

The Importance of Resistance

A Study of the Saami Resistance Movement Against the
Swedish Mining Industry

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Abstract

This study examines the importance of resistance in the context of political change through a presentation and discussion of the Saami resistance movement. The study was conducted by using methods such as literature review, semi-structural interviews and qualitative data analysis. In order to stress the relevance for environmental science the study is based on the aim to present how the movement is acknowledging environmental issues and consequences connected to mining. Further, the study provides an insight in the legal framework regulating the mining industry and how, by various form of resistance, the movement is criticising these regulations and advocates for changes in the environmental law, as well as the mineral law. In this era of time, where the political agenda concerning how to limit climate change is of great relevance, this study shows an alternative perspective in how to perceive Sweden's extraction of finite natural resources and the state's exploitation of valuable nature. Thus, the Saami's resistance against an increasing mining industry is significant as it identifies the conflicts and shortcomings within the legal framework and, therefore provides an insight of the importance of resistance in order to reach political change. Finally, this paper provides a cross-disciplinary perspective to these issues as it shows how the Swedish state's ignorance of human- and indigenous rights stands in direct relation to the political failure to reach the country's environmental imperative and a sustainable development.

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1. Introduction

Parts of the world are now in an era where the first consequences of climate change are experienced. This era in time is crucial as political leaders now have the possibility to act and consequently limit climate change to a non-disastrous level (IPCC, 2014). Today's environmental politics and law are the subjects of many conflicts and issues concerning priorities of industries, where industrial growth is often prioritised over environmental values. Hence, the political landscape calls for a new approach to how natural resources and the usage of them is perceived. Environmental related conflicts and issues of priorities, in this sense, ought to be based on a more holistic and sustainable long-term perspective.

One industry that is in constant conflict with the political imperatives of the environment is the Swedish mining industry. The mining industry is considered to be one of the most important industries for the Swedish economy and employment today and thus, the national export of minerals needs to increase parallel to the international demand, argues Sweden's Mineral Strategy (2013). The mining industry is, however, connected to many environmentally degrading consequences as well as being an industry responsible for many conflicts in the political landscape. These conflicts are not only identified within the context of environmental issues but also within the discourse of national interests and human rights (Alarik 2014; Sametingets Gruvpolicy 2014; Splitz & Trudinger 2008).

The mining industry poses a great threat to the valuable- and sensitive ecosystem and biodiversity of northern Sweden. The industry also neglects and stands in conflict with Sweden's indigenous people, the Saami's, right to land, cultural existence and the Saami's unique way and knowledge of how to sustainably live off, and with, nature (Sametingets Gruvpolicy 2014). It is in the context of these threats and conflicts that a resistance movement has grown strong. The movement are raising awareness to environmental issues and the discrimination of human rights through various forms of resistance and advocates for protection from further industrial encroachments on traditional Saami land (Lawrence 2014). Various forms of public resistance have changed the course of our history many times, and to this day resistance movements are important factors when setting the political agenda and raising awareness to environmental issues and injustices around the world (Carter 2007).

Mining activity equals a great intrusion in the nature, and the breadth of the industry means that its effects will be felt in water, air, and biodiversity, and thus makes mining one of the most harmful industries within the context of irreversible environmental damage. Therefore its consequences cannot be measured solely by the area of the land the mine consumes but these consequences need to be assessed and put in a perspective of a combined circle of consequences, where the ecological sphere affects the economic- as well as the social sphere (Splitz &

Trudinger 2008). Thus, as the posing threat of climate change calls for urgent political action in order to prevent the most disastrous level of climate related consequences from becoming reality, the current environmental issues needs to be addressed from a cross-disciplinary perspective (IPCC 2014). In other words, these issues and spheres cannot be separated from each other. In terms of relevance for environmental science, this study of the Saami resistance movement provides an alternative perspective of how to perceive and solve the lack of these intertwined components within the political landscape of environmental issues today.

From a Saami perspective all questions are environmental questions – since the environment affects all aspects of our life and our surroundings (Eallinbiras 2009:1) [Translation by the author].

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Mining Industry

Sweden is internationally perceived as an attractive country for mining investments due to its favourable law on mineral extraction and its advanced infrastructure (Sveriges mineralstrategi 2013). This favourable law and, increased demand for iron ore combined with an increased market price has resulted in an advanced prospecting for mineral extraction in Sweden. Because of these attractive conditions, Sweden today answers for 80-90% of the total production of iron ore in Europe, and is one of the most important exporters of minerals and metals (SveMin 2012). Thus, this industry has the potential of being one of the major future industries in Sweden. In order to reach this future potential, Sweden has decided to increase its mineral production three times over by 2025. Today, Sweden has 17 mines in production and to reach its goal the country's aim is to have 30 mines in production by 2020 and finally 50 by 2030 (Alarik 2014; Bergsstaten 2015; SveMin 2012).

The opportunities of this expansion is argued to exist mainly within the extraction of iron ore, which is a mineral that is to be found mostly in the northern parts of Sweden (SveMin 2012). It is also within in these lands that the majority of the mining industry has been active since the end of the 19th Century (Sjölander 2014). The lands for mineral extraction are, to a great extent, designated within the indigenous people of Sweden, the Saamis, traditional land – Sápmi. The Saami's have lived with, and off, these lands for thousands of years through traditional industries based on sustainable usage of natural resources, such as reindeer husbandry, fishing and hunting.

1.1.2 Increased pressure on the Saami Population

The Saami people have lived with colonialism, industrial encroachments and environmental destruction of their traditional lands for hundreds of years (Lundmark 2008). The collective pressure on the natural resources and lands of Sápmi has continued to increase, especially during the lasts decades through intensified forestry, wind power parks and mining (Lawrence 2014). This extensive increase of land acquisitions and encroachments together with the combined consequences from

these different industries is therefore posing a great threat to the Saami's cultural existence and their sustainable and traditional way of living (Lundmark 2008).

In the Swedish Constitution it is acknowledged that the Saami's possibility to preserve and develop their cultural- and social life shall be promoted (1974:152). However, as Lawrence (2014) acknowledges, Saami communities lack influence and an official role within the negotiations and juridical process of the establishment of a mining operation. In this sense, Saami's have no juridical right to their traditional lands and consequently the possibilities of maintaining and developing their social- and cultural life have systematically decreased. Due to this political and legal discrimination of human- and indigenous peoples rights, Sweden has become a subject for national- and international critique, that calls for Sweden to ratify the international, legally binding Convention of Indigenous and Tribal people, ILO 169, adopted by the International Labour Organization, ILO (PRO 169, 2009). The ratification of ILO 169 plays a major role in the resistance movement, since it would legally acknowledge the Saami peoples right to self-determination and autonomy over their traditional lands, and the usage of natural resources.

1.1.3 Sweden's Political Imperatives Concerning the Environment

The key elements of Sweden's current environmental politics- and work are to a great extent represented by the Environmental Objectives. These objectives are divided into 16 environmental objectives and one generation objective, comprising areas like Limited Climate Change, Sustainable Usage of Land- and Water Resources and A Magnificent Mountain Landscape. This way of structuring Sweden's environmental work is based on the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), signed by Sweden in 1993. The aim is to reach all these objectives by 2020, however, at this point only the objective of a Protective Ozone Layer is estimated to be reached (Naturvårdsverket 2015a; Prop 2013/14:141).

The Swedish Government (2014) acknowledges climate change to be one of the greatest challenges the world is currently facing and, therefore the climate is of highest political priority within Sweden's environmental work. A prerequisite and a crucial imperative to constructively work to limit climate change is argued to be an "ambitions and integrated climate and energy policy, both internationally, in Europe and in Sweden" (Miljö- och energidepartementet 2014).

The Department of Environment- and Energy (2015) notes that, the objective of a sustainable development is a superior principle and imperative that ought to permeate all political work in Sweden. The Swedish government has embraced the international definition of sustainable development and thus argues for a development founded in the needs of the Swedish population, however not at the expense of future generations.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this paper is to study the importance and role of the Saami resistance movement against the mining industry through an environmental perspective. The

study therefore aims to highlight the complexity and the conflicts within the mining industry in relation to environmental issues and how the resistance movement is, and has been responding to this.

To reach an answer to the above stated purpose and aim of this paper, the following research questions has been formulated:

- What complexities and conflicts are to be found within the mining industry in the context of environmental issues?
- How is the resistance movement addressing the harm the mining industry is causing to the environment?
- To what extent can the resistance movement create political change in the conflict between the environment and industry?

1.3 Limitations

As mentioned above, the collective pressures on the Saami population and the traditional lands of Sápmi needs to be put in a historical perspective where aspects of colonialism and marginalization are addressed. The conflict of the Saami's intrinsic right to the natural resources of Sápmi and the frustration leading to a growing resistance movement, can therefore not solely be explained by the new incentives for an increased mining industry, however due to limited time and space this part of the conflict could not be further researched. Therefore, additional studies could further look into this conflict through a historic, as well as modern perspective of colonialism.

1.4 Layout of the Paper

In the paper's second chapter it is presented what methods was used to conduct this study and a brief mentioning of the limitations to this paper. This is followed by a presentation of the results in different sections divided in subjects identified by the author in order for the reader to understand the areas of conflict in the study of the Saami resistance movement against mining. There after follows a discussion based on the presented result in relation to the purpose and research questions of this study. Finally, a conclusion of the major findings in this study is made with a connection to the relevance for environmental science.

2. Method

Three methods have been used to conduct this research study of the Saami resistance movement against the mining industry in Sweden. These three methods have been chosen with the aim to reach a socially, politically and scientifically just presentation of this conflict.

2.1 Literature Review

The first and most central method used is a literature review method. As Kelly (2011) notes, it is important that a literature review method is not used to justify and find answers to your research questions. Rather than starting the research with formulating research questions, the research for this study therefore started with an idea. From the collected literature and from the information gathered, a problem could be identified, and finally questions were shaped and reshaped during the process of reviewing the collected literature.

Thus, the method of literature review has helped the process of shaping the research questions, the process of collecting background information, in the presentation of my result and, to analyse and discuss the result of my literature findings in relation to the empirical material collected in interviews (Kelley 2011). The literature chosen as a foundation for the research and the review are theoretical books, theoretical- and peer reviewed articles as well as relevant articles from newspapers and other media coverage. Political documents and publications such as conventions, laws and declarations from both governmental agencies, as well as from actors of the resistance movement, have played an important role in trying to identify the different parts of the conflict.

The literature material was found through the databases of Lund's University, Google and Google Scholar, The Swedish Government, The Environmental Protection Agency, the UN, Sametinget, Urbergsgruppen, The Saami Council and IPCC using search terms as "Saami", "Resistance", "Movement", "Environment", "Mining", "Sweden", "Sustainability", "Political Change", "Industry", "Law", "Indigenous people" and "Human rights".

As the reader will understand, the result is presented by themes that have been drawn from reviewing literature connected to different actors of the resistance movement. This data has furthermore been reviewed in relation to political documents which comprised incentives and regulations for the mining industry. The themes identified were environmental issues connected to mining, the legal framework, conflicts of interests and the objective of sustainability. By summarising the literature collected from these actor's web pages, debate articles, press releases

and policy documents, the summary and additional literature could later be engaged in a way that made common themes, arguments, language and approaches to how the resistance movement express environmental concerns connected to the mining industry, familiar and more recognizable (Kelly 2011). In other words, by engaging the data collected in this way, themes of what political problems the movement identified within the issue of mining and the importance of resistance to acknowledge these problems, became visible and thus made it easier to structure the layout of this paper.

2.2 Semi-Structural Interviews

Since the literature material might vary in its scientific relevance due to many newspaper articles and other media coverage on the movement, an additional method was chosen to make the research more qualitative and also to add a more empirical relevance and analysis to the research (Kelley 2011; Roulston 2014). Thus, the second method used is semi-structured interviews with people that are, in different ways, involved with varied forms of resistance against the Swedish mining industry. To conduct interviews with people involved in the resistance in different ways was a conscious choice with the aim to reach a more diversified picture of the objectives, the role and importance of the movement.

All interviews was conducted in Swedish and, therefore the quotes in this paper are translated by the author. The interviews took a conversational character, however aligned to my research- and sub questions (Roulston 2014). The interviews were therefore circulating subjects like the role of public resistance, the environmental- and political issues of mining operations and the importance and varied ways of how to acknowledge these concerns. Although secondary to its extent, it could be argued that the semi-structural interviews still played a crucial role in this study concerning the range of resistance in term of reaching political change. As the total impact of resistance in relation to changing the political agenda can be hard to measure, the interviews thus provided a unique insight to how the public opinion and the political debate concerning the conflict of mining has changed due to resistance (Cater 2009).

A brief presentation of the people interviewed and their background and engagement in the resistance movement together with the questions that worked as a foundation while conducting the interviews, is to be found in Appendix 1.

2.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

To analyse and discuss the presented results, the method of qualitative data analysis was used (Onwuegbuzie et.al 2011). When looking at the result, specific themes and/or patterns within the resistance movement and the arguments used against mining were determined. These themes and patterns are what represent the discussion, where the major points identified in this context was related to the purpose and research questions of this paper. In other words, the presentation of how the movement acknowledges environmental issues and what arguments the movement are using to do so, led to an analysis and discussion of what role the movement plays in terms of creating public awareness of the issue and to what

extent it has, or can, can create political change in the conflict between the mining industry and environment.

2.4 Limitations of the Study

I want to emphasise that a major foundation to the culmination of the Saami resistance movement is rooted in the hundreds of years of colonialism, forced assimilations and other forms of systematic ignorance and violations by the state towards the Saami population. Due to lack of time, material and space for conducting this study - the conflicts within the Swedish mining industry as it is presented in this study lacks insight, analysis and presentation of how these conflicts are connected to the former and present forms of colonialism. However, they aspects are deeply connected and I therefore want urge the reader to have this in mind when continuing reading.

Finally I want to state that I, as the author of this paper, am not a part of the Saami population or of any other indigenous people and, therefore I cannot truly understand nor capture the depth or complexity of this conflict. Hence, this study should not be viewed as a complete or accurate presentation of the Saami resistance movement, but simply as an attempt to objectively present the importance of resistance in the political landscape concerning the mining industry and its effects on the environment.

3. Result

3.1 Environmental Consequences of Mining

The mining industry is connected to a wide range of environmental consequences, not only the encroachments and land accusations of unique and viable nature, but mining also often equals negative climate impacts due to fossil dependent transports and insufficient extraction methods. However, two of the most harmful and acknowledged consequences are waste landfills and the leakage of toxic substances and minerals to surrounding nature, creating acidification to water sources and lakes (Alarik 2014; Splitz & Trudinger 2008).

Today the mining industry results in the highest waste production in Sweden, creating a growing number of large landfills and mining ponds containing heavy metals and hazardous toxics. If these landfills and ponds were to break it would create a natural disaster and thus these deposits of waste products pose a great threat to both humans and the environment surrounding current and past mining industries (Alarik 2014).

Splitz and Trudinger (2008) argue, that the range of environmental concerns is hard to determine since the range is not only wide and varied, but most importantly “mine-induced change processes may occur in almost any environmental component. It is this recognition that is important rather than any attempt to present a complete picture of all potential environmental concerns” (Splitz & Trudinger 2008: 526).

In Sweden, multiple mining operations have had irreversible and comprehensive environmental consequences. Blaiken, Svärträsk and Ersmarksberget are examples where hazardous substances and heavy metals has leaked and consequently causing environmental harm to surrounding watercourses. The companies' responsible declared themselves bankrupt with the inadequate economic resource of 3 million SEK to pay for sanitation, thus leaving the total sanitation cost, estimated at 200 million SEK, to be paid by taxpayers (Müller 2012; Nordmark & Hjertström 2013).

Another Swedish operation of iron ore mining outside Pajala, conducted by the Canadian company Northland Resources, was recently also declared bankrupt with debts equal to 14 billion SEK (Lundin 2015). This mining operation has been a subject of a wide range of critique, not only for the company's debt but also for deficient environmental assessments and irreversible drainage of groundwater levels, affecting 60 hectares of protected and valuable nature in areas surrounding the mining operation (Kejonen 2014; Vallgård 2015).

3.1.1 Environmental Issues Acknowledged by the Resistance Movement

In the context of how the resistance movement highlights environmental issues, Tor Lundgren Tuorda argues that the environmental harm caused by the industry “is the most serious threat” today, but above all it poses a tremendous threat for the future. Tuorda is here referring to the landfills and mining ponds mentioned above where he notes that these dams are not “substantially built to stand still for 100s of years”. Rather, these dams are built in a rush and constructed “bit by bit as the company expands which means that the core of these dams are very weak and fragile”. Hence, Tuorda continues, if the weather conditions become extreme, for example causing floods from unrelenting rain, these dams “will burst, and create an environmental disaster. Maybe not in ten years, but in 110 or 1010, and the people who live then, it are those who are left to pay this environmental debt, this short-term rampage”. Therefore, Tuorda argues, it is these environmental issues and the unsustainable preferences the mining industry represent that the resistance movement is trying to highlight above all (Interview Tor Lundgren Tuorda).

The art-exhibition “If the Mine Comes” is a touring exhibition put together by different non-profit actors of the resistance movement, such as Urbergsgruppen, Stop the Mine in Rönnebäcken, A mine Free Jokkmokk and more. The exhibition moves around in different communities in Sweden that have been a subject for the consequences of mining and those communities that might be. To illustrate the range of environmental concerns, the exhibition is describing past examples, from Sweden and Finland, of where landfills and waste ponds have wrecked and where life in the affected water has become extinct due to contamination. The exhibition also describes the current legal conditions of the planned mines in Jokkmokk and Rönnebäcken, the two mines where the resistance movements have been highly present, and what natural-and cultural values these mines threatens to erupt (Om gruvan kommer 2015).

The environmental questions are also a damn important question but it is connected to the questions of human rights [...]. Indigenous people are handling the nature without tearing on it, they are a living example of how you can do to survive in these areas without destroying the conditions (Interview Tor Lundberg Trouda).

Sara Lathinen argues, in the context of the above mining examples in Pajala and Blaiken, that the environmental risks of mining have always been known. However as these examples shows, the current mining industry is additionally no longer social, nor economically sustainable, hence a new perspective in how this industry are perceived is needed (Interview Sara Lathinen). The Saami Parliament’s mineral policy (2014) argues for a moratorium for all exploitation in Sápmi until the Saami’s rights are truly acknowledged and respected, through the ratifying of ILO 169 and the Nordic Sami convention. The following list, presented in Saami Parliament’s Mineral Policy (2014), acknowledges the Saami’s alternative point of view in how the land and water resources in Sápmi shall be used and what conditions are to be recognised and respected before any mineral extraction takes place:

- Especially valuable areas for our culture and industries are to be protected against encroachment and disturbances
- All activities are sustainable and are conducted through the pre-cautionary principle

- careful and sustainable usage are to be materialized
- no further large-scale exploitation should occur
- the collected usage of natural resources within the Saamis traditional living area is in harmony with those ecological systems in which the industries are conducted (since sustainable reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, catch and farming presupposes a long-term usage of the nature's resources)
- utilization and exploitation of land and water resources does not further deplete the Sami industries' needs (Sametingets Mineralpolicy 2014: 5) [Translation by the author].

3.2 Sweden's Mineral Industry and Politics

The Mineral Law and politics in Sweden has been criticized from many directions, not only in media coverage but also repeatedly from the UN and various actors from the resistance movement (Sametinget 2015), (Lawrence 2014). The criticism directed towards Sweden involves discrimination of human rights, in this sense the Saami's right to self-determination of resource exploitation on the Saami's traditional land Sápmi. Embedded in the critique is also the aspect of democracy, as the Saami's today lack direct and significant involvement within the process of starting a mine is also (from prospecting to mining) (CERD 2008; Sametingets gruvpolicy 2012; SGU 2013).

This criticism and conflict between Saami's self-determination over natural resources and conflicting industries has many roots in the debate concerning national interests. Because of its important role in the national and international economy, the mining industry is considered to be of national interest, which means that this industry is a subject for exceptions and priorities next to other industries and activities, within laws in general but within environmental law in particular (1998:808; Alarik 2014; Sveriges mineralstrategi 2013;). The reindeer breeding industry is however, also acknowledged as a national interest, and the Samis right to manage this industry is recognized in both the Swedish constitution (1974:152, 2: 17§) as well as in the Reindeer Industry Act (1971: 437). According to the environmental law (1998:808) and the mineral strategy (2013) a conflict between national interests should be prioritised as follows:

If an area is of national interest for multiple incompatible purposes, preference is given to the one purpose, or purposes, who would in a most appropriate way promote long-term sustainability [Translation by the author], (Sveriges mineralstrategi 2013: 19).

However, it is important to note is that preference is almost never given to the reindeer breeding industry in the context of conflicting national interests, but rather to the industry of mining, which would suggest a conflict between the Mineral Law, Sweden's Mineral Strategy and the Environmental Law (Alarik 2014).

3.2.1 The Mineral- and Environmental Law

The Mineral law comprises Sweden's concession material, i.e. natural resources like metals and minerals for industrial use, and its purpose is to ease the extraction of

natural resources from the bedrock (Bergsstaten 2015). The purpose, to ease this extraction of finite natural resources, is something frequently criticised by actors of the resistance movement (Nätverket Stoppa gruvan I Rönnbäck 2015; Om Gruvan Kommer 2015; Sametingets Mineralpolicy 2014). As Tor Lundberg Toruda, director in Uberggruppen Jokkmokk, argues:

...these resources that you exploit are finite resources, but it is like [the mining companies thinks that] these mines will refill from some damn asteroid from outer space that will hit [the ground] right there in the pit, full of iron ore and fill up the depots. But these resources, when they are consumed then its over, then they are gone. So that's no sustainability, that's no economy. That's madness.

The Mineral Law and the Environmental Law are however two different laws as the main purpose of the Environmental law are to:

[...] to promote sustainable development so that present and future generations are ensured a healthy and good environment. Such development is based on the insight that nature is worthy of protection and that man's right to modify and exploit nature carries with it a responsibility of careful management of natural resources (1998:808, 1:1§) [Translation by the Author].

In the context of the Swedish mining industry these two laws are implemented parallel to each other. This means that in order to get permission for starting a mine, the company's Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA, needs to be tested against the Environmental Law and the Planning- and Building Act (PBL). This process is what the Government and the Swedish Mineral Strategy (2013) refers to when they argue for how strong and distinct the environmental law is in the context of the mining industry. It is important to note however, that Sweden's regulations and laws are considered to be one of the most industrial friendly in the world (Fraser Institute 2013). Thus, the legal system regulating the mining industry have become a subject for criticism, from both the resistance movement as well as from other actors and instances such as universities, media and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, SSNC (2014), (Fagerlind and Sundkvist 2015; Hjortfors et.al 2015; Sametingets Mineral Policy 2014).

The process from prospecting to start a mining operation is today divided into four parts; exploration permits, exploration mining, mining concession and permit for mining operations. Exploration permits and mining concessions can be assigned to the mining company against the landowners will, although these operations can equal great acquisitions and encroachments of the land in question. In terms of environmental concerns connected to mining, it is not until the two final steps of the process that the operation is tested against the environmental law. Important to emphasize in this step of the process is that the EIA needed for mining concession is tested by the responsible Administrative Board, however only against the third and fourth chapters concerning national interest in the environmental law. A comprehensive EIA, tested against all chapters in the environmental law by the Environmental Court, is on the other hand, only needed before the final permit for starting a mining operation (SGU 2013).

As mentioned above, interests that promote a long-term sustainable use of resources are given preference, however due to derogations in the environmental law, mineral

resources of national interest shall, as far as possible, not be prevented from industrial use (1998:808, 3:7, 10§§; Alarik 2014). Different actors of the resistance movement such as Urbergsgruppen, The Saami Parliament, The Network Stop the Mine in Rönnebäcken, The Colonies and several Saami villages are therefore criticising the current environmental law and the mineral law to be too vague and for not operating strongly and distinctly towards a sustainable future.

3.2.2 Sweden's Mineral Strategy

In 2013 the new mineral strategy for Sweden was released. The foundation of the report is argued to be based on a sustainable use of Sweden's mineral assets with the imperative of creating economic growth throughout the country. This is the document that presents the strategy of how to increase the Swedish mining industry three fold by 2020. The former minister of Industry and Trade, Annie Lööf argues that Sweden is a country with a strong and distinct environmental law and that an expansion of the mineral industry needs to occur parallel with the environment and surrounding industries. To reach this balance, the mineral strategy suggests an increased dialogue with affected industries, such as deer herding, hunting and fishing. This dialog needs to occur during the process of developing mining permits, with the aim for these conflicting industries to exist in synergy with each other. (Sveriges Mineralstrategi 2013).

Throughout the mineral strategy the consonance between increased exploitation and the environment is highly emphasized. The increased mineral extraction calls for an increased protection of the environment based on the ambition to reach the environmental goals such as an environment free from toxics, limited climate impact and healthy groundwater (Alarik 2015; Sveriges Mineralstrategi 2013). However, incentives to reach these challenges are not described in the strategy, and notably, this consonance is something that ought to be considered during the process, but nothing that has to be by law (Sveriges Mineralstrategi 2013: 22).

3.2.3 Resistance Against the Legal Framework

The association Urbergsgruppen (Bedrock Group) is a coalition of several local groups like "A Mine Free Jokkmokk", "Stop the Mine in Rönnebäcken" and "Save the Ojnare Forrest", who all are a part of the resistance against unsustainable mining. The association is a way to fund actions, manifestation, demonstrations and travels, but it also functions as a referral organisation that comes with advice opinions to propositions, political strategies and so forth. In other words, Urbergsgruppen is a tool for the resistance movement to penetrate the political landscape and to affect the political agenda of the mining industry. Sara Lathinen, one of the directors of Urbergsgruppen, is involved with manifestations arranged at Riksbron, outside the Swedish parliament, every Thursday. These manifestations have been present there for over one and a half year where Lathinen and other engaged people from the resistance movement distribute flyers and other information about the conflicts and issues connected to mining. Lathinen has been politically active in questions concerning environmental issues and indigenous rights for a long time. Today she works as a director in the association Urbergsgruppen and she argues:

The purpose of everything is for people to pay attention to these questions whatsoever and, for the politicians not to forget how important these questions are. And I see Urbergsgruppen as a bridge [...] between this kind of work [non-parliamentary] and then what is profiled as a bit more established and a bit more classic political work – Sara Lathinen.

Urbergsgruppen turned in an opinion to the new Mineral Strategy (2013) where the associations concern regarding the environmental consequences of mining are clearly expressed. Urbergsgruppen works according to the principles expressed in the Brundtland report and in The Natural Step. The association promotes a sustainable society where nature is not systematically exposed to mineral and fossil extraction, increasing concentration of waste, natural degradation due to physical methods or a society based on misuse of economic and political power (Det Naturliga Steget 2015; Urbergsgruppen 2015). With these arguments and statements Urbergsgruppen argues against the ministry's aim to increase the extraction of finite minerals three fold by 2020, instead they want to see a decline and economizing of the mining industry and greater investments and strategies for recycling minerals and metals (Bothorp and Wanneby 2013).

Urbergsgruppen is also criticising the Mineral Strategy for not taking the environmental goals conducted by Sweden, the water directive and the art- and habitats directive, into account. These directives and environmental goals should have worked as a foundation when the Ministry of Industry prepared the strategy. Urbergsgruppen points out that if Sweden's aim was to reach these environmental goals by 2020, the strategy needed to be prepared in harmony with these goals.

The flaws within the legal system regulating mining has been identified by many different actors, however a final major argument in the Mineral Strategy (2013) is for the process of EIA's and environmental permissions to be more effective, more simple and faster in order to meet the new goal of an intensified mining industry (Alarik 2014; Sveriges Mineral Strategi 2013). Niila Inga is a member and a reindeer herder of the Saami village Laveans, he started a coalition project together with other associations and Saami villages that were against the increased mining industry. The aim of the project was to spread the message to the public, to politicians and departments of the heavy encroachments and consequences of mining industry on Saamis traditional land. Niila and his friend Matti travelled nation wide to reach out with this information, the coalition project evolved and Niila argues:

Well, the next step was first and foremost to bring about change of the mineral law and to change the politics. Because the government, or the former government, did have a mineral policy [the mineral strategy] that actually said "go on and dig up as much as possible, as fast as you can" and it was this we wanted to change. They [the mineral companies and the government] took shortcuts in every curve, trying to get all permits tested and approved as fast as possible. We thought they took too many shortcuts, and we think so even today (Interview Niila Inga).

3.3 A Conflict of National Interests

Within the mining industry and politics, an argument frequently used and illustrated by the Saami resistance movement through demonstrations, political advices, debate articles and alternative strategies, is the conflict of the legal priorities in context of national interests. The mineral industry is, nine out of ten times, prioritised as a national interest above others due to the legal derogations within the Mineral- and the Environmental Law (Alarik 2014; Bothorp and Wanneby 2013). As a reindeer herder Niila Inga is strongly engaged in this conflict of national interests, he argues:

They are very quick at SGU and Bergsstaten to acknowledge areas to national interest – mineral, but there are areas, for example here around Kiruna, where they [the national interests] are overlapped, where national interests of minerals, national interests of reindeer herding, national interests of the outdoors, tourism – I mean everything, are overlapped, layer on layer on layer. But still, from a perspective of sustainability, as it is interpreted in the environmental law, the mineral are prioritised. I cannot understand that equation (Interview Niila Inga).

The reindeer husbandry is an industry based on a sustainable use of natural resources and thus, a requirement for the husbandry to exist is that biodiversity and the unique and sensitive nature of northern Sweden are respected and cared for. As mentioned above, the reindeer breeding industry is protected in the Swedish constitution and further regulated through the Reindeer Act (1971:437). This industry constitutes an essential part of the Saami's cultural existence and is a symbol for the Saami's unique knowledge and way of living, which is based on a respect and reverence for this sensitive ecosystem and biodiversity (Honningsvåg Declaration 2004; SSR 2015). The Swedish Saami National Association, SSR, describes the Reindeer breeding industry's role in the following way:

The most central part of the Saami management of land and resources, and food production, is the reindeer herding. Reindeer husbandry is a social and cultural affinity and, the most important carrier of traditions and culture and, also the base for the Samis cultural language. Reindeer husbandry is a so-called multi-functional nutrition that throughout history have become a natural part of the ecosystem of woods and mountains, and is a prerequisite for preserving the character of grazed landscapes, diversity of plant communities and the balance between lichen and reindeer in the forest landscape (SSR 2015), [Translation of the Author].

Reindeer breeding and husbandry follows the same principles as traditional nomadic grazing, as the reindeer herds move through, and are dependent on, wide and shifting acres of land as they move according to the different seasons of the year. Because of its definition as a national interest, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has designated areas in the northern part of Sweden to the Reindeer breeding industry, outdoor life and tourism. However, as mineral extraction is also defined as a national interest, the Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU) additionally has designated areas in the mineral rich, northern part of Sweden, to the mining industry – hence, creating a legal conflict between existence and development of the two national interests (Alarik 2014).

From a perspective of environmental concerns and sustainability, the legal derogations that give the mining industry precedence against the reindeer herding industry is also conflicting with the art- and habitat directive, the Conservation of Biodiversity Convention and the 17 environmental goals conducted by Sweden, which all aim to be reached by 2020 (Naturvårdsverket 2015a). One of these environmental goals is “A Magnificent Mountain Landscape” and comprises the preservation and maintenance of the unique biodiversity and cultural- and natural values in the north of Sweden:

The mountains must have a high level of recreational value in terms of biological diversity, and natural- and cultural values. Activities in mountain areas must be conducted with regard to these values and promote sustainable development. Particularly valuable areas must be protected against encroachments and other disturbances (The Government's definition of the environmental goal A Magnificent Mountain Landscape, Naturvårdsverket 2015b), [Translation by the Author”].

This goal, as every other goal except one, will not be reached by 2020. The Saami Parliament's mineral policy (2014) argues, that the reindeer and the reindeer herding industry is a prerequisite to reach the goal of “A Magnificent Mountain Landscape”. As also argued by the Swedish Society for Natural Conservation (Alarik 2014), an increased mineral industry will not only aggravate the prospects of reaching this particular goal but also the environmental goals of a “Non-toxic Environment” and “Reduced Climate Impact” (Alarik 2014; Sametingets Gruvpolicy 2014).

The mining industry is not only prioritised over other national interest, but also over natural reserves, Natura 2000 areas, world natural heritages, biotope protection, bird sanctuaries and other areas acknowledged and protected for its unique nature and wildlife. The only area completely protected from the mining industry is National Parks (Bothorp and Wanneby 2013; Alarik 2014).

The question of precedence for different national interests is highly present in the movement's criticism towards the new mineral strategy (2013) and legal system that regulates the mining industry. Urbergsgruppen, Sametinget and other actors of the resistance enquires a more clear and distinct management of these conflicting industries from a long-term perspective. In the context of resistance in relation to political change Niila Inga argues:

Consequently, if that is the case, that no change occurs before you have to take drastic measures to protect your identity, your culture, your land, then that's the way it is. [...] I am more towards a diplomatic way, but when you find yourself in that position where there is no other way, then off course you do all that is in you power to stop [it]. Because for us it is about survival, I mean, it is that simple that if the reindeer don't have pastures then it starves and dies. Without the reindeer, that after all is the Saami cultural carrier, then we lose our culture, our identity, everything (Interview Niila Inga).

3.4 The Culmination of the Resistance

In the summer of 2013 Beuwolf Mining PLC got permission to start prospecting for an iron mine in an area outside of Jokkmokk, called Gállok (Kallak). A mine in this area would split the Saami village Jåhkågasska in two, it would rule out the reindeer herding industry, and consequently aggravate Jåhkågasska future existence and development. It was because of several examples of failed mining industries and international critique together with a frustration against the environmental destruction, the lack of local- and democratic influence within the mining politics and the ignorance of landowner- and indigenous rights that the resistance movement against mining culminated in Gallók that summer (Tuorda e.al 2013).

Niila Inga is a reindeer herder in the Saami village Laevas, which in 2012 also was threatened by conflicting mining operations, by the company Kiruna Mining AB and Scandinavia Resources. In the context of the future for the resistance movement in relation to the mining industry, Niila argues:

Well, the resistance movement will exist and it will grow stronger as long as it [the mining industry] proceeds in this extent. Because we [the Saamis] are actually in a kind of change, for one we are at the cutting edge in the context of land resources for the reindeer herding, we have the mineral industry, we have the infrastructure, it is wind power parks, it is forestry, it is climate change, it is predators, we are very pressed – that's one thing. And then there is this change, we have probably awoken the rage [...], we have illuminated the need for protest. We cannot longer stand with the hat in our hands and say thank you. I absolutely believe that the resistance will grow, and I believe, I hope that there will be a change in the Swedish law in how to handle mineral extraction in contrast to Saami interests (Interview Niila Inga).

The cultural and creative sphere created in Gallók, has together with demonstrations, manifestations and civil disobedience, been argued to be the climax of the resistance movement and, a symbol for the different struggles fought in Sápmi against the mining industry (Strid 2013). The people participated in the protest came from all over Sweden, it was a creative space where different cultures, artists and activists came together, built a camp, created barricades, music, poetry and art, with the aim of creating public and political awareness to the issue of mining, colonialism and environmental encroachments (Gállok Protest Art 2013). A common denominator for many of the active protestors was the opinion that the parliamentary way of change is not sufficient and does not respect either Saami's right to their land nor the environmental values of Sápmi (Kolonierna 2013).

Parliamentarism is there you know, it works in its own way and I think it needs a lot of complement because it has a weakness, and that is that it is very slow and needs pretty much consensus, which makes it hard to reach that progress that is really needed in some areas. And since I also think that the state, as all nation states - as a construction, are built on artificial and pretty destructive boundaries, and fundamentally colonialism, I think it becomes hard to work within that construction to change that relationship. So that's why I've chosen to work non-parliamentary, and also as an activist with different kinds of direct action but also demonstrations and such (Interview Sara Lahtinen).

In the context of what role the resistance has in terms of political change, Josefina Skerk, politician in the Saami Parliament argues:

I think it means almost everything. It is incredibly important that politicians as well as the civil society, activist and people around the coffee tables talk about this. Which is already happening, it is discussed all the time in all different contexts, and that is what becomes the change. If not all these parts [of resistance] exists and above all, if not the pressure from the people out in every day life exists, then there is no potential for change (Interview Josefina Skerk).

4. Discussion

4.1 Highlighting the Complexity and Conflicts within the Mining Industry

4.1.1 Environmental Issues

As stated in the introduction, the quote from Eallinbiras (2009); all issues are environmental issues from a Saami perspective as, access to a healthy environment is a prerequisite for the management and development of Saamis traditional industries and hence, a prerequisite for the Saamis cultural existence as a whole. Thus, the preservation and protection of the valuable, unique and viable nature of Sapmí is the foundation that permeates the resistance movement arguments against an increased mining industry in northern Sweden.

One of the most important and visible arguments used to state the significance of access to healthy land- and water resources is the reindeer husbandry. This traditional industry is therefore not only an important cultural carrier amongst the Saamis, but has also become a symbol for the vast and viable nature Sapmí upholds. Additionally the reindeer industry also exemplifies an alternative, long-term, ecological and sustainable industry next to the short-term and environmentally harmful mineral extraction. Embedded in this cultural carrier is also the unique knowledge the Saamis possesses of how to live and to sustain industries in harmony with the ecological conditions of northern Sweden. Thus, as argued in Honningsvågs Declaration (2004), it is not only the natural values that are threatened by an increasing mining industry but also important knowledge that could help shape the political incentives needed to reach the ecological imperatives stated by Sweden.

The criticism and arguments brought up by the resistance movement towards the environmental issues connected to mining is furthermore emphasized through the demand for the Swedish government to ratify ILO 169. The ratifying of this legally binding convention would give the Saami population the right to self-determination and autonomy over natural resource exploitation in Sápmi (Sametingets Gruvpolicy 2014). An acknowledgement of indigenous rights in this context would therefore allow for an alternative perspective of industrial encroachments to flourish, where a long-term, sustainable management of the natural resources in Sápmi would have priority over the short-term rampage, as expressed by Tor Lungberg Tuorda, which equals the mining industry. An alternative approach of how to perceive and develop an industry not based on finite resources and environmental harmful methods is thus, one of many important things expressed within Saami Parliament's Mining Policy (2014), which aim is to influence the political landscape of the mining industry.

The environmental issues connected to mining has been expressed by the resistance movement through parliamentary methods, as opinions, alternative mineral policy's,

appeals to the UN and responsible instances, but also through non-parliamentary means such as demonstrations, manifestations, lectures, civil disobedience and art, and music installations. These combined and varied forms of resistance together with the perseverance and presence of the movement, in all these different channels, has truly intensified and acknowledged the conflict and complexity concerning the different issues connected to mining. With sustainability as a lead star the movement has during the past years reached recognition in media, the political landscape as well as public opinion (Alarik 2014; Müller 2014; Om Gruvan Kommer 2015).

4.1.2 Regulations

The legal system regulating the mineral industry and the vision for the future mining expansion i.e the Swedish Mineral Strategy (2013) is, as presented, giving precedence to mining operations, both in an environmental context, as well as in the context of national interest. This structural ignorance of the Saami's rights means that the mining industry and the legal framework are in direct conflict with the interests of the Saami people and thus as argued above, poses a threat to traditional industries such as reindeer breeding, fishing and hunting, as well as the Saami's cultural existence.

When determining what national interest to prioritise, Urbergsgruppen argues that Sweden's Mineral Strategy and the future expansion of the mining industry (2013) should be based on the environmental law of a long-term sustainable usage of water- and land areas (1998:808). If these legal priorities of national interests would work as the purpose environmental law suggests, the national interest of reindeer herding would suit the long-term perspective, as well as being in harmony with the environmental goals and the art-and habitat directive. In other words, these directives and environmental goals should have worked as a foundation when the Ministry of Industry prepared the Mineral Strategy (2013), however according to the association, it was not. Thus, an increased mining industry in consonance with the environment and surrounding industries, as the strategy advocates for, are highly unlikely to be reached with the new strategy's ambitious aim (Bothorp and Wanneby 2013).

An other area of conflict highlighted in Urbergsgruppens opinion against the Swedish Mineral Strategy (2013), is its implementation in terms of location and width for the new mines as these locations are conflicting with areas of unique natural values such as natural reserves, natura 2000 areas, areas of water protection, reindeer herding grounds and national parks (Bothorp and Wanneby 2013).

The lack of local democracy and a deficient dialog with affected Saami's and landowners during the process of prospecting leaves limited measures to actually affect the outcome of a mining operation. This lack of political influence, together with legal derogations that constantly prioritise the economic imperative of the mining industry, next to other industries that rely on the conditions mining determinates, is partly the reason why the resistance culminated in Gallók in 2013. The vague formulation and non-existing incentives of how to reach an increased mineral industry in synergy with the environment implies a future of continued deficient ambitions

within environmental policy's and the legal framework. Thus, the arguments of the resistance movement calls for a political change where both the mineral law and the environmental law should be strengthened within the protection and priority of sustainable and cultural industries, combined with the ratification of ILO 169. These arguments also purport the foundation of the Saami Parliaments Mining Policy (2014), the Saami Councils Declarations (2004; 2008) and other political instruments used by the resistance to acknowledge and highlight these issues of regulations.

4.1.3 A Call for Holistic Perspective of Sustainability

The importance of a sustainable development based on the intertwined components of environmental, social and economical aspects are expressed as an important imperative of the Swedish state. However as presented above, and argued by Lathinen, the present mining industry and the imperatives for its growth are conflicting with the entire definition of sustainable development. Hence, the active resistance against mining argues that the political agenda of the mining industry needs to acknowledge the interaction between the Saami's right to their traditional lands, the right to autonomously decide over the exploitation of the natural resources in Sampí, and how that autonomy is a prerequisite for a sustainable development. In other words, to reach a mining industry in synergy with the environmental goals, and the international conventions signed by Sweden in order to prevent climate change, a cross-disciplinary approach, not only acknowledging environmental issues but also social and economical, needs to permeate the mineral strategy, the mineral law and the environmental law (Bothorp and Wanneby 2013; Riv mineralstategin! Skriv om minerallagen! 2013).

In this reasoning, the relevance of environmental science yet again becomes clear, as it illustrates how social, economical and ecological aspects not can be separated from each other but needs to be put in a perspective where, in this context, not ratifying ILO 169 might have direct and irreversible consequences for the environment and Sweden's environmental imperatives of a mining industry in consonance with the environment (Bothorp and Wanneby 2013; Honningvågs Declaration 2004).

4.2 The Role of Resistance in Relation to Political Change

Carter (2007) points to an acknowledged and familiar problem often identified within the aim or interest of environmental movements, which is the clash between the movements interests and the interest of the state – “the imperative of economic growth” (Carter 2007: 168). The Saami resistance movement is not solely an environmental movement but also a movement centralized around the struggle for basic human rights. However, Carter's statement is still relevant as the imperative of economic growth, in this context the mining industry, clashes not only with environmental values and the environmental objectives of the state, but it also clashes with the international rights the Saamis' has as indigenous people. Thus, by not ratifying ILO 169 the Swedish state's imperative of economic growth remains intact, at the expense of environmental values and valuable knowledge of how to

preserve and develop sustainable industries as an alternative to industries based on environmental destructive methods and finite resources.

Due to the systematic ignorance of indigenous rights by the Swedish state and the current political conflicts of priorities connected to mining, many of the activists engaged in the different forms of resistance in Gallók argue that resistance is the only tool they have to create the political- and social change they want and, think is necessary (Kolonierna 2013). This point of view is, as presented above, also shared by the people interviewed for this study, where all argue that the legal and political shortcomings in this conflict needs to be challenged, illuminated and identified. Therefore, as Josefina Skerk argues, the role of resistance means almost everything in terms of increasing the potential for political change, as it is a tool that has the possibility through presence in social, medial and political contexts, to reach the coffee tables, change public opinion and then finally, the political arena.

The overall impact and role of a resistance movement, in terms of changing the political landscape is hard to measure, it is however acknowledged that social movements are proven to have significant influence in shaping policy discourses and political agendas. As the imperatives of the state are not final, nor set in stone, resistance movements in all forms thus, plays a crucial role in shaping future imperatives that are in consonance with economic, social and ecological values (Carter 2007:169).

The presence of the resistance movement before, during and after the protests in Gallók has created the prerequisites for an increased interest within the political- and medial landscape in the conflicts concerning the mining industry. Consequently, the resistance and the following media coverage have forced leading politicians to take a stand in relation to the social- and environmental issues connected to mining, identified by the movement (Müller 2014).

5. Conclusion

The environmental, legal and political consequences of mining decrease the Saamis economical, social and ecological conditions to sustain their cultural traditions and livelihoods. On these foundations, the resistance movement has grown strong, with the aim of raising awareness to the urgency of this conflict and with the hope of creating a political and legal change where the Saami's approach to the viable nature of northern Sweden and the autonomy over their traditional lands is truly respected.

By using various forms of resistance, the Saami movement for recognition and autonomy has reached the political landscape regulating the mining industry. As a consequence of the increased media coverage on this conflict due to the persistence and creativity of the movement, the environmental issues connected to mining has been highlighted, thus contributing to an increased awareness amongst the public opinion.

The resistance movement has identified the weaknesses amongst the legal framework regulating Sweden's current mining industry. This framework is argued by governmental leaders to be one of the strongest and distinctive regulations there is, both in the context of regulating the mining industry but also within the discourse of political imperatives for environmental protection. However, as this study shows, the legal framework regulating these two conflicting areas inhabits many weaknesses, where the purpose and priority of the mineral law systematically neglects the purpose of the environmental law. The consequences of this deficient legal framework, meaning the loss of biodiversity, healthy water sources, viable nature, sustainable industries and the cultural identity of Sweden's indigenous people, is due to the resistance movement constantly acknowledged. Although hard to measure, this ever-present acknowledgement and resistance does, to some extent, provide the political landscape with a potential for change.

The resistance movement against mining provides a unique and alternative cross-disciplinary perspective of how the social, economical and ecological components concerning the mining industry are intertwined. This cross-disciplinary perspective is important within the subject of environmental science since it exemplifies how the root of environmental issues, in this context, can be a consequence of the discrimination of human rights. Important to note here are also that these cross-disciplinary and intertwined components causing environmental degradation can be hard to identify within the legal and political system that created them. Thus, the study of resistance movements can provide an important insight in identifying how the political landscape needs to change and what political measures needs to be taken in order to limit the consequences of climate change and to preserve a viable and sustainable culture, knowledge and nature for future generations.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Presentation of the People who were Interviewed

The first interview was with Tor Lundberg Tuorda, one of two former directors for the association Uberggruppen. Tuorda is engaged in several and different ways of resistance, with everything from blogging about the present and future conflicts of the mining industry to organizing manifestations and demonstrations. He is also writing articles and documenting the resistance movement and the consequences of a growing mining industry in Sápmi and, an important part in this conflict and of his work is to highlight the ongoing forms of colonialism.

Sara Lathinen is a director for Urberggruppen, and an active activist in the protest against mining. Lahtinen participated in the protests that took place in Gallók in 2013 and are continuously organizing manifestation in Stockholm to spread the information about the environmental and social consequences of mining.

Niila Inga is a reindeer herder and a member of the Saami village Laevas. Inga is active in the resistance in many ways, he has funded a coalition network that have advocated against the mining industry in different ways, for example by spreading information, participate in political events and business conferences. A majority of his work also involves appeals against future permits for mining operations.

The final interview was with Josefina Skerk who currently is a politician at the Saami Parliament and is involved in different project concerning Saami rights. Skerk have also been involved as an activist through various forms of resistance.

8.2 Questions that the interviews have been based on

- Can you tell me a little bit about who you are, in what way you are engaged in the resistance against mining and why?
- How do you perceive the resistance movement's, or the actors you are involved with, role or importance within the political debate concerning mining and the environment?
- How would you describe that the resistance movement highlights the environmental issues within the mining industry.
- What is your opinion of public resistance and civil disobedience in relation to political change?

- Do you remember a special moment or happening where you felt "wow, what I am doing really does matter, I have actually helped creating a change"?
- How do you interpret the future for the mining industry?
- How do you interpret the future for the resistance movement?

