motivations to legitimate interventions in the same areas (Bull 2020, Normann 2021). In the thesis I argue that the energy transition plays a key role in building this pressure. The case used in the thesis is the construction of power

lines in Sámi reindeer herding areas, in order to electrify fossil fuel production in Hammerfest, Finnmark. Former Sámi Parliament president Aili Keskitalo characterizes these kinds of developments as

“(…) the paradox of green colonialism. When colonialism has dressed up in nice, green refinery, and we are told that we have to give up our territories and our livelihoods to save the world because of climate change” (the Arctic circle 2020).

In indigenous areas, “the solution” has become “the problem” (Dunlap 2018). Green extractive projects and energy production on reindeer herding land imposes a loss of land that happens gradually, fragmenting available land piece by piece (Normann 2021). The contradiction between understandings of *green development* and *green colonialism* is at the core of this study.

### **1.1 Aim of the thesis and research questions**

This thesis studies the proposed 420-kilowatt power line in Riehpovuotna (Repparfjord), from Skaidi to Hammerfest, in Finnmark, Northern Norway. Through a qualitative study, I aim to contribute with insights into *why* people can experience so-called green developments as green colonialism. Exploring how green development is experienced as a pressure on Sámi land and resources in Kvalsund contributes into a broader discussion on industrial development in indigenous areas. The Sámi reindeer herders in Fielttar and Fálá experience a cumulative pressure on their pasturelands and migration routes from several infrastructural developments in the past, present and future. This limits their access to areas that are essential to the traditional reindeer herding.

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of indigenous peoples affected by green development projects, to understand how these can be experienced as green colonialism. The study follows the proposed 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line in Riehpovuotna (Repparfjord) and the experiences of affected Sámi reindeer herders in the Fielttar and Fálá districts. This aim is approached through four research questions:

1. What impacts will the proposed 420 power line have on Sámi reindeer herders in the Fielttar and Fálá districts?
2. How is the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line project related to other development projects in the area?

3. How are decision-making processes around infrastructure development in Sámi areas experienced by Sámi communities?
4. Based on the above, how do Sámi communities experience developments of green infrastructures?

To answer the research questions, I draw on perspectives from critical literature such as environmental justice. The theoretical perspectives are discussed further in **chapter 3**. The research is based on the understanding that land is a central natural resource for indigenous peoples, and that access to and control over resources is necessary for being able to act in their own interests (Anthias 2018). In Sápmi, as well as in other places, the state is central in governing access to resources. In Norway, mapping mineral resources for further exploitation has been a political goal in the last decade (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022). Increased exploitation of mineral resources is considered a means to provide economic growth for communities in Northern Norway (Johnsen 2016). In the green energy transition, sometimes called the Green Shift (*det grønne skiftet*, Norwegian), wind energy planning and construction has been booming in Norway (Kuokkanen 2022). In the 2022 updated White Paper on energy policy, the government opens for new concessions for onshore wind farms despite long-term protests (Olje- og energidepartementet 2022).

Mapping resources is a way to commodify nature, turning land into something available to exploit for profit. This contrasts with Sámi understandings of their ancestral land as a lived place (Lassila 2018), impossible to separate from the community and previous generations. In Gállok on the Swedish side of Sápmi, the conflict over an iron ore mine contributes to conflicts over Sámi land rights. “What local people?” was the mining company’s answer to the question of what local people had to say about the mining project (Persson et al. 2017), thus erasing the experiences and denying the existence of the local Sámi people. In Bolivia, the extraction of resources and energy for “the common good” competes with the duty to protect “the rights of the few”, meaning indigenous peoples (Anthias 2018). While the Norwegian context is far from the Latin American one, this thesis argues that there are similar mechanisms at work in Sápmi, which opens for using critical perspectives from Latin America to explore a Sámi green colonial context (Fjellheim 2023). If renewable energy production is generally understood as a positive effort “for the common good”, Sámi herding rights opposing this industrial development can be understood as standing in the way of progress. Among the findings of this study is how Sámi

reindeer herders, politicians and activists are often accused of halting progress. Furthermore, I argue that there is a lack of will to incorporate Sámi knowledges into the Norwegian land and resource governance.

The extraction of material resources and production of renewable energy in indigenous areas is subject to a growing body of literature. Among these we find works on wind power development in Sápmi (Lawrence 2014, Normann 2021, 2022, Ellingsen 2020, Fjellheim 2023) and in indigenous contexts in Latin America (Dunlap 2018). Planned and existing mineral extraction in reindeer herding areas is threatening traditional Sámi land use on the Swedish (Persson et al. 2017), the Finnish (Ojala & Nordin 2015, Lassila 2018) and the Norwegian side of Sápmi (Bjørklund 2016, Uhre 2018). However, the issue of energy transportation infrastructures in indigenous areas have received less attention. This thesis will contribute to this field of critical research.

Studying the social impacts of energy developments in indigenous areas also raise important questions about justice. This relates to the distribution of benefits and burdens of infrastructure development, who is included in the decision-making processes and what forms of knowledges are recognized as valid. Schlosberg's four dimensions of justice (distribution, participation, recognition, capabilities) is much used as a framework in environmental justice studies (Alvarez & Coolsaet 2020). The sphere of environmental justice has been expanded theoretically and geographically, and to non-human natures as well (Schlosberg 2013). To avoid what can be called "colonial pitfalls" of environmental justice studies which are centered on Western experiences and interpretations (Alvarez & Coolsaet 2020), we need to continually address that environmental justice studies are a contested and complex discursive frame (Holifield et al. 2009). This entails paying attention to ontological and epistemological injustices (Santos 2014), and addressing the limitations of the environmental justice framework (Temper 2019, Tornel 2022), which I also address in chapter 3.

## **1.2 Scope of the research and limitations**

To provide insights into how green developments create cumulative pressures on indigenous Sámi land, I focus on the proposed 420-kilowatt power line from Skaidi to Hammerfest as a case study (Baxter 2021). The power line crosses from Balsfjord to Skaidi, and currently spans over 300 kilometers (Statnett 2022b). Exploring the case of the 420-kilowatt power line informs the larger context of the impacts "green" developments produce in Sámi reindeer herding areas.

I argue that it is also valuable to understand how the herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts experience the pressure on their pasturelands and how this affects their livelihoods. The conflict over the 420-power line in Kvalsund has clear similarities with conflicts over other large physical infrastructures such as wind farms or mines. In Kvalsund, the Fiettar and Fálá herding districts are facing three other separate large-scale projects encroaching on pasturelands, calving areas and migration routes: the 420-power line (Statnett 2022a), the Nussir copper mine (Nussir 2023) and the Barents Blue ammonia plant (Horisont Energi 2023). Using the power line as a case, my main focus has continued to be the experience of Sámi reindeer herders in Kvalsund, to inform the wider debate.

The thesis is a result of multi-sited fieldwork in Kvalsund, Kautokeino, Hammerfest and Oslo. The data is based on participant observation, 6 individual interviews, informal conversations and document analysis. I attended a seminar on human rights violations hosted by the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution (Norges institusjon for menneskerettigheter) in Kautokeino. I also participated in demonstrations marking 500 days since the Fosen verdict in Oslo. The fieldwork and methodological considerations are elaborated on in **chapter 4**. With the empirical findings, I hope to illustrate the lack of trust between the Sámi community and Norwegian authorities in energy developments. Further, this lack of trust results in an understanding of “green” developments in reindeer herding areas as an expression of green colonialism and indifference to Sámi perspectives in the green transition. The relevance of this study is in contributing to the growing field of critical research exploring the negative impacts of the green transition, building on the historical experiences of Sámi communities. Energy-related developments in indigenous areas produce important questions about what a just transition will entail, and who takes part in deciding exactly what is green and fair. Researching the geography of loss of land and green developments is a subject that human geography must focus further on.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is organized around 7 chapters.

Chapter 2 provides necessary background about the energy transition in Norway and the development of energy infrastructure. The chapter provides context for understanding the decision-making processes around the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, as well as the

cultural and socio-economic context of Kvalsund and the Sámi peoples in Norway, including Sámi reindeer herding.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis. I explore the environmental justice framework, discussing each of its main components; distributive justice, justice as recognition, participatory justice and capabilities. I also discuss traditional knowledge and knowledge production, power relations, green colonialism, land as the key resource for Sámi reindeer herders and the theory of accumulation by dispossession.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological choices forming the thesis. I aim to give an honest account of the research design. I reflect on the data collection process and ethical considerations, both during fieldwork, analysis and writing up the thesis.

Chapter 5 is the thematic analysis of my findings from interviews, documents and observation. The categories developed are ‘cumulative pressure’, ‘vulnerability’, ‘knowledge production and traditional knowledge’, and ‘participation and trust in decision-making processes’. Cumulative pressure refers to how the combined effects of historic, present and planned encroachments put pressure on the reindeer pasturelands and migration routes in Kvalsund. With vulnerability, I refer to how climate change and land encroachments exacerbate each other and create vulnerabilities. I explore the power asymmetries in knowledge production related to development processes in Sámi reindeer herding areas, and how Sámi reindeer herders experience that their traditional knowledges are ignored. This contributes to a mutual lack of trust in decision-making processes in Sámi areas, which I argue is based on a superficial participation.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion based on my analysis and theoretical perspectives. First, I discuss the relationship between green colonialism and green development in Kvalsund, informed by the experiences of the reindeer herders. Then I address how the decision-making processes around the power line are experienced as unjust, due to unequal distribution of risks, superficial recognition and limited participation.

In chapter 7, I aim to summarize and conclude on some of my findings. I provide several issues for future research.



## **2 Background and context**

This chapter intends to give the necessary context in order to grasp the social and political issues involved in climate change adaptation and the renewable energy transition in Norway. It provides relevant background information on the Norwegian energy transition and the historical, political and structural factors shaping the conflict over the 420-kilowatt line Skaidi-Hammerfest. The chapter starts by outlining the situation for renewable energy production and access in Norway, and a brief presentation of how the energy sector is organized, before zooming in on the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line. Further, the chapter moves on to a discussion on Sámi indigenous rights, the period of Norwegianization, and Sámi reindeer herding. Lastly, the chapter provides contextual information on Kvalsund and a brief summary of other development projects which together make up the cumulative pressure experienced by the Fieltar and Fálá districts.

### **2.1 Climate change adaptation and energy transition in Norway**

The impacts of climate change are experienced differently within and across communities and regions, depending on the social context (Leichenko & O'Brien 2019:124). Climate change is thus a social issue reflecting power relations in our society as well as physical phenomena transforming the natural world. This implies that climate change adaptation is a social and political act, with the possibility to reshape future power relations in society (Pelling 2011, Eriksen et al. 2015).

Physical adaptation to climate change often comes with social costs that are unevenly distributed. The umbrella term *green transitions* has been promoted as a tool for transforming energy production and use in particular (Leichenko & O'Brien 2019). According to the Norwegian government, the green transition implies how Norway will “transition into a low emission country before 2050” in order to achieve its national goals set in the Paris Agreement. Innovation, technology and industry development are seen as the driving forces in this transition (Klima- og miljødepartementet 2021). A core part of this aim is growth in renewable energy production and extractive industries, which will contribute to transitioning into a low carbon society. At the same time, the green transition necessitates development of infrastructure and resource extraction in new areas. The White Paper *Norway's Climate Action Plan for 2020-2030* (2020) outlines how Norway will be “a major producer of renewable energy”, while the petroleum industry will be producing oil and gas “efficiently, with low emissions” by

electrification of installations (Meld. St. 13 2020:19). “Green development” is understood as developments in industry, infrastructure or resource extraction legitimated by environmental purposes.

The global energy transition is an ongoing process of restructuring the energy system, moving away from a reliance on fossil fuels and towards sustainable low-carbon energy sources. In their 2021 *Net Zero by 2050: A roadmap for the global energy system* report, IEA (the International Energy Agency) lays out a normative roadmap for transitioning the global energy sector towards a zero-emission goal in line with the Paris Agreement (IEA 2021). In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement framework by 2030, the EU (European Union) implementing the *European Green Deal*. The deal requires greater energy efficiency and large-scale implementation of renewable energy technologies (European Commission 2019). Both the European Green Deal and the Net Zero by 2050 roadmap maintain that the clean energy transition must be fair and inclusive, and leave no one behind (IEA 2021, European Commission 2019). This requires asking what a fair transition entails, as well as how the costs and benefits can be distributed among individuals and communities.

The Norwegian energy market is closely integrated with the energy markets in other Northern European countries. Together with a well-developed transfer grid and hydropower dams, the integration gives the Norwegian energy supply flexibility and reduces the vulnerability of seasonal production changes (Energifakta 2022). Large flexible volumes of electricity and a strong transmission capacity plays a key role in the clean energy transition (Funcke & Bauknecht 2016). The Norwegian government’s White Paper *Energy for Work: Long-term value-creation from Norwegian energy resources* (2020-2021, authors translation) details how expanding the renewable energy sector can both secure welfare for the population, and contribute to electrification and phasing out fossil fuels. Securing access to energy depends on adequate production of renewable energy and the capacity of the energy transmission grid. Increasing the transmission capacity also allows for industrial development within the green transition, but the responsibility to limit loss of nature and biodiversity is also part of the equation (Meld. St. 36 2020-2021). A large portion of the Norwegian in-land energy use is electricity, both for households and energy-intensive industries. Around 89 % of the energy supply is produced by hydropower, and an increasing amount of wind power (Energifakta 2022). The potential of increasing its energy production casts Norway as a supporter of the EU clean energy transition, requiring expansion of both hydropower production and transmission capacity (Egging & Tomasgaard 2018). Both public and private stakeholders position

themselves as actors in the green energy transition. In their 2022 Energy Perspectives, petroleum giant Equinor details how the energy transition can deliver sufficient energy levels, reduce CO2 emissions and limit global warming (Equinor 2022).

The Norwegian government argues that increasing renewable energy production is “important to meet the future energy needs” (Olje- og energidepartementet 2023). Norwegian energy authorities thus have a twofold aim. One is stimulating for use of alternatives to fossil fuels in all sectors. The other relates to further developing Norwegian oil and gas production, through electrification of petroleum production. At the Barents Sea Forum 2023, the Minister for Petroleum and Energy Terje Aasland alleged that “the petroleum fairytale in the North has only just begun”. He argued that expanding the electricity grid and energy production in Finnmark is essential. The minister further argued that «not only Finnmark, but the whole country” need to quickly develop more energy power production, while safeguarding reindeer herding and biodiversity (Olje- og energidepartementet 26.04.2023).

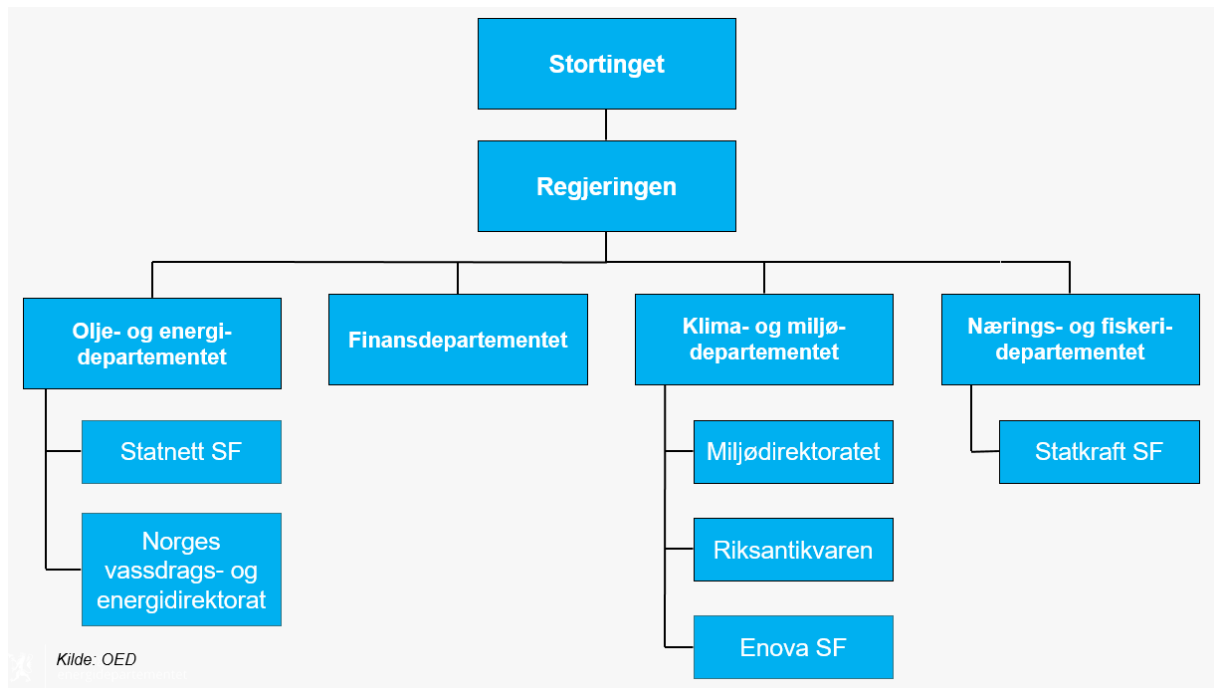
The electrification of oil and gas production may have a bigger impact on lowering CO2 emissions than previously anticipated (NRK 12.01.2023). The *Energy for Work* White Paper concludes that “Electrification makes Norway greener and better” (Meld. St. 36 2020-2021:6, authors translation). The debate concerning electrification of oil and gas production raises questions of supply and demand. The energy needs for households and industry are covered by the already existing energy supply. Further developing the energy sector is motivated by an increasing demand for energy, meaning an increase in consumption. This increased consumption will come from “green industries” such as hydrogen or minerals. Furthermore, the Norwegian authorities plan for an increase in energy production from hydropower and offshore wind power, part of a more active and ambitious involvement of the authorities in the aim for a “green industry” (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022). The increasing Norwegian energy demand is detailed by among others Statnett, in their updated *Long-term Market Analysis 2020-2050* (own translation). Part of this growth will likely come from electrification of petroleum production, and other industrial development incentivized by policy developments. The European Green Deal and Norwegian White Paper *Energy for Work* both contribute to incentivizing electrification of industry (Statnett 2021a, 2021b).

## 2.2 The Norwegian energy sector

Knowledge of the main institutional actors in the Norwegian energy sector is a prerequisite to understanding the processes around the development of energy infrastructure. This section provides a brief overview of the actors involved in the sector. The purpose of the Norwegian energy policy is to provide a suitable framework for an efficient, reliable and environmentally sustainable energy system. The Norwegian power market was deregulated in 1991, opening for market-based production and trading of electricity, although grid operations are still regulated. The physical trading in the Nordic power market takes place in an organized marketplace for power exchange. The Nord Pool group organizes the sale of electrical energy both in Norway and other Nordic countries (Energifakta 2022).

Figure 1 below illustrates the connections between the main actors in the energy sector. The Norwegian Parliament decides on the political and economic agenda of the national energy and water resource management. The government holds executive power over this framework, which is executed through several ministries. The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (Olje og Energidepartementet, OED) is accountable for how the Norwegian water resources and energy are managed. The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (Norges Vassdrags- og Energidirektorat, NVE) is organized under OED. NVE manages the domestic water and energy resources, as well as managing flood prevention and securing power supply in the face of climate change. Furthermore, NVE processes license applications for constructing new hydropower plants, major power lines and other infrastructure. Their recommendations are delivered to the Ministry before final approval. Another important actor in this case is Statnett SF, a state enterprise owned by the Norwegian state, also located under OED. Statnett is the system operator in the Norwegian energy system, and owns the license for the 420-kilowatt power line.

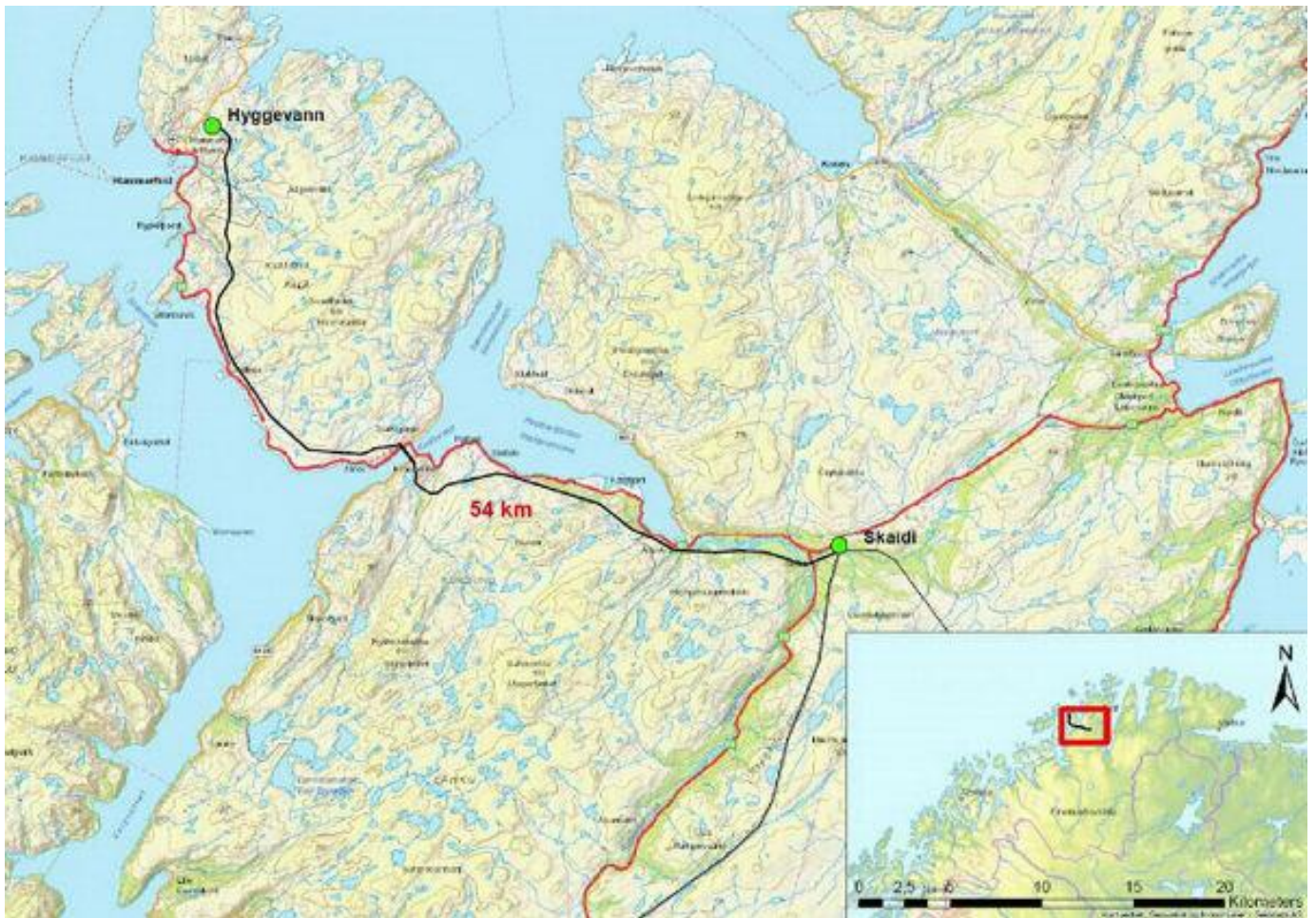
Figure 1. Overview of actors in the Norwegian energy sector. Source: Olje- og energidepartementet.



### 2.3 The 420-kilowatt power line Skaidi-Hammerfest process

Energy transmission infrastructures are a part of the green transition and inevitably exists in a broader social context. This is also the case for the 420-kilowatt power line from Skaidi to Hammerfest. Studying energy infrastructure on indigenous land demands asking how climate mitigation measures can be balanced with the responsibility to protect biodiversity and indigenous Sámi culture. I explore the case as a socio-environmental conflict (Rodríguez-Garavito 2011), with both physical and social impacts for the indigenous peoples in Kvalsund. This section provides an outline of the processes concerning the 420-kilowatt power line. The process is ongoing, as the final concession is still pending. During the process of writing, there have been developments in the 420-power line project. This includes the delay of the Wisting oil field (Equinor 2022), and changes in political support for the electrification of Melkøya LNG, where one of two government parties' annual congress rejected the electrification project (NRK 20.03.2023).

Figure 2: Map of the proposed power line from Skaidi to Hammerfest. Source: Statnett.



In 2007, Statnett started the application process for a 420-kilowatt line from Balsfjord to Hammerfest to secure power supply for northern parts of Troms and Finnmark county. NVE granted Statnett the concession to construct the power line in 2012. The concession was halted due to complaints from affected reindeer herding districts and the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi, which were sent to the Ministry for Petroleum and Energy (NVE 2022). In 2015, Statnett was granted approval to a step-by-step construction of the power line. The construction of the Balsfjord-Skaidi power line was completed in November 2022, but the final concession for the power line between Skaidi and Hammerfest is still pending (Statnett 2022b), and is yet to be decided by OED. The ministry's decision will be based on the updated impact assessment (Multiconsult 2021), the recommendation from NVE (NVE 2022), and consultations with affected reindeer herding districts and the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi.

The power line has two main contributions to the green transition; securing the power supply in Finnmark and increasing transmission capacity, and contributing with renewable energy to the electrification of the Hammerfest LNG plant. A secure power supply and increased capacity can facilitate industrial growth in Finnmark (Statnett 2022a), which is a priority for local government (Aftonbladet 2022). District municipalities, such as Hammerfest, depend on securing local jobs and attracting investments to deliver welfare for their citizens. In Hammerfest, the expansion of the oil and gas industry has both provided employment and highly needed investments. Locally, revenues and taxes from the oil and gas production have contributed to constructing a new port, a public culture house and the renovation of schools. The Labor Party mayor of Hammerfest, Terje Wikstrøm, is adamant that “we cannot stop oil production and complete a green transition at the same time” (Aftonbladet 2022). The local council has given their plenary support to the power line and electrification of Hammerfest LNG. Supplying the Hammerfest LNG plant at Melkøya with electricity is part of the project “Snow White Future”, with the aim to continue operations, while cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The project can potentially provide increasing tax revenues for the municipality (Equinor 2022c).

Initially, the power line was also intended to supply the Wisting oil field in the Barents Sea with electricity. The Wisting oil field was intended as the northernmost oil field developed yet in the Barents Sea, with an estimated production of 500 million barrels of oil. The development plans were highly controversial, and dubbed a “climate bomb” by a coalition of environmental organizations, youth political parties and climate researchers (Framtiden I våre hender 2022). The resistance focused on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the coming decades, vulnerable Arctic species, as well as health and safety, as the area is far from the coast. In November 2022, Equinor decided to postpone the investment decision. Global inflation and cost increases in the supply industry made the investment precarious. According to Equinor, the project’s maturation continues, aiming for an investment decision by the end of 2026 (Equinor 2022a).

While the Wisting oil field investment has been postponed, Equinor plans to supply the Hammerfest LNG plant with electric power. This will, according to Equinor, “secure the future of the Hammerfest LNG” (Equinor 2022b). Upgrading of the LNG plant may reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by around 850 000 tons per year. Equinor and partners will provide a “considerable investment contribution” to constructing the 420-kilowatt line (Equinor 2022b, Holter 2022). The plans to upgrade Hammerfest LNG will be processed at the same time as the 420-kilowatt line. In 2022 NVE delivered their recommendation to OED, indicating that the license for the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line ought to be granted. NVE recommended that the Ministry

considers the “societal benefits” of the electrification of the Hammerfest LNG plant against the disadvantages caused by the facilities (NVE 2022:2). These disadvantages are experienced in particular by the reindeer herding districts Fielttar, Fálá and Gearretnjárga. The negative consequences for reindeer herding are expected to be greater at the time of writing, than at the time the first concession was granted in 2012. This is based on increased pressure on reindeer herding land (NVE 2022). Balancing this increasing pressure with the development of renewable energy infrastructure is a challenge for energy authorities.

30 reindeer herding districts and one Swedish herding community (Swedish *sameby*) are affected by the Balsfjord-Hammerfest power line. For the Skaidi-Hammerfest line, the reindeer herding districts Fielttar, Fálá and Gearretnjárga are expected to experience negative effects. This thesis focuses on the experiences by herders in Fielttar and Fálá. The Fielttar and Fálá districts have not protested against the power line itself, but rather the placement of it. The herders propose ground or sea cables as an alternative to the overhead line. This is confirmed in consultation protocols that I analyze in chapter 5. According to the districts, a sea cable would have minimal impact on their pasturelands, in comparison to overhead cables. Both Statnett and OED contend that this would be too costly (personal communication with the districts’ legal representation). As a general rule, expansions to the main grid and high voltage lines will be built as an overhead line, expressed in the White Paper St. 14 (2011-2012), *We are building Norway – about the development of the energy grid* (authors translation). The Fielttar district has also questioned the relevance of the power line after the Wisting development was postponed. The district leader, Nils Mikkelsen Utsi, describes the arguments in favor of the power line as “weakened” after the delay of the Wisting project (NRK 06.04.2022).

In order to build a power line, the network company must acquire property or user rights from either the land owner or user. Rights may be acquired either through amicable agreements or by expropriation. This is regulated under the Expropriation Act (Oreigningslova 1959). Expropriation refers to the transfer of ownership or user rights by use of force, in return for compensation. The practice of expropriating land has come under scrutiny in the past decades. In particular, the possibility for preliminary intervention (*forhåndstiltredelse*) is questioned. This allows developers to start the construction work before final assessments and compensation is agreed upon with land owners or users (NVE 11.06.2015). A committee appointed by the Sámi Parliament has suggested updating the Expropriation Act. In their proposal, the committee suggests that both expropriation and preliminary intervention should be more difficult to obtain (Reindrifstlovutvalget 2022, NRK 29.03.2023).



In Sámi areas, questions over ownership of lands and resources have been an issue for centuries. Historically, the Norwegian state has considered itself the owner of Sámi lands, as nomadic and collective use of areas and resources were not defined as basis for property rights (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022). The Finnmark Act (Finnmarksloven 2005) transferred state-owned lands to the people of Finnmark, through the institution of the Finnmark Property (Finnmarkseiendommen, FeFo). FeFo refers to the board and staff that manage the land and resources that make up the “property”, managed on behalf of the inhabitants in Finnmark (Finnmarkseiendommen n.d.). In 2023, the ownership of lands and resources in Karasjok (Kárášjoga) municipality was tried in court. Two groups contested FeFo’s ownership of the land in Finnmark; one group representing Karasjok municipality on behalf of all local inhabitants, and the other representing the Sámi local community. The verdict concludes that the local inhabitants, both Sámi and non-Sámi, in Karasjok municipality are the landowners, meaning that the Sámi rights holders did not win exclusive rights. The verdict has been appealed by FeFo (NRK 21.04.2023)

#### **2.4 Contextualizing Sámi people in Norway: Sámi indigenous rights and Norwegianization policies**

In this section I address the period of Norwegianization and its repercussions on the Sámi people, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen*) and Sámi human rights, including the right to be consulted. This provides an important contextualization of past and present experiences of injustice on the Norwegian side of Sápmi. I first turn to the period of Norwegianization.

The assimilation of Sámi people in Norway does not have a clear starting point. Sámi researcher Liisa-Ravna Finbog argues that the colonization of Sámi has been an ongoing and slow process for one thousand years (Finbog in Johansen 2020). The Norwegian majority culture’s political dominance, and the Sámi’s gradual subordination in social status, was further influenced by stigmatization of the Sámi minority (Gaski 1997:15). Between approximately 1800 and 1960, Norwegian authorities enacted official policies against Sámi, Kven and Norwegian Finnish people which had severe harmful consequences for their culture, language, identity and living conditions (*Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen* n.d.). The Norwegianization policies were aimed at assimilating minority groups in the North into the Norwegian society. Cultural education, directed at schools and the church, was central. The

main issue in schools was over Sámi languages and identity (Niemi 1997:73). To uncover the injustices perpetrated against indigenous people and national minorities in Norway, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen) was appointed by the Norwegian Parliament in 2018. The Commission has a three-part mandate: to map historical injustices perpetrated by Norwegian authorities' policies locally, regionally and nationally; to assess the effects of the Norwegianizations policies and to deliver recommendations for further reconciliation (Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen n.d.). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's official report and recommendations are expected June 1<sup>st</sup> 2023. Following the mandate, the commission is also studying the intention and ideology behind these policies.

Norway is not the only country critically studying its historical responsibility in injustices experienced by indigenous peoples. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided a space to share the legacy of "Indian Residential Schools" for people affected by the system. The Commission's final report (2015) is considered to be a starting point for further reconciliation (Government of Canada 2022). Processes of truth and reconciliation are not neutral, but rather affected by how the majority population responds to it. Critics are asking who will gain on the outcome of these processes, and most importantly if there can be true reconciliation.

Is reconciliation possible if previous human rights violations are not repaired, and the minority groups continue to experience injustices? Siri Broch Johansen (2020) argues in her book *Letter to the Commission* that we cannot consider the period of Norwegianization as a terminated historical period that society can move easily on from, but rather a continuous process of injustices. Industrial development and processes of land grabbing are, according to Johansen, standing in the way of reconciliation. "It is impossible to mention neither truth nor reconciliation while exercising aggression against Sámi vulnerable activities and livelihoods on this level" (Johansen 2020:138, authors translation). In particular, how authorities follow up the *Fosen verdict* from 2021, can influence the reconciliation between Sámi people and the majority population. The *Fosen verdict* refers to the 2021 Supreme Court verdict (HR-2021-1975-S), concluding that wind farm developments at Storheia and Roan on the Fosen peninsula in Trøndelag represent a violation of the South Sámi herders' cultural rights. The wind farms are a joint venture between Fosen Vind and Statnett. The area is used by the Fovsen Njaarke Sijte reindeer herding district. The district consists of two groups, with six families in total. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has demanded that the authorities make clear how human rights can be protected from future violations if the windfarms will stay (NRK 02.01.2023). The Fosen

verdict was highlighted by all participants in my research as significant for the current position of Sámi rights. Conflicts over industrial development on Sámi pasturelands often derive from questions on both economic compensation for losses, land use and struggles over knowledge. In the view of the participants, if a supreme court verdict is not enough, what will it take for national authorities to respect Sámi reindeer herding rights?

UN interpretations of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (SP 27) include minorities' right to effective participation in decisions that may affect their economic, cultural and social rights. The right to effective participation is in practice interpreted as a right to be *consulted* (Ravna 2020). Article 6 in the International Labour Organization's Convention – 16 (ILO 169) establishes that governments have the duty to consult indigenous peoples through appropriate procedures in matters that may affect them directly. Indigenous peoples have the right to *freely participate* at all levels of decision-making in matters concerning them. "The consultations carried out in application of this Convention shall be undertaken, in good faith and in a form appropriate to the circumstances, with the objective of achieving agreement or consent to the proposed measures" (ILO 169, article 6.2). States must have the indigenous peoples' *free, prior and informed consent* (FPIC) as the primary objective of consultation, before implementing measures that may affect them. FPIC constitutes three interrelated rights of indigenous peoples: the right to be consulted, the right to participate and the right to their lands, territories and resources (A/HRC/39/62). The human rights norm that FPIC concerns, is key to secure indigenous peoples' fundamental right to self-determination (OHCHR 2018).

In 2005, the Norwegian government and the Sámi Parliament signed a consultation agreement, which was incorporated into national law through the Sámi Act in 2021 (Sameloven 1989, Kommunal- og distriktsdepartementet 2005). The *Procedures for consultations between state authorities and the Sámi Parliament* formalizes the state obligation in ILO 169, to consult Sámi on legislative or administrative matters affecting them directly (Kommunal- og distriktsdepartementet 2020). Both national and local authorities have an obligation to consult representatives for Sámi culture and livelihoods. The consultations shall be carried out in *good faith*, with the goal of achieving consent or agreement, and should start early enough to secure the parties the opportunity to agree on the final decision (Sameloven § 4-6). The rights and duty around consultation is also the case for proposed interventions and developments in Sámi areas that can have an effect on Sámi material cultural practices (Sameloven § 4-1). The 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line is considered a proposed development that may have impacts on the

material basis for cultural practices. Thus, both affected reindeer herding districts and the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi are consulted as representatives for Sámi interests. My participants experience that the right to consultation differs from being able to influence the outcome of decision-making processes. This will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

## **2.5 Sámi reindeer herding**

An important cultural practicing of Sámi culture is reindeer herding, briefly presented in this section. Reindeer herding is a complex industry and expression of Sámi culture, and while it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a full account of the practice, I provide some essential points to understand the importance of Sámi reindeer herding. Reindeer herding employs a minority of Sámi people, yet it is an essential bearer of Sámi language and culture (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022), as corroborated by all participants in this study.

Per 2023, Sámi reindeer herding takes place in 126 of 356 Norwegian municipalities, in theory covering almost a gross area of 40 % of the Norwegian land mass. This gross area includes large areas that are not used for reindeer herding; lakes, glaciers, cities, villages, roads and planted forest. Around 89 % of reindeer herding areas are affected by buildings and infrastructure (SSB 2020). Though 40 % of Norway is in theory available for reindeer herding, in reality piece-by-piece infrastructure developments lead to a far smaller area. The increase in wind energy production, accelerated by climate- and energy policies in the green transition, has physical impacts for both biodiversity and reindeer herding areas. There is a need for long-term research on the cumulative effects of energy production in reindeer herding areas, seen together with other land encroachments such as roads, powerlines, mining and cabin infrastructure (SSB 2020).

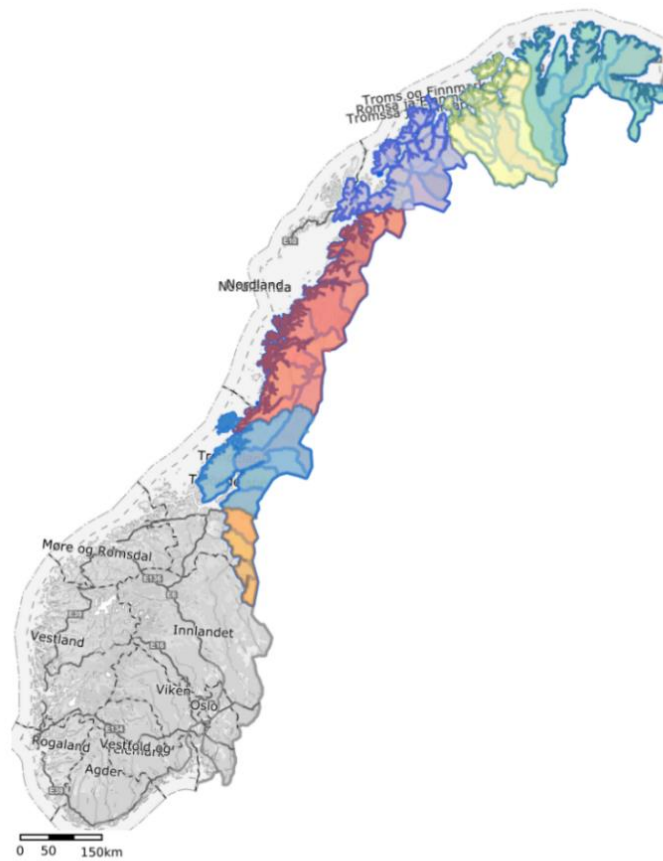
Around 3000 individuals are involved in Sámi reindeer herding in Norway, keeping about 215 000 animals (Landbruksdirektoratet 2022). Herding is divided into 6 regional grazing areas, and further into 82 grazing districts. The reindeer herding areas are illustrated in figure 2 below. The reindeer herding communities, known as *siida*, has been an organizational unit from time immemorial. The establishment of numbered reindeer herding districts has been an instrument for national authorities to govern the Sámi reindeer herding industry (Sara 2009:155). Throughout the thesis, I use the Sámi names rather than numbers for the herding districts. The *siida* or district name traditionally characterizes either the people representing a particular *siida* or the name of a central part of the landscape within the *siida* area (Strøm Bull

et al. 2001 in Eira et al. 2016:38). For example, the name Fiettár describes the shape of the narrow Repparfjord where it meets the valley, while Fálá is the Sámi name for the peninsula Kvaløya in Hammerfest.

Figure 3. Reindeer herding areas in Norway. Source: NIBIO.



Reinbeiteområde Norge 



Koordinatsystem: UTM 33

kilden.nibio.no

25.01.2023

Following the ILO 169, states have a duty to protect indigenous peoples' access to and control over natural resources and the areas that they depend on. SP 27 protects the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities to enjoy their culture, use their own language and practice their religion (Strömngren et al. 2021:26). This protection extends to material cultural practices such as reindeer herding, fisheries and other industries that constitutes a significant part of the minorities' culture. Pasturelands (*guohtun*) and natural resources are considered the material basis for Sámi cultural practices (Sara 2009, Bull 2020, Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022).

Norway was one of the first nations to sign the ILO 169 convention. The Norwegian constitution is thus committed to safeguarding Sámi cultural rights, language and traditional industries. The Finnmark Act from 2005 declare that the Norwegian state was established on the lands of two peoples, the Sámi and the Norwegians (Ween & Lien 2017). The right to use areas for reindeer herding is protected by use from time immemorial (Sara 2009, Bull 2020). Sámi land use has traditionally been collective rather than individual. The protection of indigenous peoples' exercise of culture and the material basis for culture is individual, but has a collective dimension. The right to exercise your culture makes little sense if the cultural practices cannot be performed together with others of the same minority group (Strömngren et al. 2021:32). Since 1989, steps have been taken to build and strengthen Sámi political, educational and cultural institutions (Sara 2009). This includes the Sámi Parliament (*Sámediggi*) and the Sámi University of Applied Sciences / Sámi allaskuvla. At Sámi allaskuvla, students can study introductory courses in Northern and Southern Sámi language, religion and traditional spirituality, and Sámi approaches to education (*Sámi allaskuvla n.d.*).

Sámi reindeer herding is thus considered an essential carrier of knowledge and language, with the *siida* as the main space for knowledge transfer. The traditional knowledge in Sámi reindeer herding *siidas* centers on a broad specter of practices constituting the herders' livelihood. This includes both the reindeer and many other resources in their nearby environment (Sara 2009:175). The inter-generational knowledge exchange takes place both at the family and household, *siida* or district level (Eira et al. 2016). Traditional knowledge is explored in more detail in chapter 3.

Reindeer pastoralism on the Norwegian side of Sápmi is based on a pattern of seasonal migration between pastures. In Finnmark, herds migrate between inland winter pastures and green summer pastures on the coast (Benjaminsen et al. 2015). The migration between and within pastures is decided by weather and climate, and the available pastures. Varying

temperatures and icy conditions can make access to pastures difficult. Winter pastures may be “locked” by layers of ice (more on this in chapter 5). The yearly cycle starts by moving the herd from winter pastures to the calving areas in the spring, based on the eight seasons in Northern Sámi; late winter/*giđasdálvi*, spring/*giđđa*, early summer/*giđasgeassi*, summer/*geassi*, late summer/*čakčageassi*, autumn/*čakča*, early winter/*čakčadálvi* and winter/*dálvi* (Landbruksdirektoratet 2022).

The national authorities in Sápmi have historically held the role of governor (*formynder*) over Sámi people, land and ways of life. On the Norwegian side of Sápmi, laws controlling reindeer herding were executed by local supervisors known as “lappesynsmenn”, from the late 1800s (Bjørklund 2016). Farming and developments in industry and infrastructure have increasingly come into conflict with Sámi land use. The Alta conflict (around 1968-1982) created a momentum for taking steps to improve the relationship between Sámi people and Norwegian authorities. The Alta conflict refers to a long struggle to protect the Alta-Guovdageaidnu River from hydropower development. The social mobilization resulted in the creation of the Sámi Parliament and an increase in public knowledge and interest in Sámi culture, though the construction of the dam was completed (Bjørklund 2016). As discussed in the section 2.3, the question of land ownership and rights continues to be conflicted, even after transferring state-owned land to the public.

The core of reindeer herding governance is achieving *sustainable* herding. Reindeer herding is administered partly by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Landbruks- og Matdepartementet, LMD). Eira et al. (2016) argue that there are two contrasting understandings of what sustainable reindeer herding is. The dominant understanding relies on economic measures of success, based on slaughter weight and productivity within the districts. This quantification of sustainable herding is a form of “modern” top-down management which limits adaptation responses to climate change (Eira et al. 2018). An alternative understanding is based on social and cultural sustainability, building on traditional Sámi knowledge (Eira et al. 2016). According to Benjaminsen et al. (2015), the public narrative on Sámi reindeer herding is dominated by a misreading of the Arctic landscape and an idea of excessive grazing in Finnmark. The dominant narrative is thus that Sámi herders keep too many animals and overuse the available resources. The idea that Sámi herders sustain too large herds is not new. Rather, Norwegian authorities have aimed at reducing the reindeer population in several periods (Benjaminsen et al. 2015).

The Reindeer Herding Act (Reindrifstloven) regulates the organization and governing of Sámi reindeer herding. Its main purpose is facilitating a sustainable reindeer herding based on traditional knowledge in order to protect Sámi culture and social life. The act aims to protect the areas that make up the material resources for reindeer herding. This responsibility is shared between reindeer herding rights holders, other rights holders and the authorities (Reindrifstloven 2007, § 1). Reindeer herders have argued for updating the act. In 2022, a committee appointed by the Sámi Parliament and Norwegian reindeer herders' association (NRL) delivered their proposal for an updated reindeer herding act. The proposal highlights change in the organization of herding and a strengthening of the siida rights, especially protection against land interventions (Sámi Parliament 12.09.2022). The aim is to strengthen and protect reindeer herding in the future, both as an industry, its traditional knowledge and culture. The proposal and comments from the public will be debated in the Sámi parliament, though an update on the act will have to be decided in the Norwegian parliament (NRK 24.01.2023). This illustrates how the rights an indigenous people can acquire and exercise depend on acceptance from the majority community (Oskal 2011).

## **2.6 Kvalsund (Ráhkkerávju / Fálesnuori)**

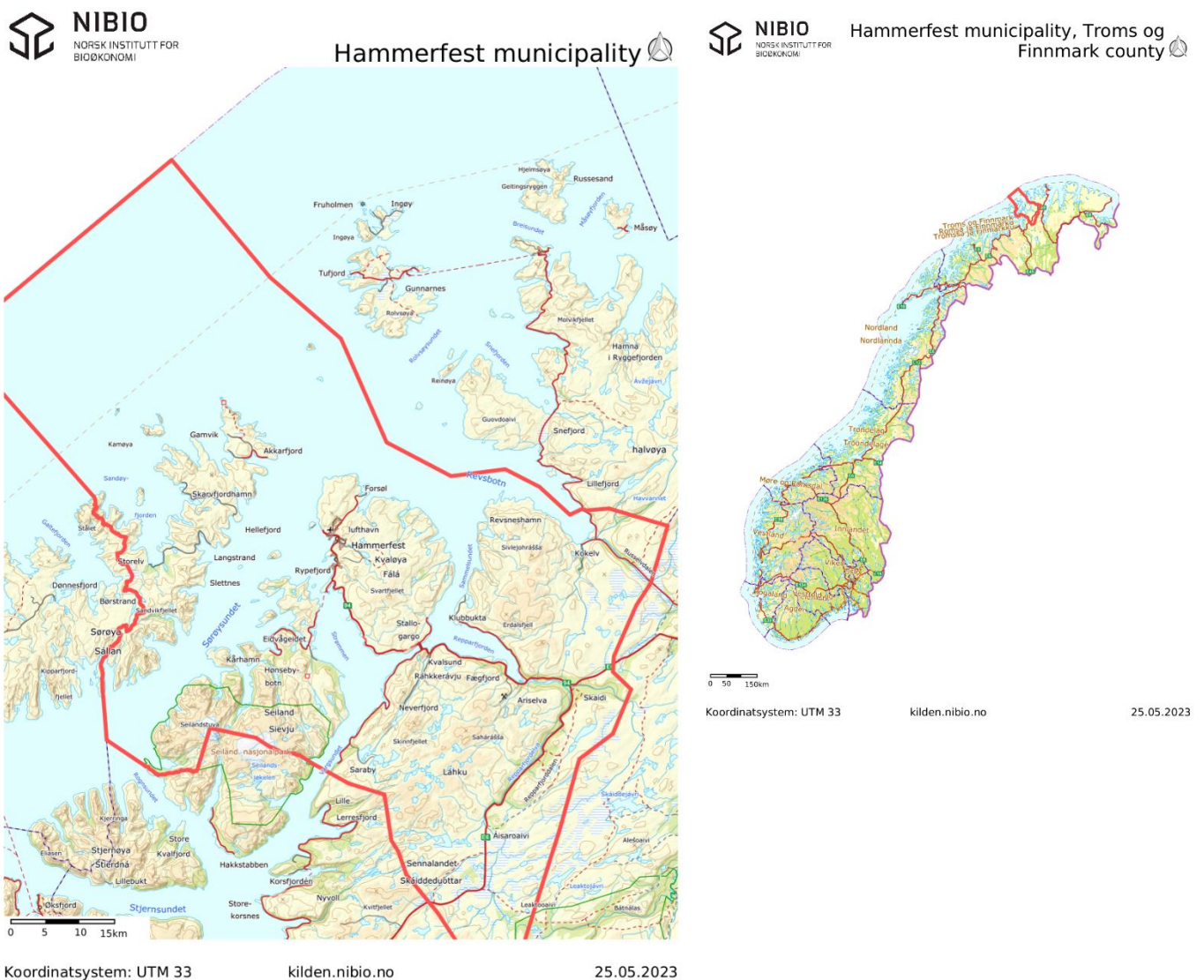
This section provides contextual information on Kvalsund, before briefly discussing the two main development projects that I consider exert part of the cumulative pressure on reindeer herding; the Nussir copper ore mine and the Barents Blue ammonia plant. Like the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, they are also under planning and not yet in construction.

Repparfjord is situated in Kvalsund (Ráhkkerávju or Fálesnuori in Northern Sámi), a small village in Hammerfest municipality in the Troms and Finnmark county. Kvalsund was a municipality on its own until merging with Hammerfest in 2020. Today most of the around 1000 inhabitants work other places in Hammerfest municipality, for example at the Hammerfest LNG plant (Melkøya), in salmon farming or public service. During the salmon fishing season, the Kvalsund river is a popular destination for tourists. The area has traditionally been referred to as coastal Sámi, with most inhabitants previously combining small-scale traditional fisheries and farming. Mineral extraction has in periods contributed to local employment, with the last mine closing in 1978 (Bjørklund 2016). During World War II, inhabitants in Kvalsund were evacuated and the village was burned down. Nevertheless, many families moved back to Kvalsund and surrounding small communities that were rebuilt (Johannesen 2019). In the last



decades, many small-scale farmers and fisheries have closed down in the area. This has in particular led to fewer inhabitants in the smaller villages surrounding Kvalsund, such as Saraby, Stállogárggu, Neverfjord and Porsa. Questions over Sámi identity and belonging make debates over industrial development in Kvalsund and Hammerfest difficult. As discussed above, this is influenced by historical experiences from the Norwegianization period, but is present in present-day conflicts as well (own observations and informal conversations).

Figures 4 and 5. Hammerfest municipality, in Troms og Finnmark county. Source: Nibio.



In Kvalsund, the reindeer districts Fiettar and Fálá use the area for grazing, calving or migration routes. The summer pastures are used for around 6 months, from around April-May, until moving towards inland winter pastures in September-October. Migration towards the coast starts around March-April, depending on the weather and quality of winter pastures. Both districts have winter pastures inland, approximately between Kautokeino and Karasjok.

The Fiettar district herds stay on the mainland in Kvalsund from spring and calving season, until autumn and slaughter, while the Fálá district move the herd through Kvalsund, and cross the strait to Kvaløya, before coming back to Kvalsund for the autumn season. This is illustrated in the maps below. In the Fiettar district, there are 14 siida shares. The siidas working on the western side of the Repparfjord valley will mainly be affected by the Nussir mine, while the eastern siidas will be affected by the 420-kilowatt line (interview with Lars 04.09.2022). One of my research participants, Lars, estimates that over 100 people are involved in the districts herding. The Fálá district is smaller, with 6 siida shares. The research participant Andreas estimates that around 30 people are directly involved in the district's herding (interview with Andreas 07.09.2022). In the Fálá district, marking of young calves is done in September, after the herd swims back to the mainland. In theory, most of Kvaløya makes up the Fálá spring and summer pastures.

Figure 6. Fálá spring pastures and calving areas, at Kvaløya. Source: Nibio.

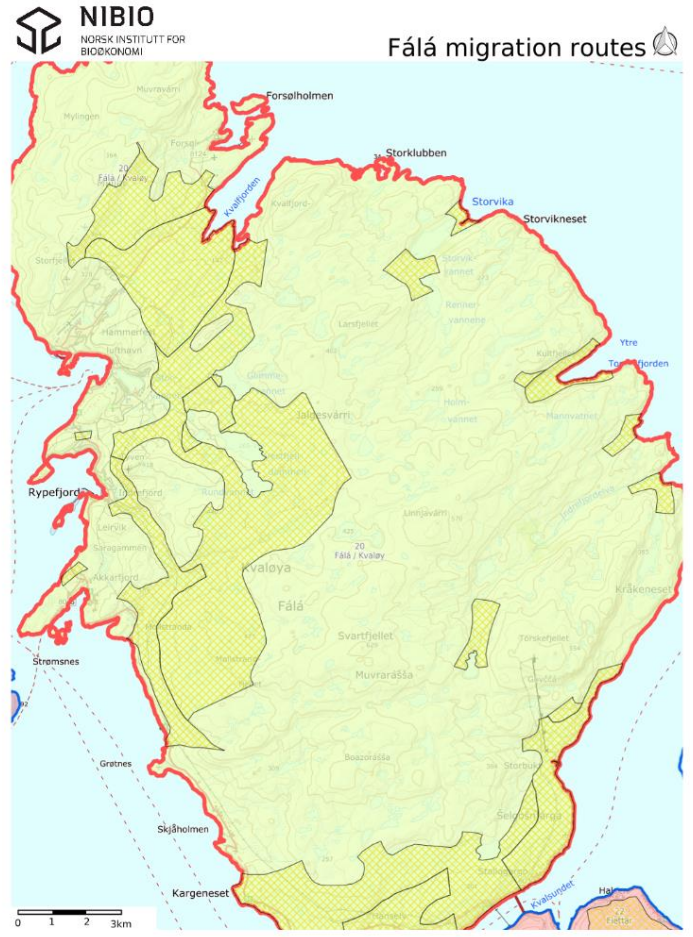
Figure 7. Migration routes Fálá district, at Kvaløya. Source: Nibio.



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23.04.2023



Koordinatsystem: UTM 33

kilden.nibio.no

23.04.2023



Figure 7. Spring pastures and calving area Fiettar district, Kvalsund. Source: Nibio.



### 2.6.1 Development projects in Kvalsund

The 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest line is one of several large-scale development projects in Kvalsund. The Nussir copper ore mine and the Barents Blue ammonia plant are planned in addition to already existing road, housing and cabin infrastructure. The two projects are seen together with the 420-kilowatt power line, as part of a cumulative pressure. In the analysis chapter, I argue that the reindeer herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts experience a cumulative pressure on their pasturelands and migration routes. This claim is based on data from interviews and conversations, as well as the documents analyzed.

Nussir ASA seeks to establish a copper ore mine from the Nussir and Ulveryggen / Gumppenjuni mountains. There has been mining activity in the area since around 1900. At Gumppenjuni, Follidal Verk established a large copper mine in 1972 that subsequently closed operations in 1978. The open pit mine was a significant disturbance for the Fiettar district (Bjørklund 2016). The mine shut down due to falling prices in the global mineral market. In Kvalsund, people hope that a new copper mine can provide jobs and contribute to population growth (informal conversations in Kvalsund). Still, most were worried about pollution of the local environment and the fjord. They told me how fisheries in the fjord were impacted dramatically by mining operations between 1972 and 1978, when mining waste was deposited in the fjord. At Gumppenjuni, the remnants of the old mine are clearly visible decades on.

The proposed mine has provoked over a decade of protests from environmentalists, Sámi reindeer herders and local activists. The controversy around the mine is centered around two main impacts. Firstly, the deposits from the mine will be led by a pipe down from the mountain and deposited at the seabed in the Repparfjord. The Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (Havforskningsinstituttet) argues that depositing heavy metals and sludge will put the marine life in the fjord and salmon fishing at risk (Fosså et al. 2011, Knutsen 2019). Secondly, the mining is planned in the middle of herding and calving areas and migration routes for the Fiettar and Fálá districts. The majority of the Sámi Parliament have voted against allowing mining in the Nussir and Gumppenjuni mountains at several plenary meetings (2016, 2018, 2019). The Sámi Parliament decisions argue that the cumulative negative effects on fisheries, reindeer herding, environment and Sámi culture and society, are so grave that the mining cannot be established in the Nussir and Gumppenjuni mountains, and sludge deposit in the Repparfjord (Sametinget 2019).

For over a decade, local and national activist groups have mobilized against the mining project. In 2021, the group *Stopp Nussir – Redd Repparfjord* organized a protest camp in Kvalsund. The camp lasted for over one hundred days, and raised awareness about the struggle against the mine. I participated in the camp as an activist. As I discuss in chapter 4, my background in mobilizing against the mine takes part in shaping my reflections of the context in Kvalsund. During the protest camp, activists stopped construction work through civil disobedience actions several times (NRK 21.07.2021). The Aurubis group terminated their contract to buy copper from Nussir ASA in 2021, indicating that social sustainability demands were not met in the project (Aurubis 2021). Hammerfest municipality retracted the development permission for the area in autumn 2021, and the protest camp closed down (NRK 01.10.2021).

During our interview, the research participant Annie told me how Nussir ASA have been very quiet since their development permission was retracted (Interview with Annie).

Mineral extraction in Norway is regulated by the Mineral Act, Mineralloven (2010). The 2022 official report for the new mineral act (NOU 2022:8) problematizes how protecting Sámi culture and access to natural resources is difficult to balance with mineral extraction. Large quantities of Norwegian mineral resources are in areas with Sámi settlement and traditional use of nature. Establishing mineral extraction here will produce effects that may lead to shutting off or disturbing access to these areas and resources (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022:102). Norwegian mineral policies are largely based on the idea of mutual adaptation and co-existence between mining and other use of the same area, with an overall aim of increasing Norwegian mineral extraction. This is formulated in the 2013 national Strategy for mineral development (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2013). An updated strategy is expected before the end of 2023.

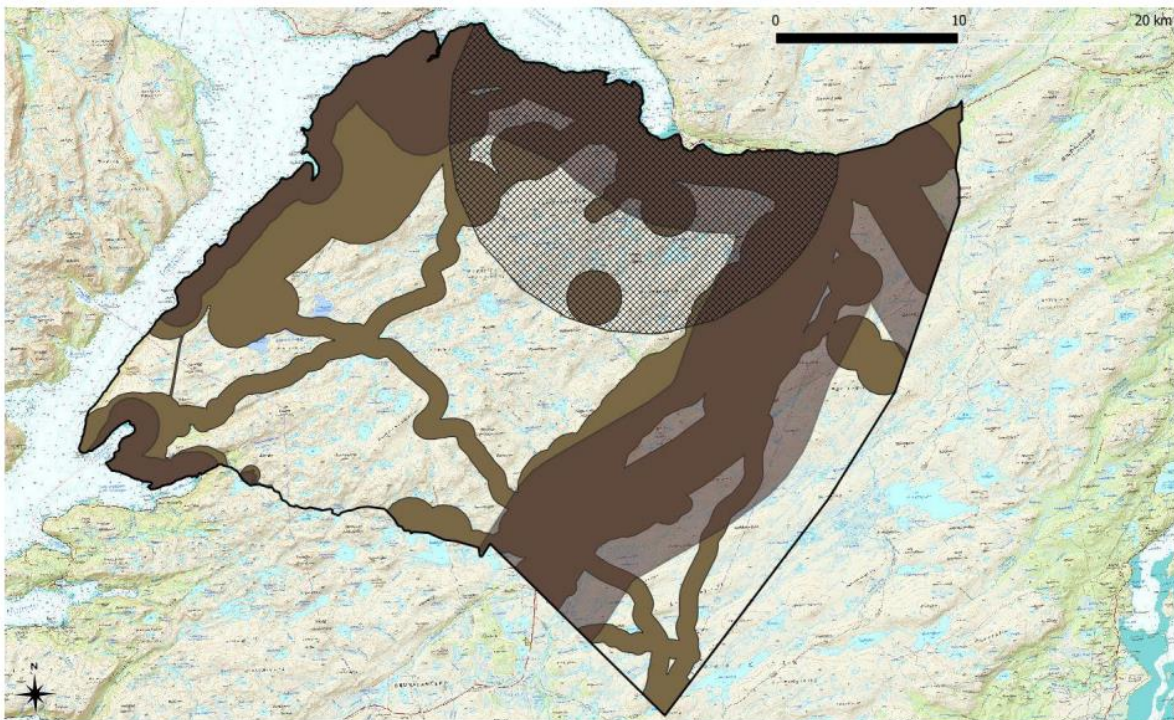
While the conflict over the Nussir copper mine is well established in the public debate, the Barents Blue project at Markoppneset in Riehpovuotna is less known. The Barents Blue project is a joint venture between Horisont Energi and the ammonia producer Fertiberia, aiming to develop the world's first and largest clean ammonia factory at Markoppneset in Kvalsund. Equinor and Vår Energi have discontinued their partner interests at the end of the development phase. The project aims to produce 1 million tons of clean ammonia (Horisont Energi 2023). The ammonia will be produced with natural gas from the Barents Sea, with CO<sub>2</sub> captured during the production process, and stored permanently at the Polaris reservoir offshore. According to the developer Horisont Energi, the purpose of the ammonia plant is to bridge “the gap to a carbon neutral future” by producing so-called clean ammonia and blue power for the regional grid (Horisont Energi 27.04.2023).

The Markoppneset (Márgophi) area is regulated for industrial development by Hammerfest municipality. There have been preliminary road infrastructure developments from the main road down to the fjord, where a dock is to be established. During the protest camp against Nussir ASA in 2021, the activists established a “guard post” at Markoppneset. During the summer season, reindeer from the Fiettar district regularly graze in the area, which herders describe as “good and green pastures” (conversation with participant “Ole”). The herders in the Fálá district use Markoppneset to rest the herd when moving along the coastline.



Accessing updated documentation on the Barents Blue project has been difficult, as the project is in the early planning stages, and it has only been covered briefly in media. The herders in Fiettar wish to postpone consultations with Horisont Energi until there is an impact assessment available. In early 2023, Horisont Energy's application for reserving electricity was rejected due to capacity problems. Currently, Horisont Energy and Lucerna are working towards adjusting the power demands during the development phase, to secure access to the local grid (Horisont Energi 22.03.2023).

Figure 8. Cumulative impacts from existing and planned encroachments. Source: Protect Sápmi.



As shown in the above illustration by Protect Sápmi, the cumulative effects (dark brown) of the proposed 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line and the Nussir copper mine (represented by the shaded area), will together with existing encroachments leave little unaffected reindeer herding land.

## Summary

In this chapter, I have provided contextualization of the proposed 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line in relation to the green energy transition in Norway, and how it is part of a global energy transition. Furthermore, I have situated Sámi human rights in relation to the history of Norwegianization politics. Reindeer herding is an integral part of Sámi human rights, as it is a material expression of culture. Lastly, I have presented other development projects in Kvalsund and Hammerfest that influence what I argue is a cumulative pressure on the Fiettar and Fálá districts. Now, I turn to the theoretical framework that underpin the thesis.

## 3 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I outline the theoretical framework for the thesis, environmental justice. Justice as distribution, recognition, participation and capabilities are the central concepts of environmental justice (Schlosberg 2007). I also discuss the concepts *green colonialism* and *power*. Green colonialism is not a theoretically developed term, but rather a term first used by indigenous activists to describe real-world experiences in the context of the green transition. Based on my findings and literature, I suggest that green colonialism is a continuation of colonial processes, justified by contributions to the green transition. It can thus be understood as an expression of injustice, with implications for distribution, recognition and participation. Though the concept is mainly used in activism, it has been applied by researchers in the past few years (Normann 2021, 2022, Fjellheim 2023). Questions over power and particularly power asymmetries, are key to debates on green colonialism. Power, as a concept, is well covered in literature but difficult to define (Allen 2021). I start the chapter by addressing environmental justice, both its origins and development into what Svarstad & Benjaminsen (2020) term radical environmental justice. Then I discuss issues of distributive justice, recognition, participation and capabilities. To address the concepts power and green colonialism, I draw on perspectives from political ecology literature. Lastly, I discuss *knowledge production* in the context of traditional knowledge, and *land as the key resource* for Sámi peoples.



### **3.1 Environmental justice**

Environmental justice (EJ) came into use in the 1980s, as a framework for making normative claims about the relationship between environment and social difference (Walker 2009). Communities of color in the South of the United States (US) resisted the unequal distribution of environmental ills, especially toxicity and pollution (Bullard 1990). The foundation of the environmental justice movement is thus linked to specific forms of activism in the US. A critical event in the development of the environmental justice movement in the US is the 1982 protests in Warren County, North Carolina. Black community members protested against the siting of a toxic landfill, recognizing that their community was overburdened with environmental harms (Bullard 1990, Murdock 2021:7).

Importantly, environmental justice is both a theoretical term and a movement grounded in community experiences. Both start with the people and communities that are experiencing harms (Murdock 2021:9). The real-world experiences of people and the origins of environmental injustices are at the core of environmental justice studies (Tornel 2022). These experiences of injustices are, as explored by Svarstad and Benjaminsen (2020), at the intersections between radical environmental justice studies and political ecology. They argue that the approaches share an explicitly normative focus on justice, with human rights, justice and environmental sustainability as its core values (Robbins 2012, Svarstad & Benjaminsen 2020:2).

From a political theory perspective, the issue of justice has been understood as the distribution of benefits and burdens. Early justice studies were defined by the liberal distributive justice theories of John Rawls, which Rawls defined as “the appropriate division of social advantages” (Rawls 1971:09-10); accordingly, we would achieve justice if we create rules for equitable distribution of costs and benefits in society. Though a distributive understanding of justice has dominated EJ studies, demands for participatory justice has been part of the distributive understanding of justice since its beginning (Schlosberg 2007, Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010). Environmental justice thus continues to expand in scope and scale, exploring what processes take part in constructing maldistribution (Schlosberg 2007, 2013). The globalization of EJ, both in theoretical and activist terms, means that we speak of environmental justice in broader, more global terms, with research and policy manifestations both internationally and locally. Environmental justice has thus scaled up from its American origins, becoming a language for movements around the world to use (Walker 2009).

In Norway, issues of environmental justice are among other found in studies on carnivore and human-wildlife conflict. Jakobsen and Linnell (2016) argue that perceptions of distributive justice and recognition were most prominent in the conflict over large carnivore management in Norway, such as wolves. Moreover, they found that in conflicts where it is impossible to satisfy all stakeholders in the outcome of a situation, it is key to ensure that the decision-making process is perceived as fair and just and that participants experience recognition of their identities and perspectives (Jakobsen & Linnell 2016:17).

In the case of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, justice questions are visible on several levels. The reindeer herders in both Fieltar and Fálá experience that they are forced to carry the cost of developing infrastructures, which are motivated by the majority society's goals for the green transition. In the decision-making processes concerning development in their pasturelands and migration routes, the herders experience that it is difficult for them to participate on an equal basis with the national authorities and the developers. Furthermore, Sámi knowledges are ignored in these processes. This will be elaborated on both in the thematic analysis, and in the discussion chapters.

Environmental justice has also become a framework for understanding indigenous struggles over environmental conditions and autonomy of lands and resources. Indigenous peoples struggle to defend the basic functioning of their communities (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010). Sámi reindeer herders who are struggling against industrial and infrastructure development are not environmental justice activists. They experience that they need to defend their livelihoods. As I suggest in the thematic analysis, the reindeer herders in Fieltar and Fálá experience that they have already adapted too much. When they are asked to make room for more industrial developments motivated by the green transition, they worry for the future of their siidas and districts (interviews with Ole and Andreas). Thus, they experience environmental injustices, and EJ studies can contribute with insights into why that is the case. Indigenous peoples' demands for equity, recognition and participation can thus be understood as tools in their struggle for the basic functioning of culture, nature and communities (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010). In the remaining parts of this section, I discuss the four central dimensions that constitute the EJ framework; distributive justice, recognition, participation and procedural justice, and capabilities.

### **3.1.1 Distributive justice**

Distributive justice explores how environmental harms and benefits are distributed and experienced in the context of uneven power relations (Kaswan 2021). Societal inequalities are mirrored in the distribution of environmental risks, causing a maldistribution of these risks (Schlosberg 2007). On a basic level, environmental injustice occurs when the costs of environmental risk, and the benefits of good environmental policy, are not shared equally between communities (Schlosberg 2007:56). Injustices can be experienced by closeness to environmental harms (Bullard 1990) or from energy systems, production and infrastructure (Day 2021). For the reindeer herders in Kvalsund, energy infrastructures in their seasonal pastures and migration routes, are experienced as a form of injustice, by negatively affecting their use of the lands. Early distributive justice studies acknowledged that in particular Black, indigenous or low-income communities were exposed to environmental risks. Environmental risks were understood as simply another example of social injustice (Schlosberg 2013).

Various factors contribute to the distribution of land uses or risks between individuals and communities. Asking *what is causing* the distributional injustice is key. If the cause of distributional disparities is discriminatory decision-making, we must ask whether this reflects present or past discrimination (Kaswan 2021:31). Past discrimination can contribute to current unequal patterns of distribution. As elaborated in section 2.4., the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission is currently exploring how past discrimination against the Sámi community may contribute to negative consequences today. Injustices experienced on an individual level, can then contribute to embedding injustices in communities.

### **3.1.2 Justice as recognition**

The distributional approach to justice has been challenged with an examination of the underlying causes of maldistribution, and who is left out of the distributions. Lack of recognition is a harm, or an injustice, in the same way as a lack of equal distribution of harms and benefits (Schlosberg 2007:18). Thus, *recognition* is about who is respected or not, and whose values, interests and worldviews are recognized as valid (Svarstad & Benjaminsen 2020). My findings suggest that ignoring Sámi reindeer herding perspectives contribute to producing maldistribution of costs from the green transition.

According to theories of justice as recognition, we must then examine the context of the real-life injustices experienced by people (Schlosberg 2007). Following Young (1990), Honneth (1992), Fraser (1998, 2000) and Taylor (1994), a lack of recognition at the social and political level, inflicts damage on both individuals and communities. A lack of recognition for group differences can play a key role in determining unjust distributional patterns. According to Young (1990) and Fraser (2000), justice requires attention to both distribution and recognition, as they are linked. The structural and institutionalized causes for domination or oppression must be recognized and acknowledged. This requires examining whether, and how, individuals and communities are recognized by others (Schlosberg 2007:15). In the case studied here, I argue that historical injustices experienced by the Sámi community contribute to the current patterns of injustices in distribution and recognition.

Mis- or malrecognition is a form of institutional and cultural injustice, “rooted in patterns of representation, interpretation and communication” (Fraser 1998:7). Taylor argues that recognition is a vital human need for individuals and groups. The lack of recognition (nonrecognition) or misrecognition, can inflict harm and be a form of oppression (Taylor 1994:25). Recognition is one way to conceptualize justice, by acknowledging identity differences. Honneth argues for seeing recognition as an overarching concept of justice, and that all claims for justice can be understood as struggles for recognition (Honneth 1992). Thus, different conceptualizations of recognition deals with how we accommodate and respect a diversity of peoples, their cultural practices, identities and knowledge systems (Coolsaet & Néron 2021:52).

Recognizing group differences between the Norwegian majority population and Sámi community is a continuing process. Establishing the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi in 1989 can be seen as one step forward in recognizing the distinctiveness of Sámi culture. Still, the Sámi community is not one homogenous group. Reindeer herders have different needs than sea Sámi fishermen, or those practicing duodji (Sámi crafts). The larger Sámi community encompasses several different languages, stories, practices and art. In the case of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, recognizing the importance of the reindeer herders’ access to the lands they use, as well as their knowledges and experiences, can contribute to mitigate previous experiences of injustices.

### 3.1.3 Participation and procedural justice

My findings indicate that both reindeer herders and Sámi activists experience that decisions on development in Sámi areas appear to be concluded in advance. Participating in decision-making processes does then not necessarily provide the ability to influence the outcome. Procedural justice approaches are concerned with obtaining fair and equitable decision-making processes that allow individuals and communities to participate. Put simply, procedural justice is concerned with the ability people have to participate in and influence decision-making processes (Clayton 1988 in Suiseeya 2021). Participation is the primary mechanism for obtaining procedural justice. It may or may not address the power asymmetries, exclusion and misrecognition that produce environmental injustices (Suiseeya 2021:48). Furthermore, economic injustices can deny people the necessary resources to engage with others and participate in society. This creates new forms of injustice (Coolsaet & Néron 2021:56).

One part of procedural justice is representation. Fraser argues that the question of political representation is a defining factor of justice. The political dimension tells us “Who is included, and who is excluded, from the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition” (Fraser 2005:6). Fraser’s bivalent understanding of justice (2000) has evolved to a trivalent understanding by which justice requires economic redistribution, cultural recognition and equal political representation. The different forms of justice are closely interconnected (Schlosberg 2004, Fraser 2000, 2005), as I have found in my analysis.

*Participation in itself* is not enough to secure just outcomes for affected populations such as the reindeer herders in Fiettar and Fálá. If all participating actors involved are not committed to mutual recognition of needs and differences, a decision-making process is unlikely to produce a fair outcome (Coolsaet & Néron 2021:62). To achieve procedural justice, we must ask how power is wielded during decision-making processes (Suiseeya 2021). The power to influence varies between individuals and groups, and may be influenced by their social or economic positions. As mentioned in chapter 2, human rights following SP 27 can be violated if affected community members cannot effectively participate in decision-making processes concerning them. As I discuss in the analysis, participating in the development processes is both time-consuming and puts an economic burden on Sámi reindeer herders.

### **3.1.4 Capabilities as an approach to justice**

Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's (1992) conceptualization of justice focuses on the capabilities necessary for people to live the lives they choose for themselves. This is known as the capabilities approach to justice, where the key question is what it takes for people to *live their lives fully* (Schlosberg 2007:34). Nussbaum and Sen argue for expanding beyond the goals of distributive justice, in order to evaluate how the distribution of resources affects the wellbeing and functioning of people's lives (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010). According to Holland (2021) the question of human wellbeing is central to understanding how people are harmed by injustices. Conceptualizing wellbeing in terms of people's capabilities to live and improve their lives is one way of understanding the importance environment holds in ensuring a good life. The capabilities approach is concerned with whether people have what they need for living a fully functional life. Hence the approach is providing an opportunity to link issues of distribution, participation and recognition. Political participation is crucial for individuals to lead fully functioning lives (Nussbaum & Sen 1992).

The capabilities approach has also been applied to animals and non-human natures. Rather than focusing on the capabilities necessary for the flourishing of individual animals and species, the capabilities approach can recognize the flourishing of systems as a whole as well (Schlosberg 2007:148). Expanding the EJ framework moves the debate into a realm where nature and environment can be understood to create the conditions for social justice. Furthermore, a capabilities approach can recognize the functioning of natural systems, as well as the basic needs of the human and non-human individuals who depend on them (Schlosberg 2013:44).

### **3.1.5 Limitations of environmental justice**

Although the environmental justice framework provides important theoretical contributions to study cases such as the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, there are nonetheless limitations that need to be addressed. Indigenous communities experience a broad pattern of coloniality, which is not accounted for in full by approaches to justice alone. Issues of distribution, participation and recognition may fail to properly account for indigenous communities' experiences of coloniality (Tornel 2022). This includes the material impacts from maldistribution of harms and benefits, and recognition of indigenous relationships to land (Coulthard 2014). Environmental justice studies are often criticized for a lack of critical and

decolonial perspectives. Concepts such as the “environment” and “justice” are often defined through Western ways of thinking. While empirical EJ studies increasingly take place in contexts in the global South, conceptual EJ studies struggle to move beyond Western frameworks. Uncritically applying Western concepts and frameworks to describe the global South or indigenous peoples can risk being ineffective, produce additional injustices (Álvarez & Coolsaet 2020), or fail to properly study ontological and epistemological injustices (Santos 2014).

Temper (2019) argues that the EJ framework on recognition, participation and distribution fails to meaningfully address the experiences of indigenous communities with extractive industries and environmental injustices. Environmental justice studies must learn from indigenous struggles for self-determination, in order to properly address decolonization and epistemic justice (Temper 2019). The call for autonomy is apparent in Sámi rights struggles as well. The Tråante Declaration (Saami Council 2017) asserts the Sámi people’s rights to self-determination, which cannot be defined or deprived by others. This challenges the dominant position of the nation states in Sápmi; Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Furthermore, the declaration asserts that Sámi people thus have a right to “exercise effective influence on the outcome of those things that are essential to the Saami people. The right to self-determination is a right different from the right to being consulted” (Saami Council 2017:3). The declaration was the result of the 21<sup>st</sup> Sámi Conference in Trondheim / Tråante in 2017, gathering the Saami Council member organizations to mark the centennial jubilee of the first national Saami Conference in 1917. In the thematic analysis and discussion chapters, I argue that consultation is not an adequate form of participating in decision-making processes, for Sámi reindeer herders.

### **3.2 Green colonialism**

I now turn to discussing the term green colonialism, which I argue is well suited for mitigating the limitations of environmental justice studies in indigenous areas. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, green colonialism is in its essence an activist term, which has increasingly been included in academic literature critically examining the negative effects caused by green developments in indigenous areas. Based on my findings, I argue that *green colonialism* contributes to describing how Sámi reindeer herders are losing lands necessary for their livelihoods, justified by the green transition.

During interviews, several of my research participants elaborated how they see the green transition as a convenient form of rhetoric to justify taking Sámi lands. The term green colonialism has thus emerged to refer to loss of lands that represent a continuation of historical processes, but recently under the guise of sustainability. Development projects in the green transition are leading to loss of indigenous land and resources, as well as a lack of trust between majority and minority groups in society. In Norway, the main expression of green colonialism is connected to wind turbines in Sámi reindeer herding areas. The construction of wind turbines on Sámi reindeer herding lands has put herding districts at risk by disturbing seasonal pastures and migration routes (Lawrence 2014, Fjellheim & Carl 2020, Ellingsen 2020, Normann 2021, Fjellheim 2023).

Globally, indigenous peoples experience climate change as a double burden (Normann 2021). In addition, processes of social and economic change such as economic globalization and land-use change influence the impacts of climate change. The joint impacts of climate change and globalization are often referred to as double exposure, impacting certain communities and areas (O'Brien & Leichenko 2000). Interventions and developments motivated by the green transition in the global South shifts the burden onto formerly colonized peoples (Batel 2022, Sultana 2022). This is recognized by indigenous leaders globally, who question who will pay the price and give up land and resources needed in the green transition (Monet 2023). These interventions take different forms, but result in similar processes of dominance and degradation. This thesis concentrates the discussion to expressions of green colonialism in Sápmi, though similar mechanisms are at play in other geographical locations.

Zografos and Robbins (2020) argue that Green New Deals (GND) could put severe pressure on indigenous and marginalized communities, reshaping their ecologies into *green sacrifice zones*. The claims of a just transition in the various GND programs are contradictory, as the materialization of the green transition depend on colonial structures of resource acquisition (Zografos & Robbins 2020). Building on the idea of sacrifice zones, Kuokkanen (2022) asks whether reindeer in Sápmi have become the new buffalo “that is being sacrificed in the race to building green energies”. The negative environmental and social impacts caused by the production of “clean” or “green” energy are not removed, but relocated to regions rendered as “sacrifice zones”. Kuokkanen suggests that reindeer herding areas in Norway might be considered sacrifice zones for the green transition (2022).

Environmental injustice can reinforce experiences of injustice and oppression already affecting marginalized or vulnerable communities. Theories of EJ must involve multiple



dimensions of harm and repair (Murdoch 2021). Figueroa (2011) argues that communities need both a fair distribution of environmental resources, and recognition of how the harm of environmental injustice also has deep psychological and existential dimensions. The damage and harm of injustices are thus about more than the deprivation of environmental goods. One example is the colonization of Australia. The declaration of empty lands, *terra nullius*, by white settlers in Australia, made Aboriginal peoples invisible. The lack of existential recognition of Aboriginal peoples' presence and relationship with the land is, according to Figueroa, an example of structural and continuous violence with long-lasting consequences (Figueroa 2011, Murdoch 2021). In Sápmi as well, the nation states did not recognize Sámi reciprocal relations with the land when drawing national borders (Finbog n.d.). Thus, Sápmi was an empty wilderness, a no man's land with connotations to *terra nullius* that could be taken and owned (Niemi 1997:62).

### **3.2.1 Power**

Questions over *power* are central to the understanding of how green colonialism functions. In this context, it is useful to draw on perspectives from political ecology for a discussion of power. Political ecology focuses on how power manifests itself in material and discursive environmental struggles (Robbins 2012, Svarstad & Benjaminsen 2020). The discipline is often defined as “tools for thinking about the conflicts and struggles engendered by forms of access and control over resources” (Peluso & Watts 2001:25).

Power is often considered as something held by individuals or institutions, and exercised for dominance over others (Ahlborg & Nightingale 2018). Allen (2021) distinguishes between feminist conceptualizations of power as a resource that can be distributed, power as domination and as empowerment. Ahlborg & Nightingale argue for an embodied and situated conceptualization of power, produced in interactions between human and non-human elements. Power is thus produced in specific situations, and needs to be exercised to be realized (Ahlborg & Nightingale 2018:383). Feminist theories of power argue that power is always contradictory, and that social, economic and political differences are the outcome of power rather than indications of power held (Butler 1990, 1997, Allen 2021). Following Nightingale (2017), power and politics are always part of climate adaptation processes. The ability to influence decision-making processes is distributed unevenly between individuals and groups, which can produce a lack of participatory justice. Decision-making processes concerning Sámi reindeer

herding areas take place at local, regional and national levels. As detailed by Holifield et al. (2009), indigenous communities often have limited power to influence political decisions that could mitigate environmental inequalities they experience.

### **3.3 Knowledge production and traditional knowledge**

This section discusses the relationship between knowledge production and traditional knowledge. The exclusion of indigenous knowledges from “green agendas” is experienced as a form of dehumanization and invisibility (Normann 2022:176). Interpretation of empirical data about the Other can have negative impacts by being represented as knowledge. It can be understood as an indirect and nonphysical form of violence, subjecting the Other to *epistemological violence* (Teo 2010). Southern and indigenous knowledges have historically been erased and devalued by Western science (Santos 2014). Acknowledging the existence of different forms of knowledge requires establishing a dialogue of knowledges (Tornel 2022). The Latin American turn toward ontological politics (Blaser & De la Cadena 2018), centers on the right of subaltern groups to live in accordance with their own ways of knowing the world and speaking for themselves (Spivak 1988, Leff 2017, Tornel 2022).

Indigenous ways of knowing the world can be expressed and taught as practices and ways of life (Oskal 2011). Indigenous knowledges are often referred to as forms of traditional knowledge, or holistic knowledge systems (Holmberg 2018). According to Berkes (2008), traditional knowledge is “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief”, handed down between generations through practical experiences. This knowledge is about the relationships that living beings, including humans, have with one another and their environment (Berkes 2008:7). Sámi traditional worldviews recognizes that humans are a part of nature, and not above other forms of life (Helander 2000 in Holmberg 2018, Oskal 2011).

Sámi knowledge and culture has historically not been based on written sources, but rather observation, transfer of skills and professional jargon through generations (Jernsletten 1997). As a result of this, there are few older written Sámi sources. This is part of the unequal power relations in the storytelling of Sámi culture, and the assimilation project. Sámi reindeer herding is central to keeping knowledge and language alive, as an abundance of specialized terms about reindeer, herding activities and the environment, represent a key part of the Sámi reindeer herding knowledge (Sara 2009:159). This is corroborated by my interview data. Traditional knowledge about land and resources are key in protecting Sámi reindeer herding’s

ability to adapt (Eira et al. 2018). Epistemic justice refers to the aspiration or goal of overcoming barriers for alternative forms of knowing the world to be recognized as valuable and valid knowledge (Temper 2019). Further, it refers to making visible ways of knowing that have been marginalized by the dominance of one knowledge system over others (Widenhorn 2013:380). Critically addressing knowledge production and the epistemic foundations of the green transition is key to changing colonial relations. This requires asking who is cited, who gets to speak and whose knowledges are recognized as valid (Sultana 2022).

For Sámi reindeer herders, environmental impact assessment processes (EIAs), represent asymmetrical knowledge systems. Notions of rationality and practicality dominate reindeer governance (Eira et al. 2018). As I explore in chapter 5, both reindeer herders and other Sámi representatives worry that EIAs in practice function as a step in an already concluded process. In particular, the question of recognizing cumulative effects is central. My findings suggest that both the reindeer herders and Sámi politicians are concerned with how the impact assessment processes function.

### **3.4 Land as a key resource**

Access to land as a key resource is closely connected to the conceptualizations for environmental justice. The access to and control over resources can be understood as a territorial struggle, where recognition of territorial demands and indigenous rights are central (Borras & Franco 2013). While extractive industries expand their geographical reach, land rights continue to be conflicted. Indigenous peoples recognize that without resources there is no autonomy (Anthias 2018:249). Who has access to land is often the result of political struggles and decisions. In the global South, the extraction of energy and resources “for the common good” is contrasted with protecting “the rights of the few”, meaning the rights of indigenous peoples (Anthias 2018). If land is understood as the fundamental resource for indigenous people, then autonomy over that resource is crucial.

This study builds on the assumption that *land is the key resource* Sámi reindeer herders depend on. For this reason, access to use particular pieces of land represents a political struggle. Huber (2019) argues that resources are more than an object of political struggle. Whereas a rudimentary understanding is that political struggles over resources are simply “fighting over stuff”, Huber argues that we should imagine how resources themselves might shape politics (Huber 2019:553). Land as a material resource in Sápmi has both practical value as pasturelands

for reindeer, and value-generating potential for industrial development, energy production and extractive industries. Land is a natural resource in itself, but it is also special because it gives access to other natural resources. For indigenous peoples, land is also a territory where their ancestors lived, and where they themselves continue to live and relate to the nature around them (Borras & Franco 2013:1726).

David Harvey's (2004) theory of "accumulation by dispossession" describes the continuing and transforming practices of accumulation under neoliberalism. Neoliberal capitalist expansion result in the centralization of wealth and power, and privatization of public land and resources (Harvey 2004). Central to processes of accumulation is the enclosure of assets for profits (Bakker 2005). Access to land is generally mediated by a range of processes fixing or consolidating forms of access, claiming and exclusion. These mechanisms can be understood as land control (Peluso & Lund 2011). Forms of land control and dispossession are part of primitive and ongoing forms of accumulations in various kinds of territories. Old and new forms of land control combine and create new subjects and frontiers of land control (Peluso & Lund 2011:677).

Sámi lands are not sold to private investors. Rather, areas are made available by primarily the state for use through concessions to use both the resources and the land. Still, the processes behind loss of Sámi lands share similarities with global grabs for land and resources. Access to and control over land and material resources are still restricted. The Norwegian state is the main institutional actor through state-owned enterprises such as NVE and Statkraft. This means that Norwegian authorities play several roles in development conflicts on Sámi lands; executive power granting access to resources, protector of indigenous rights and promoter of economic gains from the projects. The recognition of indigenous peoples' human rights also means recognizing the importance of resources and land as the material basis for their culture.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the theoretical framework of environmental justice, addressing the contributions of distributive justice, participation and procedural justice, justice as recognition and the role of capabilities and functioning. These components are complimentary and together provide a more comprehensive understanding of justice (Schlosberg 2007). In the context of the Fiettar and Fálá districts, different understandings of justice and injustice intertwine. Lack of respect and recognition hinders participation in society. If you do not

participate, you are not recognized; and if you are not recognized, you do not participate (Schlosberg 2007:26). This impossible situation is familiar for indigenous peoples who need to participate in “dialogue” processes of not-yet realized future projects, where their contributions and knowledges are ultimately ignored in the decision-making processes (Österlin & Raitio 2020).

Sámi peoples’ struggles for protecting their access to traditional lands and keeping knowledge and culture thriving cannot adequately be explained by an environmental justice framework alone. Examining questions of epistemic justice and power in relation to knowledge production is one way of addressing the limitations of the EJ approach (Widenhorn 2013, Temper 2019), another is to recognize the way processes in the green transition may be a continuation of historic colonial relations under a new guise.

#### **4 Methodology**

In this chapter I explain the methodological choices that have formed the project. First, I reflect on the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the thesis, before moving on to discuss qualitative research. This is followed by a presentation of and reflections on the data collection process, fieldwork, positionality and reflexivity, ethical considerations, and analytical strategy.

In this study, I use a triangulation of methods, combining individual interviews, participant observation and document analysis. Firstly, this is a tool to secure rigorous studies and results. Secondly, this is a way of minimizing pressure on people who are forced to participate in dialogue about encroachments on their lands with authorities and developers. Taking time to participate in media coverage and research projects is voluntary, though time consuming. Although participating in research projects can be a way of making oneself heard, Sámi reindeer herders facing numerous encroachments on their lands may experience research and participation fatigue (Löf & Stinnerbom 2016, Fjellheim 2023), given that a growing part of the herders’ livelihood is dealing with development projects and legal processes over time.

This research is based on interviews with three reindeer herders in Kvalsund, and three Sámi activists with different political positions. The interview material is combined with data from participant observation that I conducted both during fieldwork in Kvalsund and during protests in Oslo. In addition to individual interviews and participant observation, I analyzed

protocols from the consultation and dialogue between the reindeer herders and the Sámi parliament, and state representatives from NVE and OED. I also analyzed NVE's recommendation to OED on the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line (2022), and the updated environmental impact assessment (Multiconsult 2021). The combination of methods triangulation with several data sources, has allowed me to minimize the amount of pressure I enforce on participants, while ensuring better validity of data (Cope & Hay 2021).

#### **4.1 Ontological and epistemological assumptions**

While working on this thesis, I have studied theoretical concepts both before and while collecting data. This has been a form of deductive-abductive approach, moving in a cyclical manner back and forth between theory, to the case and back. Thus, this study is informed by theory, while incorporating an “insider” view on why people do what they do (Blaikie 2007:90).

The research of this thesis is placed within critical theory, challenging the idea of an objective and positivist science. Critical theory seeks to transform and liberate society, rather than simply describing or understanding it (Cresswell 2013). My methodological choices are shaped by my position as a feminist human geographer with a decolonial approach. Decolonizing geography has proved difficult and requires re-thinking geography from the vantage point of the marginalized (Radcliffe 2017, Radcliffe & Radhuber 2020). It further demands acknowledging multiple ways of knowing and being, especially indigenous knowledge systems (de Leeuw & Hunt 2018:6).

Following traditions of feminist geography, this means that I integrate myself into the research process. This rejects the notion of the researcher as a dematerialized and disembodied entity, searching for a universalistic and objective truth (England 1994). In this thesis, I seek to confront and challenge dominant understandings of what is “valid” forms of knowledge in development conflicts in Sámi reindeer herding areas. This does not mean rejecting scientific forms of knowledge. Rather, it means granting equality of opportunity for different kinds of knowledges (Santos 2014:190). Kuokkanen (2008) argues how academic spaces are characterized by an “epistemic ignorance”, enabling the continued exclusion of knowledges outside dominant Western traditions. This ignorance also takes place outside the academic context. In the analysis, I argue that Sámi knowledges are willfully ignored and thus kept out of processes of impact assessment and decision making. Taking indigenous knowledges into account can be a way of rejecting the claim of Western knowledges as “universal” (Smith 2021).

Research is not a neutral nor distanced academic exercise, but rather a contextual and political act of interpretation (Stordahl et al. 2015, Catungal & Dowling 2021). It is an activity with something at stake, occurring in a set of political and social conditions (Smith 2021:5). In Repparfjord, the reindeer herders experience that their future and traditional ways of life are under threat from climate change and industrial developments. Sápmi can be understood as a site of struggle over forms of knowledge and history (Fjellheim 2020). As discussed in the section 2.4 on Norwegianization, sharing personal and collective stories on the subjugation of Sámi ways of being and knowledge is a way of confronting colonized science. Teo (2010) defines how acts of interpretation of empirical data about the Other can have negative impacts by being represented as knowledge. Knowledge production can thus be epistemological violence (Teo 2010). To avoid reproducing epistemological violence or injustices, I have circled back to findings and notes from conversations and observations, seeking out indigenous and Sámi sources.

#### **4.2 Qualitative research and case study**

Due to the aims of the project, I decided that a qualitative approach would be best suited for conducting the research. Qualitative research allows for looking into people's experiences of being in the world (Cope & Hay 2021). Accessing Sámi experiences of how the green transition impacts reindeer herding in Repparfjord, and cultural aspects of Sámi reindeer herding and knowledges, made qualitative research methods the best choice for my project.

The project has been conducted as a case study, using the case study as an approach to research (Baxter 2021). Gerring (2004) defines the case study as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (Gerring 2004:342). In this study, using a case study methodology is a means of both understanding the concrete aspects of Kvalsund and the context the reindeer herding districts are in, and expanding theory (Baxter 2021:122). Studying the 420-kilowatt power line is valuable in itself; the development of the power line will have an impact on the place and the people who depend on nature for their work and cultural practices. The case also contributes to a wider debate on how “green” infrastructures are part of a negative pressure on Sámi reindeer herding. The findings then contribute both to understanding why the power line Skaidi-Hammerfest is so conflicted, and to understanding other similar cases of infrastructure development in Sámi reindeer herding areas.

Initially, the thesis was planned as a case study of the Nussir copper mine. After conducting fieldwork in Finnmark, I reflected on what the data could contribute to: how could my findings contribute in particular to research and debate on green colonialism in Sápmi? During this period of reflection, I decided to focus my analysis on the 420-kilowatt line. This implied shifting my focus from natural resource extraction to a renewable energy infrastructure project. I did this for two reasons. First of all, the 420-kilowatt power line itself has previously not been explored in academic literature. Secondly, *energy transmission infrastructures* are less explored than the production of energy or resource extraction. Studying green colonialism through renewable energy production and infrastructure seemed to be a meaningful way to expand the field. I build on previous studies on energy production in Sápmi, in particular wind power (Lawrence 2014, Ellingsen 2020, Normann 2021, 2022, Fjellheim 2023).

To operationalize the study, I have gone through many rounds of reflection, which ultimately led to a change of focus. An individual master thesis is limited to a short time period. Because of this, it can only access a part of the struggle, at a certain time. The parts of people's everyday experiences that form this thesis contribute to further insights into why phenomena are experienced as they are. The overall aim of the thesis, to study the cumulative effects experienced by the Fieltar and Fálá districts, remained the starting point of this thesis. Changing my case after completing the physical fieldwork in Finnmark, has in some ways limited the data material. The interviews in Kvalsund and Hammerfest were conducted with the Nussir mine as the main example of intervention to study the development pressure the herders are experiencing. Since the aim was to study the cumulative pressure from several encroachments, the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line had already been included in all the first interviews; this facilitated the change of focus. The two last interviews, with Aili Keskitalo and Beaska Niillas, were conducted after I changed the case. Changing the case focus has also had implications for the theoretical chapter, and for what kinds of relevant documents I have analyzed.

### **4.3 Fieldwork**

Early in the research process I decided that I should spend some time in Kvalsund to conduct fieldwork. Firstly, access to relevant participants is easier if you are physically present at their location. Secondly, being in the right place can also contribute to accessing knowledges and deeper insights in itself by observation of everyday activities. I have several times previously been to Kvalsund and Repparfjord as an activist. My latest visit was during the protest camp



against the Nussir mine in August 2021. Going “into the field” therefore represented both returning to a place of importance to me, as well as being in a new role as a researcher conducting a project. Being in the “role of a researcher” in Kvalsund involved participant observation. Thus, I approached the social situations during fieldwork with two purposes; engaging in appropriate activities, and observing the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation (Spradley 1980:54).

Madden (2017) argues that a key characteristic of ethnographic research is the attempt to balance the “insider” and “outsider” view. In practice, this means accounting for both the emic and ethic point of view in a given case. The emic perspective reflects the insiders’, or participants’, point of view. The etic perspective reflects the outsiders’, or the researchers’, point of view. Although I became familiar with the people participating in this study, it is important to recognize that the researcher always maintains some sense of “the outsider” (Madden 2017:20). My aim is not to uncritically reproduce a reindeer Sámi point of view in infrastructure development conflicts. Nevertheless, my interpretations are based on the fact that Sámi reindeer herders experience that they are marginalized by the negative impacts of the green transition.

The context provided an opportunity to use participant observation to collect data. My observations, and in particular the practices I could take part in with the herders, provided me with rich data. I spent a month in Kvalsund from the middle of August to the middle of September 2022. This time included some day trips to Hammerfest / Hámárfeasta and attending a seminar at the Norwegian institution for human rights in Kautokeino / Guovdageaidnu. In section 4.4.5, I discuss my participation in demonstrations against human rights violation from wind turbines at the Fosen peninsula. I explain why it is data that contributes to further understanding the context of this study.

My time in the field often consisted of waiting for potential participants to reach back to me. The concept of “indigenous time” or “the Sámi half-hour” became central to my everyday life. Sámi reindeer herding does not follow clear dates, and things happen when the reindeer are ready, or when the weather permits it. The immediacy of herding also means that appointments risk being moved hours or days to a less busy time. Delays and unclear agreements to meet “tomorrow afternoon” became both a basis for frustration and something I could joke with participants about during conversations later on. Becoming more comfortable with “the Sámi half hour” was an important cultural insight. Accepting that I was humorously perceived as impatient by my interlocutors, contributed to building trusting relations. This

confirms the experience of many researchers using participant observation methods in their work. As a participant observer, I often had the feeling of being an insider and outsider simultaneously. Learning the tacit rules for behavior in a specific context often require imitating other people's actions (Spradley 1980).

The fact that things take time became an important learning point during fieldwork. Fieldwork is an intense learning process. The lack of smooth progress gave me a sense of insecurity and even doubt about my entire project. I often felt guilty for not being more proactive, and that the fieldwork was at a standstill. While doing fieldwork, it is often difficult to identify progress (Sæther 2006). It was difficult to acknowledge that the learning process in fieldwork continues in everyday situations. The research process was far from linear, but rather prompted me to move between data collection, reflection and theory throughout the process. This confirms England's statement that "research is a process not just a product" (England 1994:82).

A weakness of my fieldwork is the timing in which it took place. I missed the larger collective happenings in the yearly calendar of reindeer herding. I arrived in Kvalsund some weeks after the calf marking (*miessemearkun* in Northern Sámi), that takes place in the summer. I could not leave Oslo earlier due to work. The slaughter season started after I left Finnmark. These collective happenings could clearly have provided rich data sources, and represent missed opportunities of learning. Outside the larger happenings in the districts, there are only a few herders present at the same time in Kvalsund. Still, my timing did mean I came at a time when said herders had available time to speak with me. It was a period of planning before slaughter season and shift-based herding at the end of the summer season. This meant that I both got rich individual interviews and more informal hangouts and conversations. The time I spent with participants was very valuable, both in terms of the thesis and for personal curiosity. It was an opportunity for learning about reindeer herding, and the herders' experience. Ideally, I would also have gone back to Finnmark at least one more time, preferably to the winter pastures or after the spring migration this year. Time and personal economy made this difficult. I argue that by triangulating the data, using participants observations and document analysis as well, I mitigate this potential weakness. What might be called missed opportunities, can also be an example of how I lacked the tacit knowledge about Sámi reindeer herding. As an outsider to both Kvalsund and Finnmark, and to the Sámi community, people were generally curious about why I was there. I was not a fishing tourist, nor did I have family connections there. I explained that I was a student collecting information for my master thesis. Despite this explanation, people

in Kvalsund generally placed me in the category “protestor against mining”, based on me being a woman in my 20s from the South of Norway, a common sight during the protect camp.

Spradley (1988) distinguishes between five types of participation, depending on the degree of involvement with the people and activities under research. For this thesis, I mainly varied between moderate participation and active participation. The degree of my involvement depended on the situation. Active participation is, at its core, seeking to do what other people are doing, both to gain acceptance and more fully learn cultural rules for behavior (Spradley 1980:60). One of the reindeer herders in Fieltar, “Morten”, did not want to participate in a formal interview. He nevertheless invited me to go with him on trips to check on his animals, and slaughter bulls. Assisting “Morten” in slaughtering two of his reindeer bulls in the mountains, provided a chance to actively participate while observing what he did in the situation. Actively participating gave me important insights into a part of traditional Sámi reindeer herding knowledge.

In addition to our interview, another participant, Lars, offered to show me the Nussir and Gumpjenjuni mountains and how the different encroachments influence the available area for herding. These developments represent physical barriers in the landscape, in addition to naturally created bottlenecks where the herds have to pass safely. Lars also pointed out where the new overhead line will be erected. After coming home from fieldwork, I have been in occasional contact with Lars and with the lawyer representing the two districts. The latter shared protocols from consultation meetings between the districts and both OED and NVE. These protocols are not yet signed.

During fieldwork, there were several public events that provided useful information and contextualization. One was a seminar at the Norwegian Institution of Human Rights that I attended in Guovdageaidnu before heading home south. The seminar’s main focus was the 2021 Supreme Court verdict on wind farming at Fosen, to inform a broader context of human rights protections against development in Sámi areas that put Sámi culture at risk. This allowed both for situating the land use conflicts in Kvalsund within the wider context of developments in Sámi reindeer herding areas, and to experience a part of Finnmark where Sámi culture and language represent the majority. In Oslo, I attended a demonstration in front of Parliament, marking the one-year anniversary of the Fosen verdict and several demonstrations marking 500 days after the verdict. I also attended a seminar on the development of the Wisting oil field and its climatic and environmental impacts, shortly before the project was postponed.

#### **4.4. Sources of data**

This section provides a discussion on the different data sources studied in the thesis. As explained earlier, the triangulation approach means that I based the analysis on interview data, participants observations both from Kvalsund and Oslo, as well as document analysis.

##### **4.4.1 Selection of participants and reaching out**

In this case, conducting in-depth interviews with a small selection of knowledgeable informants provide rich insights (Stratford & Bradshaw 2021:99). The overall selection of participants generally followed a combination of different forms of purposive sampling. At the end of each interview, I asked if the participant knew other people who I might speak to, a form of “snowball sampling”. One of my participants, Beaska, suggested during our interview that I should reach out to Aili Keskitalo, as she has considerable expertise on green colonialism, which turned out to be a successful suggestion. The selection of participants also touched on opportunistic sampling, as being flexible was important (Stratford & Bradshaw 2021). My experience is that it was easier to get in contact with individuals involved in politics or activism, than with reindeer herders. As I elaborate on in the analysis, the herders experience that they are overburdened with development projects, and feel they constantly need to defend their livelihood. Getting in contact with Annie and Beaska was also considerably easier because we had met before, through my background in *Natur og Ungdom* as an activist. *Natur og Ungdom* is the largest environmental youth organization in Norway. The richness of information and its meaning and validity is not dependent on sample size, but rather the dialogue between the researcher and the participants (Patton 2015, Stratford & Bradshaw 2021). The participants included can be seen as “data rich” individuals, holding relevant information and experiences. They provided me with key knowledge about how the development of “green” infrastructures are experienced both in Kvalsund especially and Sápmi generally by Sámi stakeholders.

The thesis could have benefited from a broader selection of participants. Interviewing more reindeer herders, in particular from Fálá, could have benefited positively to the balance of the data. It was important to include both the reindeer herders’ own experiences, and representatives from Sámi politics. The aim is to highlight Sámi experiences of injustices produced in the green transition. Before and during fieldwork, I reached out to relevant stakeholders for interviews, but they did not wish to prioritize time for the interview. One might argue that not including representatives from the Norwegian authorities, such as OED, NVE or

the developer Statnett, could be a weakness. As this thesis seeks to understand the Sámi point of view in the green transition, the reindeer herders' and other Sámi representatives' perspectives are at the core of this study. I base my methodological choices on a decolonial approach, as discussed in 4.1 and 4.2. Using written material, such as the documents and official statements from the authorities, mitigates this potential weakness.

#### **4.4.2 Interviewing**

Interviews were conducted between August 2022 and January 2023. The interviews took place in Hammerfest, Kvalsund and Oslo, and lasted between roughly 50 and 112 minutes. The three interviews with Ole, Lars and Andreas were conducted in the house I stayed in when in Kvalsund. The interview with Annie took place in her home in Hammerfest, while the interview with Beaska was done at a café in central Oslo. The different locations had their strengths and weaknesses. Doing an interview in a crowded café produced a lot of background noise, but provided a less formal setting for our conversation. The interview with Aili was conducted digitally on Zoom. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews, giving both flexibility and structure to the conversation (Dunn 2021). This meant that I had prepared an interview guide with questions, that I reviewed before and after interviews (see appendix). After the first initial interviews, it was easier to relax and ask more precise questions.

The interviews were recorded on a manual recorder and transcribed verbatim using f4 software. I took notes during the interviews, to keep track of the conversation and think of follow-up questions to specific points. After each interview, I wrote detailed notes on what we had discussed and how our interview setting was. All the interviews presented in this thesis were done in Norwegian, and translated by me.

Table 1: Overview of interviews

|   | <b>Name</b>     | <b>Who</b>                                                                                                                       | <b>Place of interview</b> |
|---|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Annie Henriksen | Hammerfest. Retired midwife (70), activist in Naturvernforbundet and Sámi activist.                                              | Hammerfest                |
| 2 | Ole             | Moves between Kvalsund and winter pastures inland. Married with children, (50s). Reindeer herder in the Fiettar district.        | Kvalsund                  |
| 3 | Lars            | Moves between Kvalsund/Alta and winter pastures inland. Married with children, (50s). Reindeer herder in the Fiettar district.   | Kvalsund                  |
| 4 | Andreas         | Moves between Kvalsund/Hammerfest and winter pastures inland. Married with children (40s). Reindeer herder in the Fálá district. | Kvalsund                  |
| 5 | Beaska Niillas  | Deatnu / Tana. Sámi parliamentarian for NSR and activist. Married with children (40).                                            | Oslo                      |
| 6 | Aili Keskitalo  | Guovdageaidnu / Kautokeino (50s). Former president of Sámediggi / Sámi Parliament. Political advisor in Amnesty Norway.          | Digital                   |

#### 4.4.3 Document analysis

As part of the methods triangulation, I have analyzed some key documents about the conflict over the 420-power line, in addition to news and media articles. The documents are listed in Table 2. Though documents might appear neutral, they have a messenger and a purpose (Asdal & Reinertsen 2020). Documents can even be understood as places to explore, places of actions,

and they take part in shaping and creating places. Applying a practice-oriented document analysis means using documents to study what happens in practice (Asdal & Reinertsen 2020).

I studied the documents in line with the thematic categories and my theoretical framework. The protocols from recent consultation meetings are not finally signed by the parties and await the inclusion of comments from the reindeer herders (personal communication with lawyer 10.03.2023). Initially, I was denied access to the protocols on these grounds. Through the lawyer representing both Fiettar and Fálá, I was able to access the protocols and written communication between NVE and OED, and the legal representation of the two districts. As the protocols from the consultation meetings are not finally approved with comments from the reindeer herders included, they are not formally public documents. Sharing them outside the involved stakeholders, may raise ethical questions, but the lawyer representing the two districts consented to using the documents as sources for this thesis, on the basis that it is important to showcase both sides of the ongoing process. A potential weakness in utilizing these documents is that they only represent a certain part of reality. A written protocol is a condensed version of a dialogue over several hours. It leaves out body language, facial expressions and meaning. The protocols are written in a dense and neutral language, and all have a similar form. Still, they provide important information on the different actors' arguments. They also corroborate statements from the interviews. During the consultations between the reindeer herding districts and official authorities, a representative from the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi, was present, as well as the lawyer representing the district and a reindeer herder from the district in question.

The different documents contribute to the analysis in diverse ways. They are open for interpretation by the reader (Asdal & Reinertsen 2020). The impact assessment (Multiconsult 2021) and recommendation to OED (NVE 2022) both function as tools for the ministry when deciding the outcome of the case. The protocols from consultation meetings contribute with insights into the relationship between the actors.

- Consultation Skum siida (Fiettar district)
- Consultation Fiettar (district as a whole)
- Consultation Fálá (district as a whole)
- Consultation Sámi parliament / Sámediggi

Table 2: Overview of key documents.

| <b>Title</b>                                                                                  | <b>Norwegian title</b>                                                                       | <b>Publisher and status</b>                           | <b>Year</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Balsfjord-Hammerfest. Additional impact assessment on reindeer herding with new alternatives. | Balsfjord-Hammerfest. Tilleggsutredning for tema reindrift for nye alternativer              | Ask Rådgivning                                        | 2011        |
| Additional impact assessment. New 420-kilowatt powerline Skaidi-Hammerfest                    | Tilleggsutredning. Ny 420-kV kraftlinje Skaidi-Hammerfest                                    | Multiconsult on behalf of Statnett (public document). | 2021        |
| Background and recommendations. New 420-kilowatt power line Skaidi-Hammerfest                 | Bakgrunn for instilling. Ny 420 kV Skaidi-Hammerfest. Hammerfest kommune i Troms og Finnmark | NVE (public document)                                 |             |

#### 4.4.4 Other sources of data

Formal and informal pieces in media were a good source of contextualization during the process. This includes both opinion pieces by a variety of actors, and news articles about the project and important events. One important event in the wider political context of the thesis was the Fosen demonstrations in Oslo (NRK 23.02.2023). I participated in blockades of entries to several government ministries, and in front of the Royal Palace. This was a form of active participation. I consider the Fosen verdict and its follow up from the authorities, and the quick development in public opinion after the demonstrations, as an important source of data for this thesis. Kvalsund and Fosen are different cases and contexts. Nevertheless, the Fosen verdict and debate around the conflict, can impact the case of the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line. Starting with a demonstration marking 500 days since the Fosen verdict, the following demonstrations contributed to *green colonialism* increasingly being used as a phrase in national



and international media (Nugent 2023). The demonstrations also contributed to strengthening the general debate on how Sámi human rights can be protected, while also fulfilling goals in the green transition. The Fosen demonstrations are described in more detail in the analysis in chapter 5.

#### **4.4.5 Generalization and reliability**

In this thesis, I have used triangulation of methods through interviews, participant observation and documents, to ensure reliability of my findings and analysis (Cope & Hay 2021). I have tried to account in a transparent way, how the research process has progressed. This research cannot be replicated by another researcher and get the same result, but is a product of this particular context, and the relationships between myself and the participants. I do not believe that this study's findings can be applied in a generalized manner to all cases involving industrial development in reindeer herding areas, or development of energy infrastructure. The 420-kilowatt line Skaidi-Hammerfest and the experiences of the Fiettar and Fálá districts are shaped by the place-specific context, and the actors involved. Still, I argue that the findings can contribute to broadening how critical geography approaches infrastructure development in indigenous areas, and to the conceptual field of green colonialism. Similar industrial developments whether in in Sápmi or in other countries, motivated by the green transition, might be described as expressions of green colonialism.

#### **4.5 Positionality and ethical considerations**

My own positionality and ontological assumptions influence the work in this thesis. Accounting for and discussing my positionality and motivation is relevant for the reader because it allows them to understand what has influenced my selection of theory, methodologies and how I have analyzed my findings.

As a non-Sámi living in Oslo, Norway's capital city, I have been able to go in and out of the field of conflict. Both before and during the process of working with this thesis I have reflected on whether it is ethically right for me to write and retell experiences of Sámi marginalization. From an indigenous perspective on Western research, any study on indigenous peoples brings with it a set of values, different and competing theories of knowledge and structures of power (Smith 2021:49). According to Alcoff (1991), the practice of speaking for

others is recognized as a problem in feminist and critical research. Speaking carries with it a need for accountability and responsibility for what one says, as a speaker's social location has a significant impact on their claims of authority. Recognizing the problem of speaking for others does not imply that I as a privileged researcher should "move over and get out of the way", if the people I am writing about are not listened to. Rather, I must look at the aim of my study, and whether it can contribute to empower the people I am writing about (Alcoff 1991: 24-29). As I show in chapter 5, one of my key findings is that Sámi reindeer herders' perspectives are not recognized in decision-making processes. Thus, centering my research around Sámi experiences of "green developments" can be a way of contributing to amplifying marginalized perspectives.

As a researcher with feminist values, I understand knowledge as partial, situated and produced. Haraway argues for a feminist objectivity of situated knowledges, rejecting the "god trick" of seeing everything from nowhere (Haraway 1988:581). Working within a decolonial framework means acknowledging the place where knowledge is produced and for my own place in the modern-colonial relations of knowledge and power (de Leeuw & Hunt 2018), and how indigenous ways of knowing have been excluded from modernity and marginalized through colonialism (Smith 2021).

Ethical research is produced through spaces and practices of reflexivity, examining issues of positionality and power relations at multiple scales (Sultana 2007:375). The ethical considerations relate to power relations in the research process, and my own role as a researcher. I disclosed my own views of this context during conversations with possible informants, and explained that I participated in the protest camp against the Nussir mine the year before. I did not aim for a role as a "neutral" researcher, nor to fully eliminate bias. Attempting to eliminate bias is an impossible task, as bias is always present in the social world of research. Researchers exist in a social reality with our own distinct positionalities, identity and worldviews. As a qualitative researcher, I must acknowledge and confront possible biases that might influence the project (Cope & Hay 2021:11). Reflecting on the data collection process in my research diary, as well as sharing with others, have been ways to address bias and working towards a responsible research practice (Catungal & Dowling 2021). I wanted to make sure that the participants felt that they could speak freely about how they experience the situation. In Kvalsund and in Hammerfest / Hámárfeasta municipality, there is a high degree of mistrust between Sámi herders, locals and authorities. Several of the participants told me how reindeer herders are blamed for problems, or even accused of standing in the way of progress.

One concern that stayed with me throughout the process has been how to avoid putting additional pressure on my participants and their community through my research. Beaska observed during our interview how Sámi are “the most researched group of indigenous peoples”. He made a humorous remark about how “every Sámi family used to have their own anthropologist”, but now needed their own lawyer to help fight development projects taking reindeer herding land (interview with Beaska, 25.10.2022). This description of Sámi experiences with research is shared by indigenous communities in differing contexts. Whether it is true is irrelevant; but the sense of weight about what research contributes with to indigenous communities, must be taken seriously (Smith 2021:3). In Sápmi, research has been associated with colonialism and racism (Fjellheim 2020). Researchers and academic institutions carry a responsibility to address lack of knowledge about minorities. For example, academic institutions in Southern Sámi areas contributed to land theft from Sámi families, by not dementing the “advancement theory” (Fjellheim 2020, Svendsen et al. 2023). Addressing the part research played in ignoring Sámi culture and rights, is part of working toward more ethical research in Sápmi.

In addition to this, the legacy of racial science is part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ inquiries. Sámi people were subject to skull measuring, to document their position as an inferior people, less intelligent than Norwegians and Swedes. The claim that Sámi people were inferior took part in justifying politics of assimilation (Fjellheim 2020). The conduct of ethical research in Sápmi has been discussed for decades, yet there are no clear guidelines for Sámi research (Stordahl et al. 2015). Currently, the Saami Council / Sámiráddi are developing suggestions for ethical guidelines for research involving Sámi peoples (Saami Council / Holmberg 2021).

#### **4.5.1 Reflexivity**

My motivations for studying this particular case are shaped not only by academic interest, but also by my background as an activist in Natur og Ungdom, mobilizing against the Nussir mine. This brings with it certain interpretations and assumptions of the context it takes place within. Throughout the project, I have worked to do open and fair research and account for the steps I have taken. England (1994) argues that individual reflexivity is far from being “mere navel gazing”, but rather a way of analytically scrutinizing the self as a researcher (England 1994:82). Reflexivity is the process of critical self-review that is central to ethical research (Stratford &

Bradshaw 2021). This requires that the researcher understands that they are active participants in the research process. The purpose of critical reflexivity is not to remove power relations or minimize the impact of the researcher's situatedness, but recognize how this affects the research (England 1994, Catungal & Dowling 2021). During fieldwork, I used a research diary as a tool for reflecting on the research process and my interpretations of experiences. Recording my own experiences and emotions during the process was a good tool for being reflexive (Catungal & Dowling 2021). I reflected on my experiences that day and the thoughts that they spurred. The diary contained both regular notes and descriptions of the field, and more reflexive thoughts. Notes that I took during interviews were kept in a separate notebook.

#### **4.5.2 Potential risk and anonymization versus identification**

Participating in the research project did not represent any risk of physical harm for myself or the participants, but the risk of social harm is present. Both Kvalsund and the wider Sámi community are small. Industrial development in Sámi areas is a field of conflict. Several of the participants told how Sámi people are accused of "hindering progress and development". Findings from a 2021 survey suggest that many Norwegians both lack knowledge about and agree with negative stereotypes about Sámi and national minorities (Dawson 2022). Negative attitudes and stereotypes against reindeer Sámi were also mentioned by participants.

I have chosen to anonymize one group of participants, reindeer herders, while identifying the group consisting of Sámi activists and politicians. While the herders asked not to be identified by name, the participants in the other group were comfortable with being identified. One participant asked to read any direct quotes I would use in the thesis. In a context such as this, complete anonymization is difficult. A person involved in reindeer herding is in a different position than a Sámi parliamentarian, although they are on the same "side" of the conflict. The negative stereotypes of Sámi people mentioned above no doubt take part in this. For example, "Ole", a herder in the Fiettar district, was happy to be interviewed and share his views, but wished to remain anonymous in order for his children not to be identified. The herders all have to be part of the local communities where they live and work. Using pseudonyms and leaving out some personal information, provide more security.

The seminar in Kautokeino was open to the public, and the presentations were done by representatives of either the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi, NIM (Norwegian Institution for Human Rights) and the law professor Øyvind Ravna from the University of Tromsø, presenting

recommendations to update the Reindeer Herding Act. The speakers had thus already consented to documenting their presence. The reindeer herder “Morten” in Fieltar consented to being part of my research as a source of information, but did not wish to carry out a formal interview. We discussed several of the topics of the research project, and that I was interviewing other herders.

### **4.5.3 NSD**

The Norwegian Center for Data Security (NSD) manages research conducted in Norway. All research projects, including a master thesis, must be registered and wait for feedback on the project before commencing data collection. This thesis is registered with NSD and in compliance with NSDs guidelines for ethical research. A declaration of consent was provided to and by all interview subjects. Except for the digital interview with Aili Keskitalo, all participants signed the declaration of consent. Keskitalo gave oral consent to participate, since we spoke digitally. At the start of each interview, I asked the participant for permission to record our conversation. All participants were told before and after the interview that they could withdraw their consent at any time before the thesis was handed in. I recorded the interviews on a manual recorder, and deleted the files after transfer to UiO Lagringshotellet. The process is in accordance with NSD recommendations about research data security and storage.

### **4.6 Analytical strategy: coding and thematic analysis**

I have used thematic analysis as the basis of my analytical strategy. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic coding provides a theoretically flexible approach to analyzing data. The aim was to identify and analyze patterns, or themes, within the data (Braun & Clarke 2006:79). Themes from the data are used to form a narrative on how green colonialism is experienced in Kvalsund, in the following chapters. Thus, I also use perspectives from narrative identity analysis, to form a recognizable story (Loseke 2007:663). The analysis is organized by thematic categories that inform a holistic analytical narrative that illustrates my key argument; that the industrial developments in Sámi reindeer herding areas in Kvalsund are not experienced as green developments. Rather they are experienced as an expression of green colonialism, and that this is the result of power asymmetries in the decision-making processes.

The transcribed data from the interviews were coded using NVivo software. I started the coding process by reading through the transcribed interviews, while noting down phrases

and keywords of interest. These notes provided the basis of an initial round of codes, organized under broad categories. The codes were informed by the theoretical concepts I was working with in chapter 3, as well as the reflection I made during fieldwork. I constructed further codes as I worked through the files and could see what codes worked well to find meaning in the data. Using thematic analysis, my own active role in looking for repeated patterns of meaning in my data, is important. The data does not “appear”, but is actively found (Braun & Clarke 2006:80).

The findings are organized around the themes cumulative pressure, vulnerability, knowledge production and traditional knowledge, and participation and trust in decision-making processes. In the analysis, I have focused on giving a rich account for particular aspects of the data. Early in the analytical process, I expected to find data around knowledge production and power. A recurring theme was the relationship between reindeer herders and other Sámi knowledge holders, and the consultants that are hired to conduct environmental impact assessments. The recurring focus on impact assessment firms was surprising. Based on literature and a preliminary desk study of media articles on industrial development in Sámi areas, I also expected to find a lack of trust, but the dual mistrust was more explicit than I initially imagined.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have provided an overview of my methodological choices, and how my ontological and epistemological assumptions, and positionality have informed how I have approached the research. I have accounted for the ethical considerations I have made during the data collection and writing process. The main point of this chapter is to be transparent about the choices I have made for the research design and process, and how this influences the thematic analysis and discussion. Being open about the researchers’ strengths and weaknesses, makes it possible to consider the validity of the research (Cope and Hay 2021).

## **5 Thematic analysis**

This chapter provides the empirical findings of the thesis, presented as a thematic analysis. As explained in chapter 4, this allows me to systematically look for meaningful patterns in my data (Braun & Clarke 2006). The themes identified and addressed here, build on the theoretical

framework, as well as the aim of the study. Each thematic category combines findings from the interviews, observations and written material that I have analyzed<sup>1</sup>. The themes developed here are:

1. Cumulative pressure
2. Vulnerability
3. Knowledge production and traditional knowledge
4. Participation and trust in decision-making processes

The written material used in the analysis are both public documents and unpublished protocols from recent consultation meetings. They are listed in Table 2, in chapter 4. The consultations between NVE and affected parties were conducted in autumn 2021, while the consultations between OED and the districts and Sámi Parliament, were conducted in autumn 2022. The protocols from the 2022 consultations between the reindeer herders and OED are not finally approved by the parties on at least two accounts. Firstly, the herding districts have sent comments to OED which are not yet included in the protocols. Secondly, the districts intend to keep consultations going with the ministry, in order to reach a mutual agreement (personal communication with lawyer representing districts, and Lars). The documents are a rich source of information about the communication between the affected parties and Norwegian authorities.

## **5.1 Cumulative pressure**

The theme ‘cumulative pressure’ refers to how the sum of several planned industrial developments is a considerably heavy load for the herders. “Cumulative effects describe how a business together with other ongoing, former and future encroachments influence the reindeer herding in a certain area” (LKAB and the Sámi herding communities Gabna and Laevas 2013:2, Protect Sápmi 2020:10-11). My findings show that the herders are not only worried about the effects of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, but also about the Nussir copper mine, the Barents Blue ammonia plant, road and cabin infrastructure. It is the combined impacts of existing and planned industrial developments that produce significant cumulative pressure. The

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<sup>1</sup> I conducted two interviews with herders from the Fiettar district, Ole and Lars, and one with Andreas, from Fálá. I also interviewed the former Sámi Parliament president Aili Keskitalo, member of Sámi Parliament for NSR, Beaska Niillas, and activist Annie Henriksen from Naturvernforbundet.

herders in both districts recognize that the pressure from interventions makes traditional herding difficult. In the interview, Lars explained that they need to adapt to a certain extent to interventions that are useful for society at large. Reindeer herders already face changes in the environment because of climate change. To adequately adapt to these changes in precipitation, temperatures, snow coverage and quality of pastures, a combination of traditional knowledge and flexibility is key (Eira et al. 2018). However, as a reindeer herder in the **Fiettar** district, Lars experiences that their flexibility is lost. This is largely due to the cumulative effects from large and small encroachments on their pasturelands.

*“(...) The flexibility is at zero (...) In a situation where we already have an enormous number of interventions (...) the reindeer herding industry has been generous, very generous for a long time. Of course, this cannot continue, quite frankly. If we are going to have any chance to continue reindeer herding in the areas we have used from old times”.*

*“I can't see encroachments isolated (...) from existing infrastructures, and the encroachments and disturbances that are already there. All the time we must see the cumulative effects (...) For example, if you look at SP 27. You must look at development A in relation to B, C, all the other ones. To have the full picture. Then you might find out that this tiny development project, that might seem minimal (..) is the one tipping the scales”.* (Den lille tua som velter hele lasset, Norwegian).

(Interview with Lars 04.09.2022)

Lars offered to show me the old mining area at Ulveryggen / Gumppenjunni. The entrance to the old tunnel is still open, and both Lars and “Ole” told me how the animals go inside the tunnel during warm summer days for protection against heat and insects. The tunnel continues for several kilometers into the mountain. Rusting equipment and cables lie around the tunnel entrance, which can lead to injuries for the grazing animals. Lars showed me the unsecured open pits where the mining company Folldal temporarily deposited sludge from the old mine, and now left as gaping holes in the ground with steep drops. The water in these pits is bright green, and heavy rains can cause them to overflow into nearby streams. These visible scars in the landscape were a point that several participants touched upon, and something that I myself

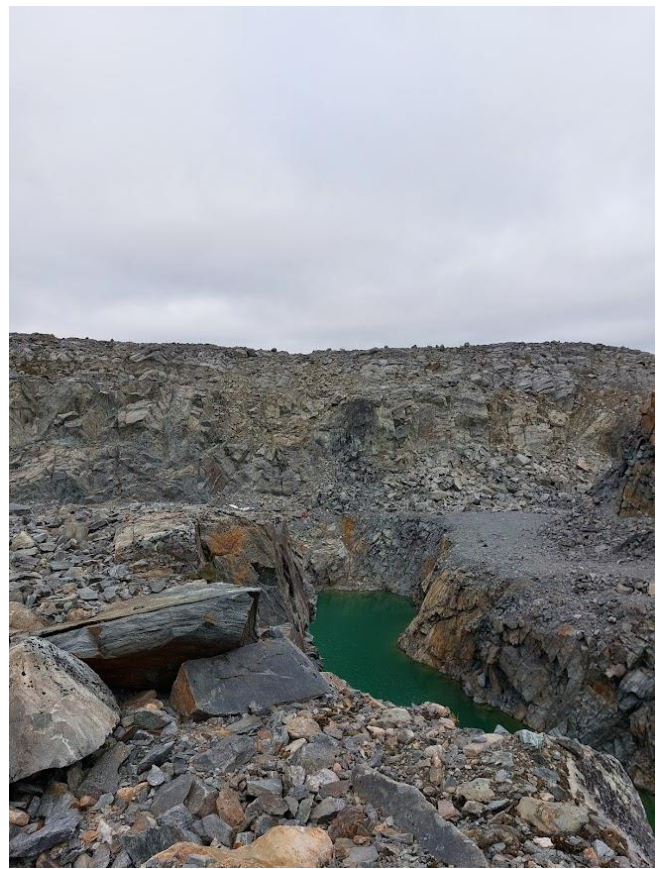


have reflected on after visiting the old mining area. The herders are frustrated that no one has taken the responsibility to clear the area after the old mine closed. Lars pointed out how the landscape creates bottlenecks where the herds have to cross the proposed mining area and already existing road infrastructure. If they are not able to do this, they may need to cross steeper areas which are less accessible for the herders and the more vulnerable reindeer. He also worried about the impact of increased traffic and disturbances from human activity in the calving season.

The cumulative effects from already existing encroachments on Fiettar and Fálá is then part of the daily lives for the reindeer herders. The Sámi Parliament requested a report on the effects of the Nussir mining project in 2019, using reindeer herding knowledge and intervention mapping. Protect Sápmi won the tender competition to conduct the analysis. Their report uses both traditional reindeer herding knowledge, inputs from reindeer herders, and applies the cumulative effect method to calculate total impacts of historic, present and planned encroachments (Protect Sápmi 2020). According to this report, over 54 % of pasturelands and migration routes in the Fiettar and Fálá districts are already negatively affected by infrastructure. The completion of the proposed 420-kilowatt line and Nussir mine, would increase the risk level of the districts. If completed, the two projects may leave very little untouched reindeer herding areas (Protect Sápmi 2020:66). For the Fiettar district, the powerline and the mine could affect around 70 % of available lands. The report concludes that the Fiettar district may be forced to drastically downscale their herding due to the cumulative effects, and that construction of both the power line and the mine will produce impacts well beyond the threshold (*tålegrensa*) (Protect Sápmi 2020:66-67).

Figure 8. The entrance to the old Folldal copper mine at Gumppenjunni. Photo: Tina Andersen Vågenes

Figure 9. One of the open pits on the Gumppenjunni mountain. Photo: Tina Andersen Vågenes



When speaking about the cumulative effects on their available pasturelands and migration routes, the herders in both districts fear that one development project can trigger others. This can be described as form of domino effect; if one industrial development is granted concession, another might be deemed beneficial in the same area. Likewise, some areas may be considered “lost” due to existing and planned infrastructures, and thus fitting for more developments. Ole, another herder in Fieltar, worries about the potential domino effect that might take place in what he sees as the best pastures:

*“Where they have planned wind turbines, or considered what is the optimal position for encroachments. Those are the best pastures. And then we also know that if the mine is built, or the ammonia factory, then they will push to get wind turbines, because you need a lot of power for that”.*

(Interview with Ole 01.09.2022)

For Andreas and the **Fálá** district, the negative effects of the Nussir mine and the 420-kilowatt power line combine with the spatial expansion of Hammerfest city. By spatial expansion, I refer to the growth of Hammerfest. This includes both new residential areas, a new airport and outdoor activity infrastructure (Hammerfest municipality n.d.). Andreas points out how the district has been able to adapt to the interventions in their areas. But in the last few years, the pressure has been increasing. He mentions the 2020 report from Protect Sápmi, exploring the Nussir mine and cumulative effects on the reindeer herding in both districts. Andreas told me how the authorities previously have declined to give concession to a wind turbine project at Kvaløya in Fálá's pastures, but he is concerned that the effect of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line might be connected with wind turbine developments in the future. Andreas describes how he and other herders in his district are try to see a coherent image of all the interventions, and their cumulative effects.

*“(...) we have had to adapt to the situation (...) But there is a limit to how much you can adapt. And that limit is reached I think for both Fieltar and Kvaløya, Fálá (...) They have done calculations both for Fieltar and Fálá. 70 % of Fieltar is affected, and 72 % of the areas at Kvaløya are affected [by interventions]. So that makes only 30 %, 28 % that is not affected yet. If you see that in relation to where the best pastures, less good pastures and poor pastures are. Then you see that the best pastures are most affected by interventions. (...) So, in a way, the best pastures are taken by housing and industry”.*

*“There is a piece-by-piece development, piece-by-piece loss of pasturelands (...) All the time we have new interventions [to address]. It is an enormous amount to keep track of. They come one by one, isolated (...) You have a wind turbine, you need to address that. You have a power line; you need to address that (...) Continuous expansions of the city, new residential areas we need to address. And all the time, we think about the larger context. The whole island, the whole district seen together. And try to form an image, understand it in connection to the whole”.*

(Interview with Andreas 07.09.2022).

On the political level, Sámi political representatives frequently address how the cumulative effects from several interventions are putting pressure on reindeer herding. Beaska Niillas, NSR representative in the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi, considers that the threshold is already passed for Fieltar and Fálá:

*“It is clear that there are large consequences and that there is already a significant pressure on these districts. (...) the cumulative effects are already huge, and then it will be added to this burden (...) of course there is a threshold. And the herders themselves say that this threshold has been passed (...) It is piece by piece by piece. It is like a puzzle; they take the pieces out one by one. And in the end, there is nothing left of this image”.*

(Interview with Beaska 25.10.2022).

In the last decade, the Sámi Parliament / Sámediggi has increased their political focus on the cumulative pressure Sámi reindeer herders are experiencing, in the context of the green transition. In the specific case of Kvalsund, the Sámi Parliament has worked against the Nussir mining project for several years, in support of the Fieltar and Fálá districts. This includes several majority votes opposing the project (Sámi Parliament plenary decision 2019), as well as contacting international investors. The Sámi Parliament has also expressed concern over power line construction in Sámi areas. In 2021, the Sámi Parliament participated in the public hearing about the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line. In the written statement, the Parliament expresses worry over the lack of prior informed consent from Sámi land users, and lack of inclusion of the affected reindeer herding districts. The statement concludes that a new assessment process is in order, with an explicit focus on the reindeer herders’ traditional knowledge and experience of cumulative pressure from other developments in the area (Sámi Parliament 2021).

In a 2022 consultation meeting between the Sámi Parliament and NVE, the main argument presented by the parliament was that the cumulative pressure on the Fieltar and Fálá districts is not adequately addressed. The Sámi Parliament argues that the affected reindeer herding districts are under considerable pressure from other developments. NVE on the other hand, indicated that they *“experience that the reindeer herding districts are close to the*

*threshold (tålegrensa), but that it is unlikely that the power line itself will be decisive” (own translation).*

*“Based on newer research, NVE considers the effects for reindeer herding to be bigger than estimated when Statnett was granted concession ten years ago. There is an increasing pressure on reindeer herding areas. The power line produces significant effects for reindeer herding during the construction phase, and potential negative effects during the operating phase at key points along the power line. There is a need for more and stricter terms for the construction work to minimize the negative effects for reindeer herding. Nevertheless, the disadvantages for reindeer herding cannot fully be mitigated, neither during the construction- nor the operating phase. Still, NVE considers that the concession can be granted without violating international law”.*

(NVE 2022:2).

A shift toward a focus on the cumulative pressure on Sámi reindeer herding areas is also clear in activist and advocacy organizations. Increasingly, the focus is on the protection of human rights in the green transition. Aili Keskitalo, former Sámi parliament president, works in Amnesty Norway with indigenous human rights. For clarification, she does not speak on behalf of her employer in the interview, but rather from her experience with Sámi politics and advocacy. She characterizes the cause behind the cumulative effects as the sectorization of the Norwegian society:

*“I think among the big challenges we are facing is what you call piece-by-piece politics. (...) The sectorization of the Norwegian society makes it difficult to see the whole picture. I mean, the authorities do not see the whole picture, the sum of all the interventions put upon reindeer herding”.*

(Interview with Aili 03.01.2023)

By using the word sectorization, Aili criticized how the responsibility for handling development projects in Sámi reindeer herding areas are spread across several branches of Norwegian

authorities. In her opinion, this leads to a lack of responsibility. In the quote below, NVE concludes that they do not have the “authority to consider the societal benefits” of electrification. This is an interesting point, as the justification of constructing the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line currently is transferring electricity to the Hammerfest LNG. Furthermore, NVE describes how:

*“(…) Considering the electrification of Melkøya and Wisting is a political decision, and NVE expects that this will be a significant part of OED’s management of the case (…)  
NVE can nevertheless specify in the recommendation that we think OED should consider the societal benefits of electrification, against the disadvantages the power line produces for among others reindeer herding”.*

(NVE 2022, authors translation)

Annie Henriksen is an activist in Naturvernforbundet and NSR. As a lifetime Sámi activist, she is worried about the future of reindeer herding. She sees the cumulative effects of different encroachments as a destruction of the nature and environment that we all depend on. Annie describes how the “robbers from the south”, which refers to the Norwegian authorities and capital interests, do not listen to the Sámi minority. In her view, the authorities have the power to decide on matters directly affecting Sámi livelihoods without considering the impacts this might have on Sámi culture. This power asymmetry was addressed by all the participants, and will be further discussed in chapter 6.

*“(…) Reindeer herding won’t survive if it continues like this, with the destruction and the encroachments in nature. And the reindeer herders have told [the authorities] this clearly. So that’s why I say that the robbers from the south won’t listen to those of us in the minority. And the reindeer herders are an even smaller minority than us”.*

(Interview with Annie 19.08.2022).

As shown in the above quotes, the participants use different terms for describing the cumulative pressure that the Fieltar and Fálá districts experience. Andreas from Fálá describe it as a piece-by-piece development, while Aili described it as a result of the sectorization of Norwegian

society, that divides responsibility between several actors. The herders in both Fiettar and Fálá emphasize how they always need to see the different encroachments in relation to each other, and not as isolated projects. All the participants conclude that the sum of existing and planned developments in Sámi reindeer herding areas is too large. The vulnerability from the cumulative pressure of existing and planned infrastructures is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, which Normann (2021) identifies as the “double burden” of climate change and adaptation in indigenous areas.

My research shows that there is a piece-by-piece loss of land used for pastures and migration routes for the reindeer herders. Happening in the same place, the different developments and the encroachments that they produce are experienced as a cumulative pressure. The herders, as well as the activists Aili, Beaska and Annie, experience that the cumulative pressure is not adequately recognized by the Norwegian authorities. This is also expressed in the written statements from the Sámi Parliament (2021), as well as protocols from consultation meetings. In sum, herders in both Fiettar and Fálá districts experience that a cumulative pressure from existing and planned developments directly affects their livelihoods.

## **5.2 Vulnerability**

The theme ‘Vulnerability’ refers to the vulnerability Sámi reindeer herders experience from climate change impacts, and how the increasing number of existing and planned encroachments on Sámi lands put reindeer herding at risk. The reindeer herders in both Fiettar and Fálá experience that future generations’ ability to continue traditional herding is made vulnerable by the double burden of climate change and land encroachments. In addition, the calving areas in Kvalsund and on Kvaløya are particularly vulnerable regarding the negative effects of the power line.

Vulnerability to climate change explains how increasing Arctic temperatures lead to changes in weather patterns and unpredictable seasons. Changes in temperature, precipitation and climate variability have in the past years given variations between mild weather and colder frost periods (Oskal 2008:23). Thus, rapid climate change is impacting the vulnerability of indigenous reindeer herding in the Arctic (Eira et al. 2018, Mathiesen et al. 2018). The past few years have seen several periods where winter pastures have been “locked” under ice (Landbruksdirektoratet 31.03.2023). The impacts are described as a pasture crisis (beitekrise), as the reindeer have trouble accessing pastures on their own. When pastures are locked beneath

ice, herders have to bring fodder for their herd. This increases the workload and cost for the herders. During all interviews, I asked the participants about their experiences with impacts of climate change on Sámi areas and reindeer herding. Beaska describes below how climate change puts herders in a vulnerable position:

*“In the past 5 years there have been 3 pasture crises as a direct consequence of a milder climate. When it rains during the winter, the snow freezes to thick ice. And reindeer and other animals cannot access the pastures. That leads to huge catastrophes. So there has been a lot of reindeer dying, and a lot of extra costs and extra work for the herders. [sighs]. Before, you could have a 50-year perspective. But now, it has happened 3 times in the last 5 years. And that is clearly a serious consequence of climate change. And then there are other indicators. There is less ice, meaning more dangerous ice. Nature is not acting like it used to. So, all the time you have to stay alert and adapt to the changes. It is simply dangerous to go where it used to be perfectly safe”.*

(Interview with Beaska, 25.10.2022).

Beaska described his worry over how reindeer herders are facing an uncertain future, as the nature they depend on are affected by climate change. His focus on ice-locked pastures echoes the experience of reindeer herders. During the 2022 winter, national authorities declared a pasture crisis in several parts of Finnmark and Troms. The crisis was “clearly caused by ice-locked pastures due to changes between mild and freezing weather, and not overgrazing” (Statsforvalteren i Troms og Finnmark 03.02.2022). For several reindeer herding districts, this forced herders to bring fodder for the reindeer until the snow began to thaw. Ole, a herder in the Fiettar district, described how he needed to bring fodder for his herd for several months during the past winter. When the reindeer struggle to access pastures through the ice, they get impatient and start to move. This puts significant costs on the herders in terms of both work hours and money, as they need to gather their herd (Statsforvalteren i Troms og Finnmark 2022). This also effects the family life of the herders. In 2022, several reindeer herders were unable to see their families or rest, because they needed to drive fodder out to their herds (NRK 24.03.2022). Furthermore, icy pastures also put pressure on the herders to move earlier towards the spring and summer pastures by the coast. According to the Norwegian Agriculture Agency, a pasture crisis due to ice-locked pastures has affected reindeer herders in 2023 as well



(Landbruksdirektoratet 31.03.2023). Below, Ole addresses how challenging times for the herd also has emotional impacts on the herders. For him, this is not only a job, but a livelihood that means a lot for his connection to Sámi culture. Thus, the health of his animals is important.

*“Because you think about the animals all the time. (...) I think about how they [the reindeer] move along the seashore and finds their ways, going after the migration routes they have always used. Then you know that they are happy. And then you are happy, also (...) It is like that with encroachments as well. When the reindeer are suffering, you’re suffering as well”.*

(Interview with Ole 01.09.2022)

In the consultation between the Skum siida<sup>2</sup> (one family siida in the Fiettar district) and NVE (2021), the siida argues that climate change already makes them vulnerable. More often than before, “locked” winter pastures forces the siida to move earlier into the summer pastures than before, even as early as March. If this becomes the norm, the district might need to use the summer pastures earlier in the spring and later into the autumn. This increases the value of the pastures around Kvalsund.

Sámi reindeer herding is based on a seasonal and semi-nomadic use of rotation between pastures. After moving to the coastal pastures in the spring, the calving season starts. Giving the reindeer enough space and quiet during the calving period is crucial. A major concern for the herders in both districts, is that the calving areas are disturbed by industrial development. According to the impact assessment, areas used for calving are of significantly great value for herding (Multiconsult 2021). The impact assessment is done by the firm Multiconsult, on behalf of their client Statnett, and represents a large part of the knowledge base for deciding the concession. For the herders in **Fiettar**, the potential negative influence industrial development and construction work can have on calving areas, is perhaps the most serious effect. The impacts for Fiettar were not assessed in the 2009 or 2011 special reports on reindeer herding (Ask Rådgivning 2011). For Fiettar, the operating phase of industrial development represents small negative impacts, while the construction phase can produce large negative impacts on calving,

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<sup>2</sup> Siida: traditional organizational unit in Sámi reindeer herding, primarily family-based. A group of reindeer herders working as a community, in a specific area. See chapter 2.

spring pastures and migration routes (Multiconsult 2021:63-66). Below, Ole describes the importance of protecting the calving areas from disturbance:

*“The calving areas are some of the most important things for reindeer herding (...) The reindeer moves to the same places each year for calving. And if [there are machines], they will move away, trying to save their calf. And when they calve in rough terrain, they can lose their calves. So then, you have lost both pastures and what you should live off of. And then it becomes very difficult for reindeer herding to survive”.*

(Interview with Ole 01.09.2022).

Vulnerability is present not only in terms of the area, but also in terms of time. The calving season is a particularly vulnerable time. The female reindeer are wary of human activity during the spring and summer months when they are calving, and when they later need to watch their young calves. How many calves are born and survives their first weeks, is crucial for reindeer herding as a livelihood. In the Fieltar district, newborn calves are marked during the summer. For Fieltar, the construction phase represents “middle/large negative impacts”, while the power line itself will only represent “small negative” impacts after the construction is finished (Multiconsult 2021:4).

Table 3: Summary of impacts and mitigating measures: societal benefits and reindeer herding

Source: NVE 2022:71

| <b>Priced impacts</b>                                     |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Investment costs                                          |                     | 1220-1490 million NOK                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Non-priced impacts</b>                                 |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Theme</b>                                              | <b>NVE emphasis</b> | <b>NVE consideration</b>                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Mitigating measures</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Electrification of petroleum production around Hammerfest | Large significant   | / The power line is necessary for electrification of petroleum production around Hammerfest, but NVE have not considered the societal benefits from a potential electrification.                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Reindeer herding                                          | Large significant   | / The power line will have significant impacts for reindeer herding in the construction phase, and potentially large negative impacts in the operation phase at key junctures of the power line. | Consideration of reindeer herding during the construction phase, and dialogue with reindeer herders about placement of masts by migration pastures. Potential new research project about the impacts of the new power line for the reindeer herding districts. |

For the **Fálá** district, the power line may threaten the reindeer migration and swim from Kvalsund to Kvaløya, where the district has its summer pastures. Avoidance of either construction work or the power line and infrastructure, represent negative impacts in particular during the migration back to the mainland in the autumn (Multiconsult 2021). In the autumn,

the reindeer cross the strait back to Kvalsund, before they are gathered for marking and slaughter in the Kvalsund-Neverfjord area. The impact assessment (Multiconsult 2021:66-73) concludes that the construction phase will produce “large negative impacts” for Fálá, and “small negative impacts” during the operation phase. Several sections of the power line at Kvaløya are planned close to both calving areas and around migration routes. These areas have a significantly large value for the district (Multiconsult 2021:57). This is repeated during the 2022 consultations between Fálá and OED. The potential influence on the migration between Kvalsund and Kvaløya over the strait is critical. Already existing power lines influence the environment and reindeer by producing sound and visual effects, especially in bad weather. The district is unsure how the power line will influence the crossing, and argues that NVE “gambles” on this point. If migration is hindered, or the reindeer cannot swim across, they need to have alternatives. In addition, Fálá reindeer migrate along Kvalsund towards the winter pastures. Andreas fears that this might also be disturbed by construction work and the power line. How the landscape is shaped, influences where they can safely migrate.

*“(…) the migration route that we use in the autumn, when we are moving back towards the winter pastures. That can become a plug in the system, in our migration route. It can become a physical obstruction, a barrier. Going the alternative way around carries huge risks and costs. It’s not easy to change that, it is the nature that has shaped the mountains like that. We need access to that bottleneck. If not, we’ll have problems”.*

(Interview with Andreas 07.09.2022).

A key assumption in the impact assessment is that the construction will stop during the most vulnerable periods for the districts. For Fieltar and Fálá, this is both during calving, marking of calves and migration between seasonal pastures. Multiconsult concludes that “it is most important to avoid construction work in calving areas during the calving period” (Multiconsult 2021:74). The adjustment to the reindeer herders’ use of specifically important areas is also discussed in NVE’s recommendation (2022). As the construction phase of the power line and associated infrastructure undoubtedly will affect reindeer herding negatively, the active construction work must be avoided during crucial times (NVE 2022:28). Furthermore, power lines can produce a direct loss of pasturelands, or influence the reindeer through stress and behavioral changes. The direct loss of pasturelands is limited to the areas with masts, roads or

other infrastructure, yet stress and behavioral changes can make the reindeer reduce their use of the area around certain infrastructure (NVE 2022:25). Andreas from Fálá describes how:

*“(...) Our focus is on protecting the animals. They need peace to graze (...) and the calves need to grow. With the least amount of disturbance”.*

(Interview with Andreas 07.09.2022)

In the 2022 consultations between Fálá and OED, the district representative expressed how they are under significant pressure, and that the risk level is high. In order to safeguard the ability of future generations to continue traditional herding, the district is asking for predictability and holistic planning. According to Österlin and Raitio (2020), Sámi reindeer herders are exposed to an increasing pressure from both existing and planned interventions. As illustrated by the Skum siida, the pressure from not-yet realized projects lead to uncertainties about the future. The actual pressure on reindeer herding districts can thus be difficult to see without a holistic analytical scope (Österlin & Raitio 2020:3). This insecurity is expressed in the quote below, from the consultation meeting (08.03.2021) between the Skum siida and NVE:

*“During the last decade, the siida have experienced an increasing number of applications, with associated meetings and consultations, for projects encroaching on their pasturelands. This leads to an insecurity in everyday life and in imagining the future, while also increasing internal conflicts between the herders in the district. This is experienced as psychological violence”.*

(Authors translation).

Migration between pastures may be at risk from climate change and land encroachments (Eira et al. 2018). My findings suggest that the perceived vulnerability for the districts is exacerbated by uncertainties about the future of reindeer herding. The increasing pressure from encroachments puts future generation's ability to continue reindeer herding at risk. Without reindeer herding, future generations lose traditional knowledge, language and cultural identity.

In sum, the consequences may be so severe that future generations would not have the possibility to continue traditional reindeer herding.

### 5.3 Knowledge production and traditional knowledge

The theme ‘knowledge production’ refers to Sámi traditional knowledges, and how these are included (or not) in the decision-making processes. My findings indicate that there is not a *lack of knowledge* in decision making processes. Rather, I argue that the specialized knowledge that Sámi reindeer herders hold is willfully ignored. In other words, there is a lack of inclusion of knowledges. This is consistent with findings from among others Oskal (2008), Normann (2021, 2022), Kuokkanen (2022) and Fjellheim (2023). Knowledge production and the inclusion of Sámi knowledges in decision-making processes was a theme during all the interviews. Andreas from **Fálá** told me how reindeer herders’ knowledges are not listened to in decision making processes. Below, he describes how Sámi reindeer herders hold firsthand knowledge:

*“We have our specialized knowledge, the firsthand knowledge of reindeer herding (...) It is a form of long, embedded knowledge passing from generation, to generation. Everything. How large areas are connected, how you use them as a renewable resource year after year. It is a traditional knowledge, an invaluable knowledge. That maybe should, be listened more to (...) You can ask yourself if they have really understood the reality reindeer herders are facing (...) Is it even possible to find a solution where reindeer herding can continue unhindered, as it has? It almost seems like those who made the decisions haven’t understood reindeer herding enough”.*

(Interview with Andreas 07.09.2022)

The inclusion of Sámi traditional knowledges can be understood as a form of recognition. Recognition of cultural differences, including forms of knowing the world, is crucial for establishing a process that is perceived as fair by participants. Not adequately recognizing cultural differences, may contribute to producing a lack of trust. My findings indicate that there is not an adequate recognition of Sámi culture. One example is how staying silent means different things in Sámi and majority Norwegian culture. Ole explained how:

*“In Norwegian, you say that those who stay silent consent. But, in Sámi, staying silent means you do not agree. (...) So, then you should know that, we did not consent. So that is a form of culture crash”.*

Annie emphasized several times during the interview her worry over how authorities are choosing not to listen to minority voices:

*“We are a minority. And within the green transition, it is so important to understand that you need to listen to the minorities as well. You also have to listen to those who disagree with you (...) we who live here and have lived here, we know our nature and its threshold (...) I think the worst part is that they don’t listen. We have said no in the Sámi Parliament, and they don’t listen (...) So, I think the green transition is very undemocratic (...) It oppresses our opinions, and it destroys the nature and the environment”.*

(Interview with Annie 19.08.2022).

In the below quote, Beaska points out how the authorities prioritize interventions with economic values over protecting Sámi reindeer herding. During our interview, he described how what he calls “hyper capitalism” and the aim to make a profit, is the core driver for industrial development in Sápmi. In his view, this leads to exploitation of the environment and natural resources. Furthermore, Beaska believes that the Norwegian authorities understand the impacts green developments have on Sámi reindeer herding, but that they at the end of the day do not care enough to listen:

*“So-called green development [laughs] (...) There are people who want to make a large profit, and they do. And when that is the driving force for humanity, it is just about exploiting the environment. That is what they are doing now, calling it a green transition, when it’s only greenwashing of hyper capitalism (...) I think [the Norwegian authorities] understand how important it is. There have been small moments where they*

*had to recognize how important it [Sámi livelihoods and knowledge] is (...) I suspect that they understand, but don't care. There are other values higher up on their list".*

(Interview with Beaska 25.10.2022).

The importance of reindeer herding to protect and carry culture, in particular language, was mentioned by several participants. This confirms previous studies on the importance of Sámi reindeer herding in Sámi culture (Benjaminsen et al. 2016, Johnsen et al. 2017, Eira et al. 2018). Norwegian authorities also explicitly confirm the importance of reindeer herding to keep Sámi languages and culture thriving in public documents and statements (Nærings- og fiskeridepartementet 2022). Ole in the Fiettar district, explained how the Sámi languages depend on traditional reindeer herding. For Sámi reindeer herders, Sámi languages are the working languages of herding. The close relationship between traditional reindeer herding and Sámi knowledges and language was a topic during all interviews. Following this, I also asked about how the participants considered the so-called mitigating measures proposed by authorities. Below, Ole describes how often-used mitigating measures clash with traditional Sámi reindeer herding.

*"Reindeer herding keeps Sámi culture and language alive. And if the reindeer herding disappears, then we know that many will think "okay, why do we need this language? You can't use it on anything". For example, we have all of these words just for snow (...) so that will disappear. And it is because of reindeer herding that we have all of those words. So that is easier to explain how the snow is right now. You might have to spend half an hour explaining, while I say one word to my friend".*

One or two sentences for contextualizing.

*"(...) there are no effective mitigating measures on pasturelands. You can't start by saying that we can buy fodder and feed them instead. Because then you have destroyed the traditional herding. The traditional herding is protected [by international law], not that you live off of reindeer herding. You can do that anyway, put them in a barn and feed them all the time. But that's not right, because then you have changed everything, and then you might as well stop keeping reindeer and start sheep farming".*



(Interview with Ole 01.09.2023).

As shown in this section, Sámi reindeer herders and activists experience that their perspectives and knowledges are excluded in decision-making processes in Sápmi. Sámi actors and Norwegian authorities have conflicting understandings of what impacts climate change and industrial developments have for Sámi land use. In addition, the participants worry whether the Norwegian authorities recognize the importance of traditional reindeer herding for protecting Sámi culture, and if so, if it is outweighed by other considerations. Lacking recognition for Sámi traditional knowledges have implications for the capacity Sámi actors have to influence processes concerning their land use and cultural practices.

#### **5.4 Participation and trust in decision making processes**

The theme ‘participation and trust in decision making processes’ refers to the herders’ experiences with participation and representation in decision making processes concerning the areas and resources they use, and in particular impact assessment processes. The exclusion of Sámi knowledges plays a part in creating mistrust between the actors in the decision-making processes. During the interviews and conversations, the participants detailed the lack of trust in the processes surrounding development projects in Sámi areas. According to Aili, there is an implementation gap when it comes to taking Sámi knowledges into account. She remarks how, in decision making processes, “they speak very highly of taking into account traditional knowledge”, but that this does not happen in practice. Furthermore, she explains how this creates a mutual lack of trust that she considers a democratic problem.

*“(…) local knowledge and the traditional knowledge that the reindeer herders have (…)  
as far as I can see, it rarely is respected. Often it is suspected (…)  
You can say that it’s a case of mutual mistrust. Because, not using indigenous knowledges is a form of  
mistrust from the authorities or from the developers. And that means that in the Sámi  
communities, there is often little trust in impact assessments, and to the assessment  
firms”.*

*“This mutual lack of trust. I think it is destructive. In Norway, we usually say that the  
trust we have in our society is part of our most important capital. So, when the most*

*important capital does not exist when we are governing land and water in Sámi areas. (...) It's a problem for the Sámi community, and it's a problem for the Norwegian community".*

(Interview with Aili 03.01.2023).

Lars from the **Fiettar** district describes how it is stated that Sámi knowledges shall be included in the processes concerning developments in their areas, but that the herders experience that their knowledges are ignored. In the assessment process over the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, the herders in the district were involved in dialogue with both Statnett, NVE and consultants. Lars says they were told by the consultants that the districts' suggestion of where to place the power line was in fact more damaging to the reindeer, than the one proposed in the assessment.

*"(...) when they did the assessment on the 420-power line a few years ago the district said that, of course we can't stop the power line being constructed. But we can ask the power company, Statnett to investigate whether the power line can be put on the divide line between two reindeer herding districts. To get the reindeer to avoid an area where they shouldn't be. Then they did an impact assessment (...) the line was planned in the middle of our calving areas, which has enormous consequences. And the consultant says that it would be more harmful for the herding, to place the power line in the middle between two districts, where you can avoid mixing the different herds. That it was better to have it in the calving areas".*

According to Lars, placing the power line where two district borders meet would help the herders in keeping the herds apart. For Fiettar, participating in dialogue with the consultants and the developer then meant that their knowledges were dismissed as completely invalid. In other words, the herders did not know what was best for their livelihood. The power asymmetries in the decision-making processes are expressed by a conclusion that makes Sámi ways of knowing invalid.

*"If they had listened to us, then there would be less damage for the districts (...) when they even argue that putting it between districts is more damaging than in the calving*

*areas. I think it tells a lot about what we are struggling against (...) I think that it might be some kind of arrogance. At the same time, the consultant might think that he needs to secure more projects from Statnett, and then he can't contradict them".*

(Interview with Lars 04.09.2022)

The Fiettar district's experience with being told that the reindeer herders did not know what was best for their livelihood reconnects with questions over epistemic justice. Following Widenhorn (2013), social injustices cannot only be conceived in a material sense, but also on an epistemic level. The above quotes can thus be understood as an example of epistemic injustice, casting indigenous Sámi knowledge as not credible, while the consultant's knowledge is considered objective and universal (Widenhorn 2013:378). Understandings of epistemic justice argues that knowledge is neither neutral nor objective, but rather connected to power (Temper 2019).

The processes around development in Sámi areas take part in producing the mistrust that Aili speak of. Before developing the physical infrastructure for the 420-kilowatt power line, the concession owner Statkraft is required to follow certain procedural steps. Developers must facilitate an environmental impact assessment, as part of acquiring a concession (Plan- og bygningsloven 2008). The Fiettar and Fálá districts are asked to participate in consultations, often referred to as dialogue, with both the developer, concession granting authorities and OED. The lack of trust towards environmental impact assessments and consultants was a subject that several of the participants felt very strongly about. As I will discuss more closely in chapter 6, the close relationships between developers and consultants are a concern both for the participants and other actors in such cases.

Several of the participants questioned how bureaucrats and consultants, with no experience with or knowledge of Sámi reindeer herding, can make informed decisions about the management of Sámi areas. The reindeer herders expressed mistrust both towards authorities, and towards the firms hired to do environmental impact assessments. In their experience, the consultants have already concluded before they start the assessment. Likewise, both the reindeer herders and the other participants point to how the authorities seem to mistrust Sámi knowledges and experiences.

*“All they’re really trying to do is look for (...) a specific answer. So, it’s no wonder that they don’t believe that there are consequences for us”.*

(Interview with Ole 01.09.2022).

When Ole refers to “a specific answer”, he points out how reindeer herders experience that the impact assessment process, commonly understood as “gathering knowledge” necessary to conclude the concession process, most often ignores Sámi knowledges. For the developer, the aim of starting an impact assessment process is to get an overview of what is needed for acquiring a license and start construction. The lack of trust that the Sámi community has in the licensing process is addressed below by Beaska.

*“I think it’s a conscious strategy for the developers, to use consultants that write what they want them to write. It seems like the case with land conflicts in Sápmi. There are a few consultancy firms that show up again and again (...) And when the same consultants are used all the time, you grow suspicious of them (...) Reindeer herders experience time after time that it’s a conclusion ordered by the developer (...) You need a system where everyone can trust the consultants doing the job”.*

(Interview with Beaska 25.10.2022).

My findings indicate that the lack of trust in the Norwegian authorities is influenced by several factors. In cases where the energy or environmental authorities fail to assess the cumulative effects, the herders question whether the decisions are taken on an adequate basis. Another factor is the lack of action on the Fosen verdict, which is understood as a key juncture for the protection of indigenous human rights in the green transition. The Fosen verdict is explained in section 2.4. More locally in Kvalsund, the historic, present and planned encroachments on pasturelands and migration routes contribute to the lack of trust. For example, infrastructure from the old copper mine at Ulveryggen were not cleaned up after the mine shut down. When previous encroachments are not cleared up, the pressure of planned developments has a larger negative effect.

The participants expressed a lack of trust towards impact assessment processes in general, and consultants in particular. They experience that their knowledges and experience-based inputs are not recognized with the same importance as “scientific” knowledge in the assessment processes. The Sámi Parliament argues that the process concerning the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line has been extended for a long time, without the assessments implementing relevant new information. In the public hearing statement from 2021, the Sámi Parliament asks that the process should start over with a new assessment program that takes the “very demanding cumulative situation for the affected reindeer herding districts into account” (Sámi Parliament 06.05.2021:2). In the documents provided by Norwegian authorities, such as the recommendation from NVE to OED (2022), a key message is that this consideration is not an entirely new process. Rather, it is a continuation of the original concession process. Moreover, the reindeer herders experience that the cumulative effects of various developments have increased the risk level that the power line can exacerbate. The question then becomes: how can there be trust in the process when the authorities are so clear on this being only a process over formal complaints, and not a new consideration?

Within the environmental justice framework, the ability for individuals and groups to equally participate in decision making processes concerning their lives, is particularly important. My findings suggest that Sámi rights holders, and in particular reindeer herders, do not have the possibility of meaningful and effective participation. According to ILO 169 and SP 27, indigenous peoples shall have the opportunity to effectively participate in political processes and matters concerning them (Strömngren et al. 2021). What effective participation means though, can be unclear. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted in 2007 as an important successor to the ILO 169. The protection against encroachments on indigenous peoples’ right to enjoy their culture, including the right to land and resources, has been considered the core of international indigenous law (Ravna 2020:234). Recently, consultation and participation are emphasized as key parts of international indigenous rights. The duty to consult Sámi rights holders is implemented in Norwegian law through the consultation agreement (Kommunal- og distriktsdepartementet 2020).

*“Consultations between reindeer herders and the authorities should be conducted in good faith and with openness to finding a solution. My experience is that this is not always the case. The districts get the feeling that the authorities and the developer have*

*concluded already that the intervention should be granted a concession. And then the consultation becomes just a point to check off your list”*

(Personal communication with lawyer 10.03.2023).

While consultations shall be conducted in good faith between parties, meaning a real will and aim of reaching an agreement, this is not always the case in practice. Both the herders in Fiettar and Fálá, and Sámi activists, experience that consultations seldom are conducted in good faith. Previous legal procedures on indigenous rights have concluded that it is not sufficient that the indigenous party has the opportunity to make their views known (Ravna 2020:238). This follows from ILO 169 Article 6 (2). In practice, consultation processes can be experienced as “just a point to check off your list”, as described above.

*“So, in a way it is a rotten deal. And a system that not exactly helps protecting [indigenous] rights (...) We need to have detailed legal competencies in Sámi [law] questions (...) We are almost “hobby-lawyers” all of us. And we need to be”.*

(Interview with Beaska 25.10.2023).

Herders in both Fiettar and Fálá experience consultations as a time-consuming process, which rarely lead to satisfactory results. Fálá is a relatively small district, and the herders spend a considerable amount of time speaking to developers or authorities. Andreas details how:

*“The result is that we are affected and, in a way, pushed out (...) We will get a negative result whether or not we have a dialogue and try to agree with them (...) It is hard to keep a good tone of dialogue when (...) you need the areas, and they need the areas that we are already using. So, it’s not easy to find a solution for co-existence without consequences for us”.*

(Interview with Andreas 07.09.2022).

Ole describes the tedious process of attempting to come to an agreement in consultations. In the process, there might be confusion or disagreement about the content of the consultations and basis of protocol. Drafts of protocols are sent back and forth with comments, as the parties may have different views on what was discussed and agreed upon. For several herding districts, the processes around developments end up in the courtroom. This is demanding, both in terms of money, time and energy. Developers as well as Norwegian authorities, often describe how their aim is to have “good dialogue” or “trustful dialogue” (NTB 08.03.2023). Below, Ole describes his experience from Fiettar about participating in dialogue and consultations:

*“The thing about consultations. It is really only nonsense. Because it is time and resources wasted, you get nothing out of it. And then you have to agree”.*

*“Dialogue meetings (...) no matter how unfriendly it was. But then it is written as, we had a nice conversation. (...) And then we’re supposed to have agreed on a conclusion”.*

(Interview with Ole 01.09.2022).

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented and analyzed key findings in my data through different thematic categories. Together, they contribute to understanding the implications that the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line have on the Fiettar and Fálá districts, as part of a cumulative pressure from several developments. The thematic categories presented in this chapter are all interrelated, like one aspect of justice often leads to another (Schlosberg 2004). This is emphasized further in chapter 6.

Sámi reindeer herders see an increasing number of existing and planned encroachments on their pasturelands and migration routes. During the interviews, the herders explained how they can never see the encroachments isolated. Both the herders and Sámi activists argue that the cumulative pressure from several developments put reindeer herding in Fiettar and Fálá close to the threshold. What exactly defines the “threshold” is difficult to say, but I understand it as loss of access to areas and resources at such a scale, that it negatively affects the ability to continue traditional reindeer herding. Crossing the threshold might mean traditional reindeer herding is made impossible. NVE concludes in their 2022 recommendation to OED that the negative impacts for Fiettar and Fálá are more serious than estimated in the first assessment,

and that the power line produces negative effects at key points. Nevertheless, NVE maintains that it is possible to construct and operate the power line, without reaching a threshold that violates indigenous human rights (NVE 2022).

Impacts from climate change exacerbate the vulnerabilities produced by land encroachments upon reindeer herding. This vulnerability leads to insecurity about the ability future generations may have to continue traditional Sámi reindeer herding. Furthermore, reindeer herding is more vulnerable in specific areas and at specific times during the bare ground period, such as calving and migration between seasonal pastures. My analysis suggests that traditional Sámi knowledges are not included in decision making processes on an equal basis with the knowledge gathered by consultants. This has implications for the herders' perception of trust in decision making processes concerning areas and resources that they use.

During the assessment and decision-making processes around the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, the affected reindeer herding districts and the Sámi Parliament have been in consultation meetings both with Statnett, NVE and OED. Both Fiettar and Fálá demand to keep the consultations going, between themselves and OED. Thus, they disagree with the understanding of participation as just being consulted and “making their voices heard” (Ravna 2020); they aim to continue the consultations in order to reach an agreement with the Norwegian authorities.

In the next chapter, I turn to the discussion of these findings in terms of the different components of justice. Moreover, I will demonstrate how the development of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line in two reindeer herding districts that already experience vulnerability from climate change and land encroachments can be experienced as an expression of green colonialism.

## **6 Discussion: Green development and green colonialism**

*“Because us Sámi, we are accused of being against development (...) we stop development, we are a hindrance for the Norwegian authorities. Now there is a massive need for metals, and new energy, petroleum, wind turbines and more. That will be established in our areas. We all need to share; we need to contribute as well. And we must not stop the development, because this is about saving the planet”.*



(Interview with Annie 19.08.2022).

Protesting against encroachments that threaten Sámi traditional land use may lead to accusations of always being against progress. In February 2023, the largest Sámi political party NSR, Norgga Sámiid Riikkasearvi, was called a “hindrance of all development in Northern Norway” in an opinion piece by the Norwegian parliamentarian Sylvi Listhaug. Listhaug wrongfully claimed that Sami reindeer herders effectively have a veto right on developments, such as mines, wind turbines or power lines (Listhaug 2023). Increasingly, there are also strong internal disagreements between parties in the Sámi Parliament on what constitutes good development and progress for the Sámi community. While the majority party NSR oppose industrial developments in Sámi reindeer herding areas, the Sámi political party Nordkalottfolket regularly criticize NSR for “putting us on the sideline and saying no to everything” (Larsen 2023). As is often the case for conflicts over land rights, resource use and perceptions of justice, there is no unified understanding of neither what the source of the conflict is, or what the best solution might be.

The participants in this study argue that their land and resource rights are far from a right to veto projects in Sámi areas; in their experience Sámi land rights are limited to consultation with authorities and developers. They also recognize that there is a need for some industrial development in the green transition in order to fulfill Norway’s goals of reducing national and global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, accepting the encroachments caused by some projects may open the door for more projects, which can further increase the vulnerability of Sámi livelihoods and culture. Moreover, the argument illustrates important perceptions of injustice from so-called green transition infrastructures. If everyone needs to contribute equally to the green transition, why do Sámi reindeer herders experience that they need to contribute the most?

Based on the thematic analysis presented in chapter 5, this chapter explores how the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line influences the perceptions of just transitions in Sámi areas, thus addressing the thesis’ central question: why this “green infrastructure” can be experienced as green colonialism. I start by outlining the contradictory understandings of renewable energy production and infrastructure as green development or as a continuation of colonial processes. Then, I explore my findings in light of the different components of environmental justice.

Lastly, I show how the justification of destroying reindeer herding areas in order to electrify petroleum production contrasts with Sámi understandings of human-nature relations.

### **6.1 Green development or green colonialism in Kvalsund**

The relationship between green developments and green colonialism cannot be easily defined. As explained in chapter 2, Norwegian authorities understand the green transition as the process of turning Norway into a low emission country by 2050, with a transition towards products and services with considerably lower negative impacts for the environment and climate (Klima- og miljødepartementet 2021). The Whiter Paper *Norway's Climate Action Plan for 2020-2021* recognizes how drivers of climate change also lead to loss of biodiversity, and that an important part of climate change adaptation is protecting nature (Meld. St. 13 2020:14). Green developments can then be understood as developments, often in technology, energy production or infrastructure, that have environmental purposes. My main argument in this section is that these developments are not understood by my participants as green, but rather as an expression of colonialism.

Reindeer herders in both Fielttar and Fálá are skeptical of how electrification of petroleum production is considered an essential part of fulfilling Norway's goals under the Paris Agreement, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from petroleum production by half. Electrification of oil- and gas production on the Norwegian continental shelf will also demand upgrading of the power grid (Meld. St. 13 2020). When I asked about the motivation for the power line in our interview, Andreas in **Fálá** jokingly addressed the electrification of Melkøya as "*Norway's contribution to saving the world*" (Interview with Andreas 07.09.2022). The narrative around constructing power lines in reindeer herding areas with the purpose of electrifying petroleum production as green developments is contested by the reindeer herders in Fielttar and Fálá. In the protocol from a consultation meeting between Fielttar and NVE (08.03.2021), the district representative explicitly addresses how power lines constructed to electrify the petroleum industry, may be a form of green colonialism.

*"The district (...) point to how green energy is used as an argument for the electrification of petroleum production, and considers constructing power lines for these purposes as a form of green colonialism. They argue that it is wrong to build infrastructures that destroy nature, to electrify the petroleum and gas industry. It is important to note how industry interests represent the majority needs for the power line.*

*These corporate interests should pay for the necessary mitigating measures. Furthermore, a sub-sea cable is the only mitigating measure that can work adequately by eliminating the risks to such a degree that a human rights violation can be avoided”.*

(Protocol 08.03.2021, authors translation).

Though the participants all agree that there is a paradox present in the green transition which justifies the destruction of nature in order to “save the world”, they do not describe it in the same way as the district representative above. In the interviews with Ole, Lars and Andreas, I asked them for their view on the term green colonialism. The herders saw this as a political term, and pointed out how the Sámi Parliament uses it to argue that there is a paradox in the green transition - destroying nature in order to save the climate, a paradox also apparent for the herders. Even though the herders do not use the term green colonialism explicitly in their daily language, I argue that it describes well their everyday experiences of the paradox; that developments aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions shift negative costs onto Sámi reindeer herding. In the protocol from a consultation meeting between Fiettar and NVE (2021), the explicit use of the term green colonialism by the district representative strengthens the argument that the construction of the power line may trigger a human rights violation. Furthermore, the herding district emphasizes how the aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions does not mitigate the negative impacts on the natural resources the herders are dependent on, and the impacts on cultural identity.

Since the process around constructing the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line started in 2007, the stated motivation for the power line has changed. In their first application, Statnett argued that the power line would contribute to securing the power supply in Finnmark, and that the Skaidi-Hammerfest stretch was needed if the Hammerfest LNG power plant were to be expanded. Presently, the main argument is the electrification of production at Hammerfest LNG and potential greenhouse gas emission cuts (NVE 2022:1). NVE states in their 2022 recommendation that considering the societal benefits of electrification of the Melkøya LNG and Wisting oil field is beyond their mandate. They argue that OED is responsible for considering the demand for electrification of the petroleum infrastructures at Melkøya, against the negative effects the power line will represent for reindeer herding and other local interests (NVE 2022). At the 2021 consultations with NVE, the district representative and their lawyer argued that the impact assessment was not adequate, as it did not address the cumulative effects

of existing and planned interventions for Fálá (protocol 07.03.2021). In the consultation protocols between Fálá and OED (protocol 24.11.2022), the Fálá representative argues that the negative effects from the power line on reindeer herding, “*far exceeds the societal benefits of the electrification, which in itself is debated*”. Furthermore, the representative argued how:

*“OED should make an independent decision if the societal benefits are indeed larger than the negative consequences for reindeer herding. Thus, it is not adequate for OED to “hide behind” a potential political decision to allow electrification at Melkøya”.*

(Protocol from consultation meeting Fálá and OED 24.11.2022, authors translation).

The participants refer to how there is a common understanding in Norwegian society that everyone needs to contribute in the green transition. Norway’s Climate Action Plan 2021-2030 concludes that “The whole society must pull in the same direction if we are going to reach our climate targets and succeed with the green transition” (Meld.St.13 2020-2021:14). In practice however, my participants experience that the Sámi are always expected to contribute the most. This suggests that the development of green energy production and infrastructures are dominated by distributive injustices. The herders in both districts argue they already have given too much to land encroachments. Below, Ole explains how in his experience, Sámi reindeer herders have already lost so much valuable land, that their future is at risk. Moreover, he points out how destroying nature in order to save the environment, does not follow a sense of logic for him as a reindeer herder.

*“(…) they say that we need to sacrifice so much for the green transition. Personally, I think that we have given too much already. If we are continuing at this pace, then in a few years- [sighs] (….) No one is talking about reducing the consumption in society (….) So, we are going to destroy nature in order to save the environment. I don’t understand this logic. At least not in a Sámi way of thinking”.*

(Interview with Ole 01.09.2022)

The contradictions in how the green transition is taking place were also brought up by other participants. In the quotes below, both Lars in Fiettar, and Beaska describe how the destruction of nature in order to save the climate, does not make sense.

*“What is so problematic about these development projects is that they demand so much land. Over time, so much land has been taken from Sápmi for a range of purposes, that there is nothing more to give (...) Calling it a green transition when you destroy nature, it doesn’t make sense. It’s a kind of rhetorical strategy that unfortunately has worked very well”.*

(Interview with Beaska 25.10.2022).

*“(...) It is unbelievably illogical. There is no connection. That you in a way want to save [the world] and develop it, by destroying what is the basis of everything. It [The electrification of Wisting and Melkøya] has nothing to do with the green transition”.*

(Interview with Lars 04.09.2022)

Based on my findings, I argue that green colonialism is a relevant term to discuss processes of uneven distribution in the green transition. By “green colonialism” one refers to the continuation of colonial processes and dispossession, with the justification of contributing to a green transition. As explained in chapter 3, the term is often used by indigenous activists and politicians when describing the development of power infrastructures on their lands. For example, Sámi Parliament president Silje Karine Muotka argued in a keynote speech in March 2023 that there is “a new green colonization in Sápmi”, in the name of green transition (Sámi Parliament 23.03.2023).

During the interviews, I asked the participants how they understood the dominant motivations for the Norwegian green transition. Aili Keskitalo is considered one of the first political actors in Norway to use the term green colonialism systematically to describe the loss of lands and resources taking place in the green transition. She argues that indigenous peoples carry both the burden of climate change and climate mitigation (the Arctic Circle 2020). Non-consensual exploitation of resources and lands in Sámi areas for “green” industries is experienced as a form of green colonialism (Saami Council 2017). Lack of consent can produce injustices and be perceived as a threat to the material basis indigenous peoples have for

exercising their cultural rights (Sametingsrådet 2019). In our interview, Aili described the motivation of the green transition in order to construct infrastructures in Sámi areas, as false arguments masking the results:

*“It is a form of convenient rhetoric. False clothing, like a form of costume. That you dress the colonialist in”.*

*“(…) abuse done in the name of the climate, the environment, and nature – it is still abuse. You cannot (…) wash clean or greenwash, all kinds of human rights violations (…) Because the result is the same, right. For the Sámi people at Fosen- the result for them is the same. They are losing their livelihoods and their access to areas they have used since time immemorial. (…) And for them, isolated, it doesn’t matter very much if they lose it to a large parking lot, or to wind turbines. For them, it is colonialism, no matter the arguments behind it”.*

(Interview with Aili 03.01.2023).

Aili’s statement explains how the arguments behind green developments do not mitigate the experiences of loss for Sámi reindeer herders. In other words, a benign purpose does not lessen the strain the herders are experiencing. The expression of green colonialism taking place in Kvalsund is not unique. Rather, it is an experience shared not just by other individuals and communities in Sápmi, but globally. In our interview, I asked Annie how she considers green colonialism. She describes it as a form of greenwashing, or a form of rhetoric concealing the goal of making profits. Annie describes how “robbers from the south” (referring to Southern Norway) accumulate resources from Sápmi. She further describes it as a continuation of historic relations, “the same thing that has always happened here in Sápmi (…) they rob our resources. We get pearls, and they get money” (Interview with Annie 19.08.2022). All participants were clear in describing how Sámi reindeer herders, as already mentioned with regards to cumulative pressure, have already sacrificed so much that they are on the threshold of what their industry can endure.

## **6.2 Processes around the 420-power line experienced as unjust**

My findings show that the decision-making processes around the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line are experienced as unjust by Sámi actors. Based on an environmental justice

perspective, I argue that this is due to what I call superficial recognition, unequal distribution of risks and limited participation in decision-making processes. My findings suggest that the construction of the power line produces an unequal distribution of risks onto Sámi reindeer herding, that is exacerbated by a lack of recognition for and inclusion of Sámi perspectives and knowledges in the decision-making process. Furthermore, my findings suggest that reindeer herders experience that they lack power to influence the processes and outcomes affecting their herding areas.

### **6.2.1 Unequal distribution of risks**

As other studies confirm, Sámi reindeer herding as a livelihood is increasingly being forced to make space for “competing land use practices”, most commonly energy production and infrastructure in the green transition (Kuokkanen 2022:2). Development of holiday cabins, road and outdoor activity infrastructures is also increasingly present in reindeer herding areas. The fragmentation of reindeer pasturelands is the result of cumulative industrial development in resource extraction, energy production and infrastructure (Österlin & Raitio 2020, Kuokkanen 2022). Though 40 % of Norway’s landmass is theoretically used for reindeer herding, the situation for reindeer herding in reality is much more restricted. As explained earlier, 89 % of reindeer herding areas are now impacted by infrastructure and developments in close proximity (SSB 2020). In Kvalsund, the reindeer herders experience that their areas are disproportionately impacted by encroachments. The cumulative effect of constructing both the proposed 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line and the Nussir mine may affect up to 70 % of pasturelands and migration routes for Fiettár and Fálá (Protect Sápmi 2020). As explained by the herders in the thematic analysis (chapter 5), this results in little space unaffected by infrastructures.

Overviewing my findings, questions over distributive justice are clearly visible. The distributional implications of adaptation processes, such as the construction of renewable power infrastructures, are influenced by social-political relations. Adaptation efforts may influence social relations and distribution of resources. Climate change adaptation agendas thus need to explicitly address the distribution of risks and vulnerabilities (Eriksen et al. 2015). Sámi reindeer herders experience that they carry the costs of developing energy infrastructures, by way of negative effects on their reindeer pastures and migration routes. From an environmental justice perspective, the thematic categories ‘cumulative pressure’ and ‘vulnerability’ are those most directly connected to issues of distributive justice. Reindeer herders experience an unequal

distribution of physical infrastructure on their pasturelands and migration routes. This is a form of maldistribution that has both economic and human costs.

During our interview, Andreas remarked how if you question the way the green transition is taking place, you are seen as “a bully”. There is not room for questioning the common understanding that the green transition is a good thing, even though the herders might lose their “own green livelihood in the green transition”. Furthermore, Andreas asks: “(...) *The green transition that is going to save the earth. I mean, who will pay the price for that?*”. The question of who will pay for negative impacts of the green transition commonly shows up in conflicts over developments in Sámi areas. In a panel discussion in 2019, Aili Keskitalo criticized the perception of an equal dialogue taking place between Norwegian authorities, developers and affected parties in the green transition. She asked who will pay the price, for the common moral responsibility to save the world (Tømmerbakke 2019).

Questions over how to distribute the costs of the green transition are raised both by indigenous peoples and global justice activists outside Sápmi. At the 2023 United Nations Summit for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, delegates questioned whether the costs of the green transition are being distributed fairly, or whether their communities are bearing a disproportionate part of the burden of mineral extraction and renewable energy production. Both distributive injustices and the unequal capacity to participate in decision-making processes were raised (Monet 2023). Furthermore, global justice activists argue that the green transition depends on resource extraction that may take the form of a new green colonialism that exacerbates colonial injustices (Rehman 2019). The uneven distribution of the social, environmental and economic costs of the green transition cannot be left unaddressed (Zografos & Robbins 2020), yet addressing uneven distribution does raise questions over recognition. Inequalities in distribution of costs and benefits can also be rooted in lack of recognition, which is addressed in the next section.

### **6.2.2 Superficial recognition**

The issues identified in my discussion of vulnerability, knowledge production and traditional knowledge in chapter 5 illustrate how Sámi vulnerabilities to climate change and land encroachments are not adequately addressed in past and ongoing processes of infrastructure developments. It is clear that Sámi reindeer herders experience vulnerability caused by climatic changes, particularly related to rapidly changing seasons, unpredictable shifts between frost and



milder periods and changes in precipitation (Oskal 2008, Eira et al. 2018, Mathiesen et al. 2018). This puts the access to material resources used for Sámi reindeer herding at risk. In the last few years, climate change has materialized as so-called pasture crises, where shifting temperatures cause winter pastures to “lock” under a layer of ice. As detailed by both Lars and Ole in Fieltar, and Andreas in Fálá, the herders experience that their flexibility is lost.

I argue that the development of energy infrastructures in Sámi reindeer herding areas to electrify petroleum production takes place without substantially recognizing Sámi traditional knowledge and reindeer herding practices. Furthermore, reindeer herders experience a lack of recognition of the pressure caused by land encroachments. The participants in this study experience that the distinct characteristics and needs of Sámi reindeer herding are not adequately recognized and acknowledged by the authorities. I found that the recognition of Sámi traditional knowledge is key to creating decision-making processes that all the involved actors can trust. Knowledge production and traditional knowledge refers to the importance of traditional knowledge for Sámi reindeer herders, both in terms of cultural and social reproduction, as well as specific cultural practices. The transfer of knowledge and skills is key in keeping Sámi languages alive. The impact assessment of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line (Multiconsult 2021) explicitly recognizes the impacts of climate change as part of the burden on reindeer herding. The report also refers to how changes in the natural biodiversity in Finnmark, as well as an increase in temperatures, is expected to impact Sámi reindeer herding (Multiconsult 2021:59). The assessment report discusses how herders describe pressure on their winter districts, and how the alternative is to bring fodder for the herds. At the same time, in consultations with OED, the reindeer herding districts and Sámi parliament point to insufficiencies in the assessment reports conducted by Multiconsult (2021) and Ask Rådgivning & Naturrestaurering (2011). In particular, they point to insufficient or lacking assessment of the cumulative effects originating in various encroachments in the districts.

My findings indicate that the mistrust originating from superficial recognition extends to environmental impact assessments (EIA). During our interview, Lars detailed his skepticism of the consultants hired for impact assessments in reindeer herding areas. In his view, consultants may downplay negative impacts on reindeer herding and environment, in order to secure new consultancy opportunities. This was corroborated by Beaska, who expressed mistrust to a system where “the same few consultancy agencies” are responsible for assessing a range of development projects in Sámi areas. Developers are legally required to facilitate an environmental impact assessment, as part of acquiring a concession. Following the Planning

and Building Act (Plan- og bygningsloven 2008), developers must carry the costs of the impact assessment and suggest consultants. This opens for a discussion on whether this makes it possible for the developer to influence the outcome by choosing the right consultancy firm, or whether rigorous and thorough environmental impact assessments are always in the interest of the developer. Industry-hired consultancy firms may have an economic incentive to *not* find reasons that could jeopardize the development project, as large sums have already been invested in surveying and planning (Winge et al. 2023). Identifying major environmental impacts, ecosystems in need of protection or cultural values, risk halting the development project (Kuokkanen 2022).

Other land conflicts in Sápmi, such as conflicts over wind power development, have resulted in years of legal struggle. One example is the Fosen trial and subsequent Supreme Court verdict in 2021. Another is the conflict over wind turbines at Øyfjellet in Nordland County, where the reindeer herding district Jillen-Njaarke are struggling against wind turbines on their migration routes. The intended trial over the validity of the license to start in May 2023, but has been postponed to 2024 (Fjellheim 2023, NRK 22.05.2023). In development conflicts that go to court, the burden of proof lies with the Sámi population and not the Norwegian authorities or the developer (Ellingsen 2020:107). In the decision-making processes concerning land use in Sámi areas, my participants experience that Sámi knowledges are seen as biased. Challenging assumptions seeing indigenous knowledges as biased and dominant “scientific” knowledge as universal, can be a way of enhancing epistemic justice (Widenhorn 2013). If they attempt to criticize the conclusions of impact assessments, in the worst case this might be perceived as the reindeer herders’ only being dissatisfied with the result, and not as valid critique of the assessment process. My participants experience that the authorities question whether Sámi knowledges and experiences represent a legitimate description of reality. This corroborates previous studies exploring how national authorities and Sámi reindeer herders operate with different ontological understandings of nature and resources, and the human-environment relationship (Eira et al. 2016, Johnsen et al. 2017).

Environmental impact assessments can be perceived as neutral instruments to explore and evaluate possible environmental and social impacts of development projects and thus help in decision-making. Yet, the EIA’s can also be viewed by developers or investors as a step that should be fulfilled as part of official procedures before commencing construction of a project (Aguilar-Støen & Hirsch 2015:473). For Sámi reindeer herders and other Sámi actors opposing development projects, their critique of the data collection and interpretation in impact

assessments are rarely seen as valid. According to my participants, impact assessments are not a neutral “tool” for acquiring knowledge, but rather a system built on unequal terms, influenced by social, cultural and political factors. Researchers on spatial planning and consultants are critical of the close relationships between developers and the consultants they hire, which results in losing the Norwegian nature “piece by piece”. They argue that the relationship between consultants and developers may lead to assessments withholding information on environmental impacts. This can weaken the legitimacy of the impact assessment system in Norwegian governing of nature and resources (Winge et al. 2023).

Different forms of justice intertwine (Schlosberg 2004). If recognition is not properly addressed, it will have impacts on other forms of justice. Distributional equity cannot be achieved without recognition, and a fair outcome from decision-making processes is unlikely without the participants mutually recognizing each other (Coolsaet & Néron 2021:62). Thus, distribution can influence the capacity individuals and groups have for participating in and influencing decision-making processes.

### **6.2.3 Limited participation in decision making processes**

In this section, I discuss the Sámi reindeer herders’ capacity for effective participation in decision making processes concerning their livelihoods. Even though indigenous peoples have a protected right to effective participation in decisions concerning them directly, what this means in practice is unclear and open for interpretation (Strömberg et al. 2021).

The participants experience that generally, the ability to decide the outcome of those processes lies with national authorities or developers. Furthermore, capital interests are understood as a driving force which is prioritized over Sámi rights. As shown in the thematic analysis, the Sámi reindeer herders in Fiettar and Fálá experience that there is a pressure from the Norwegian authorities to participate in consultation processes that rarely lead to positive results for them. Andreas in Fálá describes how the district loses lands whether they participate in so-called dialogue with developers and national authorities or not. Beaska described the decision-making processes on development in Sámi areas as a *skinnprosess*, ‘skin process’, meaning a process that is already concluded when the Sámi rights holders are involved. According to my findings, this suggests that political aims provided by national authorities take part in concluding before Sámi stakeholders are included in the process. Political aims to expand the power grid and contribute to electrification of petroleum production is thus seen as

a framework for the ensuing dialogue between national authorities and Sámi stakeholders. Following ILO 169, consultations carried out shall have the objective to reach an agreement or consent to the measures proposed. The issue of consultations and participation in decision-making continues to be one of the main challenges to the relationship between indigenous peoples and the majority population in several nation states (Ravna 2020:236).

I argue that power inequalities between stakeholders influence whether they can effectively participate in decision-making processes concerning them directly. In the first round of coding, I organized several codes under the broad category ‘power’. These were later included under the thematic category ‘participation and trust’, as I find that power inequalities influence levels of trust between individuals and groups in the case under study. In my interview with Aili, she identified “a striking power asymmetry” in the relationship between the Sámi community and Norwegian authorities (interview 03.01.2023). This power asymmetry between the Sámi minority and national authorities has roots in historical injustices from the Norwegianization period, as well as current processes. The different parties have varying capacity, both in economic, political and human terms, to influence the outcome of decision-making processes. The various development projects are demanding in terms of time and economic resources for legal assistance, which puts a strain on the herding districts. Thus, reindeer herders feel that it is impossible to participate equally and effectively in the processes. My findings suggest that the ability to participate in the licensing processes is limited to being consulted, and does not include the possibility to give or withdraw consent. This constrained space for decision-making contrasts with Sámi perspectives of self-governing authority over Sámi lands and resources (Fjellheim 2023). The Tråante Declaration (2017) starts by declaring that the Sámi are a “independent people, like other people”, and have “the right to our lives and to decide on matters concerning us” (Saami Council 2017:1). The fact that the right to “decide on matters concerning us” is not properly respected, may be due to continuous asymmetrical power relations, where the authorities have the power to define both the problem and the solution (Bjørklund 2016, Sehlin MacNeil 2017).

As discussed in section 4 in the thematic analysis, Aili identifies a mutual mistrust in the decision-making processes. Herders experience that the perception of “good dialogue” between parties often is misleading. A meeting where the parties clearly disagree on both the problem and the solution, can be described as “good dialogue” by the authorities. In a sense, the herders feel like they are trapped in dialogue with both authorities and developers. If the herders do not participate in the dialogue, they worry that both developers and authorities

interpret that they are careless about what happens to the land. Ole describes it as “(...) then it’s like “they don’t even want to talk, so they don’t care about the area”. That you don’t care”. Participating in dialogue is then understood as necessary, even though it might not lead to actually influencing the outcome.

At its core, procedural justice concerns the ability to both participate in and influence decision-making processes (Suiseeya 2021:38). I argue that the ability to participate in decision making processes is mediated by unequal power relations. For Sámi reindeer herders, participating in decision-making processes mean participating in so-called dialogue with state authorities and private developers. The increase in the number of state- and corporate-led “dialogues” and various processes where Sámi reindeer herders have to participate in is criticized by both scholars and activists. Other studies from Sápmi suggests that the power asymmetries between Sámi reindeer herders, national authorities and corporate interests can be experienced as a form of racism and dominance, or even structural and extractive violence (Sehlin MacNeil 2017, Fjellheim 2023). As suggested by the participants in this study, the capacity to participate in a meaningful way in decision-making processes vary both in terms of economic and human capacity between the actors.

*“You can kill us with dialogue. If you really want to interact with us, you need to make sure that we have the capacity to carry a meaningful conversation”* (Tømmerbakke 2019).

The above quote by Aili Keskitalo illustrates the experiences of unequal power distribution in decision making processes in Sápmi. It is not enough to secure participation, if the power relations remain uneven and one of the parties does not have the capacity to effectively participate on their own terms. Being consulted or participating in a public hearing does not mean that the affected parties have autonomy in or influence over the decisions concerning them directly. The right of participation means indigenous peoples must have a real influence on decisions taken, but this is not reflected in practice (Ravna 2020:239). The issue of effective participation comes back to the concept of free, prior and informed consent, and in particular the concept of *prior*. The timing, that is when a dialogue takes place is also important for how the actors experience the process. Being invited to partake in dialogue with the developer or authorities can be understood as simply a “box to be ticked”, or a prerequisite step on the way to a license for construction (Aguilar-Støen & Hirsch 2015). This is particularly the case if dialogue takes place *after* construction has started. In the case of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, consultations between the reindeer herding districts and OED are conducted after

the construction Balsfjord-Skaidi has been completed. Affected parties are included so late in the process, that influencing the outcome of the process is difficult. Simply being consulted, or “having your voice heard”, is not enough (Ravna 2020). Yet, this is often the result for Sámi affected parties.

## **Summary**

For indigenous communities struggling for environmental and social justice, issues of distribution, participation, and recognition are intricately woven together (Schlosberg 2004:527). In the case of the Sámi reindeer herders in this study, the unequal distribution of risks is exacerbated by a lack of recognition of their culture and knowledges. In addition, they experience that they lack the ability to effectively participate in decision making processes concerning their livelihoods. Norwegian authorities and developers argue that Sámi stakeholders are invited to participate in the process, while the participants in this study question whether consultation can be meaningful participation. Rather, they believe decision making processes may be concluded before any dialogue with affected Sámi stakeholders takes place.

Based on my findings, I argue that there is a willful ignorance of Sámi knowledge and experiences from Norwegian authorities, in decisions over land use in Sámi areas. There is therefore not a lack of knowledge dominating the processes over the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, but rather a lack of inclusion of Sámi knowledges. Through my interlocutors, I have learned that Sami's knowledges are ignored in the processes of environmental impact assessment when development projects are under process. This lack of recognition can be seen both in terms of traditional knowledge and Sámi land use, and it bears implications for the Sámi herders' capacity to participate in and influence decision-making processes in the green transition.

## **7 Conclusions**

The world is facing the substantial challenge of addressing the impacts of global climate change, while combatting biodiversity loss and securing people safe and reliable energy access. The impacts of both climate change and adaptation are experienced differently by communities and individuals. At the same time, climate change is a highly social and political issue, that

reflects power relations in society. Thus, adapting to climate change is both a social and political act (Pelling 2011, Eriksen et al. 2015, Leichenko & O'Brien 2019). The conflict over the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line and other “green” developments in Sámi reindeer herding areas can be understood as socio-environmental conflicts, with contrasting forms of knowledge meeting in a context of power inequalities (Rodríguez-Garavito 2011). Key to climate change adaptation is a shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy, a shift that can require expanding both energy production and transmission grid infrastructure. This is emphasized by the Norwegian authorities and energy system actors (Meld. St. 13 2020-2021, Statnett 2021). The construction of renewable energy infrastructure has important social implications, particularly in indigenous areas. At the core of the conflicts over “green” infrastructure developments in Sámi areas in Norway, is the issue of land use. The aim of this study has been to explore the experiences of indigenous peoples affected by green development projects, to understand why these projects can be experienced as green colonialism. This has been approached as a case study of the proposed 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line in Riehpovuotna / Repparfjord and the experiences of affected Sámi reindeer herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts. The aim has been approached through four research questions:

- 1. What impacts will the proposed 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line have on Sámi reindeer herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts?*
- 2. How is the power line project related to other development projects in the area?*
- 3. How are decision-making processes around infrastructure development in Sámi areas experienced by Sámi communities?*
- 4. Based on the above, how do Sámi communities experience developments of green infrastructures?*

My attempt to answer the above research questions led me to some important findings. First of all, the so-called green developments in Kvalsund, in particular the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, are experienced as a form of green colonialism by affected Sámi reindeer herders, meaning a continuation of colonial processes. My findings further suggest that Sámi perspectives are excluded from the green transition by Norwegian authorities, through a lack of recognition of Sámi knowledges and experiences. This leads, in turn, to a mutual lack of trust in decision-making processes. The reindeer herders in Fiettar and Fálá experience that the future

of their livelihood, traditional Sámi reindeer herding, is at stake. The cumulative pressure from land encroachments is exacerbated by climate change impacts, and vice versa. As land is the material basis for exercising Sámi traditional culture, this has implications for the rights of the Sámi community.

I started this thesis with a discussion of the social challenges of climate change adaptation (Pelling 2011, Eriksen et al. 2015), as well as a brief overview of the Norwegian energy transition. The Norwegian energy sector is characterized by asymmetrical power relations between the different stakeholders that leave Sámi reindeer herders with little room for influencing developments impacting their livelihoods. The 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line project has not materialized in a vacuum, but is rather part of a number of projects that together exert a cumulative pressure on the reindeer herding districts Fiettar and Fálá. The power line project is also part of a political aim to expand the energy grid and contribute to electrification of petroleum production in order to lower greenhouse gas emissions (Meld. St. 13 2020-2021, Meld. St. 36 2020-2021). The historical context of Norwegian-Sámi relations contributes to understand the situation for Sámi rights today, as well as the relationship between the indigenous minority and the Norwegian majority community. The assimilation policies during the Norwegianization period from around 1800 reduced the speaking of Sámi languages, gradually subordinating Sámi peoples as a minority (Gaski 1997, Jernsletten 1997). As discussed in the thesis, reindeer herding plays a key role in safeguarding Sámi languages and facilitating for knowledge transfer. Today, Sámi reindeer herding is impacted by small and large land encroachments on pasturelands and migration routes. In Kvalsund, the reindeer herding districts are facing the possible development of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line and related infrastructure, the Nussir copper mine and the Barents Blue ammonium plant. The combined impacts of these encroachments will, according to my findings, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities both in terms of time and land use for traditional reindeer herding.

The thesis has also given a thorough account of how I have approached the project methodologically, ontologically and epistemologically. My data material has been collected using a triangulation of methods (Cope & Hay 2021), combining individual interviews, document analysis and participant observation. Using a complex case for this study, as well as attempting to contribute to a new theoretical field, has been challenging. Theoretically, the thesis has been informed largely by the environmental justice framework. Environmental justice studies have scaled up from its distributional roots providing a framework for North American activists to understand environmental impacts of social inequalities, to a broader



framework that is used globally (Schlosberg 2004, Gordon 2009). The main pillars or components of the EJ framework are distributive justice, recognition and participation. Distributive justice concerns how harms and benefits are distributed and experienced among individuals and communities (Kaswan 2021:22). Recognition, or lack thereof, may be a cause of distributive injustices (Schlosberg 2007). The ability to participate in and influence decision-making processes is at the core of procedural justice (Suiseeya 2021:38). Conceptions of justice and experiences of injustice can be experienced in numerous ways at once (Schlosberg 2007:73). The conflict over the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line can thus be understood as an environmental justice conflict. I have applied the components of the EJ framework as tools for analyzing the conflict over the Skaidi-Hammerfest power line, and the experiences of the reindeer herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts.

As shown in chapter 3, the environmental justice framework has several limitations that make it insufficient alone to analyze an indigenous context. One is epistemic limitations that may produce new or perpetuate existing injustices (Alvarez & Coolsaet 2020). Another limitation is focus on power asymmetries. Applying the environmental justice network in a Nordic Sámi context thus requires critically addressing epistemic justice and knowledge gaps in a justice framework (Temper 2019, Tornel 2022). Throughout the analysis and discussion, I have accounted for these limitations, while I know that they cannot be fully remedied. By studying the intersection of experiences of environmental injustice and power asymmetries, I have aimed for what Temper (2019) terms a decolonizing and transformative approach to environmental justice. Justice must include self-governing authority rather than simply participation; breaking down the dualism between humans and nature instead of redistributing nature, and epistemic justice that reaches beyond recognition (Temper 2019:104). The issue of self-governing authority is asserted in the Tråante Declaration (2017), stating that Sámi peoples must resolve the issues facing the Sámi community “(...) for us, based on our own terms, to be able to develop our society” (Saami Council 2017:1). Furthermore, the declaration argues that:

*To enable the Sami people to live in a responsible way and be able to celebrate the next one hundred years mercenary states in Sápmi must cease to impede our right to self-determination.*

(Saami Council 2017:1).

My findings bear implications for understandings of justice and injustice regarding land use conflicts in Sámi areas. As land is the primary resource for Sámi reindeer herding, and reindeer herding constitutes an important carrier of Sámi culture, access to land is key. Understanding and recognizing the importance of land is needed to produce more just outcomes in land use conflicts. As the different forms of injustice found in this study are interconnected, attempting to remedy one would not be adequate to address the full experience of injustices for the Sámi reindeer herders. A key implication for distributive justice is the experience of unequal distribution of risks onto Sámi reindeer herders in the green transition. Furthermore, my findings indicate that the cultural importance of Sámi reindeer herding is not adequately recognized by Norwegian authorities in so-called green developments, and thus represent a challenge of recognition. In addition, the reindeer herders' knowledges are kept out of the knowledge basis. The participants in this study experience a clear paradox in the green transition that for them represent a logical fallacy; destroying biodiversity and natural resources, in order to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Indigenous peoples have the right to effective participation in decision-making processes directly concerning them (ILO 169, Strömberg et al. 2021). My findings indicate that participation is limited to consultation, which is consistent with other land use conflicts in Sámi areas (Ellingsen 2020, Fjellheim 2023). This contributes to reproducing knowledge gaps at the national authority level, as well as for developers. In theory, decision making processes around industrial development opens for all impacted stakeholders to participate. Yet the ability stakeholders have for effective participation depends on whether those in power recognize their interests and knowledges. If Sámi reindeer herders were to have an effective right to give their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) on development projects directly concerning them, the outcomes would have fewer power asymmetries. Being able to give or withdraw consent is fundamentally different from taking part in consultations with decision-makers who makes the final conclusion (Ravna 2020). Implementing the concept of FPIC better into Norwegian law could mitigate the experiences of participatory injustice that Sámi individuals and communities have. Decision-making processes do not suffer from a lack of knowledge. Rather, I find that Sámi knowledges are willfully kept out of decision-making. In other words, I argue that the authorities understand how important access to land is for Sámi culture is, but it is either not worried about sufficiently, or it is not considered as important as other aspects of socio-economic development.

The development of renewable energy infrastructure in Sámi areas depend to some degree on continually transforming processes of accumulation, particularly processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2004). A key part of processes of accumulation by dispossession is the commodification of nature. In Norway, the national authorities take on multiple (and sometimes contradictory) roles in the governance of Sámi areas; granting access to use land and resources, safeguarding Sámi livelihoods and culture and ensuring that Norway fulfills its climate targets. In this capacity, they contribute to dispossessing Sámi reindeer herders of pasturelands. Recalling Annie's observation that the dispossession taking place now is "the same thing that has always happened in Sápmi", Harvey's argument that the 'new imperialism' appears as nothing more than a revisiting of the old in a different time and place (Harvey 2004:182), can contribute to understanding the experiences of green colonialism in Sápmi.

This thesis argues that Sámi perspectives are excluded from the green transition. If there is no effective inclusion in the decision-making, a pillar of democracy, namely trust, is lost. Based on my findings, I argue that the willful exclusion of Sami knowledges and worldviews leads to the exclusion of indigenous voices in the Norwegian energy transition. If Sámi land use and traditional knowledge about nature and management are systematically made invisible, the lack of trust between the broader Sámi community and Norwegian authorities will continue to grow. Furthermore, my participants express significant insecurity about the ability future generations have to continue reindeer herding. In Fiettar and Fálá, family *siidas* may have to discontinue herding or downscale the herd size below an economically sustainable level, depriving more people of the ability to practice traditional Sámi culture. This can lead to a continuation of the period of Norwegianization. Thus, the assimilation of Sámi people in Norway may not be something of the past, but an ongoing process entangled in processes of green colonialism today. The lack of trust also has historical roots in the period of Norwegianization. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, pending June 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, will hopefully provide much-needed public attention on historical injustices and how they continue to have impacts today. Whether the report will eventually lead to reconciliation is uncertain. Nevertheless, the report provides a chance for continued research on how Sámi individuals and communities' experiences with Norwegianization (NRK 22.05.2023). How the report is received by both authorities and the wider majority community will no doubt influence the level of trust in Sámi-Norwegian relations. There is a need for decolonizing Norwegian

knowledge, political and social life, to mitigate the inherited impacts from the Norwegianization period.

Can there be justice through recognition of cultural difference, if the “rules of the game” are not changed? The central conclusion of this thesis is that the land use conflicts in the green transition in Sámi areas represent a continuation of colonial processes, that can be understood as colonialism “dressed up” or reinvented with green justifications. This expression of colonialism takes place despite legal recognition of Norway’s responsibility to protect Sámi traditional culture and use of language. As shown in chapters 5 and 6, traditional reindeer herding is a crucial part of safeguarding Sámi culture through the use of language and knowledges transferred between generations. I argue that these perspectives are made invisible in the green transition.

Finally, at the theoretical level, this thesis contributes to the development of the concept of green colonialism by applying it to a land use conflict where power asymmetries between the Sámi community and Norwegian authorities exacerbate vulnerabilities experienced by reindeer herders from so-called green developments and climate change. I suggest that green colonialism can both be (i) an activist term useful for describing the experiences of Sámi reindeer herders with encroachments taking place without their consent and motivated by a broader political purpose from the Norwegian authorities, and (ii) an analytical category that can be applied to understand land use conflicts in indigenous areas. As an analytical category, I analyze green colonialism as the paradox of the green transition, characterized by unequal distribution of risks, superficial recognition of indigenous knowledges and experiences, and limited participation in decision-making processes concerning indigenous land. Thus, green colonialism may be used as an analytical tool for exploring the power asymmetries dominating the relationship between national authorities and indigenous peoples, that contribute to shift the costs of the green transition onto indigenous peoples.

This study has used the specific case of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line and the situation in two reindeer herding districts, yet the findings can have implications for other land use conflicts both in Sápmi and other indigenous areas. Expressions of green colonialism, in particular from energy production and infrastructure, dispossess Sámi people of access to their traditional lands (Jåma 2023). Lack of recognition and unequal capacity for effective participation in decision-making processes are, as previously discussed, not a situation unique for the Fiettar and Fálá districts. There are ongoing conflicts over so-called green developments both on the Norwegian and Swedish side of Sápmi. In particular this relates to the construction

of wind turbines and power lines on the Norwegian side, and mineral extraction on the Swedish side. A common denominator in these conflicts is the lacking recognition of both Sámi land use, and the structural ignorance of Sámi knowledges in environmental impact assessments. Norwegian authorities thus have a responsibility to safeguard the ability Sámi people have to participate in and influencing decision-making processes in Sámi areas. Beyond Sápmi, Chile offers an interesting example, where the indigenous Mapuche people are struggling against hydropower development in the river Pilmaiquén. The hydropower plant is owned by the Norwegian state-owned enterprise Statkraft. The Mapuche are demanding Statkraft shut down operations, and stop what they call “a new colonization” of their areas through green projects (VG 05.05.2023).

### **Agenda for further research**

Previous studies on impacts on reindeer herding from energy infrastructure are few, and does not take the social and cultural implications into full consideration. Research in human geography has a clear potential for meaningful contributions on land encroachments in Sámi areas, in the context of the green transition.

- One such area of research is critical research on the cumulative effects of historic, present and future land encroachments. This loss of indigenous land is exacerbated by impacts of climate change. Research at the intersection of physical and social impacts of climate change and adaptation processes are therefore needed.
- Further research needs to ask how indigenous knowledges are being included (or not) in impact assessment processes, and subsequently decision-making (Kelly 2019). A stronger focus on power asymmetries, highlighting voices of resistance and indigenous forms of knowledge to strengthen the cause of indigenous groups. Human geographical research can contribute to unsettling such power asymmetries.
- Research on indigenous land loss in the green transition also represents an opportunity for further decolonizing geographical knowledges. This suggests the need to make changes in the geographical knowledges that are being taught, and a need for critically view power asymmetries in relation to colonial injustices. In addition, human geographers must continue to critically examine our own methodologies and place our knowledge.

## **Epilogue: what happens next?**

Writing about something that has yet to happen, or might never take place, is difficult. Whether the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line will be built depends on a political decision, namely whether the Hammerfest LNG power plant should be supplied with electric power from the mainland. It is difficult to say when the pending decision is to be made by OED, or to speculate what the decision will be. The outcome of the processes over the Nussir copper ore mine or the Barents Blue ammonium plant are not concluded either.

During the writing process, I have strived to consider what will happen in Kvalsund later on. The Fiettar and Fálá districts have demanded to continue formal consultations with OED, as they have not been able to reach an agreement. At the same time, Statnett has announced a tender competition for the construction of the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line and infrastructure. So-called pre-qualified contractors are invited to participate in the competition (Statnett 07.03.2023). This is announced before the ministry has formally decided whether Hammerfest LNG should be electrified. The leader in the Fiettar district, Nils Utsi, has expressed his disbelief. “This is not surprising. You start the construction process, before it [the decision] is formally concluded” (NRK 20.03.2023). Furthermore, he believes that the power line can become a “new Fosen conflict”, because the herders in the district fears that their human rights can be violated by the construction (NRK 02.03.2023). When I spoke with the lawyer representing the reindeer herders in Kvalsund, he suggested that Statnett is seemingly expecting to get concession. This would then entail expropriation of areas used for reindeer herding, or even prior intervention (*forhåndsiltredelse*), allowing construction to take place before the impacts and mitigating measures are finally processed.

The two parties in the Norwegian coalition government, the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) and the Center Party (Senterpartiet), have reached opposite decisions at their annual meetings about the electrification of Hammerfest LNG. The Labor Party has voted in favor of electrification and an expansion of the energy grid at their annual congress, while the Centre Party annual congress voted against electrification (NRK 05.05.2023). As discussed throughout the thesis, development conflicts in other Sámi areas contribute to the uncertainty about what will happen next. The unresolved tension in the Fosen conflict might make a license for constructing the 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line more unpopular in the public sphere, and contribute to protest. It is still likely that the power line will get a concession, with “mitigating measures” to protect the reindeer herding districts and biodiversity. No matter the

final outcome of the ongoing processes, the reindeer herders in the Fiettar and Fálá districts are facing substantial challenges for their continuation of traditional Sámi reindeer herding.

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## 9 Appendix

### Appendix I

#### **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet** *Green development or green colonialism - 420 power line in Sámi herding areas in Repparfjord*

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke 420-linjen Skaidi-Hammerfest i Repparfjord som et grønt utviklingsprosjekt. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

Målet med oppgaven er å undersøke erfaringene urfolk som er påvirket av grønne utviklingsprosjekter, for å forstå hvorfor disse kan oppleves som grønn kolonialisme. Prosjektet følger den foreslåtte 420-linjen fra Skaidi til Hammerfest i Riehpovuotna (Repparfjord) og opplevelsene til de påvirkede samiske reindriftsutøverne i Fiettar og Fálá-distriktene. Dette utforskes gjennom tre forskningsspørsmål:

Forskningsspørsmål:

1. Hvilke innvirkninger vil den planlagte 420-kV linjen ha på samiske reindriftsutøveres virksomhet i Fiettar og Fálá-distriktene, og hvordan kan dette sees sammen med andre utviklingsprosjekter i området?
2. Hvorfor opplever samiske samfunn utviklingen av såkalt grønn infrastruktur som et uttrykk for urettferdighet?
3. Hvordan bidrar beslutningsprosessene rundt utvikling i samiske områder til mangel på tillit?

Forskningsprosjektet er en masteroppgave i samfunnsgeografi ved Universitetet i Oslo. Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi (ISS) Universitetet i Oslo er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du delta i et individuelt intervju. Det vil ta deg ca. en time. Jeg vil ta lydopptak av samtalen vår og gjøre notater underveis. Dette blir lagret elektronisk.

#### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

#### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- De eneste som vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger er meg og min veileder.
- Personopplysningene vil lagres på UiO Lagringshotell som sikrer at ingen uvedkommende får adgang til opplysningene.

Jeg vil be om samtykke til at du kan gjenkjennes i den ferdige oppgaven. Gjenkjennelige opplysninger vil for eksempel være ditt navn, virke eller andre spesifikke opplysninger om din bakgrunn. Det er frivillig å samtykke. Dersom du ønsker å anonymiseres eller gir sensitive opplysninger vil jeg sørge for at du ikke kan gjenkjennes.

### **Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 31.12.2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med dine personopplysninger anonymiseres. Datamaterialet skal lagres ved UiO sitt Lagringshotell.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Oslo har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi. Hovedveileder Jemima Garcia-Godos: epost ([jemima.garcia-godos@sosgeo.uio.no](mailto:jemima.garcia-godos@sosgeo.uio.no)) eller telefon 22855293 / 48216138.
- Personvernombud ved Universitetet i Oslo, Roger Markgraf-Bye: epost ([roger.markgraf-bye@admin.uio.no](mailto:roger.markgraf-bye@admin.uio.no) / [personvernombud@uio.no](mailto:personvernombud@uio.no)) eller telefon 90822826.

## **Samtykkeerklæring**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Green development or green colonialism - 420 power line in Sámi herding areas in Repparfjord*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i individuelt intervju
- at opplysninger om meg publiseres slik at jeg kan gjenkjennes ved navn
- at mine personopplysninger lagres til 31.12.2023

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

## **Appendix II**

### **Interview guide**

#### 1 Background and information

- Participant and their background

#### 2 Sámi rights and reindeer herding

- Views on the value of nature: human-nature relations in Sámi and Norwegian majority culture
- Reindeer herding rights
- Reindeer herding in Sámi culture: language, knowledge, traditional livelihoods

#### 3 Green development: impacts on reindeer herding in Fiettar and Fálá

- 420 Skaidi-Hammerfest power line
- Nussir copper mine
- Barents Blue
- Impacts for reindeer herding in Fiettar and Fálá:
  - Pasturelands, calving, migration pastures

- Economic, human and cultural impacts
- Personal and political experiences with power relations in decision-making processes around encroachments in Kvalsund or other Sámi areas
  - Who holds power

#### 4 Piece-by-piece-politics and development projects

- Thoughts on “green” projects
- Characteristics of development projects in Sápmi generally
- Impacts for reindeer herding: green projects in general
- Green colonialism as a concept
- Piece-by-piece loss of land
- Relationship between Sámi land rights and development for the majority
- Fosen verdict: influence on other conflicts
- Mitigating measures
- Personal / political experiences with Norwegian authorities
  - How are Sámi perspectives included
  - Contact between stakeholders

#### 5 Climate change and knowledge

- Climate change impacts on Sámi reindeer herding
- Resource extraction in Norway and Northern Norway in particular
  - Motivations
- Green transition and social justice
- Recognition of Sámi knowledges about nature, climate change and reindeer herding
- Considerations of knowledge in conflicts and governance