



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

DEPARTMENT OF
EARTH SCIENCES
INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
GEOVETENSKAPER

MARGINALIZED INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND MODERN SWEDISH COLONIALISM

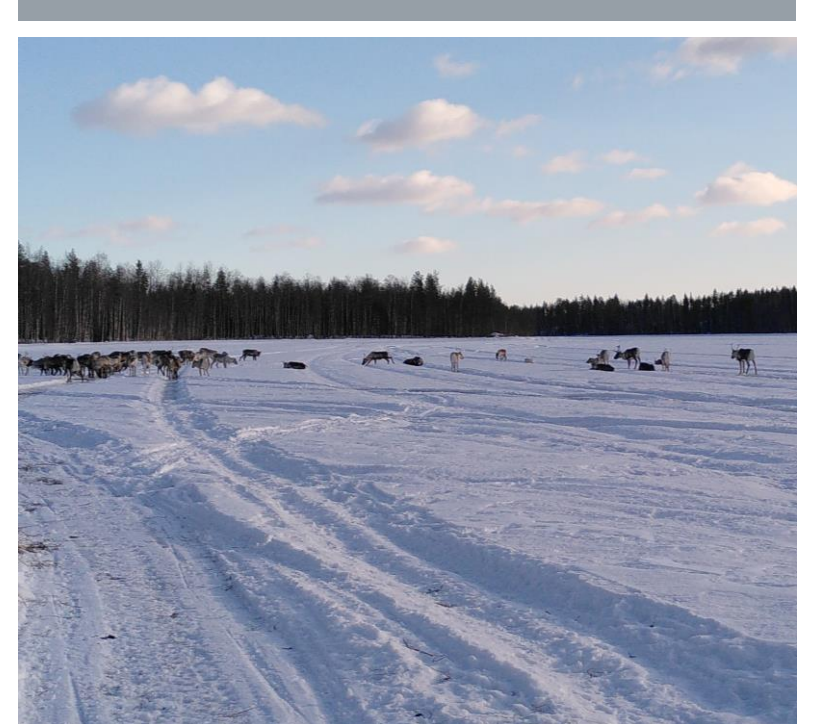
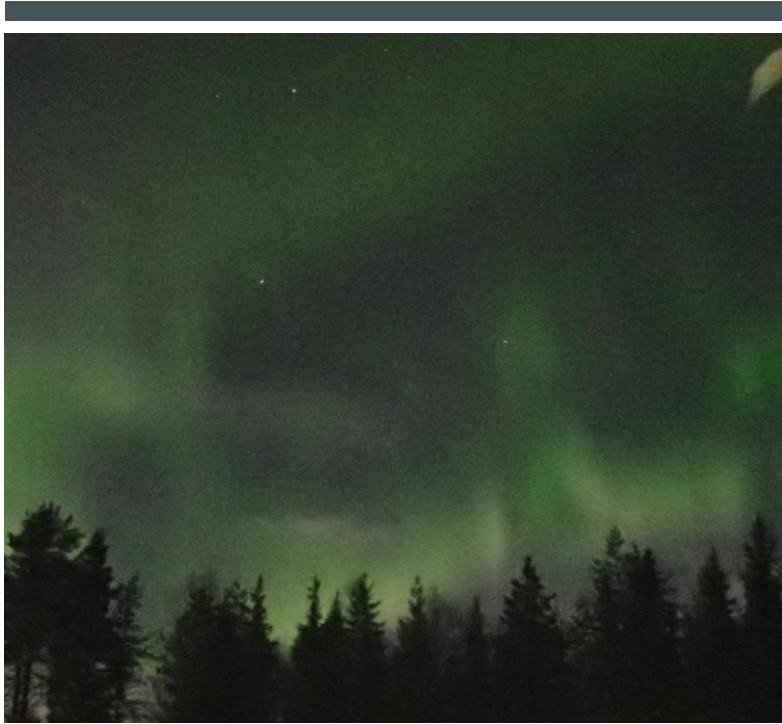
*The Case of Reindeer
Husbandry in Gällivare
Forest Sámi Community*

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MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTATION
DEGREE PROJECT E – VT 2021

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND, RATIONALE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGIES

RATIONALE

- Sámi: Europe's only acknowledged Indigenous group
 - Not all Sámi people have reindeer, but reindeer husbandry is a cultural staple
- Survival of reindeer husbandry = human rights & ecological issue
 - *Rangifer tarandus* = same as wild species, still occupy ecological niche
- Threats to reindeer husbandry compound on each other
 - → very resilient system, but close to regime shift
- Traditional knowledge critical to the preservation of reindeer husbandry



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – SETTLER-COLONIALISM IN SWEDEN

- Sámi once occupied all of Sweden
 - Pushed north in 1700s
 - Pushed above cultivation limit in late 1800s/early 1900s
- Land perceived as "*terra nullius*" to be exploited
 - Mineral ore, furs, timber, hydropower
- Forest Sámi were not considered "real" Sámi
 - "Real" Sámi live above cultivation limit in the mountains
- Efforts by Swedish state to assimilate Forest Sámi
 - Christianization → education → language → culture
 - General ignorance that Forest Sámi exist / herd reindeer



AIMS & OBJECTIVES

■ Questions:

1. What are the main challenges to the viability of reindeer husbandry in Gällivare *Skogssameby* and how do they relate to one another?
2. To what extent are these challenges caused or exacerbated by ongoing colonization of Sápmi by the Swedish state and/or based in Sweden's colonial history?

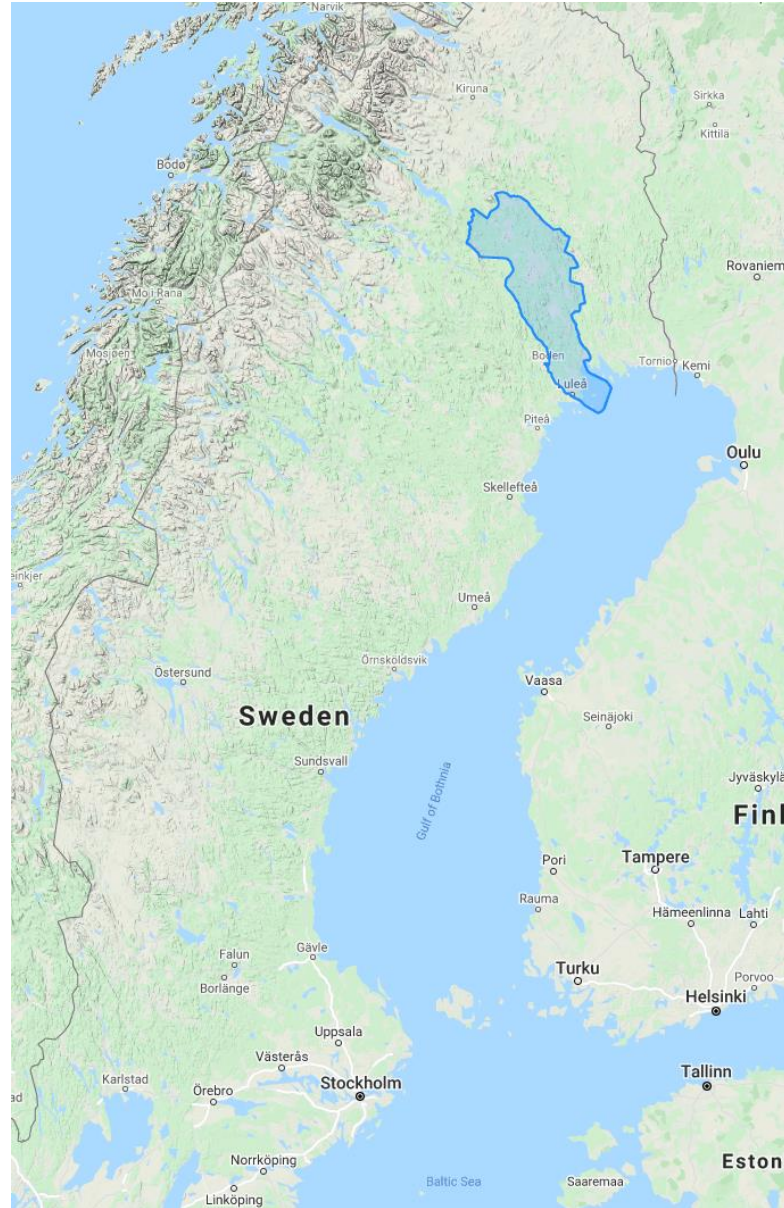
■ Hypothesis:

- The Swedish settler-colonial state hinders the ability of Sámi people to engage in the traditional livelihood of reindeer husbandry by allowing and promoting corporate intrusion on their land and seizure of natural resources, and that this is due to a combination of anti-Sámi racism and sense of entitlement to the natural resources in Sápmi.



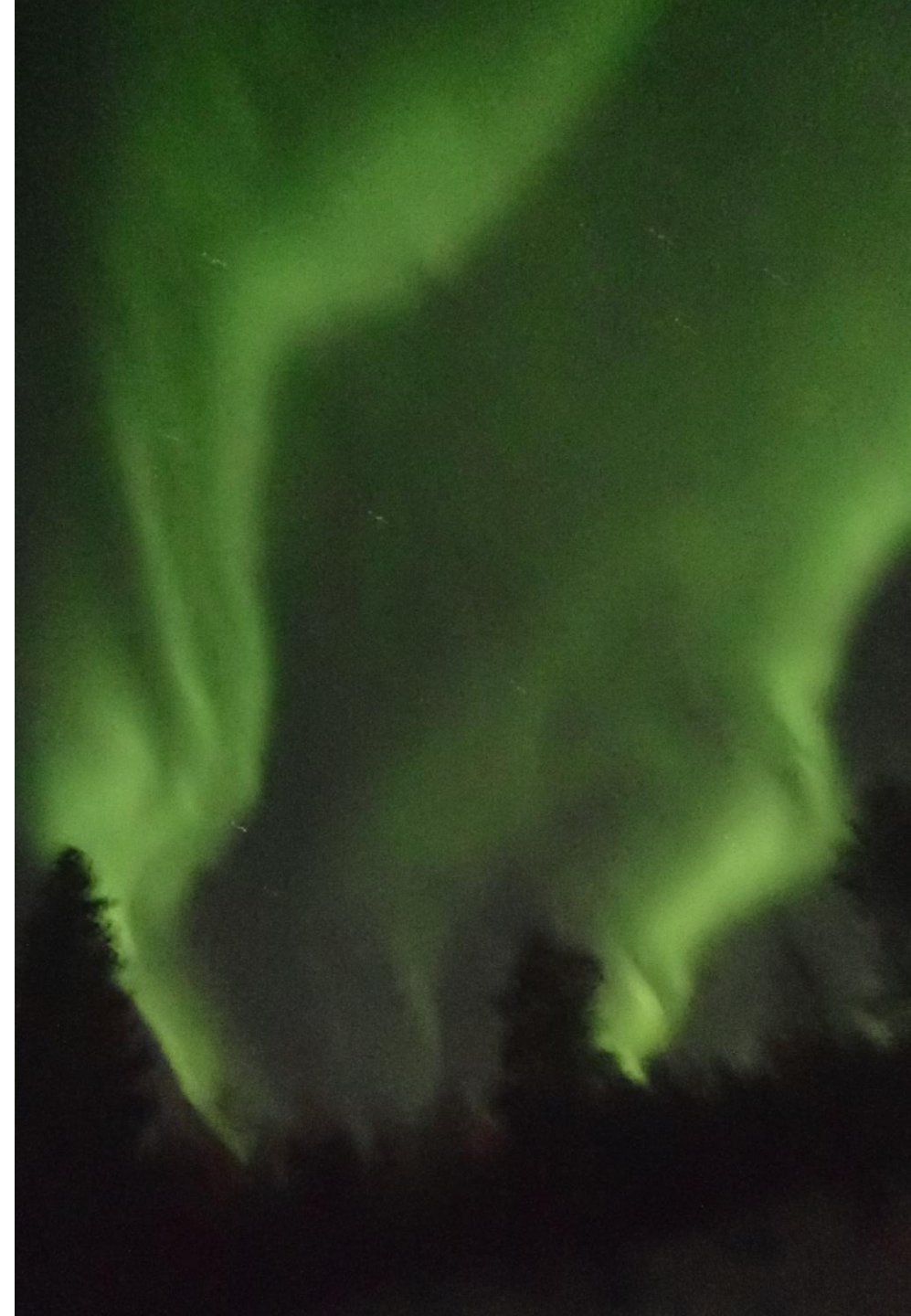
FIELDWORK & ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

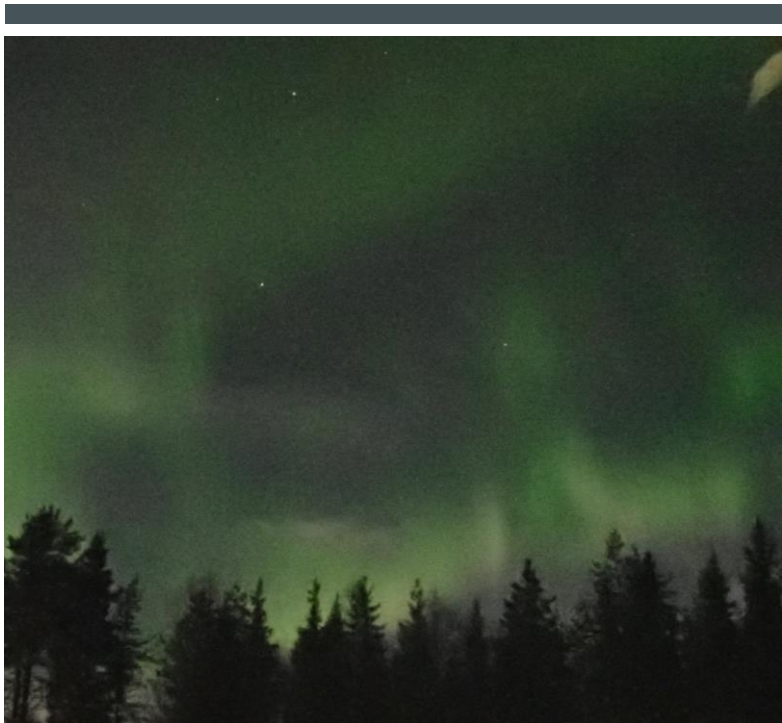
- 4 weeks as a volunteer with Henrik Andersson in Gällivare *Skogssameby*
 - Participatory observation
 - Semi-structured interviews
- Sámi ethical framework
 - FPIC (names, information)
 - Acknowledgement vs. erasure



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- “Indigenist Paradigm” and anti-colonialism
 - Centering Indigenous (Sámi) perspective
 - Valuing Indigenous traditional knowledge & ontology
- The Nature vs. Culture false dichotomy
 - Myth of wilderness
 - Avoiding essentialism
 - Reindeer herders NEED intact natural areas
- Cartesianism, complexity, and Indigenous ontologies
 - Cartesian logic of environmental exploitation inextricably linked to logic of colonization (human exploitation)
 - Complexity theory provides a better understanding of the world
 - Holism also central to Indigenous epistemologies
 - *Everything is connected*





CASE STUDY

HENRIK ANDERSSON, REINDEER HERDER / ACTIVIST / BOARD
MEMBER, GÄLLIVARE FOREST SÁMI COMMUNITY



**CONTENT WARNING – GRAPHIC IMAGE AND
DISCUSSION OF ANIMAL DEATH**

LIVELIHOOD THREATS

1. Wind power
2. Predators
3. Forestry
4. Railroads and
Highways
5. Local conflict



WIND POWER – FACTS & FIGURES

- During calving season (spring) reindeer are completely feral
 - Wind power development areas create enormous stress for females during construction phase (1 - 3 years, out to 3.5 - 5 km)
 - Severe stress → miscarriage, abandonment, inability to produce milk
- Planned wind power development in Gällivare *Sameby* could lead to population collapse
 - Vattenfall *Storlandet* development: in the middle of *sameby* calving area
 - Vasa Vind *Hällberget* development: within 5 km of Henrik's house, also in calving area

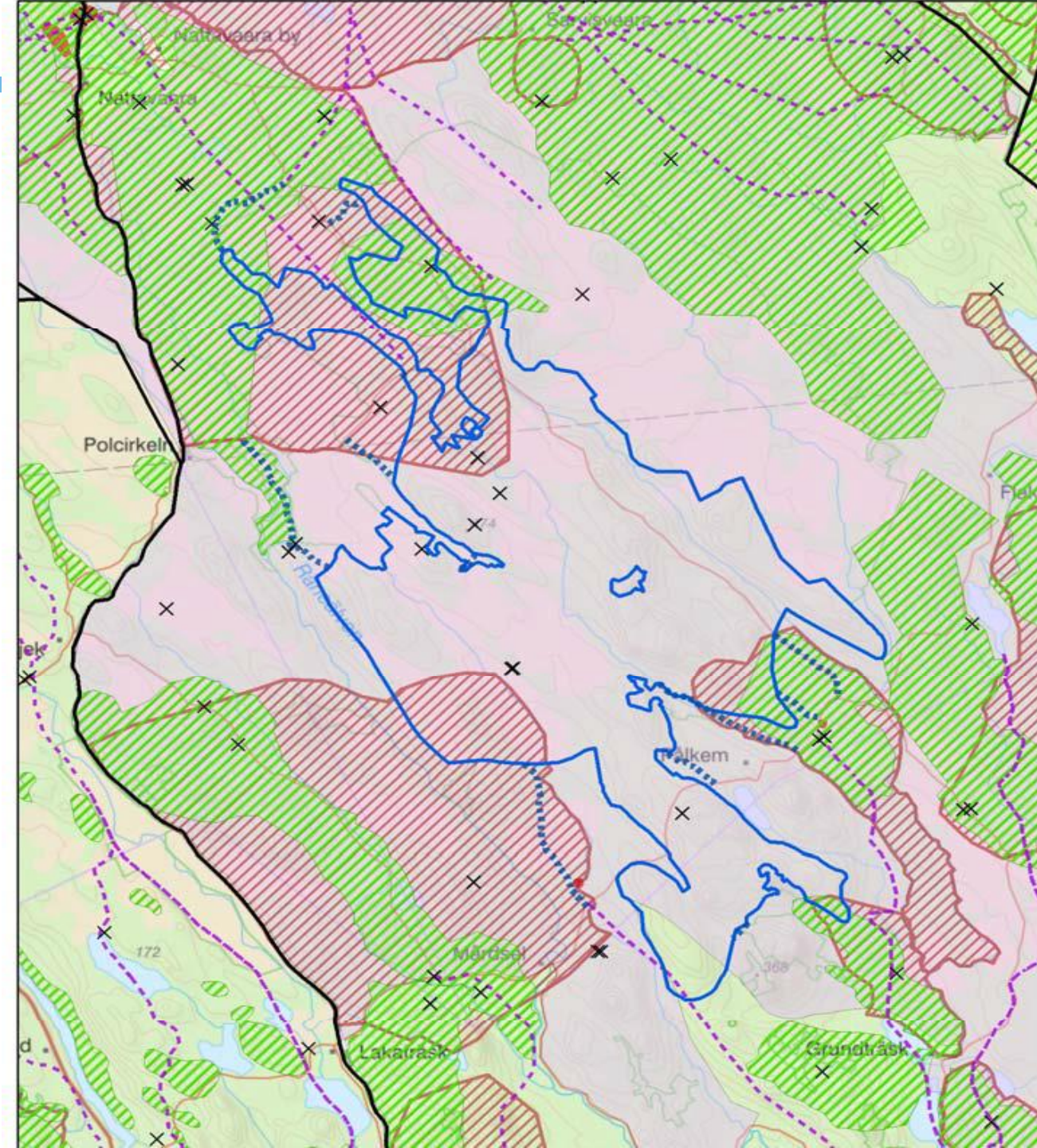


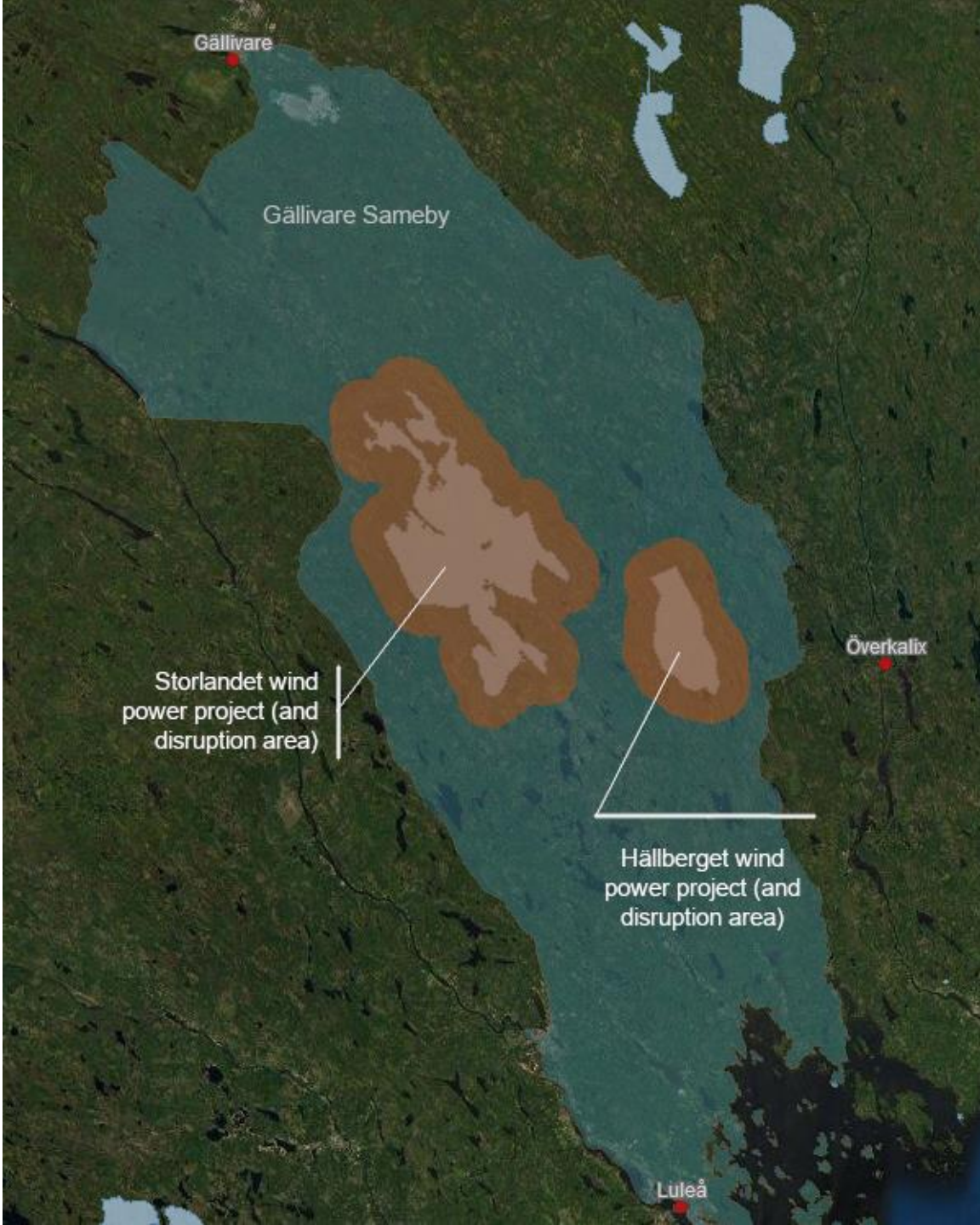
STORLANDET WIND POWER PARK / REINDEER HUSBANDRY LAND USE

Source: Sámi Parliament via
Vattenfall

Blue outline: Storlandet wind
power park planned area

Light pink area: Gällivare
Sameby calving lands





PLANNED WIND POWER DEVELOPMENT IN GÄLLIVARE SAMEBY

Light turquoise: Gällivare *Sameby* grazing area

Dark orange: Projected disruption zone (5 km, pessimistic estimate)

Light orange: Planned wind power parks

Total exclusion area (including development zones): 1,715 km²

Corridor width: 2 km

WIND POWER – INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

- Consultations, but no FPIC requirements
- Company keeps profits, so no benefits for the local community (no compensation for possible losses)
- Historical parallels with early 20th Century hydropower development
 - Modernization at any cost
 - Destroying Sámi land for the “greater good” – economic development (1921), green energy (2022)
- Ignorance about / indifference / racism toward Sámi reindeer herders
 - “Interpretative privilege” – Össbo & Lantto, 2011
 - “They are coming to our lands, and they haven’t even done their homework.” – Another reindeer herder





PREDATORS – FACTS & FIGURES

- Wolves, wolverines, golden eagles, bears, lynx
- Kill an average of 70-80% of reindeer calves / year
 - Average of 30% of a herd / year
 - Reindeer population: 15,000 (mid-1990s) → 4,000 (present day)
- Bear predation alone accounts for 30-40% of calf deaths
 - 1 female bear can kill on average 13-14 reindeer / year
 - Upper range is 37 reindeer per female bear / year



PREDATORS – INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

- “We have never made a species extinct.” – Henrik Andersson
- Predator protective killing catch-22:
 - Legal avenues: Lengthy process, risk losing dozens of valuable reindeer
 - Illegal avenues: Save the reindeer, risk jail time
- Legislation protects predators, but not reindeer or reindeer herders
- Legislation ignores traditional knowledge
- *Hunting legislation is applied equally to everyone, but Sámi reindeer herders bear the highest burden*

FORESTRY – FACTS & FIGURES

- Lichens are the reindeer's primary food source in winter (on the trees & on snow surface)
- Lichens take 60-70 years to establish themselves in new forest
 - Forest is “mature” for harvest when it is 70-120 years old
 - → Timber plantations cannot feed reindeer, do not qualify as productive ecosystems
- Planted tree varieties:
 - Native: Scots pine, Norwegian spruce
 - Introduced (North America): Lodgepole (contorta) pine
- Contorta is extremely unpopular with reindeer herders
 - Can be felled after 50 years, so no chance for lichen to grow
 - Provide ample cover for predators, but hinder reindeer and reindeer herders



FORESTRY – INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

- 50% of the land Henrik uses is owned by Sveaskog
- Sámi have usufructuary rights, not ownership
- Limited consultation, no FPIC requirement
- Intensive forestry – clearcutting, soil tilling, chemical fertilizers, monoculture plantation
- FPIC & legal ramifications can be evaded by selling to small-scale owners
- The letter of the law protects reindeer herders in theory, but:
 - Too many loopholes, not enough firm requirements
 - Skewed toward private business



RAILROADS AND HIGHWAYS – FACTS & FIGURES

- ~ 25-105 reindeer deaths (from Henrik's herd) / year
 - 5 on roads / highways
 - 20-100 on train tracks
 - (relatively small number)
- Train collisions often due to negligence (wildlife fences left open)
- Infrastructure runs through migration routes → increases habitat fragmentation



RAILROADS AND HIGHWAYS – INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

- Compensation is insufficient / incomplete
 - Base market value of meat
 - Some road collision deaths are not compensated at all
- Few / no wildlife passages in reindeer areas
 - Proposed as early as 1914
 - Expensive, not usually retrofitted
 - No political or private sector will to install



LOCAL CONFLICT – FACTS & FIGURES

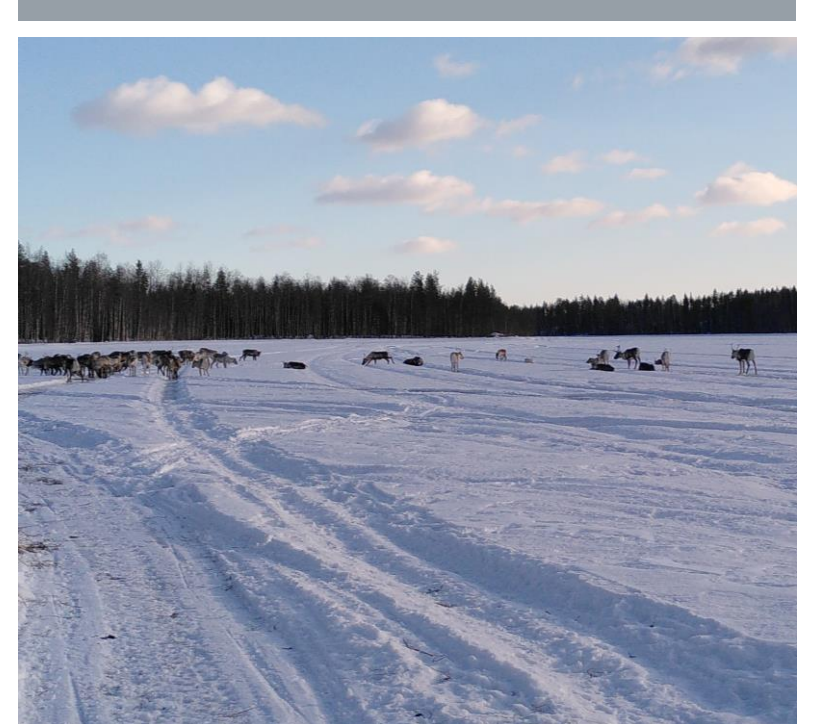
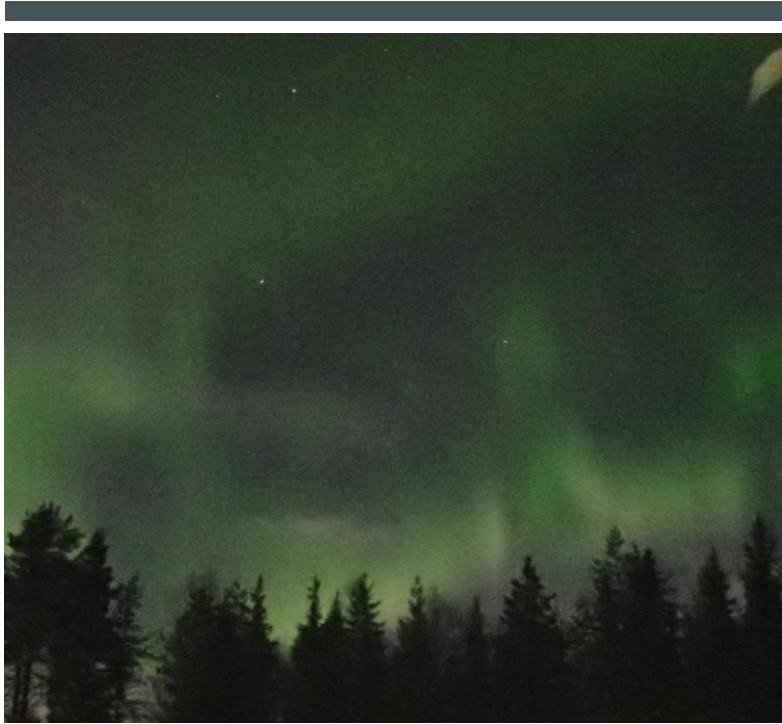
- Retaliatory reindeer killings & death threats following Girjas decision
- Possibly intentional collisions with reindeer in forest Sámi communities (automobile, snowmobile)
- Dogs off-leash kill/injure reindeer



LOCAL CONFLICT – INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

- No education in schools or official advisories or warnings about how to interact with reindeer
- Black plastic bag issue: What if a southerner goes north?
- BUT
- Most conflicts are small-scale, settled quickly
- Reindeer herders & farmers generally have functional relationships

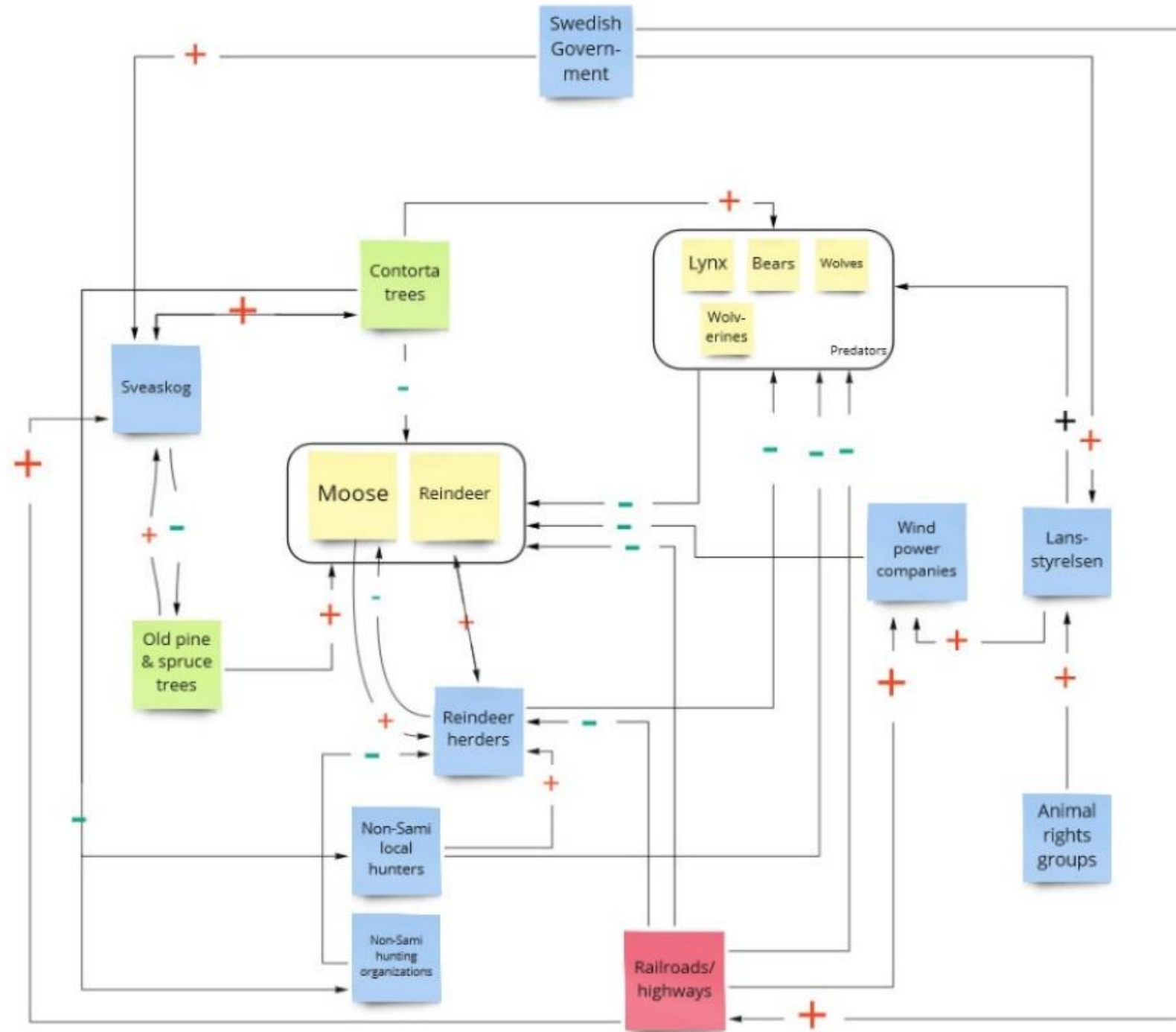




DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

DISCUSSION

- Combination of habitat fragmentation and marginalization of Sámi people → conditions for reindeer population collapse, further loss of heritage
- System is resilient, but even resilient system have shock absorption limits
- Sámi traditional knowledge is devalued, history of colonization not acknowledged



CONCLUSION

- Immediate action
 - Amnesty Sápmi
 - Skogsupproret
 - Extinction Rebellion
- Sámi reindeer herders' traditional knowledge provides sufficient basis for action
- Precautionary principle





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A reindeer with dark fur and a blue collar with a red buckle is shown in profile, looking towards the right. It is standing in a snowy field with many thin, bare trees in the background. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND
ATTENTION!**

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

REFERENCES

For a complete reference list, please see thesis bibliography ([copy/paste from below or click here](#)).

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