



# What local people? Examining the Gállok mining conflict and the rights of the Sámi population in terms of justice and power

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## ABSTRACT

The global extraction of minerals is commonly located in areas populated by indigenous people; and while conflicts between multinational corporations and local activists and indigenous people are widespread today, the understanding of their dynamics are lacking. The Swedish government's encouragement to an expanding mining industry has caused resistance due to environmental and social implications, particularly its effect on Sámi reindeer husbandry. The resistance to a mine in Gállok is based on the belief that the right to decide about land use historically falls on the Sámi people, and the right to affect land use is detrimental for the survival of Sámi culture and reindeer husbandry. Although the conflict may be perceived as concerning access to natural resources, we argue that the perceived environmental conflict can be viewed as part of a larger struggle over social status and recognition. Data have been collected using qualitative methods such as observations, interviews and documents. The subsequent analysis relies on a meta-theoretical framework of justice as recognition using a typology of relations of power. Our findings suggest that relations of power constitute different categories of social actors. Stakeholders like the Sámi population are subordinated to more dominant stakeholders such as the government, the company and media, who have 'more' power or 'different' kinds of power 'over' others. Through these asymmetric power relations, historical state-Sámi relations are continuously reproduced within prevailing institutions, and also in this mining conflict. Interviewees from business and the municipality testified to the discourses driven by a neoliberal and profit-focused worldview. Challenging the neoliberal discourse, other stakeholders, namely civil society and Sámi, expressed an alternative discourse based on a local, traditional, cultural, environmental and anti-neoliberal worldview.

## 1. Introduction

"What local people?" is the answer given by Clive Sinclair-Poulton, chairman of Beowulf Mining Plc, while showing a picture of landscape with no people in it when asked what the local people would say about the mine project in Gállok.<sup>1</sup> The conflicts surrounding the Gállok mining project is known as one of the most nationally debated environmental movements in Swedish history due to the historical relations between the Sámi population and the Swedish government. The Swedish national government has been criticized for not responding to concerns about the expanding mining industry (Government Offices of Sweden, 2013; Norberg Juuso, 2014) while also lacking constitutional rights for indigenous people (e.g. UNRIC, 2017). One of the major concerns is environmental destruction such as resource depletion along

with negative social impacts of mining investments. Furthermore, the critique also extends to how mining projects in particular interfere with the traditional reindeer husbandry of the indigenous Sámi population (Länta et al., 2013) and has on several occasions dealt with the state as a colonial power whose land ownership is contested by Sámi people (e.g. Länta et al., 2013). The resistance to a mine in Gállok is based on the belief that the right to decide about this land historically falls on the Sámi population, and furthermore that Sámi being entitled to make decisions that concern land-use is detrimental for the survival of Sámi culture. Reindeer herding has a central role in Sámi culture, and the land where the minerals are found is perceived to play a crucial role in the survival of the reindeer herding as further development in the area would severely affect migration paths (Länta et al., 2013).

In several parts of the world, global exploration and production of

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<sup>1</sup> Gállok (in Sámi), or Kallak (in Swedish), is the name of a territory located in the municipality of Jäkkåmähkke (or Jokkmokk in Swedish). This area is also located within the Jäkkågasska 'Sámi village', which is an economic and administrative territory within which its members conduct reindeer herding.

minerals are commonly located in areas populated by indigenous people (Whiteman and Mamen, 2002), and mineral extraction might go hand in hand with marginalization of the indigenous groups through underrepresentation and misrecognition. According to Bridge (2007), the recognition of minerals ‘as resources’ is a political process embedded in different valuation of land and materials (see also Li, 2014). Often conflict over values is represented in indigenous peoples’ mobilization, as native communities resist the companies, governments, and policies which might have aims to create cultural disintegration (Schlosberg and Carruthers, 2010).

Sweden has an expansive mining industry. The Swedish mining industry association (SveMin) estimates that the mining production in Sweden is going to threefold until 2025, directly or indirectly creating more than 50,000 new jobs (SveMin, 2012). According to the Canadian think-tank Fraser Institute’s yearly survey of mining companies, the ratings for 2013 show that mining companies themselves consider Sweden one of the most attractive countries to invest in (Wilson and Cervantes, 2014). According to estimates, Sweden holds 60% of Europe’s identified iron ore deposit and is currently responsible for 90% of Europe’s iron ore extraction (Björklund, 2012). According to the government’s recently launched Mineral Strategy, further extraction of minerals is vital for a global economy and good quality of life, and the government wants to reinforce the country’s position as a leading mining nation (Government Offices of Sweden, 2013).

The most significant mineralization in Sweden resides in Norrbotten (af Geijerstam and Nisser, 2011). In the decades around 1900, the region underwent a rapid industrialization, and was described as the “Swedish America” or “Land of the Future” as it had the greatest natural resources of the country – forest, hydropower, and ore – just waiting to be used (Sörlin, 1988; Geijerstam & Nisser, 2011). Dating back already to the 1600s, Crown chancellor Carl Bonde was referring to this region as “an India within our borders” (Sörlin, 1988: p. 30; Lundmark, 1971); supported by an enthusiasm that made references to Spanish conquering of silver ore across South- and Central America (Lundmark, 2008: pp. 42–48). Today, there are eighteen active mines in Sweden, five in Norrbotten, seven in Västerbotten and six in other parts of Sweden (Bergsstaten, n.d.). Importantly, both Norrbotten and Västerbotten also have territories for reindeer herding, of which Gállok serves as a key example of how a planned mine interferes with the reindeer husbandry of Sámi.

Our aim in this paper is to identify the power relations between the stakeholders of this conflict and investigate these relations within the framework justice as recognition. We ask: how, and to what extent, is the relationship between different stakeholders in the Gállok mining conflict affected by politics of recognition? We argue that although the conflict concerns access to natural resources, it also illustrates the everyday struggle of the Sámi population claiming justice through their historical rights and culture. In this endeavour, we also explain, and relate our findings back to, the historical context of Sámi struggles for recognition against the Swedish state. In doing so, we contribute to fill a knowledge gap on contemporary state–Sámi relationship in Sweden against the backdrop of internal and external critiques concerning indigenous rights.

Our analysis is based on a meta-theoretical framework that combines a justice as recognition approach with a typology of relations of power. The results of this paper suggest that relations of power constitute different categories of social actors. This can be shown particularly prominent in the way that more dominant stakeholders such as the government, the company and media have ‘more’ power, ‘different’ kinds of power and/or power ‘over’ other subordinated stakeholders such as the Sámi population. Through such asymmetric power relations and patterns of misrecognition, the historical state–Sámi relations are continuously reproduced within prevailing institutions and also in this mining conflict. By linking this conflict to resource use and rights, we contribute to wider debates on environmental justice as facilitator of socio-ecological transitions and the re-development of environmental

values (Martinez-Alier, 2009).

The study has been conducted as a qualitative explanatory case study drawing data from different sources using multiple methods, namely: interviews, unstructured non-participant observations and a literature and document review. A field visit to Jåhkåmåhkke<sup>2</sup> was conducted in the winter of 2014, giving us a better understanding of what meaning stakeholders in Jåhkåmåhkke attribute to different everyday occurrences. To access stakeholders, we employed a purposive sampling strategy coupled with further snowball sampling. In total, we have conducted thirteen interviews which have been categorized into five different groups: authority, civil society, journalists, business and Sámi. The majority of the interviews where semi-structured and took place in Jåhkåmåhkke, while one interview was conducted as a narrative walk where we were given the opportunity to accompany one Sámi reindeer herder to the reindeer forest. This allowed us to learn directly from one stakeholder about the impacts of the mine in situ.

The article starts with a brief introduction of the theoretical framework focusing on the justice as recognition and dynamic power approaches. In the third section, we then provide a historical overview on the misrecognition and land rights of Sámi in Sweden. In the fourth section, we focus on the contemporary political economy of mining in Sweden. In the fifth section, we present our findings, categorised according to three different power dynamics. Finally, in the sixth section, we discuss these findings in relation to politics of recognition and provide concluding remarks.

## 2. Justice as recognition and power

This paper uses the justice as recognition framework inspired by Fraser (1998) and Schlosberg (2004), and the categorization of power provided by the dynamic approach (Avelino and Rotmans, 2009) in order to illustrate the relationship between different actors in the Gállok conflict.

Scholars debate over whether or not recognition is a separate or integrated component of distributive justice.<sup>3</sup> Some philosophers argue that recognition along with respect are inherent preconditions for distributive justice and should therefore be incorporated into the concept of distribution (Schlosberg, 2004). Proponents of identifying recognition as a separate component of justice argue that the lack of recognition in the social and political realms cause harm and decreased freedom for those individuals and groups who experience insults and degradations at individual and cultural level (Schlosberg, 2007a, 2007b). While incorporating recognition within the theoretical concept of distribution might work in theory, recognition cannot simply be assumed in the real world and therefore such argument does not hold (Schlosberg, 2007a, 2007b). Further, critical theorist Nancy Fraser argues that recognition should not be treated as a good to be distributed, nor should distribution be accepted as an expression for recognition (Fraser, 1998). Schlosberg (2007a) defends recognition as a distinct element of justice (and not as a part of distribution) arguing that a “lack of recognition, then, is a harm – an injustice – as much as a lack of adequate distribution of various goods” (Schlosberg, 2007a: p. 18).

Procedural justice, targeting fair and equitable institutional processes such as participation, has been put forth as yet another argument for treating recognition as an integral element of procedural justice. In response to that, Fraser argues that when unjust patterns of misrecognition are institutionalized this hinders misrecognized social actors from even participating (Fraser, 1998). Fraser sees misrecognition as an institutional practice (rather than an individual experience) where the social status of individuals and communities are being compromised

<sup>2</sup> Here, Jåhkåmåhkke (in Sámi), or Jokkmokk (in Swedish), refers to both the municipality and the largest town in the municipality.

<sup>3</sup> Distributive justice refers to ‘just’ distribution of benefits and burdens within society (Schlosberg, 2004).

(Schlosberg, 2007a). Recognition as a question of social status means, according to Fraser (2000: p. 113); “a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on par with the rest”. She argues that we have to examine institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative relation standing of actors (Fraser, 2000).

The concept of power is arguably one of the most contested concepts when describing social phenomena (Göhler, 2009). Definitions of power are highly diverse, ranging from power as ‘the capacity of a social system to mobilize resources’ (Parsons, 1967; Giddens, 1984) to Michel Foucault (1984) where power is not a negotiable resource but is the substrate of interaction from which there is no emancipation. Our approach to power is dynamic and related to actors’ rights to reproduce or transform themselves in the dynamic interplay where meaning is made. The relations of power might constitute some categories of social actors as acceptable and others as deficient. To disentangle such patterns, we use the dynamic power framework by Avelino and Rotmans (2009), to argue that status-based misrecognition can be made visible in the relations of power between different stakeholders. By using relational and dynamic approach to power, Avelino and Rotmans (2009) distinguishes between three relations of power: (i) A has power ‘over’ B; (ii) if A has ‘more’ power or ‘less’ power in comparison to B, and lastly; (iii) if A has a ‘different’ power than B (Avelino and Rotmans, 2009). By distinguishing the way power is being executed the approach facilitates an understanding of whether any kind of misrecognition is taking place. Rather than trying to capture its essence in one all-encompassing power theory, we aim to use power language that is suitable for this context in order to highlight patterns of misrecognition in the relationships.

### 3. Historical overview on the misrecognition and land rights of Sámi in Sweden

Mining conflicts in Sweden demonstrate how colonial patterns are integral to Swedish history and how these patterns take part in shaping current relations (Ojala and Nordin, 2015). We recognize the importance of this historical reading for our investigation, since it seeks to properly elucidate “the power relations between the Swedish state, majority groups and minority or indigenous groups through time” (Ojala and Nordin, 2015, p. 16). Thus, in order to situate the mining conflict in its institutional setting, we now provide a short historical overview to issues of justice, focusing on land rights, voiced by an indigenous Sámi population in Sweden, whose history is shaped by the colonial power of nation states across Sápmi.<sup>4</sup>

It is commonly considered that an ethnic group with characteristics that we now regard as Sámi<sup>5</sup> has been living in northern Scandinavia for as long as 2000 years (Hansen and Olsen, 2014; Government Offices of Sweden, 2014; Sámskt Informationscentrum, 2011). It is also widely regarded that Sámi people were the first occupants of the region and already present at the time when the state formation that grew out of Mälardalen first gained control of northern Sweden during the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Hansen and Olsen, 2014; Allard, 2006; Lundmark, 2008). Hansen and Olsen’s (2014) synthesis of archaeological research covering the early-modern period shows how the interactions between Sámi and Scandinavians have many dimensions, including both exploitation and cooperation (pp. 48–57), as well as mixed identities and intermarriages. If anything, we want to emphasize that interactions between groups within and outside of a Sámi population have many sides over time, but that our focus concerns what Sámi land rights have been institutionalized in Swedish Sápmi.

Our overview of Sámi land rights starts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when

agricultural settlers were receiving support from the Swedish Crown to move north, including exemptions from taxes and military service (Allard, 2006: p. 34; Lundmark, 1998). Up until the 1800s, partly due to the lack of resources necessary to control the vast areas of the rural north, the state intended to support Sámi interests given their importance for trade (Lundmark, 2008; Päiviö, 2011). Yet as the relative proportion of the Sámi population declined concurrent with growing numbers of settlers across Swedish Sápmi (Allard, 2006: p. 35), it became increasingly possible for the state to overlook the land rights of the Sámi (Lundmark, 2006; Päiviö, 2011). The state set up several administrative and legal institutions to favour the “more useful” agriculture lands (Allard, 2006; Lundmark, 2008). This included a gradual shift in legal decision making practice from District Councils to County Boards; which was imperative for diminishing the land rights of Sámi in Sweden as the District Councils were more accustomed to ruling with respect of Sámi customary rights, whereas the County Boards considered land as the state’s property (Lundmark, 2006, 2008; Päiviö, 2011: p. 257).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century involved major reforms that affect Sámi livelihoods even today. The Reindeer Grazing Act of 1886 stipulated that the recognition of Sámi customary rights concerning only those, which were reindeer herders, more specifically referring to ‘special’ grazing rights, or ‘privileges’ (Mörkenstam, 1999). This meant that approximately a third of the Sámi population were recognized as having customary rights, since only a minority were active reindeer herders (SOU, 1923). Additionally, the Land Partitioning Statute of 1873 gave agricultural settlers ownership of their previous ‘taxed’ agricultural land, while Sámi received ‘exclusive use rights’ of the land situated in the north of the newly established cultivation border, controlled by the County Boards (Lundmark, 2006).

From an institutional perspective, reforms in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century recognized the state as the primary owner of land and resources in Sápmi. Furthermore, this period also included the growth of racist discrimination and theories of cultural standings across Europe (Lundmark, 2008). The nomadic Sámi were by some considered as an inferior group of a lower standing culture, and as they had not been able to reach a cultural state where property rights had to be developed, they could not be considered the owners of land (Päiviö, 2011: pp. 250–251). This position perhaps became most apparent in the state’s ‘Lapp’<sup>6</sup> should remain Lapp’-ideology in which the Sámi were weak reindeer herders by nature that could not protect themselves against civilization, eventually leading to their demise (Lantto, 2000). The Swedish state came to rule through a paternalistic ‘trusteeship doctrine’ in which institutional Sámihood revolved around reindeer herders that were to be kept safe from Swedish civilization (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008). Through these forms of misrecognition, the Sámi gradually lost more and more of their (customary) rights to use land and resources (cf. Lundmark, 2008).

Moving into the early 1900s, the Swedish state, seemingly reproducing its’ previous agrarian-colonial perspective, used an industrialization-colonial discourse in techno-legal modernization strategies, as dams were installed on rivers located in Sápmi to provide with cheap electricity (Össbo, 2014). The damming of rivers further changed the landscape, flooding many Sámi settlements and reindeer migration paths, as well as diminishing the availability of important resources such as fish, berries, and forest hay (Össbo, 2014). In this process, state officials and settlers again claimed to favour the “good of the common people” while the existing rights of Sámi was referred to as a privilege given to them by the state (Össbo, 2014; Lantto, 2012).

However, during the early 1900s, an oppositional movement started to emerge in Sweden under the initial leadership of activist Elsa Laula Renberg, whom organized against the way that the Reindeer Grazing

<sup>4</sup> Sápmi is land historically inhabited by Sámi that stretches across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula.

<sup>5</sup> This includes language, reindeer herding, hunting and fishing practices, handicraft, and joik.

<sup>6</sup> Today any derivative of the word ‘Lapp’ are derogatory exonyms that are disapproved.

Act only gave grazing rights but no ownership (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008). Lantto and Mörkenstam (2008: p. 30) depict Elsa Laula's arguments as speaking to Sámi as an ethnic group "to create a community of interests between reindeer herding and non-reindeer herding Sámi." However, their demands were not accepted by the state; partly what Sámihood had been altered, but also due to difficulties in activating reindeer herding Sámi in this movement (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008). Nevertheless, the influence of organized opposition continued to grow, including the establishment of Sámi unions and newspaper, yet mainly serving as a reactive force to discriminatory practices and institutional inconsistencies (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008).

Since then, many changes concerning Sámi-related institutions in Sweden have been brought about through political claims made by Sámi movements throughout the second half of the 20th century (Lantto and Mörkenstam, 2008: p. 28). For example, Sámi were acknowledged as indigenous by the Swedish parliament in 1977, and received constitutional recognition as a 'people' in 2011 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014). However, contestations over rights to land and natural resources remain due to further increasing extractive practices and deployment of energy technologies, seen as solutions to economic stagnation in the rural northern region. Issues concern wind power developments on traditional Sámi land (Lawrence, 2014; Sasvari, forthcoming), and conflicts over Sámi fishing and hunting rights (Crouch, 2016). In the latter, the approach of state representatives in court led to a debate article signed by 59 leading academics on Sámi studies; condemning how the state's representatives in court had applied a rhetoric that drew on racial derogatory terms, questioned the indigeneity of Sámi, and rejected (government funded) scientific research (Allard et al., 2015). This scientific questioning may illustrate Ojala and Nordin's (2015) point on how the history of archaeology has marginalized Sámi history in relation to dominating national narratives; further emphasizing the need for more "Sámi archaeology" in scientific and legal struggles (pp. 12–15).

This overview serves to show how the legacy of institutionalized Swedish misrecognition of the Sámi may continue on even today, as further explained in the following sections. In closing, it is important to stress that Sámi are a heterogeneous group, part of different historical and contemporary political contestations, where some are positive about, for example, the mining sector. For a more in-depth reading about how mining in Sápmi relates to Sámi indigeneity and Swedish colonialism, we recommend Ojala and Nordin (2015).

#### 4. The mining Sector and neoliberalism in contemporary Sweden

*"Our mining industry and our iron ore is for us what oil is for Norwegians. An amazing wealth, an opportunity to build future investments, future development and we think that it is important for us to help and reinforce this in different ways."*

Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeldt 2012 (Herminge, 2012)

The mining industry is seen as essential for job creation and growth in Sweden, particularly to the rural northern region where the government states that "the mining industry's growth is helping to change the perspective of northern Sweden from a depopulated region to a region of the future" (Björling, 2012). While production has increased, the number of mines, and people working in them, has decreased (af Geijerstam and Nisser, 2011).

Mining being the driver of Sweden's economic growth has been contested in several ways. One critique raised is that minerals in Sweden are almost given away to foreign corporations for free, as exportation fees are set to 0.02% of the market value of the minerals (Petersen, 2013; Sveriges Geologiska Undersökning, 2006), while simultaneously serving to deteriorate other livelihoods, such as reindeer husbandry, and leaving behind it ruinous landscapes (see Åsbrink et al., 2013). In contrast, the government office argues that companies employ people, create tax revenues and pay social security charges (Norberg

Juuso, 2014). The Minister of Enterprise at the time, Annie Lööf, argued that "a mineral resource that is untouched in the ground has just as little economic value as an unbuilt car factory or research facility. It is only when the ore is mined and sold, that a value occurs in the first place. And to really be able to mine iron ore, a multi-billion investment is often needed which the company provides from its own pocket" (Norberg Juuso, 2014).

Johan Rockström, a prominent sustainability researcher and director of Stockholm Resilience Center, argues that the government fails to separate the environment and economic growth, and instead chooses to frame growth as "a prerequisite for a healthy environment, although there is no scientific evidence of this" (Klefbon, 2013). Similarly, the government's taxation argument has been challenged by survey results from 2013 where 16% out of the responding mining companies were mildly affected by the taxation regime in Sweden and only 2% considered it as a strong deterrent to invest, whereas 32% saw the taxation schemas as an encouragement for investment (Cervantes et al., 2014). The way that the government's taxation regime encourages mining activities and investment illustrates the 'actually existing neoliberal state approach' (Heynen et al., 2007), whereby liberalization in Sweden is pursued through deregulation and privatization as seen in several sectors, including the railway systems and the school system (Eriksson, 2012). During the neoliberal era, the promotion of mining business by the state actors is yet another way of marginalizing Sámi people, as it serves to introduce competing land-uses at an increasingly rapid pace.

#### 5. Struggles for justice: understanding stakeholder relations in the Gállok conflict

Our overall aim in this analysis is to identify the power relations between the stakeholders<sup>7</sup> of this conflict, and to investigate these relations within the framework of justice as recognition. We use a broad definition of stakeholders provided by Grimble and Wellard (1997) which defines them as "any group of people, organized or unorganized, who share a common interest or stake in a particular issue or system". This definition allows for an inclusive view of stakeholders at any level in society from global, national and regional concerns down to households.

The analysis is structured according to Avelino and Rotmans's (2009) three relations of power where in the first section we analyse relations of power 'over', in the second section we analyse relations of 'more' power, and lastly relations of a 'different' power. We argue that although the conflict is a conflict concerning access to natural resources, it also illustrates the everyday struggle of Sámi making claims for justice through their historical rights and culture. In this endeavour, we also explain, and relate findings back to, the historical context of Sámi struggles for recognition against the state. To start with the first: when different discourses are institutionalized in cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation, some of the stakeholders' perception of the issue can become misrecognized (Fraser, 1998; Martinez-Alier, 2009). This could negatively affect the positions of social actors. It therefore becomes important to highlight different discourses in order to investigate whether there are any institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitutes some categories of social actors as visible and others as deficient or inferior (Fraser, 2000).

##### 5.1. Power 'over'

The first relations of power identified by Avelino and Rotmans (2009) is how some stakeholder(s) have power 'over' other stakeholder

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, we identify and focus on five stakeholder groups; authorities, civil society, journalists, business, and Sámi population. Within each group there might be subgroups with different roles and opinions such as authorities which includes County Administrative Board, The Mining Inspectorate of Sweden, Municipality and Government that have different roles and opinions with regards to the issue.



(s). Power asymmetry between stakeholders often leads to this type of exercise of power. What becomes evident from the interviews is the lack of power that the Sámi representatives and activists feel towards the government and the mining inspectorate of Sweden with regards to influencing the outcome of land rights and reindeer herding in general. A general feeling is expressed that power is being exercised over subordinated Sámi population when: (i) reindeer herding in particular, and Sámi culture in general, is disparaged as other, more dominant discourses, prevail; and (ii) that – to quote one interviewee – “the law is so sanitized for exploration by mining companies” (Personal communication with Sámi reindeer herder).

Firstly, the general view by representatives from the business sector as well as the municipality is that there is a need for investment; as investment, according to this discourse, equals development and desirable growth. Such investment is believed to be able to tackle the perceived decline in employment in Northern Sweden. Further, small municipalities face a challenge of youth migration to the more densely populated southern Sweden, while the average age of the remaining population is increasing to a rate that is difficult to handle for small municipalities in the North. Several of the interviewees expressed a common perspective about the Gállok mine: that it was a national interest to build a mine. Two examples of this discourse are demonstrated in these quotations:

Much of the industrial development in Sweden and the prosperity we have today is linked back to the mines and steel companies. (...) If some of these companies disappear from Sweden lots of other work would also disappear from Sweden, regarding both those that make complete machines, mining machines, etc. but also those who are suppliers to these companies. So it would have a major economic impact (Personal communication with business group).

It is important for the nation. One has to see to the big picture. However, it may be difficult. (Personal communication with Mining Inspectorate of Sweden).

However, the dominant view of growth and development as vital is contested. [Martinez-Alier \(2009\)](#) argues that such money-reductionist arguments harm the social legitimacy of less tangible values such as e.g. sacredness, cultural value and indigenous rights. In line with that, the Sámi interviewees highlight the strong position and historical roots that reindeer herding have within the society of Jåhkâmáhkke<sup>8</sup> and its connection to Sámi culture. Money-reductionist arguments are perceived as a challenge to Sámi rights and culture.

If you would remove everything related to reindeer and reindeer herding, you would not have a vibrant culture, you would not have an active language, you would not have the Joik, and you would not have the handicrafts because everything is built on the reindeer culture. You would not have gotten a hold of the products. (...) I would say that it is all for the Sámi culture (Personal communication with Sámi reindeer herder).

Reindeer herding is seen as vital for the continuation of Sámi culture and it still constitutes the livelihood of people in Jåhkâmáhkke. One interviewee emphasizes reindeer herding as the third strongest enterprise in the Jåhkâmáhkke municipality. It is also emphasized how this is locally grounded and, just like the arguments regarding the mine, creates employment in the local society as it provides all the necessary material and raw resources to run the local businesses. Our interviewees from Sámi people and civil society emphasize that they might have to completely give up their livelihood if the Gállok mine is being constructed.

Reindeer are not considered to be worth anything. It is not recognized as a national interest. It is seen as a hobby activity against

these big bets being made, because people look coldly on money only. There are no natural or cultural values that weigh against money and it is a short-term mindset. And then it's hard to fight against it when the talk should just be of money (Personal communication with Sámi reindeer herder).

Many reindeer herders who feel that this is my identity and this is my heritage and it cannot be maintained unless there is a land to have reindeer on. You cannot. There they agree that yes, you are entitled to choose your own identity as well and pass on your heritage. And it's not okay that someone coming from outside in just pure greed and says 'I can make a lot more money on this land than you do, therefore I'm entitled to it' (Personal communication with a NGO).

By establishing a dominant discourse centred around the exchange value of natural resources and economic growth, the alternative perceptions based on livelihoods and cultural value expressed by the Sámi population become unrecognized by the dominant party. The dominant stakeholders are gradually diminishing the recognition of the subordinate party, in this case the Sámi population.

Sámi perspectives are, to a very limited extent, included in the decision-making process today since applicants for mining concessions are required to assess the impacts on reindeer herding as one of several existing land-uses on the location of the mineral findings (cf. [Lawrence and Larsen, 2017](#)). However, in the general discourse in which mining is discussed, it can be argued that the significance given to reindeer herding is not equal to the significance given to a mine as the significance is measured in monetary terms. One example is the clear statement in the company JIMAB's<sup>9</sup> environmental impact assessment that states:

The added value of a mining project exceeds with a considerable amount the predictable loss of value. (...) The moral value losses that would accompany a project is not expected to be of such magnitude that they could significantly affect the evaluation of the project's suitability. When the mine has been reclaimed and the industrial area has been restored, the area can basically be used as before.

[Eriksson, 2013](#), p. VI

The argument demonstrates subjective values that are in the end not grounded in any other discourse than monetary values and hence the value of reindeer herding and Sámi culture is interpreted using the same measuring stick. This argument consequently fails to recognize non-monetary discourses and therefore serves to reinforce institutions that misrecognize and subordinates Sámi people and their values. Arguing that the Sámi villages would only have to stay put during the years when the mine is active and would then be able to use the land as before, fails to recognize the intrusion that a mine represents for the Sámi population. [Martinez-Alier \(2009: p. 86\)](#) argue that languages of valuation such as livelihood and indigenous rights that were powerful in the past are slowly becoming worthless in the era of neoliberalism. This constitutes the actors agreeing to the monetary arguments as normative while portraying the disagreeing party as inferior ([Fraser, 2000](#)).

Secondly, subordinated stakeholders express a feeling of how power is being exercised over them, which manifests itself as a feeling of hopelessness and non-recognition. The Sámi Parliament expresses that “Swedish mineral law makes Sámi powerless when facing the mining establishment” (Personal communication). One of the civil society interviewees argues “just because it is the law it doesn't mean that it is right” (Personal communication).

Our data shows that most of Sámi and civil society interviewees express a feeling of being continuously rendered invisible. Some express

<sup>8</sup> Jåhkâmáhkke (in Sámi), or Jokkmokk (in Swedish), is the name of the municipality where Gállok is located.

<sup>9</sup> JIMAB stands for Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB, and was the new name of the mining company Beowulf Mining Sweden AB.

a feeling of being invisible by the means of authoritative representation which is institutionalized through the legislative power, government discourse and mining inspectorate. Some interviewees expressed such institutionalized misrecognition in relation to colonial power relations. The interviewee expressing this the strongest and clearest was one of the non-local NGO members – and hence, not one of the Sámi representatives – arguing that this kind of power relations prevail in the relationship between the Swedish state and the Sámi population. Arguing that Sweden is a colonial power exercising power over Sámi population in ways creating a dependency relationship is another articulation of injustice in which the subordinate group is being exposed to social patterns of non-recognition, cultural domination and disrespect (see Fraser (1998) for categories of subordination). The quotation below illustrates the asymmetric power relations and Sámi population's concerns due to lack of protection of one's own rights and the rights of others (such as future generations, the environment and Sámi culture):

I think Sweden will be one of the worst states to fight against. I think from the outside, people do not see the Swedish government as if they do not care about the people in their own country. If you are looking at, for example, Africa, then you know they get run over. (...) You don't think that about Sweden. Here you use some fucking intimidation techniques, by which you just gently violate and conquer the country. (...) It is done in a nice way, to ensure that you do not need to bail out anybody, give any rights, sign any conventions (Personal communication with Sámi reindeer herder).

In the current decision-making process, our informant at the County Administrative Board claims, Sámi people are not treated differently compared to other concerned parties. This could be compared to other countries, the same interviewee states, where indigenous people are given a stronger position. Fraser argues that in some cases the subordinated group might need to emphasize their distinctiveness as while in other cases, they may need to have hitherto under acknowledged distinctiveness taken into account (Fraser, 1998). If one chooses to see Gállok as a conflict between indigenous Sámi people and the state, then one could argue that nationalist norms are pervasively institutionalized, that generate ethnically specific status injuries which denies them, the Sámi population, full rights and protections of citizenship (Fraser, 1998: p. 19). If recognizing the distinctiveness, by for instance adopting principles of free, prior and informed consent, and signing the ILO convention 169 the state would better enable the subordinated group, the Sámi population, to be represented and by this be able to participate on par with the rest.

## 5.2. 'More' power in comparison

The second relations of power identified by Avelino and Rotmans (2009) is that some stakeholder(s) exercise 'more' power than others. This is because some stakeholders have greater ability to mobilize resources in comparison with other stakeholders. Hence, stronger stakeholders can have the ability to mobilize 'more' power than other subordinated stakeholders and by this also institutionalize cultural injustices. Fraser states that if recognized, a group is supposed to be able to participate in society on par with the rest (Fraser, 2000). It should then be possible to argue that different stakeholders involved in the decision-making process should equally be equipped in order to be able to participate and make claimants equal, on par with the rest. If this is not the case one stakeholder might hold 'more' power than the other stakeholder.

According to the current legislation and the design of the decision-making process, the company applying for the mining permit is responsible for conducting an analysis of the effects on the reindeer herding. Hence, this means that the company is responsible for paying any cost associated with this, including paying the consultants that conduct the analysis. Based on this assessment, and other documents,

the different uses of the land are evaluated. This process has already been criticized for producing assessments with highly limited Sámi participation, instead resulting in one-way communications from the mining companies (cf. Lawrence and Larsen, 2017).

In the case of Gállok, the Sámi villages felt that they were routinely being disrespected and disparaged by the company. Something that the Municipal interviewees testify to:

(...) the mining company, first Beowulf mining, later on Jokkmokks Iron Mining I would say they made all the mistakes you can make. (...) They did everything to provoke conflict, to get a conflict with the local people. Just going around showing pictures – this is the area we are talking about - do you see any people? No, there are no people. No conflict with the local people because there are no local people. (...) I think they made lots of mistakes in the beginning (Personal communication with the municipality).

Findings pointed to a general mistrust of the impact assessments provided by the company and its consultants, resulting in Sámi people conducting their own analysis of the effects on reindeer herding in case of a mine. One interviewee, a local journalist, testified that there could be good reasons for the Sámi villages to conduct their own analysis. Based on interviews he conducted with consultants working on the environmental impact assessment, he states that: "[i]f it is the company paying the consultant to conduct an investigation, then you get a different result". Our interviewees expressed their mistrust in the analysis conducted by the company. One of the reindeer herder states:

We have chosen to keep the communication with the company via lawyers. (...) We feel it is so important. We can be deceived, but lawyers' are a little harder to deceive at least. (...) It costs money though, and it's a pity (Personal communication).

Often stated among the interviewees from the Sámi Parliament (Personal communication) is the need for free, prior and informed consent as stated by the Article 10 in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>10</sup>:

Indigenous people should be given a strong position particularly in issues concerning land, because we have customary right to these areas. (...) The Sámi does not own the land according to the law, but we have the right to use it. One can no longer use the land if there is a mine. So one should have the right to decide whether it is possible to implement the infringement (Personal communication with Sámi reindeer herder).

Historian Lundmark argues that the reason why Sweden does not sign conventions such as the ILO 169 which deals specifically with the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples is that it would require the state to give Sámi population stronger rights over the land (Lundmark, 2008: p. 243). Meanwhile, Lundmark argues that Sámi people's land rights continue to diminish (Lundmark, 2008: p. 231). By not agreeing to such conventions, the state, as a stronger stakeholder, doesn't recognize position of Sámi stakeholders as prior inhabitants. While Sámi representatives in their interviews referred to customary law giving them the right to continue making use of the land just as they have done for generations, prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt recently responded with reference to the case of Gállok that (Rosengren, 2014):

I say that the legislation must be followed. People have different interests, background and history. Customary traditions meet legislation. Should land be put in use and utilized or remain unchanged?

<sup>10</sup> Article 10: "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return" (United Nations General Assembly, 2007, p. 5)

The legal process leading up to a mine is protracted and according to the interviewee at the Mining Inspectorate of Sweden it can often take around ten years or more. Lundmark (2008) criticizes the fact that Sámi reindeer herders in a case such as Gállok would not get any financial compensation for engaging in these drawn-out and costly legal processes concerning their land rights (p. 237). Similarly, international organizations such as the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination have expressed that there is a need to take urgent action in order to improve the land rights of Sámi in ways that both articulates and protects these rights, and also gives the Sámi meaningful and continuous influence in decision-making processes concerning land (Lundmark, 2008: p. 242).

### 5.3. A “different” power: Activism and Media

Lastly, Avelino and Rotmans (2009) identify a third relation of power. According to them, power can be expressed and exercised in different ways and through this also institutionalize cultural injustices differently. If one stakeholder exercises a power that is dominant in the end, this might foreclose possibilities for other stakeholders to upscale their power despite they use collective action and mobilization strategies. This can be exemplified with two accounts in this case: (i) how activists mobilized against the mine; and (ii) how the media dealt with the issue. Activist mobilization (and perhaps in particular environmentalist activists), partially along with the Sámi population, illustrated a different kind of power compared to other stakeholders when the resistance camp in Gállok started in summer of 2013. That would be something that the state, state agencies and company would not be able to accomplish in a similar way.

How many comparable large political grassroots movements – for in the broad sense I just have to say that this is a political movement – how many equally significant political movements are there to describe in Sweden? (...) This is really a large movement in society (Personal communication with the journalist).

However, the company chose to act against the resistance camp referring to the fact that they have a legal right to be there. In that sense, the company has the institutional power such as law and support of the state's forces such as the police who exercise yet a different kind of power towards the activists. In this sense one might reflect about whom in the end has power ‘over’ whom, going back to the first relation of power. By exercising a different kind of power than the protesters in using the help of the police, the resistance was stopped. Our interviewee who is a NGO member argued that protesters were not taken seriously in their claims and disparaged by authoritative cultural representation. The same interviewee said:

Above all, they used a lot more violence than they would have needed. They had already decided that this was some kind of dreg that had to be removed from the road, that it was no use trying to talk or come to some sort of understanding or anything like that but.... They had a complete picture of who was there and what they were worth as well. People were treated very rough (Personal communication).

To discuss the influence of these actions, we look at a survey conducted by the Fraser Institute in the autumn of 2013 (after the larger demonstrations in the summer of 2013). This shows that companies in general don't feel deterred from investing now compared to the result in previous survey the year before (Cervantes et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2013). Hence, the struggle for recognition by demonstrations has not had an effect in general regarding the will to invest among mining companies. This is another illustration of invisibility and non-recognition of Sámi resistance as their struggle is continuously being neglected.

The second account has to do with how the media dealt with the issue, something that also sheds light to institutionalized cultural

norms. The increasing mining activities in Northern Sweden, which negatively affect part of the population, was for a long time not considered news worthy events. By being selective in regards to what kind of articles are being published, the affected part of the population is consequently subordinated in relation to other social actors (Fraser, 2000). This rendered part of the population invisible, subjected to patterns of communication that were associated with another culture of the dominant group and in this case hostile to their own (Fraser, 1998). Most of our interviewees, including the municipality, described the role of activists as important to make the issue visible both nationally and internationally. During the interviews, it is stated that their years-long resistance had no real breakthrough in media. It was first after the activists that came from outside and who approached the problem with a new method, setting up a camp to prevent the company from entering the site, that the issue was being up-scaled to the media channels. One of our interviewees described it as follows: “It's not a very new question, but it was like it (...) had to be sort of sensational before anyone outside Jokkmokk municipality began to care” (Personal communication with non-local NGO). This also might be an indication of lack of interest in the media when it was mainly about Sámi reindeer herders' struggles for recognition.

According to the radio program *Medierna* broadcasted in late August 2013, the struggles in Gállok was mentioned in ten larger newspaper articles and in a dozen of notifications in the past twelve months (statistics from ten larger newspapers) (Sällström et al., 2013). This can be compared to the struggles over an old oak tree that took place in the capital Stockholm which was mentioned 150 times in ten larger newspaper during the months when this struggle was ongoing (Sällström et al., 2013). This lack of attention to the Sámi cause has been acknowledged by the editor in chief at one of Sweden's largest newspaper, Peter Wolodarski<sup>11</sup> (Sällström et al., 2013). The statistics along with the testimonies given by the interviewees depicts a picture of how the questions over mining in Sápmi have routinely been ignored by media. By not letting this issue take place in the media it has continuously prevented the Sámi people's opportunities to create a public debate and opinion to facilitate the possibility to influence their situation.

According to Swedish journalist and cultural critic Po Tidholm, it is not of news value when another mine opens in Northern Sweden as the Northern part of the country is considered as the “raw material harbour” of the country (Tidholm, 2013). Hence, Tidholm argues such struggle over resources is not worth giving emphasis to in the national media (Tidholm, 2013). Similarly, the northern region is getting less media resources as well, with major news bureau TT closing their offices in the north, stating that the demand to have people on the ground has decreased (Rehnman and Carlsson, 2013). If this is how the media reasons, this even further complicates the possibility to build support from other geographical parts of Sweden as the topic and the people behind the struggle continuously are excluded from communication. This further complicates the possibilities to reach out and build support and gain recognition of the issue in other parts of the country.

The media is one of the major actors which helps to create institutionalized cultural norms by giving privilege to certain topics and making certain groups in society more visible. The role of media in Gállok conflict is an illustration of what Fraser calls an ‘authoritative representational communication’ (Fraser, 1998; Schlosberg, 2007a, 2007b).

## 6. Discussion and concluding remarks

It is increasingly recognized that many of the world's wealthiest nations have been able to uphold a relatively protected environment at

<sup>11</sup> “should have been there earlier (...) should have done more” - Peter Wolodarski (Sällström et al., 2013).

**Table 1**

Justice as recognition framework in understanding power relationships between stakeholders. Summary of authors' analysis of the conflict over a mine in Gállok.

	Stakeholder	Means of domination	Patterns of Justice as recognition
Power 'over'	Business groups State actors	Economic growth discourse (employment from mining sector)	Misrecognized: social legitimacy of less tangible values such as e.g. sacredness, cultural value and indigenous rights. Ex: Sámi cultural values, reindeer herding, and land rights, ILO United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
	Sámi population		
'More' Power	State actors	National legislation	Misrecognized: Historical and customary rights of Sámi population  Ex: ILO requirements of "Free, prior and informed consent" in the decision-making processes
	Sámi population		
'Different' Power	Company Activists	National legislation (use of police force)	Misrecognized: claims of the resistance groups
	Media Sámi population	Non-coverage of the conflict by the Media	Misrecognized: value of the conflict in the North by national media and rest of Sweden

home by polluting abroad (Walker, 2010). Sweden is now being accused of doing the same within its own borders by placing mines, which may provide financial revenues for the state, in what some groups perceive as colonized Sámi. Despite of the effect of mining on resource dependent Sámi communities, this process simultaneously deepens a historical misrecognition of Sweden's indigenous population in regards to their (lack of) influence on decisions concerning land-use.

As have been demonstrated in the analysis, the struggle over a mine in Gállok can be understood as a struggle over more profound causes of inclusion and representation. In this case, such politics of recognition can be understood as institutionalized in the relations of power between different stakeholders, which perpetuate a particular form of institutionalized subordination (Fraser, 2000). In Table 1, we have summarized the different relations of power between stakeholders in the conflict over a mine in Gállok in terms of means of domination and justice (see Table 1).

Any relation of power "that constitutes some categories of social actors as normative and others as deficient or inferior" (Fraser, 2000: p. 114) can, as demonstrated in the analysis, be shown prominent in the way that some stakeholders are perceived to have 'more' power, 'different' kinds of power and/or power 'over' other stakeholders. What became evident from the interviews is the different perceptions of the issue with regards to the impact and significance of constructing a mine. Interviewees from the business sector as well as the municipality testified to the discourses driven by a neo-liberal and profit-focused worldview. As a challenge to the neoliberal discourse, others stakeholders, in particular civil society and Sámi stakeholders expressed an alternative discourse based on a more local, traditional, cultural, environmental and anti-neoliberal worldviews. Similarly, although the struggle over increased mining had actually been ongoing for years, the media has recognized it only recently. By non-communicating the issue to the public, media exercised a different kind of power compared to the other stakeholders. In this sense, media outlets hinder Sámi stakeholders' participation in society on par with other actors and hence, render them invisible and subjected to politics of recognition.

It has been also documented that legal system functions in a way to limit space for Sámi to make claims to affect decisions regarding land-use in Sápmi. This is a responsibility that falls on the legislative power, along with the government to pursue a matter on how to give extended rights to the Sámi population. Research on contemporary wind power development points at these dynamics being apparent there as well (Lawrence, 2014). When and if certain stakeholders in society, such as Sámi stakeholder, are not able to participate as fully recognized members in this process it affectively hinders them from participating in society on par with other actors.

Further research needs to investigate the results from this article, compare it to other cases in Sápmi, and eventually tailor and suggest informed and suitable remedies. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concerns regarding the Swedish Mineral Act and how it "proceed[s] in the Sámi territories without Sámi communities offering their free, prior and informed consent" (UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2013). Since our analysis, the Gállok-case has proceeded to a legal back-and-forth process. Whereas the region's County Administrative Board first recommended that the mine should not be opened due to its effect on reindeer herding (County Administrative Board, 2014), their most recent statement drew stricter geographical boundaries and stipulates the opposite (County Administrative Board, 2015). The latest statement from the Mining Inspectorate referred to an uncertainty concerning to what degree the development of the area would affect the national interest of reindeer herding, and were thus unwilling to judge the impact (Mining Inspectorate of Sweden, 2015). Furthermore, legal practise on these issues recently changed due to a court case in the South of Sweden, as environmental impacts of the entire industry area (including dams, concentration plants, etc.) now has to be considered, which could send the Gállok-case back for another round of environmental impact assessments (Vallgård, 2016). In parallel, the opposition from the affected Sámi communities has continued, reporting the mining project to the World Heritage Centre since it is situated around 30 kilometres from the protected "Laponian Area"-property, introducing another legal instance which the government must clarify its position on (Swedish National Heritage Board, 2014, 2015). Finally, in order to stop what they consider a continued "exploitation of Sápmi", the Sámi Parliament in Sweden adopted a Mining Policy that called for all mineral prospecting to stop until the state abides to international conventions concerning indigenous rights, especially the principles concerning free, prior and informed consent (Sámi Parliament, 2013, 2014). The final decision on all these matters lies on the Swedish government's table.

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