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**A changing Arctic: development, geopolitics
and the political economy of climate change**

Tese de Doutorado

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-graduação em
Relações Internacionais – PUC Rio in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doutor em Relações
Internacionais

Advisor: Prof. Luis Manuel Rebelo Fernandes

Rio de Janeiro,
August 2024



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Abstract

Silva, Pedro Allemand Mancebo; Fernandes, Luis Manuel Rebelo (Advisor). **A changing Arctic: development, geopolitics and the political economy of climate change**. Rio de Janeiro, 2024. 306p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

This thesis seeks to discuss the geopolitics and economic development of the Arctic from the perspective of its impacts on the territories and indigenous peoples of the region. To analyze the region, I start from the debate on the relationship between capitalism and the exploitation of nature and, in particular, the concept of commodity frontiers, to understand how nature is produced as an exploitable element within the capitalist metabolism mediated by value and aimed at capital accumulation. Commodity frontiers, in particular, are zones where techniques and policies are implemented by capitalist and territorialist agencies to appropriate historical natures and insert them into the global metabolism of capital. Starting from a historical-sociological approach, the history of the colonization of the Arctic is reconstructed in order to frame the geopolitics and economic development of the region in a socio-ecological framework, seeking to understand how recent elements of Arctic geopolitics are, in fact, manifestations of long-term trends in the region. Thus, we seek to understand how recent strategies for the Arctic seek to reorganize Sápmi, the territory of the Sámi of Finnish-Scandinavia and Inuit Nunaat, of the Inuit of North America, representing a new wave of colonialism in the region. To do this, we will analyze the colonization process of these two regions in order to understand the economic conformation and insertion of the Arctic into the global economy, as well as to understand the resource management regimes, the indigenous organizations involved in this process and their struggles for self-determination, including the North American land claim agreements and the establishment of the Sámi Parliaments in Sweden, Norway and Finland. Thus, faced with the geopolitical scenario of the 21st century and the effects of climate change, we seek to understand how economic development projects in the region and the geopolitical tensions that run through it reproduce and reinforce colonial structures of exploitation of the human and non-human natures of the Arctic at the service of the global metabolism of contemporary capitalism through its transformation into a global extractive frontier.

Keywords

Arctic; indigenous peoples; geopolitics.

Resumo

Silva, Pedro Allemand Mancebo; Fernandes, Luis Manuel Rebelo (Advisor). **O Ártico em transformação: desenvolvimento, geopolítica e economia política da mudança climática**. Rio de Janeiro, 2024. 306p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

A presente tese busca discutir a geopolítica e o desenvolvimento econômico do Ártico a partir dos seus impactos sobre os territórios e povos indígenas da região. Para analisar a região, parto do debate sobre a relação entre capitalismo e exploração da natureza e, em particular, do conceito de fronteiras de mercadorias, para compreender como a natureza é produzida como um elemento explorável dentro do metabolismo capitalista mediado pelo valor e voltado à acumulação de capital. As fronteiras de mercadorias, em particular, são zonas onde técnicas e políticas são implementadas por agências capitalistas e territorialistas para se apropriar de naturezas históricas e inseri-las no metabolismo global do capital. Partindo de uma abordagem histórico-sociológica, reconstrói-se a história da colonização do Ártico para enquadrar a geopolítica e o desenvolvimento econômico da região em um quadro socioecológico, buscando compreender como elementos recentes da geopolítica do Ártico são, em verdade, manifestações de tendências de longo prazo na região. Assim, busca-se compreender como estratégias recentes para o Ártico buscam reorganizar Sápmi, território dos Sámi da Fino-Escandinávia e Inuit Nunaat, dos Inuítes da América do Norte, representando uma nova onda de colonialismo na região. Para isso, faremos uma análise do processo de colonização dessas duas regiões para compreender a conformação econômica e inserção do Ártico na economia global, bem como entender os regimes de gestão dos recursos, as organizações indígenas envolvidas nesse processo e suas lutas por autodeterminação, passando pelos acordos de reivindicação de terras da América do Norte e o estabelecimento dos Parlamentos Sámi na Suécia, Noruega e Finlândia. Assim, diante do cenário geopolítico do século XXI e dos efeitos da mudança climática, buscamos compreender como os projetos de desenvolvimento econômico da região e as tensões geopolíticas que a atravessam reproduzem e reforçam estruturas coloniais de exploração das naturezas humanas e não-humanas do Ártico a serviço do metabolismo global do capitalismo contemporâneo por meio de sua transformação em uma fronteira extrativa global.

Palavras-chave:

Ártico; povos indígenas; geopolítica; desenvolvimento econômico; neoextrativismo.

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Introduction

Hegemonic theorizations of the emergence of the Arctic as a space of geopolitical and economic disputes present two central problems. A short historical perspective and a focus on an abstract, timeless space hamper the comprehension of the present transformations happening in the region – as well as obscure the discussion about what are the new elements in the geopolitical and economic dynamics studied. Treating the Arctic as a blank space, a geopolitical and economic *tabula rasa* comes from a focus on a short historicization of Arctic issues, restricted to the last two or three decades of economic development and governance of the region. Another element of such theorizations is the absence of the history and political agency of the indigenous populations of the Arctic, as well as the dynamics of colonization and economic development in the *longue durée*. The present chapter seeks to discuss the history of the colonization of the Arctic, focused on the colonization process of the peoples of Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, and the incorporation of the region within the territorial, economic and (geo)political logic of the capitalist interstate system. The guiding thread of this historical review is to understand how the Arctic became a resource frontier and how technologies and policies deployed to integrate it to the nation states paved the way for present-day neo-extractivist development practices in the Arctic.

Understanding contemporary geopolitical and economic dynamics in the Arctic requires an understanding of the Arctic as a colonized and disputed space. More than an inventory of resources and a list of exploration projects, it is necessary to understand how, throughout history, the Arctic has come to be seen as a strategic and economically important region for nation-states seeking to assert and exercise their territoriality in the region. The erasure of indigenous spatialities and political and economic dynamics, as well as the history and impacts of colonization in the region, means that long-term elements are treated as novelties, preventing an understanding of the impacts of climate change on the economic development and geopolitics of the Arctic. This chapter will therefore

discuss the colonization of Inuit Nunaat, the traditional territories of the Inuit (figure 1), and Sápmi (figure 2) with a view to understanding how this process has impacted (and still impacts) the Arctic politically, economically and ecologically.

Our journey begins with a description of the colonial encounter and the various impacts of contact on the space and economic organization of the region, as well as the ecological imbalances experienced during this time. The second part of the chapter aims to understand the more recent processes of recognizing indigenous rights to self-determination. Contact with Euro-American populations, as well as signaling a process of political subordination, also had a profound impact on the relationship between the Inuit and other beings with whom they shared their world. Therefore, in addition to examining the process of Inuit Nunaat's insertion into the logic of the Westphalian state, we will also look at an environmental history of this process, in order to understand the transformations taking place in the relationship between human and non-human nature among the peoples of the region. Finally, by way of conclusion, we will discuss the struggles for indigenous self-determination in the 20th century and their consequences for the region, but also for a theoretical reading of geopolitics and economic development in the Arctic.



Figure 1: Map of Inuit Nunaat. Source: Inuit Circumpolar Council. Available in: <https://iccalaska.org/about/icc/>



Figure 2: Map of Sápmi. Source: Eurominority. Available

Available in: <https://www.eurominority.eu/index.php/en/samiland/>

In the year of 2007, a Russian submarine, in a geological survey mission, planted a flag of the Russian Federation in the maritime floor of the North Pole, an act followed by a plethora of strategic and economic initiatives. In 2008, the first comprehensive geological survey regarding the region's resource endowment was published: the Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal (CARA), produced by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), as well as the publication of the first Russian strategy paper for the Arctic region, formulating measures up to the year 2020. In 2009, the United States published a first version of its Arctic strategy in a presidential directive. Besides the publication of such strategy papers, initiatives were developed in the direction of making economic activity and resource exploitation viable in the Arctic, be it via the construction of productive and extractive infrastructure, be it through the construction of transport infrastructure and attempts to integrate the region to national economies and

international logistic corridors. Military activity in the Arctic also spiked, with individual and joint military exercises mobilizing an ever-growing amount of human and material resources.

This scenario marks the emergence of new economic potentialities and the realization of some old ones¹, together with new possibilities such as the projection of military power over the region and the penetration of hostile forces throughout the region, ignited processes of reorganization of Arctic spaces. These processes take place in the wake of climate change's physical effects, with the dwindling ice coverage and gradual reduction of the freezing periods, which brings about geographical transformations – both in the physical landscape and in the socially produced space of the Arctic. The narratives put together by the strategy documents and discourses of the leaders of Arctic states, however, show an empty land, a space devoid of people and other life forms, a distant borderland region that must now be considered. These narratives evoke the “new” threats to national and international security as ways to justify the measures and policies being crafted by the interstate system to deal with Arctic issues in the wake of climate change. This view is deeply rooted in the erasure of the history of colonization in the Arctic and of the Indigenous peoples of the region – a history of violence, assimilation, expropriation, but also of resistance and political articulation against colonialism.

The present thesis seeks to rediscuss Arctic geopolitics and economic development by two main operations. The first is the recognition of the Arctic as a colonized space and a thorough consideration of the theoretical and political implications of this recognition. The second one is to situate the plethora of strategies, spatial practices and initiatives that comprise the subject of Arctic geopolitics into a socio-ecological framework, seeking to understand not only the regional factors influencing them, but also systemic trends in the global capitalist

¹ The exploration of the sea passages in the Arctic dates from the XVI century and plays an important role in the mapping and exploration of the Arctic by European explorers and colonizers (Officer; Page, 2001).

metabolism that make themselves felt in the Arctic and that are drivers of new activities.

Relevance

Arctic issues are relatively under-explored and under-theorized issue in the field of International Relations (IR) and specially in the International Political Economy (IPE) sub-field. The available production is concentrated either in the field of security and defense or global governance, with little to no production developing critical approaches to Arctic geopolitics and governance, less so considering economic factors influencing the rise of the Arctic as a “hotspot” or as a zone of interest. In the field of International Political Economy, there is also a lack in theoretical production, with many works being geared to the discussion of domestic economic issues and specific projects, deploying concepts and understandings of IPE that erase tensions underlying plans for resource development and economic integration of the Arctic to the national economies of the region and to the international economy. More than that, there are little theoretical efforts seeking to understand geopolitical dynamics and their relation to the socio-ecological crises and contradictions that now punctuate the workings of global capitalism. Situating geopolitics within the web of socio-ecological relations that sustain human life is also important to better understand the relations between economic and geopolitical factors in the conformation of global capitalist economy.

The contradiction between capitalist economic development, even in its “sustainable” form and the livelihoods of indigenous populations and other forms of life in Arctic spaces is also undertheorized from an IPE standpoint and so are the human/nature relations. We believe the discussion of Arctic geopolitics and economic development has the potential to articulate a multitude of reflections on relevant contemporary issues – from the climate crisis to the discussion of other modes of economic and political organization to the ongoing colonial violence that permeates the structures of the international system. Departing from the field of

IPE, the present research seeks to contribute to theorization and reflection on the global extractive frontiers, developing a critical approach that sheds light over the economic and spatial dynamics crisscrossing the region. More than that, we seek to develop an approach to geopolitics and economic development that can be applied to understand other. Another important element for the present work is the comprehension of the Indigenous political articulations and responses to the emergence of the Arctic as a geopolitical hotspot and an economic and extractive frontier.

Another important point of this research is to problematize the environmental injustice and environmental racism dimensions of Arctic geopolitics. Analysis of geopolitical tensions in the region have been developed on a state-centric framework, with heavy emphasis on interstate relations in their discussions. Reflections on this level have circumvented the discussion of the colonial relations and persistent inequalities and injustices inflicted upon indigenous peoples in the Arctic. These discussions, in general, have also been oblivious to the social and ecological implications of climate change beyond the threat/opportunity framework. De-naturalizing this interstate character of Arctic geopolitics is an important step to see new dimensions of political struggles and ongoing processes of colonization and dispossession in the Arctic, as well as dynamics of environmental racism and injustice embedded in the reorganizations of Arctic spaces and economies.

All over the world, indigenous peoples are mobilizing and rising against growing threats to their lands and livelihoods represented by the advance of resource development projects. From the Arctic to the Amazon, we see peoples and movements articulating around climate change, not only in terms of mitigation and adaptation, but also in terms of reorganizing the relationship between human and non-human nature in new or ancestral basis, but one that is more harmonious, demanding a less predatory view of nature, economy and living in this world. This research also seeks to discuss the world that needs to be superseded so that these visions and practices can thrive and chart a new path for humanity's history.

Objectives, Hypothesis and Research Questions

The research questions guiding the present project can be summarized as follows:

- 1 – How are political and economic projects in the Arctic impacting the spatial organization of the Arctic?
- 2 – How are climate change and capitalist economic development in the Arctic affecting the indigenous peoples' spatialities and livelihoods? How are peoples and communities in the Arctic organizing political and economic responses to these phenomena?
- 3 – What tensions emerge from the processes of spatial and territorial reorganizations in the Arctic? What factors drive the emergence of the Arctic as a space of economic and political disputes?

The hypothesis guiding our work is that one of the consequences of climate change is the emergence of a new wave of Arctic colonialism. As the Arctic becomes a space of disputes both in geopolitical and economic terms, the region becomes a new frontier of accumulation – one where the control over land and territory gains importance for capitalist development, and where indigenous self-determination and self-government must be aligned with state and capitalist agency to further development projects based on the extraction of new resources. Thus, spatial and territorial reorganizations in the region become strategic for economic and geopolitical purposes. Such reorganizations are driven not only by a perceived need to seize economic and strategic opportunities – or perceived threats emerging with climate change – in the region but are also geared towards the expansion of the instruments to exercise control over the Arctic, disarticulating spatialities other than those developed and deployed by the Nation-State. The expansion of economic activities in the region and of the military infrastructure dedicated to the defense of the territory is impacting the livelihoods, environment and homelands of Indigenous peoples of the Arctic (both nomad and settled), as

well as non-human life forms. This is manifest through both direct climate-related transformations and human activity driven by the prospect of capital accumulation and perceived threats to national defense and regional stability.

The main objective of the present thesis is to analyze the political tensions emerging from the processes of spatial and economic reorganization in the Arctic. Secondary objectives include the mapping of the projects of economic development for the region and of socio-environmental conflicts, studying the political organization of the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic and identifying the tensions between the spatiality of these populations and those of the littoral States.

Literature Review

The increased activity in the Arctic has also provoked interest from analysts and scholars from many fields of knowledge. In the field of IR, the study of emergent international dynamics in the Arctic has been studied through two main theoretical lenses: geopolitics and governance. Arctic Geopolitics and associated concepts are deployed by scholars aligned with neo-realist schools of thought, while Arctic governance is mobilized by those associated with neoliberal/neo-institutionalist approaches. These two interpretive keys are generally deployed in attempts to make sense of the developing phenomena in the Arctic, but also abstract important transformations taking place in the region and that represent important challenges to theorization in the field of IR. The physical and social transformations brought about by climate change, the gradual incorporation of the Arctic to the global economic and financial circuits and, in a more general level, the changes occurring in the relation between states, societies and the northern polar spaces. This difficulty is rooted in what John Agnew dubs the “spatial assumptions of international relations theory” (1994), and by the ways in which such theories treat space.

Agnew (1994, 2010) identifies three spatial assumptions underlying international relations theory, all of them springing from the privilege given to the “national-territorial conception of the State” (Agnew, 1994, p.91). The national and territorial State is treated as ontologically preceding societies and as being their container – which restricts the definition of society to the national level. The second assumption refers to the stark differentiation and polarization between the domestic and the international spheres, which reinforces the inside/outside divides, therefore erasing the interactions between social phenomena operating at different scales. The third assumption is the reification of national spaces as discrete units of secure and sovereign spaces, which decontextualizes and de-historicizes processes of state formation and disintegration. Among the main ontological and epistemological implications of such assumptions, it is important to highlight the erasure of theorizations about space and the processes of production of space in the field of IR. This absence, in turn, renders the national-territorial State as an ahistorical, timeless object and presents its spatialities as a given, outside the scope of inquiry.

Besides these common elements, it is important to comprehend the shortcomings of the approaches to Arctic geopolitics and governance developed by the mainstream theoretical approaches of IR. As noted, two main interpretive keys have been deployed to read the emerging phenomena in the region, reading them either in their relation to “Arctic geopolitics” (Borgeson, 2008, 2014; Blunden, 2010; Antrim, 2010) or “Arctic governance” (Young, 2009; Bailes; Heininen, 2012; Koivurova, 2009, Dadwal, 2014). Those who discuss the Arctic from a “geopolitical” standpoint, departing from a neorealist framework, tend to present a heavy focus on defense and security issues, as well as how material capabilities are being adapted and deployed in securing sovereignty over Arctic territories and increasing national security apparatuses. This is generally done through the reading of how the physical effects of climate change may impact state’s perception of (foreign) threats in the Arctic, as well as outlining (domestic) economic opportunities emerging in the region. The perspective developed and deployed by authors in this side of the theoretical divide is centered on the state

as the main (if not the only) important actor for studying Arctic issues, altogether excluding other forms of political and social organization from the scope of the research. The narrative being developed within this field of scholarship generally tend to produce the Arctic as an “empty” space and tend to treat contemporary economic phenomena as part of the background, leaving it largely untheorized. Realist and neorealist scholarship on Arctic geopolitics also generated three important narratives framing the debate – and even with some adhesion in the public. The first is the “Arctic resource boom” – a narrative that places great importance on recent discoveries on the resource endowment of the region and its relation to global geopolitical tensions and regional disputes. A second narrative is “Arctic exceptionalism”, that stresses a relative insulation of Arctic geopolitics from global geopolitical trends due to the possibility of cooperation even in the face of the deterioration of the NATO-Russia relations, specially before 2014.

Outside the field of IR, there an important body of Arctic research develops within the field of political geography, specially by authors debating critical geopolitics (Dodds, 2010, Dittmer, Moisio and Dodds, 2011). The debates on Arctic geopolitics developed within this framework have presented deep discussions on spatialization, the materiality of Arctic geopolitics (Dittmer, 2014) and on the concrete practices that seek to link state and space. An important element of this line of research is the construction of theoretical and methodological tools to denaturalize and historicize the state-space relation, coupled with an attention to the materiality of spatial practices.

Neoliberal and neo-institutionalist approaches, on the other hand, are generally concerned with the production and implementation of new regimes for governing the activity in the region. There is also a heavy focus on the multilateral governance structures that produce regimes, rules and norms for the development of economic activity and political initiatives in the region. Here, the state-centric aspect of international relations theory is mitigated through the recognition of the agency and importance of non-state actors in the policy-making and decision-making processes. This is specially the case with the indigenous

peoples' organizations, recognized as participants in the Arctic Council (for example) under the category of Indigenous Permanent Participants and having their insights and participations officially considered when dealing with new regimes, new norms and new institutions in the Arctic.

The mainstream view of Arctic geopolitics and governance has also been oblivious to the history of colonization and territorialization of Arctic spaces and the attempts at integrating the indigenous peoples of the region. The “empty Arctic” view goes hand in hand with the idea of the need for states to occupy, integrate and develop the region, often without reflection about the needs, views, and decisions of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. Plans for economic development and infrastructure building are often discussed as ways to territorialize the Arctic and extend the governing power of the littoral states to the empty northern spaces. The mainstream IR discourse on Arctic issues has showed a tendency to produce a “whiter”, more European Arctic as the objective of state intervention, minimizing or altogether ignoring the presence and the history of Arctic indigenous peoples and the ways in which they have organized to struggle against colonialism, their views and ideas on economic development and the ways in which they organize politically to figure out and tend to their own demands. Against this theoretical backdrop, I propose here an eclectic theoretical framework that is useful to redirect our gaze and allow for the description and theorizing of Arctic international relations that considers the diversity of political and economic formations present in the region.

While neorealist IR scholarship tend to treat indigenous peoples of the Arctic in institutional and legal terms only in the measure that they might pose a problem for Arctic strategies – altogether excluding them from the theorizing process – neo-institutionalist IR, via the debate on governance, usually frame their issues through the lenses of recognition and representation. Recognition of the six Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council is treated as a sign of inclusion and participation of such peoples and their demands in the global governance agenda. The work of Ingrid Medby (2019) on state personnel and Arctic identities provides a strong critique of such assumption by adopting the perspective of a

“peopled” State. Seeing how the practitioners of Arctic policy and their everyday activities reinforce state hegemony in the development of Arctic policies, the “peopling” of the State is useful to problematize readings based on “governance”, since they rely on the (formal) recognition, consultation and participation of indigenous peoples. Switching from the State as a monolithic, abstract entity to a more nuanced, theoretically peopled territory helps us to comprehend how discourses and practices of inclusion are instrumentalized to silence indigenous voices and demands, restraining participation and consultation of those populations to the instances where their “representation” is formally recognized – generally the domestic/local public sphere, the national-territorial State. Another important element brought by Medby’s (2019) work is the attention to the moments when Indigenous organizations occupy a relevant space – moments generally related to the performance of roles which remind the constitutive outsides of Arctic States and highlights elements of radical otherness in relation to such states and their (European) citizens.

The question of state-centered hegemony in producing rules and regimes brings us to one of the main issues with mainstream interpretations of Arctic geopolitics and economic development: the absence of a reflection on the social forces at play within the Arctic and their relations to each other and their instrumentalization of the State. Moreover, these perspectives have treated climate change and other environmental issues as background issues, as given facts – and not as co-produced consequences of capitalist exploitation and enduring colonialism. This has led to discussions on the consequences of climate change and environmental crises that, by not interrogating their origins, nor the origins of the capitalist state system, do not see the composition of injustices that make these very geopolitics possible. The importance of situating geopolitics within a framework of socioecological relations of humanity – the web of life – is that it allows us to problematize state hegemony, environmental racism and injustice. This discussion, on the other hand, helps us to think of other definitions and other articulations for environmental justice, one that is informed by the political struggles being carried on in multiple points of this world by colonized

peoples seeking self-determination and the defense/preservation of their traditional lands and livelihoods.

Theoretical Framework

Neither governance nor geopolitics provide the theoretical and analytical tools to theorize critically on the spatial transformations the Arctic is undergoing, and less so about the tensions and issues that emerge from them. Both perspectives also lack a critical evaluation of the political economy of spatial reorganizations, climate change and capitalist expansion over the Arctic, treating both spatial and territorial reorganizations and economic phenomena as objects of government or as part of a background or a context, with little theorization effort of the connections between these “background elements” and the regimes and strategies produced to address Arctic issues. This is also coupled with the erasure of the history of the territorialization and colonization of the Arctic, a central feature of the integration process of northern polar spaces to the territorial jurisdiction of the littoral states and their Westphalian statecraft. This distorts the perspective on the recognition and participation of Arctic indigenous peoples, both as agents in the region’s geopolitics and as stakeholders in the regional governance structures. Leaving aside the colonial dimension of the relation between the littoral states and the Arctic indigenous peoples also operates an erasure of the political articulations created by this population, both in the resistance to colonization and assimilation, both in face of the new challenges that emerge in the Arctic.

The effects of climate change in the physical geography of the region are opening this area up for geopolitical and economic expansion. The building of the state apparatuses to intervene and promote strategic and economic objectives in the region is associated with changes in the international interest of states in Arctic territories – be it the exploitation of the resources present in the region or the possibility of navigating the northern polar seas. A central part of the present study is the intertwining of such issues, which demands a theoretical framework capable

of dealing not only with the political economy of such process, but also capable of comprehending how such economic interests act throughout different scales.

The confluence of the physical effects of climate change with new projects of economic development in the Arctic calls for an eclectic theoretical and conceptual framework – one that allows for the analysis not only of the economic development projects and their geopolitical implications, but also to their effects over space, spatialities and mobilities affected by Arctic policies. Our first step is to understand the role of competitive international pressures over the emergence of the Arctic as a geopolitical hotspot. The first point of departure is related to classic International Political Economy approaches, particularly the insights developed by Susan Strange and José Luís Fiori on the relation between power, economic development and the development of norms and regimes. Measures deployed by the littoral states to stimulate economic activity and seek economic and resource development in the Arctic are a way to seize the benefits of the opening of the region, as well as of the increase in maritime traffic in the region. These measures also seek to ensure influence over the regimes being developed by international governance structures to govern initiatives in the region. These elements recall issues related with the construction of positions of structural power (Strange, 1998), as well as the competitive pressures and dynamics inherent to the capitalist interstate system (Fiori, 2007, 2014). These measures are also connected to the creation and development of capitalist structures of accumulation and their relation to non-capitalist political and economic structures – the so-called process of original accumulation (Marx, 2011 [1867]) and contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004).

Moreover, due to the importance of socio-ecological phenomena in contemporary Arctic dynamics (and in the contemporary world), we also need to discuss the relation between capitalist accumulation, colonization and control of land – thus turning to the ecological readings of Marx developed by Saito (2017), John Bellamy Foster (2022) and Jason Moore (2015) to grasp how economic and environmental shifts intertwine and produce new spatialities and new geopolitical situations. All of this take place in contexts where national economic development

projects are increasingly based on resource development projects, evoking the need to discuss the relation between Arctic policies and neo-extractivist capital accumulation (Svampa, 2019), with a heavy focus on the construction of local economic enclaves, geared towards the extraction and export of commodities – especially hydrocarbons.

The analyses developed by Susan Strange, useful when discussing established structures of power and their intricacies, are lacking for an analysis of the emergence of such structures and their geographical expansion. While it is tempting to think of such processes as merely an expansion of structures to such regions, this step leaves the materiality of such expansion and implementation under-theorized. While comprehending the power distribution and the relations at play in such spaces is important, there is also a need to think about how the consolidation is involved in a dialectics between the spatial and territorial reorganizations required by such processes and how these are, in turn, linked to the consolidation of these power structures. The increased interest in the promotion of economic development and security in the Arctic regions brings out demands for transportation, productive and financial networks that enable the realization of economic projects. These, on the other hand, are connected to the construction of new infrastructure in the region – which has been a main driver of the involvement of actors external to the Arctic in the region's issues. Connections being weaved with the progress of the development projects now appearing in the Arctic must deal with the issue of preparing that space for capitalist exploitation and accumulation. The expansion of this mode of production and economic development in the Arctic is related not only to the building of infrastructure, but also to the disarticulation of non-capitalist modes of life and of being in space.

Two important elements, easily left aside in the debates over Arctic issues, are the presence and political organizations of indigenous peoples in the region, with modes of living and economic formations other than those hegemonic in the littoral states. Gitte Duplessis (2020) takes an important step towards the reversion of such trend in her study of the tension between the spatialities of the Sámi people and those of the Norwegian State. Analyzing such tension, Duplessis

(2020), deploys the concepts of smooth and striated space, formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, highlighting the differences between Sámi modes of life and relation to space and those deployed and practiced by the national-territorial states in the Arctic. It is important to note that this discussion is done mainly through the discussion of the relation between the main activity of the Sámi – reindeer herding – and the economic development projects formulated by the Norwegian State for its Arctic regions. One key takeaway from the work developed by the author is the concept of “striation activities” – used to refer to the process of striating a space through the construction of infrastructure and the controlling of circulation and economic activity in an area.

The adoption of the “striation” framework is important because it politicizes the tension between settler and colonized spatialities. This is also done when discussing the materiality of the construction of transport or even leisure-related infrastructure. Understanding the tensions at play within the Arctic is important, not only in terms of interstate tensions – and the possibilities opened by the concept of ‘striation activities’ allows us to access a series of violences brought about or heightened by the social effects of climate change. Another important feature of the concept, albeit underexplored by the author, is the possibility of connecting the spatial reorganizations and the tensions ensued by striation processes to the economic transformations in the Arctic. An unexplored element in Duplessis’s work are the economic factors motivating such striation activities, especially the construction of new transportation infrastructure in the Arctic. This calls for a critical evaluation of how such processes try to disarticulate indigenous and non-capitalist modes of living to enable contemporary processes of capital expansion and accumulation on new economic and geographic frontiers.

We, then, turn to the critique of political economy articulated by Marx and the subsequent evolution of Marxist thought, with emphasis on recent strands of eco-socialist theories of capitalism. A central issue is the discussion of the conditions of possibility of capitalist mode of production. This is addressed in the discussion of the processes of primitive accumulation, whereby the bourgeoisie assumes control over the means of production and economically reorganizes

social relations of production under the logic of capital accumulation. In the first book of “Capital”, primitive accumulation is tightly connected to a range of social and political processes that build up the political and economic framework upon which the capitalist mode of production will function. These processes are also related to the disarticulation of other forms of social and economic organization. This is intimately linked to the construction of the colonial system and of the nation-State, which play an important role in the rise of the capitalist mode of production and in capital accumulation afterwards.

The creation of the conditions of possibility for the exploitation of natural resources outside Europe are, then, intimately connected to the building of national economies and of the global economy in the core of the capitalist world economy. This process aims to disarticulate non-capitalist social and economic structures, expropriating non-European populations from their land, resources and modes of living. This dispossession, then, is instrumental in creating regimes of private property and economic exploitation of human and non-human nature. The debate put forward by Marx and by Marxist theorizations of the relation between capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production is also productive to think processes of annihilation and assimilation of indigenous peoples. While the relation between geopolitics, governance and the indigenous modes of life and economic organization is clearly related to a tension between the spatialities deployed by indigenous peoples and the littoral states, the search for the imposition of a striated spatiality to the Arctic, to think of such tension is also to think of the creation of the conditions of possibility for the economic and geopolitical expansion over the Arctic. In the process of creating the conditions of capitalist accumulation and development, State intervention is directed at the occupation of space through the destruction or assimilation of non-capitalist modes of life and spatialities present within spaces that are being claimed as territory. Further development of Marxist thought, specially through the works of Rosa Luxemburg and David Harvey, points to the continuity of such processes throughout the 20 and 21st century – condensed in the creation of the concept of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004).

Harvey (2004) departs from Lefebvre's reading that capitalism survives through the production of space and discusses how temporal and spatial dislocations have an important role in the process of capital accumulation. Capital, in its constant process of expansion in a context of spatially limited social formations, tends to crisis of overaccumulation, in which surpluses of capital and labor represent a chronic problem. Spatial and temporal dislocations act as temporary fixes for such a problem seeking to allow for the continuity of capital expansion, be it through long term domestic expenditure, be it through its expansion to new spaces, where accumulation processes can be accelerated. If, in Marx, this process establishes the conditions for the functioning of capital accumulation, Harvey points to a continuity in the employment of the violent methods that characterized primitive accumulation and dispossession as central to the functioning of capitalism as a world economy. This spatial focus serves two important purposes – highlighting the violences underlying the opening of the new frontiers of accumulation and comprehending international linkages being mobilized in these processes. Another important element brought up by Harvey's proposal is that it also allows for the discussion of infrastructure investments in the Arctic and their relation to the global development of capitalism. Infrastructure projects implemented and planned for the region are linked to strategies of attracting investments. A brief overview of such projects shows how the Arctic is increasingly framed as an extractive frontier, with actors seeking to develop activities based on resource extraction and exploitation, due to increasing awareness about the region's resource endowment and the perception of increased accessibility. These activities can also be read through the lenses of "neo-extractivism" (Tetreault, 2018; Svampa, 2019), and are in tandem with the various forms of being and occupying space in the Arctic.

Svampa's (2019) perspective is particularly useful to the present research for two main reasons. The author delineates an interesting perspective on neo-extractivist modes of capital accumulation and economic development, highlighting the environmental, political and economic consequences brought up by the development of large-scale agriculture, mining and infrastructure projects.

Although her attention is in Latin America, the author not only briefly discusses the emergence of neo-extractivism on the Global North, but also theorizes its role in the 21st century capitalist global economy, with an interesting focus to the concrete realization of economic potentialities based on resource extraction and on the weaving of transportation networks articulated to such activities. The concept of neo-extrativism deployed and operationalized by Svampa (2019) is, then, invaluable for a discussion of Arctic issues that also seeks bring front and center the colonial violence and expropriation carried out in the name of “economic development” or “progress” in Arctic spaces.

The second reason is the idea of an “eco-territorial turn in struggles” (Svampa, 2019), formulated through the analysis of the political articulations and struggles carried out against a plethora of neo-extractivist projects and the alternatives emerging from the practices of communities and movements engaged in these fights – many of them comprised of indigenous peoples and organizations. One of the main features of such turn is the search for new forms of valuing territories and nature – with particular attention to those which are not geared towards commodifying, pricing and exploiting nature. In short, one of the consequences of the eco-territorial turn in the struggles against environmental degradation and capitalist expropriation is thinking territory and nature in terms other than the economic, accumulation-geared terms that have been imposed over spaces and communities, as well as a constant re-evaluation of the relationship between the human and non-human natures.

Perspectives presented here allow the articulation of several phenomena present in contemporary Arctic issues – especially by shifting the focus from political and institutional phenomena to a perspective that departs from the political economy of a changing space. The idea of structural power (Strange, 1998) is an important tool to trace and understand interstate tensions and competitive pressures that now emerge in the Arctic. These pressures are important drivers of capitalist development projects seeking to make the most from the perceived new economic (and strategic) opportunities in the Arctic. To avoid State-centric explanations of international phenomena, the present

research advocates for a focus on the spatial and territorial reorganization projects that now emerge in the Arctic. The spatial approach proposed here, coupled with elements from critical political economy, is an important step in comprehending phenomena obscured by approaches centered on the agency of the national-territorial State, as well as for comprehending the broader spatialities and tensions at play in the projects regarding economic development and navigation in the Arctic.

Methodology and Research Strategy

To leave behind debates on the Arctic based on narrow understandings of governance and geopolitics, we proposed a theoretical framework geared towards comprehending spatial transformations in the Arctic and the political economy of a changing landscape. The debate on spatial tensions and transformations cannot leave aside the concrete forms that such phenomena take in the Arctic – specially the construction of transport infrastructure and the actual and planned projects for resource development in the region and its impacts over Arctic spaces and the spatialities of non-capitalist Arctic indigenous peoples spatialities and modes of living. Three elements are central for the development of the present research: a comprehension of the actual state of activity (economic and otherwise) in the Arctic, the plans for the development of economic and military/defense activity and the spatial distribution and unfolding of such projects. The methodology employed here seeks to deal with those three dimensions and understand the interactions between them, conjugating quantitative data analysis with qualitative research that seeks to comprehend how the treatment of Arctic issues has been evolving as well as how they are shaping Arctic spaces and spatialities anew.

Quantitative data on navigation, investments in infrastructure and resource development projects (actual and planned) in the region will be analyzed as part of an effort to get an accurate depiction of the present state of economic activity and navigation in the Arctic – seeking to comprehend the spatial distribution of

resource development projects and the actual conformation of the transportation infrastructure in the region, contrasting them with the spatial distribution of Arctic Indigenous peoples and their homelands. To study such interactions, we will consider the strategies produced by two Arctic States – those with permanent membership in the Arctic Council –, one of them external to the Arctic, but currently involved in the region’s political and economic issues, and two organizations representing indigenous peoples of the Arctic – seeking to understand their framing of Arctic issues. By “framing” here, we mean the coordinates in which these governments and indigenous organizations debate and formulate policies to deal with Arctic themes. Initially, we propose the study of the Arctic strategies produced by the United States and Russia (Arctic States), the Arctic tactics developed by China (extra-Arctic State) and the ones produced by the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Sámi Council – Indigenous peoples’ organizations and Indigenous Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. For the purposes of the present research, we will consider the strategies formulated from 2007 to 2020, a period of heightened activity in the Arctic and of a boom in the production of strategies and plans to the region.

This documental research, coupled with techniques of process tracing, seeks to map government and non-government framings and treatment of emerging Arctic issues by the actors mentioned above. This approach was chosen because of its usefulness for finding explanations on the individual level, but also allowing “inferences related to explanations on a structural or macro level” (Cunha; Silva, 2014, translated by the author). The employment of process-tracing methodologies is also useful because it, in like manner, allows a description of the evolution of the subject studied over time, as well as the identification of the elements influencing the “trajectory” of such evolution. In our case, we will seek to describe and comprehend the ways in which different actors, over a period of thirteen years, have changed their comprehension through the study of how Arctic issues were/are being framed by the actors in their policies and how has such framing evolved over time (and, specially, what elements drove such changes). This part of the study consists of a close reading of the Arctic

strategies and policies published by state agencies and indigenous organizations, geared to understand the narratives and categories deployed to frame the relation between political entities and Arctic spaces – as well as how the policies outlined in the strategy papers seek to reframe and redraw the Arctic – be it as a space of dispute, unexplored wealth, a home, a frontier and so on.

The deployment of process-tracing methodologies, here, is useful for two main purposes: the first is to see how the studied agents delineate and elaborate causal nexus for their actions, and how such nexus provides justification for their interventions. The second purpose is making possible the discussion of how different actors in the region are translating (and re-translating) their relationship with Arctic spaces. The focus on political economy and spatial reorganizations, however, demands an approach that can also account for the concrete/material impacts of Arctic policies, climate change and economic development. Our analysis then turns to the conditions of possibility of Arctic policies and Arctic economic development, specially through how state-capital assemblages are imposing new spatialities over the Arctic, with special attention to how these plans are in tension with the lived and used spatialities of the Arctic nature and indigenous peoples. This, in turn, leads us to an analysis of socio-environmental conflicts in the Arctic and the relation between policies and measures established by state and non-state actors and the concrete situations of conflict over land, territory and in the Arctic.

A central part of the present project is related to the political engagement of indigenous peoples of the Arctic. As a step to bring such issues front-and-center, our spatial framing of the Arctic will be defined by the traditional territories of the two indigenous peoples that are going to be studied in-depth: Sápmi, the Sámi homeland, located in northern Scandinavia and eastern Russia, and Inuit Nunangat, homeland of the Inuit peoples. The choice of structuring the present thesis based on such spatialities is related to the comprehension of the Arctic as a colonial space, as well as recognizing the colonial violence and colonial politics of the constellation of phenomena currently dubbed as “Arctic Geopolitics” or “Arctic economic development”. Inuit Nunangat and Sápmi are also spaces

traversed by rising geopolitical tensions – being a zone of contact between North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia, for example – and by spatial and economic reorganization driven by the possibilities brought about by the physical effects of climate change over the Arctic landscape. These phenomena crisscross Arctic spaces and are on the basis of current Arctic policies, most of them aimed at expanding state and capital control over previously “neglected” spaces, reinforcing colonial violences brought about by euro-American understandings of government, statecraft, territory and economy that were the basis of the attempts at assimilation and extermination of indigenous peoples living in Arctic spaces.

To address such task, the present thesis is divided in six chapters. The first part, comprised by the first three chapters, provides a critical panorama of the readings produced in the field of International Relations about Arctic geopolitics and governance and the construction of alternative analytical tools. In the first chapter, the accounts on Arctic geopolitics and governance will be revisited to comprehend the coordinates in which the Arctic is inserted in the IR debates and how International Relations theories are being mobilized to read emerging phenomena on the region, pointing to their shortcomings on theorizing a changing Arctic. The second deals with the task of building an alternative theoretical and analytical perspective that provides for a larger comprehension of Arctic issues that move beyond such narrow accounts of geopolitics and governance. The third chapter, then, turns to a historical account of Arctic colonization and territorialization, especially through its impacts on the Inuit and Sámi modes of living. This chapter, besides providing an account of the colonial encounter in Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, will also seek to map out indigenous resistance movements and the struggles that gave rise to the Sámi Council and to the Inuit Circumpolar Council. The second part discusses the emerging economic development and infrastructure building projects, presenting and debating the spatial and territorial reorganizations they entail, in parallel with the evolution of the Arctic strategies. The first chapter will discuss the projects formulated by Arctic States, with focus to the United States and Norway. The second will deal with an actor external to the Arctic, focusing on the Chinese projects to the region and the involvement of

Chinese capital in projects of infrastructure construction along the Arctic – the so-called Polar Silk Road (China, 2018), and the evolution of the treatment given to the Arctic by the Chinese State in documents such as its Arctic strategy of 2008 and its Five-Year Plan formulated in the period studied. The last chapter will discuss indigenous framings of Arctic issues. The last part of the thesis will debate the tensions and articulations emerging from this scenario, as well as the theoretical inputs that discussing the spatial transformations that emerge from climate change and from the economic and territorial reorganizations happening in the Arctic brings up for the theorization in the context of International Relations.

1. Theorizing the changing Arctic

The Arctic has long been considered a challenging region. With a climate deemed hostile by European and North American explorers, and a geographical position that renders navigation technologies developed by Western science and statecraft useless, the region has put to test the limits and assumptions of those who devoted efforts to exploring, mapping and rendering the region legible for their Euro-American counterparts. The history of Arctic exploration and colonization is ripe with error, misconceptions, myths and even mirages² that harmed and delayed the mapping of the region. Difficulty in the exploration and mapping of the territory, coupled with a perception of a pristine nature has also fueled masculine fantasies of adventure and tutelage, resulting in States rescuing their histories of Arctic exploration as a way to pose themselves as “deserving” of acting as “wardens” or “guardians” of the region.

Likewise, the study of geopolitical and economic dynamics in the Arctic region poses several challenges for the fields of International Relations and International Political Economy. While, nowadays, most of the Arctic has been turned into discrete territorial jurisdictions and integrated into regional, national and global economic relations, the region and its peoples continue to challenge established categories of territory, autonomy, governance and economic development deployed to try and make sense of political and economic developments taking place in the Arctic. Moreover, the recent interest in the Arctic due to recent discoveries of the region’s resources and increased navigability is coupled with the advances of the physical effects of climate change in its landscapes, adding more complexity to the construction of economic and political arrangements to regulate activities in the area.

The Arctic is changing. In the Arctic, global crises culminate. Climate and physical changes in the landscape meet with social, political, economic and

² Many expeditions seeking the Northwest Passage were called off once they got to a point in northern Canada where the mirage of a mountain range made expedition leaders give up on further exploration of the route.

geopolitical ones to create an incredibly complex environment. In face of this changing landscape, established understandings on themes such as geopolitics, economic development and climate governance in the field of IR fall short of understanding dynamics and explaining the surge in State and capitalist interest in both exploiting Arctic resources as well as reorganizing the region's geography to better serve strategic and economic purposes. Moreover, readings produced in the field of International Studies have tended to reproduce narratives on Arctic geopolitics and economic development that reinforce myths and misconceptions. This is generally done through a complete erasure of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, the history of Arctic colonization and their political agency, both in resisting colonialism and in shaping and discussing contemporary Arctic issues. Many theorizations thus engage the Arctic as *terra nullius*, buying state-centric narratives instead of looking at them critically.

The present chapter seeks to outline a theoretical framework that takes into account three factors: the importance of the physical effects of climate change in the Arctic, the presence, politics and political organizations of Arctic indigenous peoples and how these two intertwine with the rise of interest in the part of States and private enterprises in the Arctic. To this end, we mobilize concepts and theoretical insights from different fields of knowledge, especially from IPE, IR and critical scholarship produced elsewhere. Beginning with classic IPE concepts such as “structural power” (Strange, 1982), “global power” (Fiori, 2007, 2014), “primitive accumulation” (Marx, [1867] 2011) and “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2004), we seek to comprehend the entanglement between economic and geopolitical dynamics developing in the Arctic, as well as their impact over Indigenous livelihoods and claims to self-determination, self-reliance and self-government in Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi.

To critically understand the phenomena described here, our research engages in critical ecological readings of Marxian theories, especially those developed by John Bellamy Foster, Kohei Saito and Jason Moore. Foster and Saito provide important insights on the social and ecological impacts of capitalist development, particularly through their theorizations on the ecological

implications of capital accumulation. Moore, on the other hand, offers interesting conceptual tools to theorize such ecological and social changes in colonized contexts, especially in relation to the exploitation of natural resources and the expansion of political techniques of control over land. We also draw on insights decolonial ecological thought (Ferdinand, 2020), to study these regions not from a state-centric, colonial point of view, but to align our perspective with the experience of the colonized peoples of the Arctic.

To accomplish such objectives, the chapter is divided in four sections. In the first, we bring to the discussion recent data on the presence of resources in the Arctic and economic activity in the region, as well as a brief historical overview of the colonization of the territory. This step is important to comprehend the social and economic background against which our analysis is developed. The second section is dedicated to problematizing mainstream readings of Arctic geopolitics, governance and economic development, with special attention to the perpetuation of the “empty” Arctic narrative. The literature review offered here seeks to comprehend how the conversation on Arctic international relations developed over the last years and how different elements of Arctic economic development and geopolitics have been treated in the disciplinary fields of IR and IPE.

The following sections seek to articulate our theoretical framework in three steps. In the first, our theorization turns to the surge in political and economic interest in the Arctic region, to the renewed strategic value of the region in the contemporary geopolitical scenario and to the emerging economic opportunities that enable the development of Arctic policies over the last fifteen years. Understanding that these policies have impacts over the economic and spatial organization of Arctic spaces, we then proceed to theorize the processes of primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession are playing out in the region and how they affect Indigenous communities. Developing further on this reflection, we then turn to understand the specific characteristics of the neo-extractivist model of capital accumulation developing in the Arctic and to its political and economic impacts. To develop a critical approach to assess such impacts, we then turn to a reflection on the presence and political agency of

indigenous peoples in the Arctic and how their struggles for self-determination and self-government interact with the increasing pressures over the natural resources and territories springing from strategic, economic and even physical changes in Arctic landscapes.

1.1 What is the Arctic?

Although Arctic geopolitics has seen a recent surge in interest, economic and strategic interest in the region has a long history. Ever since the beginning of the colonization of the Americas, navigators and explorers theorized the existence of maritime routes that, passing through the Arctic Ocean, allowed navigation between the Atlantic and the Pacific. There was a strategic edge to such theories and efforts: to the British crown, it was a priority to have access to the Pacific and to Asian markets bypassing the Portuguese – and Spanish – controlled straits of the Southern Atlantic. British efforts of exploring Arctic spaces can be traced even to the names that these routes came to be known – the Northwest Passage and the Northeast Passage (now called Northern Sea Route), names given their position relatively to the British Isles (see fig. 1). Albeit brief, this historical account is important in evidencing how a series of elements treated as novelties in recent Arctic IR and geopolitics scholarship are, in fact, re-emergences of long-term dynamics that develop in the region. The search for resources, the possibility of navigation and connection between Atlantic and Pacific, the strategic and economic importance of developing such resources are elements of the *long durée* of Arctic geopolitics and economics.

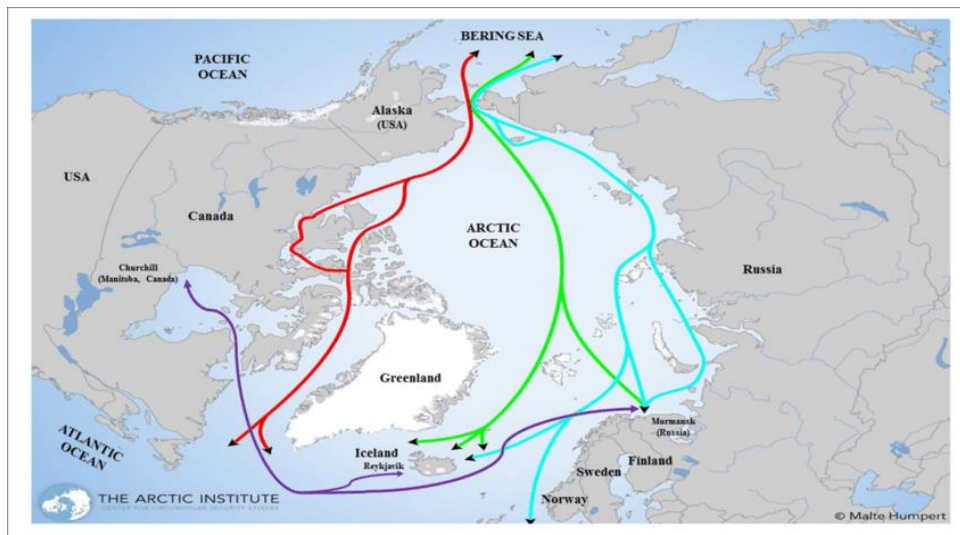


Figure 3: Maritime Routes of the Arctic. Source: Malte Humpert/The Arctic Institute. Red: Northwest Passage; Turquoise: Northern Sea Route; Purple: Arctic Bridge Route; Green: Transpolar Route (conjectural)

The history of territorialization and border-making in the Arctic is also pervaded by colonial violence promoted by Euro-American politics claiming the region as part of national territories and constitutive elements of national identities. One by-product of the search for the navigation routes was the contact between Euro-Americans and Arctic communities, with the discovery of new sources for animal resources vital to European and North American markets – such as whale oil, baleen, fox furs, ivory extracted from the tusks of walrus. The exploration of the region led to sustained contact with indigenous communities in the Arctic and to the connection between such communities and the desires and necessities from distant markets and societies (Demuth, 2019). Beginning on the sea, with commercial whaling as a main driver of contact and exchange between Euro-American civilizations and Arctic indigenous peoples, “foreign” presence began to extend landward, with the hunt for walruses and foxes. The discovery of gold and oil in the North American Arctic and the international tensions and disputes for territory in the European Arctic, however, led to the perception of a need to create control mechanisms over the land and its peoples, expropriating them from their traditional lands and livelihoods seeking improve state control over Arctic spaces and resources. The latest wave of efforts of territorialization

like these came with the formulation and adoption (although not by all States) of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The definition of territorial seas and economic exclusive zones – and of criteria for claims to expansion – sought to mediate state interest in the resources of the ocean through international law. From the vantage point of States and of the international system, the creation and adoption of the UNCLOS crystallized the Arctic map. This process produced the Arctic as a region that can be divided in eight different national territorial jurisdictions – the Arctic or littoral States: United States, Russia, Canada, Iceland, Denmark (through Greenland), Sweden, Norway and Finland. With the definition of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and their criteria of expansion by the UNCLOS and the CLCS, state territorialities in the Arctic extend over almost the entire region, except for the area represented in white in figure 2 (see below).

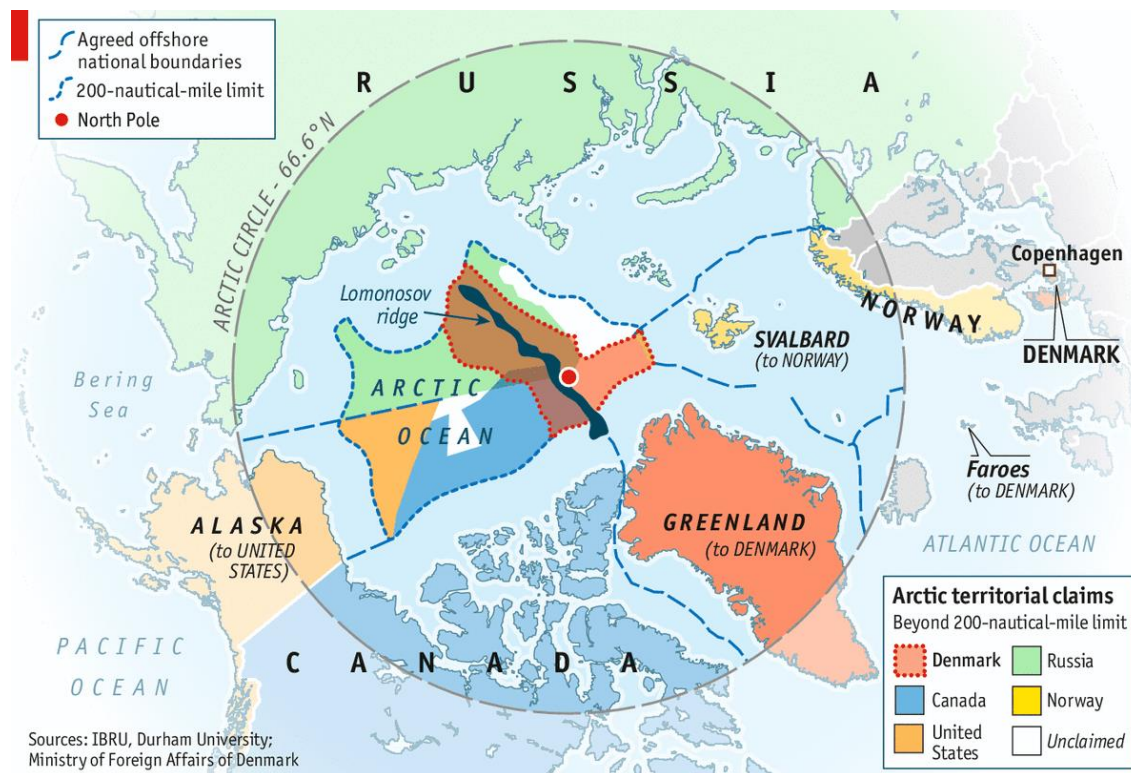


Figure 4: Agreed Economic Exclusive zones in the Arctic and territorial claims. from: <https://www.economist.com/international/2014/12/17/frozen-conflict>

Since the year of 2007, however, a new wave of Arctic colonialism, exploration and exploitation is taking form. Commerce in furs, whale and walrus related products had long been surpassed in importance by the gold rush and the discovery of oil and gas in the Arctic over the 1970's and 1980's. Even though oil and gas extraction had been taking place in the Arctic for almost thirty years, by 2007/08, the exact extent of the hydrocarbon reserves of the High North were unknown. The hostility of the region's climate and the difficulty of establishing proper Westphalian-friendly borders put the question of the territorial waters and EEZ in a secondary place in states' strategic and economic agendas. Even the geographical proximity between increasingly antagonizing USA and other NATO members and Russia did not represent a push to develop more coherent agendas for Arctic spaces. From a strategic and even economic point of view, the voyage of the *Arktika* expedition in 2007 represents a fundamental turn for Arctic international relations. The expedition was part of the efforts of the Russian Federation to scientifically prove the basis of its claim to an extended EEZ and risked the total loss of equipment and personnel when diving to reach the maritime floor of the North Pole, where it planted a Russian flag made of titanium³. Proving this claim was also a question of prestige for Russia, once it represents the possibility of sustaining claims to Arctic territoriality that have been articulated by the Soviet Union in 1926 (Horensma, 1991).

Aside from Russia, every other Arctic State has also laid claims to the extension of their EEZ over the Arctic Ocean. The main drive behind such allegations is the extension of sovereign rights over a 200 nautical miles strip of ocean. While not being part of the State's territory, over this space, according the UNCLOS, the State has "sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil (...)" (UNCLOS) as well as the right to establish regimes for maritime research

³ There is a long history of flag-planting over the Arctic Sea ice, which, then, proceeded to turn and spin and float away from the place where explorers believed to have reached the North Pole. For more detail, see Officer, Page, 2014. *Fabulous Kingdom*.

and environmental protection and preservation. In the Arctic, thus, attempts at extending the EEZ is an important instrument for States to assert their presence and interest in Arctic spaces, as well as seeking to leverage economic development with the resource potential of the Arctic Ocean.

Briefly after the *Arktika* 2007 expedition, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) published the Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal (CARA) – the first comprehensive report estimating the location and size of the hydrocarbon reserves of the Arctic. One of the main takeaways of the report, specially powerful due to the enduring importance of oil and gas for the global economy and for the strategy of the major global economies was the estimate that 30% of the world's undiscovered gas reserves and 13% of the undiscovered oil reserves are located in the Arctic (Klare, 2012). Aside from oil, it is important to note that the Arctic is also rich in mineral resources, with mining activity taking place since the late nineteenth century.

After the discovery of the potential oil endowment, a first wave of strategies to deal with the changing Arctic environment followed suit. In 2009, The Russian Federation and the United States published the first versions of such strategies, effectively putting the Arctic in a position of heightened relative importance within ideas of national security and – specially so in the Russian case – national economic and social development. Both strategies aimed at reversing a “neglect” towards Arctic security and economic issues and detailed policies that sought to integrate the Arctic not only through a security approach, but also through understanding and seizing the economic opportunities that the knowledge about resources in the Arctic presented to both Arctic and non-Arctic States. Parallel to such processes – dubbed by Jessica Shadian (2014, 2017) as global debate on “who owns the Arctic” – we can also see declarations and positions being formulated by Indigenous agents in the Arctic. In 2009, the Inuit Circumpolar Council issued the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, as well as, in 2010, the Inuit Arctic Policy. More recently, in 2019, the Sámi Council has published the Sámi Arctic Strategy. Both indigenous organizations have also been very active in the last decades, issuing policies addressing a wide range of

themes and needs of the indigenous communities of the Arctic as well as producing reports and data about the living conditions of Arctic indigenous peoples.

The period from 2007 to 2014 also saw a spike in economic (specially oil and gas extracting) and military activity in the Arctic. Partnerships between many oil companies were developed and Arctic States sought to enhance their knowledge of the presence of hydrocarbons in the Arctic to “properly” exploit such resources and leverage economic and social development through stimulating new oil fields in the Arctic. On the military side, NATO members (both individually and as an alliance) and Russia bided their time to revamp material and operational capabilities in the Arctic through the development of doctrines, routines and reorganization of armed forces to operate in the region and defend newly established interests and priorities. Outside of the Arctic this period is also marked by the deterioration of the relations between NATO and the Russian Federation, beginning with NATO’s membership expansions, culminating with tensions across Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

During the last decades, however, the involvement of new (State) actors in Arctic geopolitics has not been limited to the NATO-Russia axis. One important element of contemporary Arctic geopolitics and economy is the engagement of non-Arctic States in the region’s issues. The list of observer states of the Arctic Council – main body of international governance in the region – shows that the North Pole has been attracting attention from all over the world. Aside from the eight Arctic states listed before, the observer States include Germany, China, the Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, India, Japan, Singapore and others who, despite not having territories in the Arctic, are interested in accompanying the works of the Arctic Council, as well as participating in some of the Council’s projects. Participation in the Arctic Council, however, is far from being the most important aspect of the engagement of extra-Arctic States in polar issues. Enhanced knowledge on the presence of resource reserves together with an increased navigation window made several organizations and States notice the Arctic and seek to secure their interests in the Arctic. This is made visible not only

by the publication of an Arctic strategy by China – that has put itself in the category of near-Arctic State – but also by countries like the Netherlands, India and Ireland.

Fundamental to all of the phenomena described above is the comprehension of the physical effects of climate change in the Arctic. In the 2021 Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) report, we find that, since 1971, Arctic Sea ice has lost 43% of its extent, the temperature has increased 3,1°C (Arctic Council, 2021) – with temperature rising three times faster in the Arctic than in the rest of the world. This reduction in the extent of sea ice – coupled with a continuous rise in temperature is causing a change in the physical geography of the Arctic. Such changes are already felt in terms of the navigability of the Arctic – especially of its Eurasian portion. Figure 3 below, from 2013, compares the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the Suez Route in a voyage from Dalian, China to Rotterdam, Netherlands. In the infographic, part of an article reporting efforts by Asian energy industry actors in stimulating the use of the NSR, we can see that – despite the shorter voyages – was described as navigable only through a five-month travel window.



Figure 5: Infographic comparing NSR and Suez Route. From: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/energy-companies-test-arctic-shipping-shortcut-between-europe-and-asia-1377077162>

While still considered challenging, the NSR has been used year-round, even in winter. The Russian government has made a point of developing the oil & gas fields in Yamal, both the Yamal LNG and the Arctic LNG projects, as well as the maritime routes necessary for transport, integrating such fields in the global trade flows. The use of icebreakers in the winter or whenever sea ice becomes a hindrance on navigation, as well as the development of the tanker/icebreaker ship class (tanker ships capable of breaking ice and, thus, dispensing the icebreaker escort) and even the construction and implementation of nuclear icebreakers in the NSR were measures taken to make projects of oil and gas exploitation in the Arctic viable. These efforts, however, were coupled with the receding of sea ice, both in extension and in its freezing periods. In the North American Arctic, this

stage of development in navigation has not been achieved, although there are projects seeking to exploit oil and gas resources in the region.

1.2 The Arctic in geopolitical and IR Theory

When it comes to geopolitical theorizations, the Arctic has been utterly neglected as a complex region. A focus on an understanding of geography and space as immutable factors of geopolitical and political thought has foreclosed the need to think through a complex web of relations being traversed by changes in what is generally regarded as the “most stable factor upon which the power of a nation depends” (MORGENTHAU, 1948) or regarding it as “(...) the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is the most permanent.” (Spykman *apud* Kaplan, 2012). In geopolitical terms, the Arctic, located close to Mackinder’s “heartland”, is treated as an “icy sea” in the author’s work, one of the sources of strength for the polities controlling the global heartland. Mackinder-inspired geopolitics tend to see the Arctic Ocean as a “barrier”, warding off enemies’ penetration from the North due to its physical characteristics. In Sea Power theories, the region would have little importance due to the little importance of its waters as sea lines of communication or even as a vector in the projection of sea power. In recent revivals of geopolitics, especially those seeking to restore “geography” – more accurately described as “geographical determinism” – to a place of privilege, like Kaplan (2012), the region is barely mentioned and, if so, it is treated as an issue for a distant future. Another important aspect of Kaplan’s *The Revenge of Geography* is how its treatment is a re-valuing of geographical determinism, with a complete depoliticization of geography while defending geography – or “the map” – as a natural basis for geopolitical analysis.

Hegemonic geopolitical theories tend to depart from understandings of geography and space as eternal, unchanging bases for analyzing international relations, state power and conflicts. Moreover, the scope of geopolitical issues

cultivated in such thinking is also problematic, mainly for its tacit recognition of the national-territorial State as the only actor in international relations – or the only actor worth analyzing. These two intertwined problems result in a naturalization of colonial violence and an absence of reflection on the history of colonization and territorialization of the Arctic. In other words, the question “how did the Arctic become the Arctic?” is never asked and, if asked, the discussion is based on how Arctic States tell such stories to themselves, justifying and legitimizing colonial policies of expansion, expropriation and assimilation on a “geopolitical” or “strategic” basis.

Geopolitical theory, however, is one of the keys for IR approach to Arctic issues. Neorealist scholars, because of the heavy focus on defense and security issues, tend to deploy geopolitical reasonings in their attempts to explain and explore the Arctic scenario. This view also entails an instrumental view of economic development projects in the Arctic, with an emphasis on how such projects can extend state control over the Arctic, furthering a comprehension of territory as a bounded, exclusive space of autonomy and sovereignty that is, in many cases, simply unrealistic. Moreover, such an instrumental view of the economic factor and of the role of economic development in the Arctic is coupled with an acritical acceptance of the “necessity” or “inevitability” of capitalist economic development in the Arctic. Another important element is the naturalization of national-territorial State borders and – due to the influence of geopolitics – an absence of the reflection on how these borders came to be and the violence and expropriation underlying the conditions for both Arctic geopolitics and Economic development.

The other side of the mainstream axis of Arctic IR is composed by neoliberal interpretations that bear a heavy focus on framing Arctic issues and relations as governance issues. This group of authors contributed greatly to evidencing non-state actors in Arctic geopolitics and in beginning to comprehend how and why such actors engage in international governance structures. This recognition, however, treats these groups as “interest groups” disputing solutions in international forums, a characterization that ignores the asymmetry of power

between western non-state actors and indigenous actors in the Arctic. For the purposes of the present research, their main contribution is understanding that, aside from the Arctic and non-Arctic States, organizations representing Arctic indigenous peoples and other sectors of civil society are important players in Arctic geopolitics and economic development, especially because of their capacity to re-define and dispute the meanings involved, for instance, in projects to “defend” the Arctic, making it more “secure” and “developing” the region’s resources and economy. However, the discussions of this group of authors revolve around the creation and development of the “proper” regimes and institutions for dealing with emergent demands.

There are common elements in both sides of the discussion. While they may differ about the ways in which states behave or in how they define and achieve their interests, both schools share assumptions about space, spatiality and politics that render the national-territorial State the main (if not the sole) actor in international relations. These geographical assumptions (Agnew, Corbridge, 1995) are the reification of the state-space-society relation in the form of bounded, mutually exclusive territorial jurisdictions. Another important effect is the rendering of space as timeless, unchanging, ignoring the different ways in which different populations understand their relation to the spaces where their lives go about. This timelessness is also responsible for dislocating discussions about the Arctic to some “future” and describe it as an empty wilderness, an a-historical subject – or a subject whose history is the history of its incorporation to the Arctic States. Another common trait in the mainstream IR debate here is the treatment of the environmental effects of climate change and economic development only as long as they represent issues or objects of governance or pose a question for the strategic policies of Arctic States. IR thinking, in general, has also erased the presence and history of Arctic (and other) indigenous peoples and their engagements with international politics – as well as the way in which their political organizations are developing discourses and practices aimed at disputing the meaning of economic development, as well as preserving their traditional livelihoods and defending their traditional territories.

Mainly, readings produced within the field of IR to deal with new issues in Arctic geopolitics tend to produce two complementary images of the Arctic. One is that of an “Empty Arctic” – a white expanse, devoid of people and history, a *tabula rasa* of sorts where States may inscribe their policies and projects at will. Because of this emptiness, and in the face of the emergence of new economic and strategic opportunities, it is necessary to build the instruments to achieve a “Whiter Arctic”, a more Euro-American, State-controlled Arctic where economic and military activity can be carried out “properly”. Without critical inquiry on what constitutes economic development, as well as on what are the material, social and political foundations that enable the formulation and implementation of resource-development and navigation projects, mainstream IR has been treating a process of expropriation, assimilation and colonization as a natural unfolding of climate change and international politics.

1.3 Against the empty Arctic – alternative approach to Arctic geopolitics and economic development

While the governance and geopolitics keys may be useful in explaining some of the emerging phenomena in the Arctic, they do not provide the theoretical and analytical tools to critically discuss transformations the Arctic is currently experiencing. Both perspectives also lack a critical evaluation of the political economy of spatial reorganizations, climate change and capitalist expansion over the Arctic, treating them only as long as they can constitute objects of government or as part of a background or a context, with no effort of theorization. This is also coupled with the erasure of the history of the territorialization and colonization of the Arctic, a central feature to theorize and the process of integration of the northern polar spaces to the territorial jurisdiction of the littoral States and their Westphalian statecraft. This distorts the perspective on the recognition and participation of Arctic indigenous peoples, both as agents in the region’s geopolitics and as stakeholders in the regional governance structures. Leaving aside the colonial aspect of the relation between the littoral states and the Arctic

indigenous peoples also operates an erasure of the political articulations created by indigenous peoples, both in the resistance to colonization and assimilation, both in face of the new challenges that emerge in the Arctic.

Climate change, a fact widely recognized as fundamental to the emergence of the Arctic as a theme for International Relations, is also treated as far as it is the subject of international governance or as it affects the security environment of the region. The privilege given to governance, security and defense issues brushes aside the reflections on the physical transformations, spatial reorganizations and economic projects that now spread over the Arctic – even though they constitute the very conditions that allows for thinking of geopolitics and economic development in the Arctic in the first place. In the theoretical and normative plane, these lacks translate themselves in the production of the Arctic as an empty territory, in need of interventions by States and capitals to fulfil economic and strategic potentialities that open with the climate, spatial and social changes. The analyses produced from these perspectives, by ignoring the role and impact of colonization on the region, also ignore how the initiatives driven by economic and strategic rationales are engendering processes of expropriation and destruction of the spatialities and non-European, non-capitalist modes of life present in the region. In the face of the renewed political, strategic and economic interest in the Arctic, it is necessary to understand the link between spatial and territorial reorganizations promoted by littoral States and the international economic dynamics that motivate and/or facilitate them. These two elements are importantly linked to the comprehension of how Arctic indigenous peoples organize and articulate politically to preserve their modes of life and the environment as well as seeking for their share in the projects for economic development of the region.

The effects of climate change in the Arctic, especially its effects on the physical geography of the region, are opening the region up for geopolitical and economic expansion. The building of the state apparatuses to intervene in the region and promote strategic and economic objectives in the region, is associated with changes in the international interest of states in Arctic regions – be it the

exploitation of the resources present in the region or the possibility of navigating the northern polar seas. A central part of the present study is the intertwining of such issues, which demands a theoretical framework capable of dealing not only with the political economy of this process, but also capable of comprehending how such economic interests act throughout different scales. Three main theoretical concepts are deployed here, as an attempt to theorize the impacts of the thawing Arctic by articulating the political and economic elements emerging from the geographical transformations.

The confluence of the physical effects of climate change with new projects of economic development in the Arctic calls for an eclectic theoretical and conceptual framework – one that allows for the analysis not only of the economic development projects and their geopolitical implications, but also to their effects over the space and the spatialities that are being targeted by these policies. We start from classic International Political Economy approaches, particularly the insights developed by British scholar Susan Strange. The measures deployed by the littoral states to stimulate economic activity and seek economic and resource development in the Arctic is a way to seize the benefits of the opening up of the region, as well as of the increase in maritime traffic in the region. These measures also seek to ensure influence over the regimes being developed by international governance structures to govern initiatives in the region. To properly address such a complex web of issues, we will mobilize notions of power that account for its interface with the attempts at organizing and re-organizing economic structures and the spatial impacts of such efforts. We start discussing structural power (Strange, 1998), global power (Fiori, 2007), and the processes associated with the creation and development of capitalist structures of accumulation and their relation to non-capitalist political and economic structures – processes of original accumulation (Marx, 2011 [1867]) and contemporary processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004). All of this take place in contexts where national economic development projects are based on neo-extractivist mode of development (Svampa, 2019), with a heavy focus on the construction of local

economic enclaves, geared towards the extraction and export of commodities – specially hydrocarbons.

1.4 Global power and structural power: competitive pressures over Arctic spaces

Our starting point is comprehending the interfaces between state power, economic organization and the production of space. To this purpose, we draw on two different notions of power produced in IPE theorizations that highlight the intertwining between political and economic power, and international economic relations. The approach developed by Susan Strange for the study and comprehension of International Political Economy relies on the identification of the structures of power present in world politics. In the book “States and Markets” (1998) Strange identifies eight, four primary – security, production, finance, knowledge – and four secondary – transport, trade, energy and welfare – structures of power. Strange connects structures of power to the provision of public goods on the international scale – such as a secure international environment. The study of the International Political Economy, as proposed by Strange, departs from questions about the mix between state and market involved in the provision of public goods related to each of the structures of power. Providing such goods on an international scale heavily depends on the creation and implementation of regimes and procedures – that is not always the fruit of state intervention, nor necessarily created by the system of states. Structural power, in this perspective, is not only a matter of agenda setting, or of influence in the regime-making, but the power to influence the very conditions in which said regimes are going to be implemented, and it is related to material/ideational realities prior to the construction of such regimes. By focusing on state-market questions and issues, Strange develops a holistic approach to power that also accommodates actors and agents other than the national-territorial State and how, depending on the issue, structural power may manifest itself in spheres not

within the range of state control. Strange also provides us with an important tool for politicizing the discussion on the provision of public goods and the relation between political and economic power in many different scenarios, reflecting on how decisions by state and non-state actors, as well as shifts in the balance of political struggles can heavily affect the functioning of the global economy.

Attempting to further develop the debate on the relations between political and economic power, Brazilian political scientist José Luis Fiori (2004) has laid out several propositions on the study of global power relations and distribution. If one assumes the existence of a sharp distinction between economic and political motivations of actors, it is reasonable to say that Fiori points to the primacy of political factors in explaining international economic factors. This results in a view that furthers the need of politicizing debates and theoretical efforts in comprehending international economic issues. In fact, in Fiori's vision, political factors are the organizing principle of economic activity. More important, in our opinion, is the way that the author describes the phenomenon of war and change in international politics. According to Fiori, war and preparation to war constitute pillars of modern state activity and are permanent aspects of international political life. With the consolidation of the modern interstate system, the organization of economic activity assumes paramount importance, not only in the comprehension of individual states' interests, but also as in the spatial organization both within and without the State (Fiori, 2007, 2014).

Within the perspective of global power proposed by Fiori, two aspects are important for the discussion developed in this thesis: the relation between power accumulation – a central element in Fiori's reflections – and space, as well as the identification of power as a flux, rather than stock. Initially, the relation between power accumulation and space is mediated by conquest, the incorporation by force of new spaces to a state territory. With the depletion of the possibilities of conquest, with the capitalist interstate system becoming an increasingly closed system, accumulation of power tends to be exercised in other ways – specially through the reorganization and production of space to attend the strategic and economic interests of the State that claims sovereignty over space. This process

divorces political from economic territories, making the latter larger, as outposts of the power and influence of States.

Fiori's theorization deals directly with an already closed capitalist interstate system, characterized by political and economic competition between States. In such an environment, "war and the preparation for war (...) tend to become chronic activities" (Fiori, 2009, p.6, translated by the author), and war plays the role of "last instance instrument of conquest and accumulation as well as defense and preservation of power" (idem). To face the possibilities of aggression, territorial loss and/or fragmentation, States seek to organize their territories resorting to integration and occupation initiatives, as well as stimulating economic activity – an important element for Fiori's project and to our research efforts. Political, economic and technical changes, however, have great impact over the "strategic value" of some spaces, demanding that States alter their relation to some portions of their territory in order to face the competitive pressures that characterize the contemporary interstate system.

The permanent character of competition in what Fiori calls the "capitalist interstate system" is also fundamental for his characterization of power. Power, according to Fiori, is a flux "(...) action and movement, and only exists while continually exercised" (Fiori, 2014, p.19). His perspective on power is helpful to elucidate the connections between – as Fiori puts it – processes of wealth accumulation and processes of power accumulation. If, to exist, power must be continuously exercised, it is necessary that the actor that wields it also seeks the material conditions for the exercise, reproduction and accumulation of power – specially through the instrumentalization of economic activity. This, in turn, is one of the many articulations between political, economic and spatial phenomena.

Bearing in mind the purposes of the present research, approaches presented here are used as a point of departure to discuss issues related to resource development, navigation and the development of transport infrastructure in the Arctic – and the consolidation of positions of power and influence in a scenario deemed as emergent and in need of interventions to stimulate economic development. Both structural power and global power perspectives are important

for comprehending the engagement of State actors in the Arctic, both by presenting explanations for their interests and in tying Arctic issues to the wider context of contemporary IR dynamics. Analyses developed by Susan Strange, useful when discussing existing structures of power and their intricacies, do not provide tools for reflection on emerging structures, or the configuration of such structures of power when expanding to “new” spaces – as we see with international transport and production in the Arctic. While it is tempting to think of such processes as merely an expansion of existing structures into new regions, this step leaves the materiality of such expansion and its implementation under theorized (or not theorized at all). While comprehending the power distribution and the relations at play in such spaces is important, there is also a need to think about how consolidation of power structures is caught up in a dialectics between the “old” spatial organization of the regions and the “new” or proposed projects of redrawing space in face of the emergence of new demands and political pressures. The increased interest in the promotion of economic development and security in the Arctic regions brings out demands for the (re)organization of transportation, productive and financial networks that enable the realization of such projects. These, in turn, are intimately connected with the construction of new infrastructure in the region – which has been a main driver of the involvement of actors external to the Arctic in the region’s issues. Connections being weaved with the progress of the development projects now appearing in the Arctic have to deal with the issue of preparing that space for capitalist exploitation and accumulation. The expansion of this mode of production and economic development in the Arctic is related not only to the building of infrastructure, but also to the disarticulation of non-capitalist modes of life and of being in space.

Fiori’s perspective, albeit providing valuable insights on post-Cold War international relations and on the underlying logic of the global power of the U.S, is trapped in a comprehension of international politics as interstate politics. By putting economic power as a tool for political power, this perspective renders international political organizations and articulations outside the sphere of the state invisible, out of the scope of theoretical reflection. This also takes out of the

scope of the study of international political economy the interrogation of the colonial foundations of power in global affairs, reproducing the colonality of capitalist and state power. However, one of the ethical and political compromises the author expresses in his seminal contribution stands in sharp contrast with the bleak prospects of an interstate system where war and conflict are not only regular, but constitute the very blueprint of the capitalist interstate system:

None of that, however, disallows the necessity and possibility of national revolutions and of the permanent struggle of weaker states, political parties and social movements for peace and democratization of global decisions. These movements cannot, however, ignore the real world; on the contrary, their actions must stem from the knowledge and rigorous critique of this world (Fiori, 2009, p.178, translated by the author).

In this thesis the critique of Fiori's radical state-centrism is coupled with an attention to indigenous movements that, in their struggles for self-government and self-determination. In the spirit of seeking to contribute to such democratization, we engage in the rigorous and radical critique of the existing world. Our starting point is a critique of the instrumental relationship between human and non-human natures developed by the capitalist world economy. Understanding indigenous peoples as international agents struggling for the democratization of global policy and decision-making is a central element of the present research, as well as understanding the transformative potential of the struggles of these peoples affected by climate change for their lands and livelihoods to a range of fundamental aspects of International Relations – in practice as well as in theory.

Fiori and Strange also bring out important inputs in terms of method – specially so in identifying State (and even non-state) interest in engaging with the politics of emerging geopolitical scenarios. When approaching economic issues, on the other hand, the subjection of the processes of economic development to strategic and geopolitical reasonings, while useful in terms of theorizing spatial dimensions and consequences of international conflicts and international politics, leaves untouched the question of the conditions of the different processes embedded in what is known as economic development. This, coupled with an

absence of problematizing the conflation of development with capital accumulation, and the naturalization of the need for developmentalist policies as an imposition of competitive political pressures. This developmentalist compromise on Fiori's part (in particular) tends to externalize responsibilities and political choice while not taking into account the always-already global connections of hegemonic class projects. This also depoliticizes development, taken as need and as a way out, and closing the door for non-capitalist, non-European modes of economic organization that purport to build alternatives to neo-extractivist capitalist accumulation.

1.5 Colonialism, capitalism and the shaping of the contemporary Arctic

As said before, many elements treated as novelties in Arctic geopolitics and economic development are only new configurations of old dynamics and structures. There is an extensive history of Arctic exploration geared to making navigation in the region viable, and resource extraction has been a hallmark of the economic history of the Arctic. Generally forgotten in the study of Arctic issues, another element of the *longue durée* is colonial violence. What today is called "Arctic geopolitics", or "Arctic economic development" is also the product of centuries of enclosure, expropriation and colonial occupation exerted over indigenous populations of the region and their traditional territories. While the perspectives on power discussed before are useful in thinking about the links and connections between economic and political power, their formulation says little to nothing about how both State and economic powers rely on violent processes of colonization, expropriation and assimilation in the construction and expansion of their borders and in the expansion of capitalist metabolism.

Easily left out of the debates over Arctic issues, is the presence of indigenous peoples and their political organizations in the region, with modes of living and economic organizations other than those hegemonic in the littoral

States – modern, capitalist social formations that for their economic functioning relied on the exploitation of Arctic resources. Gitte Du Plessis (2020) takes an important step towards the reversion of such trend in her study of the tension between the spatialities of the Sámi people and those of the Norwegian State. Through a study of the Norwegian state attempts to regulate and control reindeer herding – one of the most important activities for many Sámi communities, Du Plessis (2020) deploys the concepts of smooth and striated space, formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to discuss the differences between Sámi modes of life and relation to space and those deployed and practiced by the national-territorial states in the Arctic. It is important to note that the author develops this debate through an analysis of the relation between nomadic reindeer herding of the Sámi and economic development projects formulated by the Norwegian State for its Arctic regions. One key takeaway from the work developed by Duplessis is the concept of “striation activities” – used to describe the construction of transport (and other kinds of) infrastructure and controlling of circulation and economic activity in an area.

For our purposes, it is important to theorize such spatial tensions from a critical perspective, politicizing the discussion of how space is being disputed and reorganized. Du Plessis, when approaching the interaction between the nomad life forms in the Arctic and the policies developed by the Norwegian State to control and regulate the space where the Sami populations live, reads them as a tension between different forms of being in space – different spatialities. The space of the “modern, biopolitical Nordic State” (Du Plessis, 2020) is striated, its form of occupying and organizing the space it claims as its territory is controlled through creating points and lines connecting them. Nomadic populations of the Arctic live in a smooth space, one where they

“(…) move in space multidirectionally, as vectors, not from point to point. Smooth space is amorphous and nonformal rather than homogenous, and it is infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction” (Duplessis, 2020, p.2).

In this sense, striation activities are closely related to the construction of such points, subordinating space to the logic of the national-territorial space, subordinating the line to the points in space in Deleuze and Guattari's terms. This turn inverts the priorities of the nomadic, smooth spatiality, one where the lines and vectors in space are crucial for the nomadic mobilities – like the movement of reindeer “governed by the wind” – to the “points”. Points striate space, particularly when accompanied by spatial practices whose materialities determine the connection between the points and the “national integration” – bread and butter of many geopolitical theories – as a strategic goal and subordinate non-capitalist, non-European mobilities to those desired and demanded by the State.

The smooth spatiality of the Sámi, closely associated with the migration patterns of reindeer – animals whose movement is governed by non-human elements of the Arctic landscapes – and their traditional livelihoods are seen as threats to the development of Norway's Arctic policies and resources. The rationale for creeping state control over indigenous livelihoods (again, not something new to Arctic economic history) is, at the same time, a way to “ensure” the economic development of Norway and to establish state control over Arctic spaces while gearing Sámi livelihoods towards market-oriented herding practices. This also takes away from the Sámi communities the control over their own livelihoods, subjecting their subsistence activity to market criteria of what “good” herding practices mean. While the Norwegian State seeks to introduce concepts and practices that serve as ways to measure the herds through counting and assessing carrying capacity of the herds, the Sámi cultivate a relation with the reindeer herds that is neither based on fattening the cattle nor on the market value of the meat. Two main drivers behind such Norwegian push for controlling Arctic spaces are the projects regarding the Arctic Corridor – the transformation of northern Scandinavia in a logistic corridor for goods transported in the Northern Sea Route – and the development of oil and gas extraction in Arctic waters. The development of both activities – transport and oil extraction, are closely related and, in Norway (as in Russia, Finland and Sweden) is also dependent on the

consent of the Sámi peoples with the construction of a major railway line through its traditional lands (Sápmi).

Aside from new, state-oriented spatialities, striation activities and the growing control over land also produce their own ecologies. In this case, as we shall see later on, the colonization and striation deeply disrupted and reorganized the socioecological relations that marked the metabolic interactions between human and non-human natures in these regions. All in favor of colonial, capitalist and instrumental ways of seeing and living in non-human nature – and to perpetuate and expand emerging capitalist metabolisms. Another important insight of Duplessis' research is the observation of how the State, while exercising and seeking to expand its striated spatialities over the smooth spaces of the Arctic, also instrumentalizes other smooth spatialities to erode Sámi territorialities. While attempting to control and regulate the relation between the human and non-human element involved in the nomadic life forms of the Sámi people, striating through infrastructure projects the traditional territories of Sápmi, the Norwegian State even promotes the smooth spatiality of wolves – the main natural predator of reindeer. So, while attempting to striate Sámi territories to “properly” seize the economic opportunities opening up with the increased use of the Northern Sea Route and the resources on Arctic spaces, another tool for the State is letting other smooth spatialities develop freely, specially when they directly affect the livelihood of the reindeer herding Sámi.

The deployment of such categories is important, as Du Plessis (2020) points out, to unveil and understand the colonial violence of what has been dubbed Arctic geopolitics, and as a tool for actively including indigenous peoples of the Arctic in the theorization efforts of the emerging (and enduring) phenomena emerging in the Arctic. The deleuzian perspective also has the virtue of enabling the discussion of space and spatialities based on the materiality of the production of space and of spatial practices and dynamics that traverse and emerge from them. The conjunction of such characteristics allows us to think how Arctic and non-Arctic States have been seeking to impose their striated spatiality over the seas, ice, and the indigenous populations of the region through policies geared at

creating the conditions for capitalist accumulation and development in the Arctic. Even when such policies are guided by “progressive” goals such as the energy transition (or green transition), there are worries about the emergence of “green colonialism”. In fact, the perception of emerging threats and rising tensions unleashed a new wave of Arctic colonialism, justifying interventions in indigenous lands based on “national security” or “development” issues, attempts to extend State control over such territories, disarticulating cultures, spatialities and livelihoods to achieve its goals.

Understanding spatial tensions at play within the Arctic is important, not only in terms of interstate tensions – and the possibilities opened by the concept of “striation activities” allows us to access a series of violences brought about or heightened by the social effects of climate change. Another important feature of the concept, albeit underexplored by the author, is the possibility of connecting the spatial reorganizations and the tensions they ensue to the economic transformations in the Arctic. An unexplored element in Du Plessis’s work are the economic factors motivating such striation activities, especially the construction of new transportation infrastructure in the Arctic. Politicizing the discussions by moving on from the idea of “land-use conflicts” to explain such dynamics and offering an interesting conceptual entry to analyze the conflict between the Norwegian State and the Sámi population are invaluable to the present research – also allowing the theoretical insertion of Arctic indigenous peoples and their politics within our framework. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Duplessis (2020) does not explicitly articulate the economic function of what she calls “striation activities” into the greater picture of Arctic economic development, nor, given the scope of her work, clarifies the political importance of disarticulating the livelihoods of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic.

Given the physical effects of climate change and the new economic and strategic opportunities brought about by the thaw, emerging Arctic issues are demanding actions and attention of State actors. The emergence of new maritime routes and new resource reserves are seen as calls for state and capital action to instrumentalize such resources in their economic and political projects. Structural

power and global power are important concepts in understanding State and capitalist engagement in the reorganization of Arctic spaces and regimes, as well as the role of economic development in this process, but their focus on State and capitalist agency suppress the colonial aspect of the relation between Euro-American states and societies and Arctic spaces. The concept of striation activities, on the other hand, opens up the research agenda to the agency, political articulations and spatialities of indigenous peoples, furthering the comprehension of the environmental dimension and social struggles underlying interstate tensions in the Arctic. While the geopolitics of spatial reorganization is an important element framing contemporary Arctic issues, it is also important to account for the political economy of the changing Arctic. The focus on resource potentials, navigability and an emerging porosity of hitherto “impenetrable” spaces has tended to reproduce a stark division between economic and political aspects. For our present purposes, there is a need for a theoretical framework that can take on the intertwining of political and economic matters in contemporary Arctic economic development. Understanding geopolitics in the high north in the context of an expansion of state and capital’s domain over new spaces demands the comprehension of how indigenous livelihoods and modes of living are being affected – and how, in turn, affected populations are organizing to resist and defend their traditional livelihoods and homelands. Bringing out IPE concepts, together with a more nuanced view of the Arctic, capable of reversing the invisibility of indigenous issues, however, calls for a critical evaluation of how such processes need to disarticulate indigenous and non-capitalist modes of living to enable contemporary processes of capital expansion and accumulation on new economic and geographic frontiers.

In the critique of political economy articulated by Karl Marx, the capitalist mode of production emerges after a period of “primitive accumulation”, whereby the bourgeoisie rises as the dominant class, assuming control of the means of production and reorganizing social relations of production under the logic of capital accumulation. One important element in the process of primitive accumulation is the separation between workers and the means of production,

with particular importance of the expropriation of land and of bourgeois social forces taking control over land. In the first book of "Capital", primitive accumulation is tightly connected to the dismantling of feudal social structures, institutions and practices and the constitution of a mass of expropriated workers bound to sell their labor as the only means of ensuring subsistence. Primitive accumulation, thus, refers to a constellation of social and political processes that build up the political and economic framework upon which the capitalist mode of production will function "normally" once the dirty work is done. Of special importance are those institutions and practices related to the extinction of communal property in its many forms - be it via enclosure and privatization of land, be it via colonization and disarticulation of pre-colonial, non-capitalist livelihoods. The separation of workers from the means of production and expansion of political authority over new spaces in England, for instance, are deeply connected to the construction of the colonial system and the ultramarine expansion of European state and capitalist agencies. After such a period, according to Marx, capitalism as a mode of production enters a stage of "normal" functioning.

The establishment of capitalism and bourgeois power as a class in Europe is closely related to the colonization of the Americas. The accumulation of power and capital in Europe was also based on the exploitation of the colonies' resources, land and peoples. It is possible to say, then, that primitive accumulation also refers to an already global process of disarticulation of non-capitalist forms of social and economic organization. This is intimately linked to the construction of the colonial system and of the nation-State, which plays an important role in the rise of the capitalist mode of production and in capital accumulation afterwards. Marx's description of the colonial system and the inter-European tensions brought about by the overseas expansions of European nations are representative of the role of colonial violence in the foundation of capitalism:

The discovery of gold and silver in the Americas, the annihilation, enslavement and burying of the native population in the mines, the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the transformation of Africa in a reservation for the commercial hunting of black-skinned are characteristic of the dawn of the age of capitalist production.

These idyllic processes constitute fundamental moments in original accumulation. Immediately after them, trade wars between European nations follow suit, with the globe as its stage. (Marx, 1867 [2011]), p.998, translated by the author).

The creation of the conditions of possibility for capital accumulation on a global scale is, then, also embedded in the building of national economies and of the global economy. By expropriating non-European populations from their land, resources and modes of living, European powers could subjugate and exploit the labor of colonized peoples, and the natural resources present in the “new world”. All over the world, indigenous societies and cultures suffered with the destruction of their homelands, the environmental degradation brought about by predatory exploitation of resources. The Arctic, and the indigenous peoples of the region are no exception to such movement. In the North American Arctic, sustained contact between Beringian and Euro-American peoples was first driven by commercial whaling, and this contact deepened over the centuries. As will be discussed elsewhere, predatory hunt of whales and walruses led to environmental degradation, starvation and a deep deprivation of Arctic communities, mobilized by States to deploy policies aimed at the tutelage over the peoples of Inuit Nunaat. Similarly, the nomadic life forms of the Sámi peoples were heavily repressed by the Westphalian states that occupied Sápmi and claimed it as part of their territories. The interest in expanding the tributary basis of States by claiming the Sámi as citizens led Scandinavian countries to pursue policies of restricting movement, forcing the choice of a nationality. The interest in reindeer meat and other Arctic products, such as furs, was also important in the attempts of making Sámi cultural, social and economic practices either inviable or tamed by the needs of the Scandinavian societies.

Marx’s analysis of this founding moment of capitalism not only denounces the violent, corrupt foundations of the class power wielded by the bourgeoisie, but also points to the importance of the struggle for the control over land on the part of workers. The discussion of land tenure regimes and struggles to preserve and promote communal property of land. Marx placed great importance on the struggle for land and on the problems entailed by capitalist agriculture. The role

of land as a means of production and as private property also met firm criticism on Marx's part. In the third volume of capital, the discussion on land rent is closed with a brief remark on the absurdity of treating land as property – that also offers an important insight in his vision for a future organization of social reproduction. Marx believed that, with the evolution of humanity's socio-economic formations, "the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man over other men" (Apud Foster, 2000, p. 241). It is also important to note that, in line with Marx's criticism of capitalist agriculture as a robbery system, he also saw the need to understand humanity not as owners, but as possessors and beneficiaries of land, and that we "have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as *boni patres familias*" (idem).

Private property of land, then, not only is to be abolished via political action, but also the logic of spoliation that organizes capitalist agriculture. The idea of humanity as *boni patres familias*, as beneficiaries of land that need to preserve and enhance its state for future generations is also a radical critique of the instrumental view of nature developed and promoted by capital, demanding a deep re-evaluation of the political and economic practices entailed by capitalist metabolism. In a letter to Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich, dealing with the issue of the rural commune in Russia, Marx stresses that the "radical separation between the producer and his means of production" is fundamental for the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, and that "[o]nly in England it has been accomplished in a radical manner"⁴. Thus, the "historical fatality of this process" would be restricted to Western Europe, where the transition was from one type of *private* property of land to another type of *private* property. Russian peasants and the Russian rural commune would not suffer the same fate due to the need to transform *communal* property of land into *private* property, a difference in the very *type* of property. The possibility of coexistence of communal property of land in a capitalist economy is fundamental not only as a recognition of the

⁴ The letter and the drafts cited here were published in Portuguese as part of a collection of texts named "Lutas de classes na Rússia" (Class struggles in Russia), by Boitempo Editorial but are available in english at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/zasulich/index.htm>

diversity of economic-political formations at play, but also of political solutions and political action deriving from these communities that can end in the elimination of capitalism and in the “revival, in a superior form of an archaic social type” (Morgan Apud Marx, 2013 [1881]).

The rather short letter to Vera Zasulich was preceded by four drafts. In the first, there is a more detailed discussion on the issue of the rural commune and on how it can not only survive, but be the basis of the revival, in a superior form, of an archaic social type. According to Marx, due to its survival into modernity and “contemporaneity of Western production, which dominates the world market, enables Russia to incorporate into the commune all the positive achievements of the capitalist system, without having to pass under its *fourches caudines*”⁵ (Marx, 2013 [1881], our translation). Marx’s discussion also draws heavily on how these communal, non-capitalist economic structures, are deeply exploited by capitalist and state agencies in its drive for accumulation. Here, we see Marx envisioning how non-capitalist economic structures within the capitalist world-economy are exploited in the processes of capital accumulation and can serve as potent starting points for a new metabolism, a new organization of economic structures that is, also, a more harmonious way of organizing humanity’s metabolic interactions with our natural environment.

Reflections on original accumulation and accumulation by dispossession are crucial for understanding the motivations driving States to carry on colonialist, imperialist and assimilation policies, and in evidencing and assessing the violence and continuity of such processes. While such concepts have an important role in explaining the geographical expansion of capitalism and the capability of reframing the relation between States, societies and spaces, it is also necessary to think of the environmental dimension embedded in these relations. The relationship between the human and non-human elements of nature, while being an all-pervading aspect of human life, has not been properly addressed in IR and

⁵ In the english version available at marxists.org - under its harsh tributes. *fourches caudines* (caudine pitchforks) represents the necessity of going through humiliation and/or difficulty to achieve some goal.

IPE theorizations on geopolitics and economic development. An important and vibrant line of Marxist theorizations has been forming around the critical questioning of the relation between humanity and nature – especially productive in their deployment and instrumentalization of the concept of metabolism or metabolic interactions. Eco-socialist theorizations have been developing ecologically oriented interpretations of Marx's theories that are useful to comprehend how primitive accumulation (or the processes of accumulation by dispossession) are also attempts to reorganize the relation between non-capitalist societies and nature on euro-american, capitalist terms. Moore (2015) calls this the “project” dimension of capitalism, predicated on the universal exchangeability afforded by money and by value as strategy to organize human metabolism and relation with non-human natures. The concepts of “metabolism” and “metabolic interaction” are crucial for such line of theorizations – specially so in ecological readings of Marx that tend to uphold Marx's view and political project as an already ecologically-oriented vision of political economy.

Metabolism (*Stoffwechsel*), here, is taken to mean the interaction between humanity and nature, not only in the effort to preserve the organic life, but also in the preservation and development of the social life of humanity. Authors pursuing this line of investigation have tended to stress how the capitalist mode of production – and even socialist political experiences – have tended to elevate a “promethean” view of human capacities, an instrumental view of nature as a set of objects to be indefinitely transformed. The comprehension of the material and ideological forms of this vision is aimed at the transformation of such a relation and the formulation of an eco-socialist critique. These authors also have tended to criticize the thought developed by Marx and Engels based on “ecological blindness” or “prometheanism”. John Bellamy-Foster, Kohei Saito and Jason Moore are important exceptions that seek to ground eco-socialist political thought and action in Marx's theorizations, seeking to distance Marx from the accusations of “prometheanism” and showing how his critique of capitalism is, from its outset, an ecological critique of capitalism. Once more, the concepts of metabolism and the law of value are of paramount importance, being the line that allows an

ecological critique of capitalism by identifying the core reasons for the metabolic rift (Foster, 2000; Saito, 2017) or shifts (Moore, 2015) that now threaten human life on earth.

Among the first to take this stance was John Bellamy Foster. Foster's work, especially the book "Marx's Ecology" seeks to show how Marx developed a materialist conception of history and a materialist conception of nature – both stemming not only from philosophical studies, but also from a lifelong dialogue with the philosophy of nature and natural sciences developed by Marx and Engels. Foster's research seeks to outline a recovery of Marx's intellectual influences, with special attention to the dialogue with natural sciences. To the author, a central feature of Marxian thought and critique was the political and intellectual struggle with Malthusianism and its bleak view of the relationship between humans and nature – with an emphasis of its consequences for the working classes and the policies developed to treat poverty. While Malthus saw overpopulation as a central driver for starvation and the declining fertility of the soils, Marx sought the roots of the problem elsewhere, with both overpopulation and declining soil fertility stemming from the development of capitalist agriculture. It is important to note how this diagnosis on Marx's part was influenced by the chemist Justus von Liebig not only on the understanding of the relation between predatory agriculture and soil fertility, but also of capitalist agriculture as a robbery system.

Marx's diagnosis is also important for the evolution of Marxist thought, once it focus on the town-field dichotomy. This contradiction is central not only for the development of capitalism, but also as a driver in the intensification of colonial processes and projects that sought to overcome the problems of (perceived) overpopulation and (concrete) declining fertility of the European soils. This dichotomy between rural and urban spaces is expressed in how logistic chains and the logic of economic activity in the field is geared towards supplying food to the urban population in ever larger quantities – both because of rising demand and because of the need for larger profit – while neglecting the soil's necessity for replenishment nutrients needed for continued cultivation. This is the central

feature of the “metabolic rift” identified by Marx and theorized more thoroughly by John Bellamy Foster in later works.

This ecological view of Marx is not only compatible with his analyses, but also with the ethical and political commitments the author expressed in his work. Foster is adamant in defending ecologically oriented readings of Marx, specially based on a quote from the third volume of *Capital*, in Marx’s discussion of the rents from land:

From the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation or all simultaneously existing societies taken together are not owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as *boni patres familias* (Marx, *apud* Foster, 2000).

Here, Marx stands at a genuine crossroads of human thought. A crossroads in the sense that he could synthesize and express a vision of the relation between humanity and nature that both echoes immemorial formulations of indigenous peoples regarding the role of humanity within nature, but also in the sense that he anticipated by 93 years what later would be the UN’s definition of “sustainable development” in the Brundtland Report⁶. The view of nature as property, as a source of resources and use-values is historically contingent, a product of an ideology that seeks to justify the endless exploitation of human labor and nature in the benefit of a specific class. Marx’s vision is closely related, for example, to the Inuit idea of *inua*, a view of humanity in the role of stewardship of non-human nature in the Inuit world.

Saito (2017), through a systematic study of the question of the relation between humanity and nature in Marx’s works, recasts his theorizations in two very productive ways. The first is understanding the critique of political economy

⁶ In an ironic twist of fate, Gro Harlem Brundtland was one of the responsible for the construction of the Alta Dam, and her actions during the Alta controversy were fundamental in guaranteeing the dispossession of the Sámi, the construction of an unsustainable hydroelectric power plant that was neither necessary nor effective in strengthening the power supply in the Alta-Kautokeino region.

produced by the author as an *unfinished* project, and the second is understanding the ecological dimension of the critiques produced by Marx as a fundamental part of his thought. Using the *Neue Marx Lektüre* as a starting point, he advocates for a systematic study of the treatment of the ecological question in Marx's works as a way to comprehend *Capital* – and other Marxian works – as an already *ecological* critique of political economy. The issue of the ecological degradation brought about by capitalism, the ecological dimension of the critique of political economy, more than one possibility or one among many aspects, is treated by Saito as being an integral and fundamental part of the theoretical and political project of Marxism.

Here, as in previous Marxist analysis of the relation between humanity and nature, the concept of metabolism takes a central role. Saito's proposal, however, is to reconstruct Marx's understanding and usage of the term "metabolism" to show that, more than a metaphor for the study of political economy, the concept has an explanatory role for the theorizations put forward by the German author. Metabolism was, at first, taken as a metaphorical way for visualizing the functioning of the economic systems, evoking the image of the human body, its organs, tissues and systems working in different rhythms and realizing different functions to ensure the continuation of organic life. The concept of metabolism – in its origin – refers to the constant, dynamic and open-ended interaction between living beings and their environment (Saito, 2017, p.69), creating the conditions for the perpetuation of organic life. The emergence of this concept, according to Saito (2017, p.69), stimulated Marx and even prompted him to ascribe a central role to it in the study of political economy - being integral to Marx's definition of labor, for example.

The difference here is that, while metabolism had been deployed to describe interaction between non-human living beings and nature, Marx thought of it as useful to discuss the relationship between humanity and nature mediated by labor. The plethora of humanity's social and economic formations represent different ways of organizing this metabolic interaction, ensuing different configurations of the humanity/nature relation. The emergence of capitalism

marked the emergence of a metabolic interaction mediated not only by labor, but also by value. The gearing of economic structures to the accumulation of capital-imposed valorization of capital and the constant extraction of surplus value through the exploitation of natural resources and human labor as organizing principles of the relation between humanity and nature. This reorganization has impacted the way human societies related to nature, the subjectivity of the working class and even the production of knowledge on the natural environment where humanity is inserted (Saito, 2017).

Under the logic of capital accumulation, the expansion of productive forces and processes is conflated with exerting an ever-growing control over both human and non-human nature. The push to extract increasing amounts of surplus value from the production process, when left unchecked – and as Marx describes in detail in *Capital* – tended to threaten the health and the conditions of life of workers. On the non-human side of the equation, environmental degradation and ecological crises are part of the development of capitalism as a global and globalizing mode of production. The instrumental view of nature as a mean of realizing value and surplus value also spurs a “tendency of capital toward brutal exploitation of the free forces of nature and to a *global race after cheaper natural resources*” (Saito, 2017, p.159, our emphasis), while, at the same time treating by-products of human activity organized under the logic of capital accumulation as mere externalities (*idem*, p.160). According to Saito, Marx “(...) criticizes how the one-sided mediation of the metabolic interaction between humans and nature by abstract labor exhausts and desolates the forces of labor and nature” (2017, p.166). In this perspective, it is possible to understand how Marx moves from a moralist critique of ecological degradation (e.g., “humans destroy nature”) in favor of a political critique, based on a materialist approach, understanding how the “reified movement of capital reorganizes the transhistorical metabolism between humans and nature and negates the fundamental material condition for sustainable human development” (Saito, 2017, p.162).

Saito’s reading of Marx is invaluable in comprehending climate change and environmental transformations as a product of the emergence and development

of capitalism as a mode of production and of its reconstruction of the relationship between humanity and nature based on the criterion of value, valorization and capital accumulation. Through the extensive and intensive appropriation of natural resources and forces, “capital not only increases productive forces but also counteracts any tendency for the rate of profit to fall” (Saito, 2017, p.162). To the limit, understanding nature as the source of all wealth makes it possible to grasp the contradiction between capitalist exploitation of natural resources and the sustainable development of human life on Earth. Capitalism, through its impulse to appropriate ever larger portions of land, resources, time and life, threatens its very conditions of possibility, specially through the destruction of human and non-human nature – the condition of possibility of all life. Saito’s approach to the question of the metabolic interaction between humanity and nature is invaluable in the comprehension of how (and why) colonial structures carried out the destruction of non-capitalist, non-European economic and social formations and the role of the expropriation of land and territory in such processes. Coherent with his Marxist position, the author also offers insights on struggling against the nefarious effects of capital’s shaping of the relation between humanity and nature.

As Saito reconstructs Marx’s ideas on nature and on the role of the nature/humanity relation to the comprehension of political economy, he also furthers an eco-socialist diagnosis of the inherent ecological imbalance of the metabolic interactions under the logic of capital. One apparent contradiction of Saito’s (and Foster’s) strands of eco-socialist critique is the tension between the need to rebalance metabolism and the value given by Marx and by many Marxist thinkers to the development of productive forces. Saito’s proposal can be summarized as the search for conscious and rational regulation of the metabolic interaction between humankind and the environment so that the development of productive forces – and the its benefits – is not subject to the constant search for growing profits (or countering the tendential fall in profit rates), but rather, determined by the equilibrium between humanity’s living conditions and nature. He envisions socialist strategy as the taming of the destructive impulses of capital – be it in the relentless exploitation of the labor force, be it in the exhaustion of

natural resources – while aiming at building the relation between humanity and nature anew, based on values other than valorization and capital accumulation. Moreover, knowledge and science have a pivotal role in this eco-socialist strategy. Under capitalism, under the unilateral mediation of value, knowledge and science are appropriated and geared towards the construction of lucrative modes of manipulating nature and making the exploitation of natural resources more efficient for capital accumulation. In humanity's struggle against the environmental destruction ensued by capitalism, on the other hand, it is necessary to gather and deploy knowledge and science to reverse this destruction, rationally and consciously understanding and transforming the bases on which humankind interacts with nature, overcoming the instrumental view of nature and seeking to establish more harmonic social and economic practices, in consonance with the temporalities and spatialities of the non-human.

The coupling of capital accumulation with pressure over natural resources together with the disarticulation of different social and economic organizations, different forms of organizing the metabolic interactions between human and non-human nature, has been an important dimension of Arctic colonization, economic history and emergence as a geopolitical hotspot. It is interesting to note that Saito, in his effort to comprehend the Marxian view on the metabolic interaction between humans and nature, did not articulate Marx's critiques of the processes of colonization. By Saito's own logic, processes of primitive accumulation – specially the dimensions of expropriation and destruction of non-capitalist ways of life – are a fundamental step in the production of spaces, mobilities and subjectivities aligned with the logic of capital accumulation and with a reified, instrumental view of nature.

Saito (2017) and Foster (2000) both bring about important aspects for ecological interpretations of Marx. Both point out how categories that are central to Marxian theory are already ecological, stemming from a materialist conception of nature and history. Moreover, the thorough recovery of the ecological aspects of Marx's thought is important to understand how Marxian and Marxist contributions can be important for critical research in the age of global boiling.

However, Foster's and Saito's works are also centered on the effects of the metabolic rift and of the colonial projects on the core of the capitalist world economy, be it on the discussion of British "guano colonialism" (Foster, 2000; 2020), be it on the discussion of the town-field dichotomy, centered on the effects over the British/urban working classes (Saito, 2017; 2021). These discussions, while presenting important accounts of colonialism and its function within the capitalist world-economy – and, in fact, world-ecology – do not discuss and problematize colonialism in a productive way to debate colonial ecologies' impacts over colonized peoples, neither on the struggles of indigenous peoples, for instance, and how they also inform and create new ecologies.

An important eco-socialist contribution to understand how the peripheries of the system transform in the course of capitalist development is the concept of "commodity frontiers" developed by Jason Moore (2015). While the present research does not subscribe entirely to Moore's *oikeios* approach, I draw from some important insights to develop my analysis of Arctic geopolitics and economic development. The first is the comprehension that climate change - in the Arctic and elsewhere - and the wider ecological crisis humanity now face is capitalogenic – deriving from the myriad of ways in which capitalism sought to organize humanity's interactions with nature on the basis of the law of value and in the search to indefinitely prolong capital accumulation. The second is the idea of the *commodity frontiers* – zones of contact between capitalist and non-capitalist ecologies where processes of primitive accumulation and disarticulation of non-capitalist metabolisms take place in order to, in each phase of the development of the capitalist world-ecology, restore the flows of the "Four Cheaps" that enable capital accumulation: cheap food, cheap energy, cheap labor and cheap raw materials. A corollary of the commodity frontier approach in contemporary capitalism is the ever-greater perception of the closing of such frontiers – all the while capitalist and state agencies seek to expand and double down on global resource frontiers.

A central feature in Jason Moore's theorizations on the relation between humanity and nature is the division between a zone of exploitation and a zone of

appropriation within the capitalist world economy. This division represents the difference between commodified natures and relations in the capitalist core – that due to their commodified status, depend on capital for their reproduction – and the frontiers of the system where cheap natures are appropriated to counter tendential fall in profit rates. Mediating such appropriation and insertion within the system of capital accumulation are the commodity frontiers, zones where capitalist and territorialist agencies seek turn historical natures external to the core of the capitalist world-ecology into commodified historical natures in the benefit of capital accumulation. The idea of commodity frontiers describes these regions of contact and expansion of the capitalist world economy with non-capitalist modes of production and societies. These spaces are produced via the capitalist techniques to know and exploit new territories being brought to the zone of influence of the global capitalist economy. Colonial processes and contact with unexplored⁷ historical natures are the hallmark of such frontiers, where new commodities and new historical natures are discovered and assimilated into the capitalist mode of production.

The commodity frontier is also more than an influence zone of capitalist relations of production, related to the “deployment of territorial power and geographical knowledges for the commodity-oriented appropriation of unpaid work/energy” (Moore, 2016, p.99). Moreover, techniques of economic exploitation and empire – economic and political control over land and peoples – are deployed in such regions in order to appropriate these historical natures alien to the capitalist core in the benefit of capital accumulation in regional and global scale. Whales, foxes, walruses, reindeer, caribou⁸, gold, rare earth minerals, wind and even sunlight are examples of historical natures that were or are being appropriated, measured, calculated, counted and put to work in the benefit of capitalism’s global metabolism. It is important to note that commodity frontiers are

⁷ In Portuguese, the word for exploitation and exploration is the same - *exploração*, thus the choice for unexplored in this double sense – absent from English.

⁸ Reindeer and caribou belong to the same species - *rangifer tarandus*. The difference is that the reindeer are domesticated and the caribou being wild.

agnostic to state-defined borders and are historically contingent, defined by the zones of influence of the capitalist world ecology. In the *longue durée* of capitalist development, the Arctic has played the role of a commodity frontier, a role that has only expanded with the successive waves of colonialism in the region and tends to deepen with the unjust transitions happening in the region.

Here, the idea of natural resources or resource endowment is extremely important – as part of the Four Cheaps are cheap raw materials and cheap energy. Also important is the fact that this frontier-making of capitalist ecologies is always already a global frontier-making, connecting these regions to the wider circuits of production, distribution and accumulation in a myriad of ways not contained or restricted to a single state territory. One example is how the expansion of mining to central and northern Sweden was both connected to the production of tools for the sugarcane plantations of the Americas and to the slave trade in Africa – two other commodity frontiers of early-modern capitalism. Be it a navigational frontier, in the search for new routes connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific, be it with the discovery of whale and other Arctic products such as pelts, furs, tusks, oil and deep-sea minerals. In Sápmi, the Arctic has even been an agricultural frontier for the Fennoscandian polities. A common element to all such moments is their relation to the development of colonialism in the Arctic and their deployment of techniques and strategies to further the capitalist and territorialist control over the land, the mobilities of its peoples and their livelihoods. By adopting the perspective of the commodity frontier, we seek to look to these spaces in their relation to the development of the capitalist world ecology and understand how contact, colonization and resource extractive development impacted these frontiers and, specially, the indigenous societies living there. The commodity frontier is also a space where processes of primitive accumulation develop – processes that seek to reorganize spaces, societies and their relation to land and their own livelihoods based on capital accumulation, exploitation of labor and valorization of value.

An important - and indeed central - technique deployed at the extractive frontier is race and racialization. There has been a growing discussion not only on race and international relations and on the connections between race, racism and

ecological crises. The debate on environmental racism has grown in policy and in scholarship and has contributed greatly to the discussion on the roots of the current environmental crisis, but also to the theorization of environmental justice. The concept has grown to inform the political engagement and incidence of governments and social movements dealing with the ecological crisis. The inequality in the effects of climate change and of ecological degradation is an important element for the present research, specially in its relationship with the expansion and consolidation of global extractive frontiers. To the commodity/extractive frontier perspective, we add a decolonial ecological perspective (Ferdinand, 2022) and a critical approach to race and environmental racism (Opperman), both mobilizing an analysis of the materiality of colonization to discuss ecological transformations and the relation between the colonized and nature.

The materiality of the frontier techniques - the whaling station, the trading post, the mines – the effects of these activities in the air, sea soil and non-human life, as well as the waves of new settling populations occupying the land and pressuring resources - are important drivers in the inequality of the distribution of the effects of colonization. Colonial powers mobilize capitalist and territorialist agencies to change the environments they occupy to the benefit of settler populations and economies, generally in detriment of the native populations. Malcolm Ferdinand (2022) dubs this process as the “colonial inhabitation” of the world, a mode of living and an ecology of occupation, settlement and exploitation. Parallel to the transformation of the human and non-human natures of the Americas and Africa into resources to be exploited, European colonization “violently implemented a particular way of inhabiting the Earth” (Ferdinand, 2022, p. 26). Through force, plunder and dispossession, through the transformation of forests in monocultures and exploitation of living and non-living resources, the colonial inhabitation develops through the progressive encroachment of settler economies and political structures, subordinating the geographies of the colonized region and peoples to those of the colonial powers, based on the exploitation of land and nature in the benefit of these distant metabolisms.

Ferdinand discusses three forms of the colonial inhabitation - the private property of land, the plantation system and the exploitation of human labor in the form of slavery. These three forms are ways of carrying out “engineering of humans and ecosystems” (2022, p. 32) of colonization. The colonial inhabitation of the world echoes Opperman’s (2019) discussion on environmental racism, mobilizing reflections of Franz Fanon to develop a critical approach to environmental racism. Opperman, drawing on Fanon, seeks to reframe environmental racism, with special emphasis on the definition of racism not as an event but as an atmospheric force that shapes environments and the relations between settler and colonized agents with nature. This results in Opperman’s (2019) characterization of colonial ecologies in terms of “racist environments”. Deploying Fanon’s sociogeny of mental disorders and the idea of the influence *milieu*, the environment taken as a bundle of affective, material, political and historical relations, Opperman turns to Fanon’s description of the life of the colonized, who

“(…) perceives life not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death. This ever-menacing death is experienced as *endemic famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex* and the absence of any hope for the future” (Fanon apud Opperman, 2019, pp. 69-70, emphasis added)

Indigenous populations of the world have experienced and experience this struggle against an omnipresent death. A quick search shows that indigenous communities experience higher suicide rates, high food insecurity and precarious access to healthcare. In the Arctic, cycles of famine mark the colonization of Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi and, to this day, both peoples struggle with food insecurity. suicide rates among the Inuit are nine times higher than the non-indigenous suicide rates in Canada and twice so in Alaska. Young indigenous people in the Arctic suffer some of the higher suicide rates in the world. Unemployment is also an endemic problem among these indigenous communities, and the access to menial, low-paying jobs often hinder the material welfare and access to basic needs. Moreover, following Fanon, Opperman highlights the connection between

the fate of peoples and the fate of their *milieu*, their environment “cutting railroads through the bush, draining swamps and ignoring the political and economic existence of the native population are, in fact, one and the same thing” (Fanon, 2005 p.182). Opperman (2019) uses this excerpt to discuss the connection between community and *milieu*. Here, I want to highlight how the materiality of colonization - the colonial inhabitation and production of space - is an important aspect not only of the conformation of racist environments and of ecologies geared at accumulation of capital and domination of indigenous peoples, their mobilities and livelihoods.

The process of colonization is a manifestation of what Moore (2015) dubs “the Great Frontier” - the exploration and exploitation of commodity frontiers, inside and outside Europe. These regions were exploited for their fertile soils unspoiled by capitalist agriculture, by their mineral deposits or by the possibility of mobilizing slave, unpaid or cheap labor, articulating them into the global metabolism of capital. In these places, to a greater or lesser extent, the way to inhabit the world Ferdinand (2022) addresses under the name of colonial inhabitation developed in different ways and to different degrees. The discussion of a colonial mode of inhabiting the world puts Ferdinand in direct dialogue with Opperman’s (2019) proposal of reframing environmental racism as an atmospheric phenomenon and in terms of “racist environments” in order to “ask ecological questions, which explore modes of inhabiting the world” (Opperman, 2019, p. 58). The configuration of racist environments is a condition of possibility for the colonial inhabitation of the world, producing ecologies hostile to the traditional livelihoods of these peoples, be it via the pressure on living resources, be it for the environmental consequences of the exploitation of non-living resources. This approach allows us to articulate the materiality of Arctic colonization, Arctic strategies and climate change but also to look critically into debates on environmental racism and inform new ways to theorize *ecological* justice.

In the Arctic the commodity frontier logic has been the rule. Since its colonization, the extractive frontier aspect of the region has changed little, with

differences in the techniques and political solutions deployed in attempts to exert control over land and produce and reproduce the space. With the emergence of new commodities and resources to be exploited in the region – hydrocarbons and minerals and low-carbon energy sources, this logic tends to be deepened. Throughout the whole process, the territorialities and livelihoods of indigenous peoples became objects of government, objects to be regulated and governed in the benefit of capital accumulation and territorial interests of States in the region. While Saito and Foster provide important ecological insights for a Marxist analysis, the idea of “commodity frontier” proposed by Jason Moore is a needed correction in an eurocentric trend of both authors. It is also important by placing such “frontiers” and “peripheries” in the center, allowing an analysis of the interplay between capitalist development, ecological imbalances and indigenous livelihoods. Another important aspect is the comprehension of how the changes in the material basis of the capitalist world-economy also affect such frontiers – creating ever-greater pressures on the uncommodified historical natures in these regions or changing their strategic value for capitalist and territorialist agencies.

1.6 Neo-extractivism and the contemporary reshaping of Arctic spaces

With the global expansion of capitalism as a mode of production, configurations of the relationship between humans and nature that did not fit the instrumental view that is central for capital accumulation were disarticulated in favor of a reified relation that treats nature as a resource and as a sinkhole. It is possible to say, then, that one of the aspects of the processes of primitive accumulation and of accumulation by dispossession is transforming the relation between non-European peoples and the environment in which they lived. The colonization process, then, is always already an ecological project, the transformation of landscapes and of the relations that comprise these new worlds into sources of wealth and value for the core of the capitalist world-economy. A multitude of techniques is employed to repurpose the relation between humans

and nature in colonized spaces, seeking to put human and non-human natures to work articulated to the circuit of capital accumulation.

The colonization of the Arctic is no exception, and the articulation between the subsistence activities of Arctic indigenous peoples and the demands of the global market shaped the region's insertion in global affairs from the 18th century onwards. The recent spike in interest and activity is also largely dependent on the feasibility of the exploitation of Arctic natural resources and the furthering of State control over Arctic spaces. Despite the difference in scale, type of resource and economic activity being stimulated, it is possible to dub the "Arctic resource boom" as a new wave of colonialism and to point out the continuity of the process of reshaping Arctic spaces and the relation between Arctic indigenous peoples and their traditional homelands.

The construction of physical infrastructure is an important entry in grasping the materiality of spatial reorganizations and of the impacts of climate change, and it is important to look at the economic activities they mean to make viable, facilitate and/or stimulate. A brief overview of such projects shows how the Arctic is being turned into an extractive frontier, with states and capitals seeking to develop activities based on resource extraction and exploitation, a trend accelerated in the face of the increasing awareness about the region's resource endowment. The drive behind the expansion of capitalist activities over the Arctic is also an expression of capital's attempts to reorganize metabolic interaction between humanity and the environment – with political and economic effects to Arctic environments, communities and livelihoods. The scale and intensity of such effects in contemporary international politics, as well as its environmental effects beg for new conceptual entries to understand the political economy of climate change and of the striation activities put forward by States. One such concept is the idea of "neo-extractivism" (Tetreault, 2018; Svampa, 2019) as a mode of economic development and capital accumulation with heavy spatial, socio-political and economic implications, as well as the associated concept of eco-territorial turn (Svampa, 2019) in environmental struggles seeking to resist climate

change and to build alternative social and economic practices to capitalist neo-extractivism.

Svampa's (2019) perspective is particularly useful to the present research for two main reasons. Reflecting on emergent modes of capital accumulation and economic development based on the "pressure over natural goods, lands and territories" (Svampa, 2019), the author proposes the concept of neo-extractivism as a tool to comprehend and highlight the environmental, political and economic consequences brought up by the development of large-scale agriculture, mining and infrastructure projects. Neo-extractivism describes a particular mode of capital accumulation based on extracting and commodifying of natural resources, which rely on large-scale projects and the construction of the logistic network necessary to transport the commodities to their destination markets (Svampa, 2019). An interesting aspect of the concept is that it is an intrinsically *spatial* concept, allowing the comprehension of geographical and material impacts of economic projects over the spaces that neo-extractivist capital turns its gaze and seeks to exploit. One important element in the emergence of the concept is the expansion of the extractive frontiers within the national economies.

In Svampa's discussion of neo-extractivism, the geopolitical context plays a large role in defining the conditions of possibility of this new phase of capital accumulation and economic development. In the context of hegemonic transition (Svampa, 2019), the emergence of China as a global player pressured the global demand for (and therefore the price of) raw materials, energy and commodities in general. In Latin America – Svampa's focus –, China appeared as an alternative global partner to the US, giving a push to resource-based projects of economic development that sought to use the favorable external conditions of trade as a tool for remedying historical problems and the deep-seated inequalities that traverse Latin American States. The rise of China as a global player and the direct challenge it poses to the US, an organizing tension in the global political system, opened up space for alternative, progressive political projects in Latin America – most of them reliant on the stability of the revenues from commodities (agricultural or otherwise). Seeing this implication of China's recent economic development

and its emergence as a player with global interests and global impacts, it is important to ask if such tension and such configuration is also present in other resource-rich regions of the world.

The concept also calls into question the “deepening of a logic of spoliation” (Svampa, 2019) and highlights multiscale problems and tensions that arise from patterns of development based on the predatory exploitation of nature. While extractivism and developmentalism have a long history as modes of capital accumulation, new forms of accumulation based on pressuring natural resources and territories have brought about “new political, social and ecological conflicts, and has opened way to social resistances unthinkable to the dominant developmentalist imaginary” (Svampa, 2019). The author also stresses that the extractive activities are not a “problem” or a phase of capital accumulation, but rather must be treated as a constitutive feature of the capitalist world economy. Here, it is important to understand how Svampa narrates the emergence of neo-extractivism, its distinctive factors and its contemporary importance. Due to the “growth of the social metabolism of capital” (Svampa, 2019), meaning a growing demand for energy and raw materials – and a growing pressure over natural resources – extractive activities became central features of global capitalist development in the twenty-first century. Recalling Saito’s reflections, growth of the social metabolism of capital means an expansion of the one-sided interaction between humanity and nature.

While the material dimensions of neo-extractivist capitalist accumulation are of paramount importance to the present research efforts, it is important to comprehend how these projects are justified as necessities for economic development. In the ideological level, neo-extractivism can be read as a renewal of the developmentalist consensus. The emergence of the commodities boom in the beginning of the decade of 2000, and the active role played by states in directing projects and efforts that sought to exploit the (actual or potential) benefits of the high prices in raw materials and hydrocarbons, rekindled the “developmentalist illusion” (Svampa, 2019, p.27).

This conjunction of material and ideological factors is mobilized, even after the end of the commodities' cycle to justify and promote new large-scale projects of resource-based development. Another important ideological operation that thrived is the (false) opposition between the *necessity* of economic development through resource exploitation and ecological considerations. The need for state intervention in the creation and expansion of the extractive frontiers, as well as the wealth associated with extractive activities are integral parts of the "Commodities' consensus" (Svampa, 2019). Such "consensus" posited the need for the State to act as an enabler of economic development through spurring activities linked to the exploitation of natural goods and resources such as agriculture, mining, oil and gas extraction and as a redistributor of the revenues generated by such activities on a national scale, able to deal with the multiple stakeholders involved in the insertion of capitalist modes of accumulation in new spaces. To further the expansion of such economic sectors, this State must be able to, at least in theory, conciliate the interests of the diverging parts in the benefit of a national development project.

More than seeing such activities as important for economic growth and development, what we see is the adaptation of the "*there is no alternative*" neoliberal mantra to the formulation of economic development plans of resource-rich peripheral regions of the global economy – already marked by extractivism in their economic history. The Arctic, in general, configures a northern periphery, colonized by Arctic States and heavily dependent on resource extraction economies for its development. While this discursive dimension aims to legitimize neo-extractivism as the sole mode of economic development it is also important to understand that, on the other hand:

(...) in the benefit of capital, governments project an efficientist view of the territories, considering them '*socially empty*' or not. In the name of the ideology of progress, *communities installed there seem invisible, their regional economies are devalued, or their crises are exacerbated, so as to facilitate the entrance of other models of development that turn into agents of territorial occupation*. These devaluation processes occur in traditionally 'forgotten' regions (Svampa, 2019, p.55, translated by the author, emphasis added).

As seen briefly above, geopolitical and IR theories tend to portray the Arctic as an empty space, devoid of history, devoid of people and social dynamics other than those brought about by Euro-American polities exploring, occupying, exploiting and colonizing the region. Moreover, the ecological degradation that followed the articulation between indigenous economic activities and the demands of the distant markets (Demuth, 2019) brought about poverty and vulnerability in a disastrous scale (Demuth, 2019; Shadian, 2014). The resulting deprivation and overwhelming poverty were instrumental in legitimizing Euro-American claims on the necessity of colonial practices aimed at controlling indigenous populations and territories – by attempting to assimilate indigenous communities into the national-territorial State and “preparing” them for a civilized life.

This new phase in capitalist economic development is characterized by “intense pressure over natural goods and territories, an even more for a vertiginous expansion of the commodity frontier” (Svampa, 2019, p.27). This pressure over territories, and the subsequent expansion of the resource frontier within States and on a global level, as a spreading of economic activity to spaces previously considered unproductive from the point of view of capital. This mode of development, then, is closely connected to the construction of logistical corridors that articulate the new spaces of capitalist accumulation to national economies and international circuits of capital accumulation. The building of hydroelectrical dams, oil and gas pipelines, railways and road systems – as well as enabling the navigation in previously neglected waters is an integral part of such phase or mode of capitalist development, not only in providing certain public goods needed to make economic activity viable in new spaces, but also as vehicles of capital accumulation in themselves.

We mentioned above the concept of “striation activities” – which describes how the building of transport (and other kinds of) infrastructure is closely related to attempts of bringing smooth spaces under the striated logic of the spatiality of the national-territorial State. Seeing the role of the provision of infrastructure

within capital accumulation as a whole and the special role it has in the neo-extractivist phase of capitalist development, it is possible to say that part of the political and geopolitical aspect of neo-extractivism is the attempt – with different combinations of States and capitals – to striate new spaces, to create new points and new lines connecting them as part of the development project, increasing the capillarity of State (and capitalist) control over spaces, especially when new scenarios emerge and enhance the exploitability of natural resources in such spaces.

Despite her focus in Latin America, the author not only briefly discusses the emergence of neo-extractivism on the Global North, but also theorizes its role in the 21st century capitalist global economy, with an interesting focus to the concrete realization of economic potentialities based on resource extraction and on the weaving of transportation networks articulated to such activities. The advance of neo-extractivism in the Global North is linked to the geographical expansion of the extractive frontiers, putting new resource reserves in dispute. These processes, however, are marked by social and political tensions and, in many cases, are directly linked to the political struggles of indigenous peoples. The expansion of the “energy frontier” is not restricted to the Global South, but also aimed at neglected, colonized territories within the Global North such as the Arctic territories. As pressure over natural goods becomes an imperative in world politics, peripheral regions where untapped reserves of hydrocarbons and minerals are located will be constantly sought as a source of wealth, and the development of such resources will be framed as a means to solve strategic and economic issues within Arctic States. In the Russian Arctic Strategy, for instance, the first explicit objective is turning the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation into a resource base for the solution of economic and social problems of the country.

This point is particularly important for our present research, once the advance of States and capitals over Arctic spaces is not only deeply connected to the discovery of oil and gas reserves, but the main projects fomenting the navigation in the region and attempting to “develop” the region and integrate it into national and global economies are related to the discovery and extraction of

natural resources. Be it the gold rushes of the 19th century or contemporary discoveries of oil in Prudhoe Bay and in the Russian Arctic, the presence of resources was a driver for occupation of the region. Moreover, differently from the animal-based resources like whale oil, baleen and furs, these activities require a greater measure of control over spaces and movements in the Arctic territories, leading to a radicalization of enclosures and deepening of the resource exportation enclave economies generated by mining and oil and gas activities.

The expansion of extreme energies and of the infrastructure needed for its exploitation is not the only kind of energy being mobilized to justify a new wave of colonialism over Arctic spaces. In Sápmi, for example, the construction of sustainable, low-carbon energy infrastructure like solar panels has already been identified as a vector of a “green colonialism” – since the installation of such panels is making Sámi nomadic life inviable.

By integrating global geopolitical developments of the decade of 2010 with the social struggles on the territories affected by neo-extractivist development projects, Svampa also evidences the multifaceted colonial violence underlying projects of economic development. More than that, her perspective is also helpful in comprehending emerging resistances carried on by communities affected by such projects

While this geopolitical context may be useful for an account of the emergence of neo-extractivist capital accumulation in Latin America, it is important to theorize how it also contributed to the emergence of such practices in the Arctic. While the rise of China is definitely important in both a global sense (by driving the prices of commodities up) and in a regional one (due to the Chinese role in funding infrastructure building in the Arctic), another geopolitical element is responsible for the advance of resource-based Arctic economic development projects: the escalating tensions between NATO and the Russian Federation. The competitive pressure mutually exerted in this case is not only a driver for Arctic militarization, but also for the development of resource-extraction and navigation projects, thought as forms of strengthening State’s position in Arctic politics and policy making.

The poverty of peripheral regions within national economies, however, is also used to affirm and promote the need for a development path based on the large-scale extraction of natural resources. As Svampa puts it:

(...) the affirmation that there are regions whose history is marked by poverty and social vulnerability, with low populational density and great extensions of 'unproductive' territories facilitates the installation of the efficientist and excluding discourse in name of capital's global dynamics (2019, p.56, translated by the author).

The ideological devaluation of territories, then, has its material counterpart in State and corporate interest in making resource exploitation viable in such spaces. With the widening of the technological and geographical frontier, the search for new resource reserves becomes a strategic objective for States in their pursuit of energy security and the accumulation of power and influence in the international system (Klare, 2012). In the energy field, this gives rise to the exploitation of extreme energies.

Particularly important for us is understanding and peopling the "traditionally forgotten regions". Geographically, neo-extractivist capital accumulation demands displacement and expansion of global economic frontiers, reaching for resource reserves in "new" – previously unexplored – areas. Aboriginal peoples and traditional communities – quilombolas, ribeirinhos – are often harshly impacted by such expansion, with their traditional lands threatened and livelihoods threatened by the advance of ever-growing resource extraction. The materiality of extractive economic activity – resource development – generally entails toxification of soil and air, noise that drives away animals and other non-human elements of the landscape, intrusions in the form of roads, railways, increased shipping, and construction of new logistic points and a narrowing of the geographical extension of this metabolism. This utterly disrupt non-capitalist organizations of the socioecological metabolism. Embedded in the geographic expansion is a colonial politics of erasing and disarticulating non-capitalist social and economic formations and other forms of organizing and thinking the relation between humanity and nature in favor of spurring economic growth based on the pressure

over natural resource reserves. These communities, cultures and societies, on the other hand, are neither passive “victims” of such processes nor passively accepting environmental destruction, their resistance struggles formulate and deploy political understandings and political economies that, if taken seriously, has deep implications for political economy and political theory and can inform new metabolisms, new paradigms for the relation between human and non-human nature.

It is possible, now, to rework our hypothesis. While the “Arctic resource boom” can be interpreted as a new wave of settler colonialism over Arctic spaces and indigenous lands, it is important to understand that this wave is bent on turning the Arctic into a resource frontier. This new resource frontier is new in the sense of previously unexploited, but also in the sense of new resources being extracted in detriment of indigenous livelihoods and welfare. While the North American Arctic is marked by the advances of hydrocarbon and mineral extraction, the European Arctic is being exploited for renewable, sustainable development, for new sources of energy for state-oriented projects of energy transition. More than a new wave, the Arctic is being turned into an extractive frontier, where the actions of territorial and capitalist agencies are putting ever greater pressures over the livelihood of Arctic Indigenous peoples in the name of the never-fulfilled promises of development.

1.7 Indigenous politics, international relations and the race against the end of the world

The presence and exploitability of natural resources play a major role in contemporary surge in interest for Arctic issues and are also determining factors in the theorizations of Arctic geopolitics and economic development. The reasons invoked for greater involvement in Arctic governance, as well as the concepts and theories mobilized to make sense out of the region’s dynamics tend to overlook spatial, material aspects of the emergence of the Arctic as a geopolitical hotspot. The erasure of the history of Arctic colonization and of the expropriation and

destruction of indigenous livelihoods makes itself felt again when indigenous peoples and their political agency are excluded from both theory and practice in Arctic governance.

For several reasons, Indigenous Peoples are non-subjects for theorizations of International Relations. In the case of realist approaches and geopolitical theories, the privilege given to interstate interactions as the main – if not sole – object of analysis in IR outright excludes non-state actors. Realist theorizations of IR are also predicated on narrow definitions of politics as statehood and statecraft, treating as a universal model the national-territorial state that, in many cases, has been founded on the suppression and erasure of Indigenous nations and communities. Liberal approaches in IR, however, have contributed to the reversal of such erasure by opening space for the discussion of the role and agency of non-state actors in International Relations, both theoretically and in the practical everyday development of global governance spaces. However, this is done through a homogenization of non-state actors as “pressure groups”, conflating indigenous politics and diplomacies (Beier, 2009), with the politics and international engagement of NGO’s and other non-state actors. As Beier (2009) puts it liberal theorizations, however well intended in their discussions of Indigenous politics and diplomacies, fail when they relegate indigenous practices of diplomacy and engagement with international politics to a marginal, underdeveloped place.

Beier (2009) followed by Shadian (2014, 2016, 2018), stress that Indigenous diplomacies cannot be properly addressed as an emergent practice in international affairs. From the voyages of indigenous representatives to the European Courts during the nineteenth century (Beier, 2009) to the establishment of the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Lightfoot, 2016), we can see a long history of Indigenous politics and diplomacies that is erased from current theorizations of International Relations. Once more following Beier (2009), we believe that to properly treat indigenous peoples within IR, it is necessary to *find* them, to understand their political activities and engagements in world politics in *their own* terms. More than adjusting indigenous

diplomacies to Eurocentric concepts and understandings of politics, it is necessary to understand how indigenous populations – both in their dealings with settler-colonial states and with other indigenous communities – developed their own political concepts, structures and understandings of sovereignty, self-government and self-determination.

In her study of indigenous diplomacies and politics, Sheryl Lightfoot (2017) points out the transformative potential of indigenous rights, as well as the tensions and problems for the realization of such rights. Lightfoot, like Beier (2009) discusses the erasure of Indigenous subjects from theorizations in International Relations and proposes the study of global indigenous politics as a measure to reverse such process. The author defines global indigenous politics as a project that advances indigenous peoples' rights (Lightfoot, 2016) and departs from the hypothesis that such project is a “transformational norm vector” that can bring about changes in the practice and structure of global politics.

While Lightfoot (2017) presents a broad focus on indigenous peoples, the works of Jessica Shadian (2014, 2016, 2018) focus on the development of the political struggles of the Inuit and the role of the Inuit Circumpolar Council in the struggle for Inuit self-government and self-determination. Shadian's hypotheses is that the historical resistance to colonialism by the Inuit, coupled with the more contemporary struggles for rights over their traditional homelands (*Inuit Nunaat*) are creating an “Inuit Polity” (Shadian, 2014). Like Lightfoot, Shadian also believes that the political articulation of the Inuit poses a challenge for Westphalian understandings of what it means to be a political community. Indigenous Peoples, Shadian defends, have created new ways of thinking about sovereignty, self-government and self-determination, specially by decoupling these concepts from the idea of statehood and territorial integrity (2014, 2018). In its stead, political engagements of indigenous peoples have been deploying understandings of sovereignty and self-determination based on *cultural* integrity. In the case of the Inuit, this understanding is embodied in the ICC and in its multi-scale engagement in the defense of Inuit rights over the land and the resources of Inuit Nunaat.

Beier presents an important problematization of the place and role assigned to indigenous politics within international relations. Shadian's and Lightfoot's work are certainly important contributions for a better understanding of indigenous agency in international politics, but it is important to note that their theoretical and ethical concerns are directed at the legal and governance implications of such engagements and their progressive integration into global governance structures. The discussion brought about by Shadian, for example, details the role of natural resources within the processes of recognition of Inuit rights and the ways in which the Inuit organize their relationship to land and environment – the specific form that the metabolism between humanity and nature took in Inuit Nunaat. This is explained by the concept of *inua* (Shadian, 2014), stewardship, a relation that expresses nature and its resources not as property, but as part of a web of relations of duty and responsibility between the many life forms that share the environment. Shadian (2014, 2016) brings an in-depth account of the Inuit politics and of the colonization of the Arctic, and the impacts of colonialism over the Arctic environments and cultures. Lightfoot, on the other hand, produces an important theorization of the potential of indigenous politics to affect international governance structures and how this trend interacts with State-led resistances to respect, implement and improve the status of Indigenous rights within national jurisdictions.

Similarly, Lantto and others discuss the emergence of Sámi politics and Sámi citizenship rights as *indigenous* rights. While treated as a national ethnic minority for a long time, the Sámi conception of the Sámi people as indigenous is quite recent in Sámi politics. This citizenship since its inception had to deal with the tensions of a nomad people living in a territory divided and disputed by several polities over the last four centuries. The subjection of the Sámi and the efforts at assimilation had as a main target the conditions of possibility for Sámi livelihood, restricting the recognition of “true Sámis” to the nomad, reindeer-herding Sámi. The continuous striation of Sápmi was also an important measure in the course of the colonization of Fennoscandia, subjecting indigenous livelihoods to ever greater State control. At the same time, these people organized, both nationally

and transnationally to defend their traditional ways of life and creating structures to promote their struggle in the national, regional and international arenas. An important aspect is how Sámi politics also led to an engagement in global indigenous politics seeking to create and protect the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples worldwide.

This reading of Indigenous politics focused on indigenous *diplomacies*, while important in the process of “finding” indigenous peoples in International Relations (Beier, 2009), is problematic for it takes the development of indigenous rights and the processes of recognition of indigenous rights for its face-value. Greater participation and representation of Indigenous peoples in governance structures is, in fact, important for a more democratic global governance and for circumventing governments unwilling to recognize and respect aboriginal rights of indigenous peoples in their domestic scenarios. It is also important, however, to critically assess the terms in which such representation and participation unfold and the conditions of possibility for the policies and agreements involving the recognition of indigenous rights. To articulate such critics, it is crucial to understand how indigenous representation and participation unfold in practice, and how these practices came to be. The contributions of Ingrid Medby (2019) and Glen Sean Coulthard (2014) are important in delineating the insufficiencies of the approach to indigenous politics in these two spheres.

Medby (2019), in her study of Arctic identities, focuses on the difference between discourses on the participation of Arctic Indigenous Peoples propagated by the Arctic Council and the attitudes of State personnel connected to Arctic policy making towards the representation and participation of indigenous organizations in decision and policy-making processes in Arctic countries. This move, a theoretical peopling of the State and of governance spheres, shows how deeply rooted understandings of political representation shape the space for actual effective action by indigenous peoples in the Arctic Council. Medby’s study is revealing of how State agents often find representation in the Arctic Council redundant – once they believe the State is already performing the function of representing Indigenous Peoples. Another important insight afforded by Medby’s

study of Arctic identities is the identification of the moments when Indigenous are protagonists in the debates and the role assigned to them in such moments. In Medby's terms, the "voice" granted in both political forums and policy-reports is nevertheless premised on a highly specific role, more often than not performing the Indigenous "other" (2019, p.6). The recognition of the value of traditional knowledges and indigenous views is important in the measure that they represent an otherness against which Arctic States may articulate their national identities – as well as serving to justify the measures and decisions taken by the Arctic Council and littoral states as legitimate because of the "inclusion" of indigenous voices in the debate.

One of Medby's concerns is how this politics of recognition and inclusion can (and is) deployed against its alleged intentions. In doing so, she stresses how the politics of recognition may reinforce and legitimize state practices that reproduce colonial violences over Arctic Indigenous Peoples. The politics of recognition has been thoroughly discussed and problematized by Dene scholar Glen Sean Coulthard in the book "Red Skin, White Masks" (2014). Coulthard's problematization departs from a perception of how the framing of indigenous right to self-government and self-determination as a matter of sovereignty over *cultural* aspects of life – language, traditional practices and spirituality – has been deployed by settler-colonial states to further capital accumulation by exploiting resources in indigenous lands and indigenous labor. Studying the process of recognition of indigenous rights in Canada, the author stresses how the recognition of indigenous rights is intimately connected with the articulation of projects by the Canadian State and capitalist agencies to exploit newly discovered resource reserves in the northern regions of Canada, like oil and gas fields and potential mining sites. After a period of struggles against the projects and contesting Canada's right to exploit indigenous land, the federal government began to develop political instruments to deal with the political and territorial claims of Indigenous Peoples. The politics of recognition, then, enters the scene not as in a neutral sense and, in Coulthard's reading, not even as a progressive form of politics, but rather as an instrument to open indigenous homelands to

capitalist exploitation. The author's account of the rise of indigenous movements for self-government and the process of normalization of state-indigenous relations through the settlement of land-claim agreements is particularly important for our theorization due to the exploration of the economic and political pressures that pervaded such processes.

In the introduction of *"Red Skins, White Masks"*, Coulthard (2014) stresses the importance of understanding the role and place of indigenous peoples in the colonial and capitalist economies furthered by settler-colonial States over indigenous peoples and lands. Coulthard describes the economic dimension of the impacts of colonialism over indigenous peoples as a process of primitive accumulation. Colonization, thus, can be read as process of separating indigenous communities from their homelands to open such spaces for capital accumulation and liberate indigenous labor for exploitation. While criticizing the temporal framing of Marx's theorization of the process of primitive accumulation, Coulthard also shows how such concept is useful to understand the situation of indigenous peoples living within settler-colonial States' territories and the relation between expropriation, assimilation policies and the demands of national and global capitalist development. Likewise, when discussing the concrete development of the land-claim agreements in Canada, the author also stresses the importance of the concept and of understanding how the progressive expropriation of indigenous peoples impacted the political horizons and imagination of indigenous organizations, revealed in the analysis of the political and economic impacts of the settling of land-claim agreements with the government of Canada.

The process of settlement of land claims of Arctic Indigenous communities in Canada is tangentially discussed by Coulthard – whose focus is on the struggle of the Dene people for self-government and self-determination. In his discussion of the land-claim agreements, however, the author mobilizes Fanon's ideas on the dialectics of recognition in colonial contexts to discuss how such processes were strategic in opening previously unceded indigenous lands to capitalist accumulation and exploitation of natural resources. According to Coulthard, it is

important to highlight the nexus between indigenous rights, indigenous political engagements and the discovery of resources in indigenous lands. The author places emphasis on how the discovery of oil and gas reserves in the northern reaches of Alaska and of the Canadian Arctic triggered several resource development projects, and the special role of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project. With the emergence of environmental concerns over the pipeline project, and indigenous protests against its construction in their homelands, the Canadian State was urged to reassess its relationship with the First Nations present in its territories. The land-claim agreements, in Coulthard's and Shadian's perspective, are largely a fruit of the need to stabilize this relation and formally recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. This recognition, however, is seen by Coulthard as instrumental in opening Indigenous lands to capitalist, settler-colonial resource development projects.

While the agreements are widely recognized in literature discussing indigenous engagements in international politics as a positive landmark in the recognition and realization of indigenous rights, Coulthard's analysis of the terms and of the concrete development of such agreements is central to a critical approach to indigenous politics in the Arctic and Arctic economic development and geopolitics. The author stresses the ways in which land-claim agreements were instrumentalized by the Canadian State as a tool to open indigenous lands to capitalist exploitation as well as securing that the economic organization imposed over such territories will not be challenged by communities and peoples living in such spaces. While economic and political horizons were effectively restricted for indigenous peoples with the settling of land claims – and the abandonment of claims to developing alternate organizations of economic life for indigenous communities – States fostered an understanding of indigenous sovereignty and self-government as a matter of cultural affairs. Restricting the indigenous self-government to matters of language, traditional and spiritual practices was the obverse of the forfeiting of Indigenous control over land and self-government processes

Coulthard's work and critique is largely pessimistic over the potentiality of the land-claim agreements and other mechanisms to ensure and promote indigenous rights as well as the channels for the participation and consultation of indigenous peoples in the formulation of resource development policies in indigenous territories. This distrust is founded upon a rescue of Fanon's perspective on representation and recognition in colonial contexts, as well as over an understanding of political and economic inequalities between indigenous communities and an emerging indigenous bourgeoisie. Recognizing the colonial aspect of the relation between settler-colonial States and Indigenous Peoples, as well as understanding how the process of recognition unfolded shows that the recognition, more than a process of establishing and implementing indigenous rights, was the granting of recognition in the terms of the Canadian State. These terms were strategically formulated to i) curb indigenous resistances to State power ii) undermine the development of political and economic structures other than the capitalist, settler colonial mode of social organization and iii) open indigenous lands, especially in the Canadian Arctic, to capitalist exploitation and to resource development projects. The establishment of class divisions among indigenous peoples was a particularly interesting effect since, as will be discussed later, it linked indigenous elites and organizations to resource-development projects in the interest of the state.

Another important element of Coulthard's theorization is the economic analysis of the political economy of primitive accumulation and its effects over indigenous peoples. While his main theoretical concern lies in evidencing the colonality of the politics of recognition, his critique is not divorced from an analysis of how the disarticulation of indigenous livelihoods is closely related to colonization and to the global expansion of capitalism. In a contemporary rendition of Marx's theorization, Coulthard stresses how processes separating indigenous peoples from their homelands and making their livelihoods inviable are fundamental steps in the consolidation of the colonial dominion over such populations and integrating them in national and global economies. According to Coulthard, such integration, in the form of colonization and exploitation of

indigenous labor, was also aimed at opening the resources from indigenous territories to capital accumulation and state control. This perspective informs the author's analysis of the land-claim agreements and of the perspectives of self-government and self-determination developed and deployed by Indigenous peoples of the North American Arctic.

While understanding this process of primitive accumulation is important, for our research, we need to understand how capitalist economic activity has developed over Arctic indigenous lands such as Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi. The study of the economic configuration of such regions is also important to understand how, even with restricted prospects for self-government and self-determination, indigenous organizations are fostering ideas of economic development that are linked to other configurations of the relation between human and non-human nature. This is in line with the discussion of neo-extractivist capital accumulation developed by Maristela Svampa, and her emphasis on the discussion of the eco-territorial turn in social struggles. While “neo-extractivism” serves as a diagnosis of the present stage of capitalist accumulation, Svampa also presents a discussion on resistances and struggles against neo-extractivist resource-based development projects – the eco-territorial turn in social struggles. Discussing the emergence and the dynamics of neo-extractivist capitalist accumulation, she also discusses how local and environmental transformations brought about by development projects impacted political social struggles. With the expansion of the extractive frontiers, new territories were subject to processes of expropriation and destruction aimed at reorganizing the space to better serve capital accumulation. The unfolding of such projects is neither peaceful nor accepted passively, and the affected populations developed resistances and political organizations aimed at defending the environment and their land from ecological degradation.

The idea of an “eco-territorial turn in struggles” (Svampa, 2019), is formulated through the analysis of such struggles carried out against neo-extractivist projects by indigenous peoples, local communities and social movements engaged in the preservation of nature and traditional livelihoods. The

centrality of place and ecological issues is a defining character of such turn, with the traditional communities – indigenous, quilombolas, riverside communities – affected by development projects seeking to preserve their livelihoods and modes of existence through the defense of their traditional territories. Svampa shows how, in their contestations of neo-extractivist projects, these movements are articulating critiques of the relation between humankind and nature under capitalism, under the imperatives of value and valorization as the main criteria guiding an instrumental view of nature. These struggling communities and movements, many of them comprised of indigenous peoples and organizations, are sometimes involved in developing other relations to place and nature and, from the alternatives social practices emerging from these movements, it is possible to devise the search for new forms of valuing territories and nature – with particular attention to those which are not geared towards commodifying, pricing and exploiting nature. The defense of traditional livelihoods and the different conceptions of the relation between humanity and nature deployed in these processes are important elements to comprehend the understandings of self-government and self-determination being developed by indigenous organizations in their ongoing struggles against projects developed and developing without the consultation and participation of indigenous peoples.

Svampa's work is mainly developed through reflections on Latin American social and political struggles. The concept of an eco-territorial turn, however, is very useful to analyze indigenous politics in neo-extractivist contexts, bringing to the fore social and ecological tensions underneath Arctic geopolitics and economic development. Svampa sees a correlation between the emergence of the eco-territorial turn and the development of "new modalities of expansion of capital's frontiers" (Svampa, 2019, p.46). In the Latin American context, Svampa narrates such development as marked by three phases: in the first, amidst the commodities cycle, it is possible to identify a positive social role of neo-extractivist capital accumulation since resource development projects made increases in the social spending of States viable. In the second phase, what we see is the "multiplication of megaprojects" where we see the unfolding of projects that seek

to address the logistic aspects of the expansion of the extractive frontier. The third phase, starting in 2013 is characterized as the exacerbation of neo-extractivism, when the fall in the international prices of commodities made Latin-American governments deepen their dependence on neo-extractivist projects. Social and ecological tensions are a constant throughout these phases, from the beginning, with the conflicts in the extractive frontiers between the expanding capital and the communities and populations in such places, as well as the deepening of such contradictions and conflicts with the formulation of “megaprojects” – that tend to cause mass displacements of peoples and communities.

The colonial violence underlying neo-extractivist capital accumulation is a common trait in the experience of indigenous communities in the Global North and Global South. The relation between Indigenous communities and the State, however, takes different forms in the Global North and among different States within the Global North. The present research, since focusing on geopolitical and economic issues affecting Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, will focus on European and North American arrangements of Indigenous rights to self-determination and self-government, as well as how these rights relate to the strategic and economic projects for the Arctic. Understanding the relation between State and Indigenous peoples, as pointed by Coulthard (2014), must not be restricted to the formal recognition of indigenous rights, but also attentive to how such rights are conceived within national jurisdictions and their relation to economic and strategic goals of the States that purport to “recognize” indigenous rights.

According to the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat of the Arctic Council, indigenous peoples of the Arctic form up a population of 500 thousand inhabitants over seven Arctic countries (of the estimated 4 million inhabitants of the Arctic). These populations inhabit boreal portions of Arctic States’ territories, close both to the Arctic Ocean and to the resource reserves of the Arctic. In the perspective of States, their traditional lands are strategically located both in geopolitical and in economic terms. The growing pressure over natural resources and the strategic value of minerals and hydrocarbons has put them on a collision route with government and corporate interests in the Arctic.

1.8 Theorizing the changing Arctic: geopolitics, coloniality and climate change

Perspectives hitherto presented allow the articulation of several phenomena present in contemporary Arctic issues – especially by shifting the focus from political and institutional phenomena to a perspective that departs from the political economy of a changing space. The idea of structural power (Strange, 1998) is an important tool to trace and understand interstate tensions and competitive pressures that now emerge in the Arctic. These pressures are important drivers of capitalist development projects seeking to make the most from perceived new economic and strategic opportunities in the Arctic. To avoid State-centric explanations of international phenomena, the present research advocates for a focus on the spatial and territorial reorganization projects that now emerge in the Arctic and to a shift in perspective, privileging the comprehension of how economic and geopolitical phenomena are affecting indigenous homelands and peoples in the region. The spatial approach proposed here, coupled with elements from critical political economy, is an important step in comprehending phenomena obscured by approaches centered on the agency of the national-territorial State, as well as for comprehending the broader spatialities and tensions at play in the projects regarding economic development and navigation in the Arctic.

The economic element of Arctic geopolitics is left untheorized – if not altogether untouched – in neorealist and neoliberal scholarship. An instrumental view of economic development as a geopolitical/strategic tool for states to assert their presence, dominance and territoriality over the Arctic in neorealist thought is coupled with a view of the economic issues only insofar as they represent or raise issues for governance structures and regimes. These perspectives operate a naturalization and subsequent depoliticization of economic phenomena, obscuring the conditions that make both “Arctic geopolitics” and “Arctic economic

development” possible and the process that conflated these two terms with the extension of state power and control over Arctic spaces and peoples.

In the present research, we propose an alternative approach, drawing from insights and concepts produced within the field of International Political Economy and that, we believe, can not only deconstruct the images of the empty Arctic, but also be helpful in producing theorizations and explanations of geopolitical and economic phenomena taking place in the High North. Starting from seminal IPE contributions to understanding the intertwining between geopolitics and economic development, concepts mobilized here will re-direct our gaze from a state-centered view of the Arctic as a “governance problem” and put in evidence the ways in which Arctic geopolitics and economic development are being produced and the tensions, disputes and politics that revolve around such issues. Another important element here is to reverse the erasure that mainstream IR theorizations operate when silencing about how climate change and economic development projects are affecting Indigenous livelihoods – and also the silence on Indigenous resistances and politics in face of the climate crisis and their struggle to define, implement their own ideas of economic development and defend their traditional territories.

Our analysis is directed towards two specific regions of the Arctic – Inuit Nunaat in North America, spanning from northern Alaska to Greenland, and Sápmi in Northern Scandinavia, divided between Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Our aim is to understand how climate change and transformations in the geopolitical and economic scenarios affect such regions, with special attention to the expansion of state control over these spaces, their resources and the livelihoods of the indigenous populations. One of the main links between geopolitical and economic phenomena is the transformation of the relation between humanity and nature in the Arctic. Geopolitical theory practice, as well as neo-extractivist capitalist accumulation are deeply connected through a view of nature as a source of resources and wealth, promoting instrumental relation to land and territory based on value and valorization (economic development) and on the *strategic* value of resources, territories and the colonial spatialities of trade

and development. Through an analysis of the relation between economic development projects and the Arctic strategies of States, our efforts seek to understand how geopolitical, economic and even climate factors are being mobilized to transform the relation between Arctic States (and even some outside the region) and Arctic spaces and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, we also seek to understand how indigenous peoples articulate their own visions of geopolitics, security and economic development for the changing Arctic – and the political tensions that emerge from the articulation of the right to self-government and self-determination in contexts where the state seeks to build up its control mechanisms over land, people and territories.

1.9 Methods – seeing in the white darkness

In line with the theoretical framework outlined here, we seek to understand Arctic geopolitics and economic development through their impacts on indigenous territories. This is also an intellectual “eco-territorial turn” – bringing front and center traditional indigenous lands, territorialities and mobilities to understand how the processes of economic development have affected such spaces and peoples for our analysis. To understand how the relation between humanity and nature has changed over the centuries of contact and colonization, we turn to the history of Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat to understand what the continuities and changes are in the present “Arctic resource boom”. This move is also important to critically interrogate the “Arctic resource boom” and the “Arctic exceptionalism” framings, common aspects in the literature regarding Arctic geopolitics and governance. The choice to reconstruct this history not based on state territorialities – or at least not entirely based upon them – is an attempt to comprehend how the expansion of capitalism from the centers of accumulation affected non-European peoples and non-capitalist social formations in the Arctic. Also, I believe this methodological proposition important because it has the potential to be applied to other subjects, from the disputes for land in the Arctic to

those happening in the Amazon rainforest, once it allows for analyses of indigenous peoples and their global and globalizing politics, bringing them as important actors for the field of IR.

To do so, my analysis turns to a historical-sociological approach, seeking to reconstruct the changes on the relation between humanity and nature in Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat. This historical reconstruction is important to avoid *noble savage*-like analyses of indigenous peoples, believing they are, today, the same they were when first contacted or when colonization of their territories began. The discussion of the frontier-making of the capitalist world ecology also serves to understand how these peoples and their practices were deeply affected by intrusion, colonization and articulation with distant markets. Also, it is necessary to understand the techniques, legislations and policies employed by states and capital to transform humanity-nature relations to market-oriented livelihoods and their effects. Here, we combine the historical-sociological approach with a process-tracing method, seeking to understand both project and process dimensions of the colonization of these spaces. The project dimension is understood as the discourse of states and capitals crystallized in legislation, policies and strategies seeking to reorganize the space in the benefit of capitalist accumulation. The process dimension is the effective, concrete effects of such policies and the resistances they met and the materialities involved in new plans for Arctic resource development.

Capitalism, as we have pointed out, is an ecological project, a way of organizing relations between humanity and nature. The expansion of capitalism as a mode of production created tensions between the instrumental, value-driven view of nature as a source of resources predicated by capitalist accumulation and other views of the role of humanity in nature – in the present research, indigenous socio-ecological perspectives. This clash materializes in a myriad of processes aimed at transforming the relation of non-capitalist peoples into the instrumental perspective of the capitalist mode of production and in resistance movements and politics in these places. The methods employed to analyze the economic development of the Arctic must look to how these clashes created new

configurations of power and capital that, in turn, produced new forms of relations between humanity and nature among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. In doing so, we need a historical reconstruction of contact and colonization of Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat to understand the drivers of the processes that sought to integrate the Arctic to national and global economies that sought to exploit the resources in the region. It is important to note that our use of the process-tracing method is not a traditional approach. We employ process-tracing as a method to reconstruct the historical dimension of our subject and the process dimension of the capitalist world-ecology.

Here we turn to Moore's (2015) "commodity frontier" as a methodological proposition, as a privileged window through which geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics can be seen. Because of the particular nature of the economic activities present in the commodity frontier, we adopt the term "extractive frontier" interchangeably. Understanding the Arctic as an extractive frontier, as a long-term frontier of commodification is central to the present work. Not only does it allow us to understand how and why capitalist and territorialist agencies sought to expand power, influence and control over the region, but also how this relates to the changes in material and ideational aspects of the humanity-nature relation. Treating the commodity frontier as a methodological proposition allows for the spatialization of our analysis, directing our gaze to places where capitalist and non-capitalist social formations met (and clashed) and to the activities that drove the expansion of colonization, commodification of nature and political control over indigenous territories. This is also a reason that has led to the choice of discussing Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi as units of analyses. We also believe this approach will allow us to disentangle the old colonialisms and the new, enabling a critical evaluation of the material and ideational changes that shaped the colonization of the Arctic and that shape contemporary geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics.

To deal with such a task, the following chapters are organized as follows. Chapter 2 will deal with the historical reconstruction of colonization and socio-ecological transformations in Inuit Nunaat, the North American Arctic, and in Sápmi, the European Arctic. We resorted to available sources on environmental

history and on the impacts of colonization and development over the Inuit and the Sámi, as well as their political engagements. Chapter 3 will deal specifically with the struggles of indigenous self-determination and self-government – which, coincidentally, took place almost concomitantly in history - and their impacts to the political and economic situation of the Inuit and the Sámi. Chapter 4 deals with 21st century Arctic geopolitics and economic development, especially those dynamics affecting Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat.

2. The Arctic as a colonial space

*Homeland is a happenstance of migrations
and of Our Lord's bread wherever He gives
us⁹*

Mário de Andrade

The present chapter aims to debunk the “empty Arctic” narratives. One of the most important myths in colonial enterprises and ideologies is the idea of *terra nullius*, the idea of a space as a land belonging to no one. This myth, and the framing it entails – who “owns” or who can “own” a space – is predicated in the erasure of ongoing colonial practices that sought and still seek to remake the land claimed as territory in the image and likeness of the borders claimed by the State. Another important dimension here is how this myth also erases the resistances and political articulations of indigenous peoples, telling the history of territorialization as the history of the region. In this chapter, I seek to discuss important moments of the history of Arctic colonization and colonialism, specially in the techniques deployed to reshape the humanity-nature relation in the Arctic and their function in the expansion of the global metabolism of capital.

2.1 The colonial encounter in Inuit Nunaat

The colonization of Inuit Nunaat by the various states that occupy it today has left its mark on the most diverse areas of the lives of its people. The Inuit went through a violent process that mixed the dismantling of their livelihoods and social structures with an attempt to assimilate them into the various national projects they encountered. Sustained contact with Euro-American societies and their dynamics of economic development had profound environmental effects, through the predatory hunting of walruses, foxes and whales, as well as the development of gold mining in certain regions and, more recently, oil and natural gas exploration

⁹ In the original: *Pátria é acaso de migrações e do pão-nosso onde Deus der*. Free translation by the author. From the poem “O poeta come amendoim”

projects in the Arctic. In addition, the successive crises and dismantling of the subsistence of these populations was instrumentalized by the states to force their sedentarization, even affecting the way the Inuit organized their families and ways of building kinship. This section combines insights from Jessica Shadian (2014), Bathsheba Demuth (2019) and Marybelle Mitchell (1998) to present the impacts of the colonization process on the indigenous populations of the Arctic, with a focus on the Inuit.

Demuth (2019) starts from a thesis that is central to our reflection – that the colonization of Beringia (figure 6) can also be characterized by the imposition of Euro-American logics for mediating the relationship between human and non-human elements in a region where such a distinction hardly existed or was irrelevant in everyday social practice. Demuth points out that for some populations in Beringia, including the Inuit, the barrier between humanity and non-humanity was fluid and did not demarcate a radical separation between human beings, their environment and other living beings. Thus, for example, whaling, as well as a subsistence activity, had great socio-cultural significance, since, for these populations, the whale, when it died, gave itself up voluntarily to support the communities. This way of seeing the world led to a relationship with the land and territory based on the logic of *inua* (Shadian, 2014) – which placed human beings in a network of obligations towards the land, not living off the land, but living on the land, with the responsibility of preserving and respecting temporalities, spatialities and natural cycles.



Figure 6: Beringia.

Available in: <https://ibes.brown.edu/news/2020-11-17/histories-entwined>

The colonial encounter did not eliminate this worldview but sought to radically alter the logic of this relationship. This attempt was not only in terms of a culturally determined rejection of difference, based on a Christian-European worldview, but also in terms of the imposition of a new form of mediation of this relationship – value. One of the first stages of this process was the insertion of the Inuit into the world market through their role in commercial whaling. Whaling was an important point of contact with the Inuit, be it in Greenland, Canada or, in the latest stages of contact, in Alaska. Although the indigenous people of Inuit Nunaat already hunted whales for their subsistence, from the 1850s onwards this activity became entangled with the global whaling industry which, in addition to meat, sought products such as whale oil (used in street lighting) or whale baleen – used to make accessories such as umbrellas and clothing items. The research carried out by Demuth (2019) demonstrates how whaling and sustained contact also ended up affecting other forms of life in the Arctic. Predatory whaling led to a scarcity of whales, which also made the various ships that undertook voyages to Beringia look for other activities that could make a profit. The hunt for foxes and walrus also began to link up with world markets, given the profitability of the trade in pelts, walrus skins and tusks. The development of these activities, in

addition to shifting from the logic of subsistence to the logic of profit, ignored the social practices of the region's populations, as well as bringing serious ecological imbalances to the region - profoundly affecting the subsistence of Arctic populations.

Shadian (2014) and Demuth (2019) show how the ecological and economic imbalances resulting from sustained contact with Euro-American societies destabilized the Inuit's livelihoods, bringing problems such as hunger, epidemics, and alcoholism to their territories. These situations caused by colonization entailed subsistence crises such as famines among the Alaska natives and was used by state agents as a way of justifying policies to “protect” these populations, with the state being responsible not only for providing assistance, but also for preparing and planning their assimilation and integration as full-fledged citizens, as well as their entrance in "modern" job markets. With the construction of permanent state presence in traditional Inuit territories, the idea of scientific management of this population and their subsistence activities comes into play as a control apparatus.

The authors presented here focus on an environmental history and a history of the politics of sovereignty over the Arctic to discuss the process of colonization. Marybelle Mitchell, on the other hand, seeks to discuss how sustained contact with Euro-American populations and the insertion of the Arctic and the Inuit into the capitalist mode of production impacted the socio-economic organization of the Inuit. By bringing together the perspectives of the three authors – covering roughly the same historical period - we aim to articulate political, ecological and economic phenomena in order to understand the profound impacts of colonialism on the shaping of the North American Arctic as a frontier for global capital accumulation. Thus, we seek to understand how national states reorganized the Arctic according to their strategic and economic purposes, how Inuit Nunaat became divided among Canada, Russia, Greenland and the United States.

2.1.1 Before contact

As seen on the map in figure 1, the Inuit territory comprises the northern portions of Canadian territory, the United States, Russia and Greenland. Contact between the Inuit and Euro-American populations differed greatly in terms of time and the extent of contact in these regions. Sustained contact in Alaska, for example, begins with the arrival of commercial whaling on the Beringian coast by the 1850s, while in the Canadian case it is more related to the exploration of the Northwest Passage and trade with the Hudson Bay Company between the 17th and 19th centuries. In Greenland, meanwhile, two waves of contact took place, one at the beginning of the second millennium, when the island was colonized by Scandinavian peoples (who were wiped out during the Little Ice Age), and the other from the 18th century onwards, with the new colonization promoted from 1720 by Denmark. Initially, however, the hostility of the climate and the absence (or lack of knowledge about the presence) of resources whose exploitation required a more intensive presence meant that contact was sporadic and centered on exchange relations during whaling seasons.

The frequency and nature of contact is related to the tensions that ran through these territories before colonization. Demuth (2019) and Mitchell (1996) point out that coexistence between the various communities and indigenous peoples in the region was markedly hostile, with some points of peaceful contact and trade - mainly between coastal communities and communities living far from the ocean. Contact with Euro-American navigators and whalers was based on a search for mutual advantages - the whalers looking for native knowledge on navigation and hunting in the Arctic and the Beringians and Inuit looking for products that would allow them to gain advantages in the dispute with other peoples present in the region and for their everyday survival. Mitchell points out that, while explorers and whalers were shocked by various habits of these peoples, they said little or nothing about their trading habits, indicating the existence of trade and circulation of goods in the pre-contact period.

The political and economic organization of the region's indigenous people is little commented on in the literature. However, it is noteworthy that figures such as *angakoq* (shaman) and *isumaitoq* ("the one who thinks", leadership) exercised a certain degree of *ad hoc* authority, at times such as hunting, distribution of tasks and food, or moments of spiritual, religious importance. In addition, intra-Inuit relations were also marked by mutual avoidance, with communities and populations avoiding contact with each other in the most diverse ways. The Inuit and many other peoples of Beringia did not seek to build permanent settlements, carrying out nomadic life, making journeys according to hunting and food needs and with climate conditions and seasons. These elements contributed to the emergence of an economic life focused on subsistence and characterized by the impossibility of accumulation.

Demuth (2019) and Shadian (2017) show how the Inuit culture viewed itself and its interactions with nature differently from the Western societies. As previously mentioned, the Inuit thought of their relationship with nature through the prism of *inua*, a relationship of guardianship and custodianship with nature. This position, rather than a notion of control over nature as a need, presupposes a more harmonious relationship and a series of prohibitions which, in practice, prevented predatory hunting and food waste, for example. Social and spiritual practices related to hunting and food distribution provided a protection against the accumulation of food by particular individuals, but also aimed to guarantee the material reproduction of human and non-human lives that shared the Arctic world.

On the northern Canadian coast, on the other hand, attempts to map the region and explore the Northwest Passage did not generate sufficient conditions for sustained contact with the Inuit. Contact was very sporadic and sparse, occurring in particular when expedition ships ran aground with the intention of spending the winter in the Arctic. Sustained contact between indigenous communities and Euro-American populations was consolidated with the creation and expansion of trading companies such as the Hudson Bay Company and the North West Company (Mitchell, 1996). These companies played an important role in the colonization of North America and established commercial and military

posts that organized a trade network connecting the most important colonial population centers to unsettled regions. This network allowed for a continuous flow of trade in manufactured goods from already occupied territories and even from the metropolis in exchange for furs and other fruits of the Arctic indigenous hunts.



Figure 7: Inuit trading pelts at a trading post in northern Canada. Scene from the movie "Nanook of the North"

2.1.2 The arrival of the whalers and sustained contact

Continuous contact with the indigenous populations of the North American Arctic was established at different times. Although contact between communities did not cease, given the nomadic lifestyle and great mobility of the Inuit, direct, long-term contact with Euro-American populations was recorded with great geographical variation. In 1729 and 1750, for example, there are already records of whaling in the Davis Strait (between Greenland and Canada), while in Alaska this contact was only consolidated from the 1850s onwards. The establishment of this continuous contact was facilitated by the search for the Northwest Passage by British explorers and the purchase of Alaska by the USA in the 19th century, the

development of whaling and, at the end of this century, the discovery of gold in certain regions of the Arctic. The search for alternative routes linking the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific is one of the driving forces behind the initial exploration of the Arctic and applies to both the European Arctic and its North American portion. The search for the Northwest Passage, at a high cost in terms of human lives, sought to explore the northern coast of Canada, producing maps of the geography of the region and the populations present there. This contact, however, became more permanent with the establishment of trading posts where Western manufactured goods were exchanged for merchandise such as furs, game meat and whale baleen.

In the 18th century, British and American whalers arrived in the eastern portions of the North American Arctic. With the growth of the whaling industry, especially on the east coast of the USA and Canada – and the subsequent scarcity of whales in the Atlantic – the crews began to look further and further north for hunting grounds. The way these voyages took place, as well as the region's hostile climate, favored sustained contact with the Inuit. The practice of wintering during the journey, for example, was followed by the establishment of contact with nearby communities and trade. Around a century later, the intensification of whaling also led to the establishment of permanent whaling stations – which also became points of contact between Inuit and Euro-American societies. The stations had a varied impact, depending on how they operated and how often they were visited. Mitchell (1996) reports that the impact of whaling in Canada was most pronounced in the Eastern Arctic, around Baffin Bay and the western part of the Canadian Arctic, with the whaling station on Herschel Island.

Commercial whaling also intensified contact between Inuit from different regions, especially Alaska and the Mackenzie River delta. Before colonization and even before contact, relations between different Inuit communities were marked by mutual avoidance and distrust. The accounts compiled by Mitchell (1996) show how the presence of the Herschel Island station meant that contact began to include socialization and even marriage between different communities. In

addition, it was common for indigenous labor to be employed in various roles in the whaling industry. The Inuit

(...) manned whaleboats, pursued whales, participated in flensing, transported blubber by dogsled, hunted to provide fresh caribou meat, acted as guides on sled trips, made up and repaired skin clothing and carried out many other tasks (Ross *Apud* Mitchell, 1996, p.64).

The participation of Inuit in whaling, as well as the trade arising from encounters with whalers, is a common feature of the first wave of prolonged contact in the Arctic. So were the problems arising from this contact. Mitchell (1996) and Demuth (2019) report the devastating effect of disease on these populations. Mitchell (1996) cites a community of Inuit in Canada – the Sadlermiut – who, despite avoiding contact with strangers and other Inuit, were decimated by typhus twenty-five years after the establishment of a Scottish whaling station on Southampton Island.

There is a consensus that, for the Inuit, engaging with the whalers was important for acquiring products that were not easily found in Inuit Nunaat and even new technologies such as firearms and iron tools. The whalers, in turn, consolidated contact with these peoples based on the realization that their survival depended on their ability to find fresh food in the Arctic (Mitchell, 1996), as well as on the goodwill of the communities in cases of emergency (Demuth, 2019). Contact with whalers took place at different times in different parts of the Arctic, with the first records of this contact occurring on the coast of Greenland and in northern Canada – most notably in Hudson River Bay (Shadian, 2017; Mitchell, 1996).

Marybelle Mitchell's (1996) reflections, although focused on the Canadian Inuit, are useful for thinking about the consequences of this contact for the indigenous communities of Inuit Nunaat. Mitchell starts from the hypothesis that the encounter with the whalers brought major transformations to the life and material reproduction of the Inuit. It had a double effect, reinforcing certain aspects of their daily lives while undermining the conditions for the perpetuation of others. The study of the economic (Mitchell, 1996) and environmental (Demuth, 2019)

history of contact and colonization allows us to say that the insertion of elements such as firearms and whaling boats and the economic pressures for trade in traditional living resources also transformed the relationship between Inuit communities, their territories and the other forms of life with which they shared this world. Although, subjectively, the Inuit still viewed hunting in a "traditional" way, thinking of the relationship with the animals based on keys such as dignity and the will of the animal spirits, hunting became guided by the need to trade their products for survival.

The introduction of firearms, for example, allowed the Inuit to be employed in supplying the crews and whaling stations, as well as bringing greater efficiency to the hunting activity – allowing the production of a surplus to be exchanged with the whites. Although the relationship with the whites was now mediated by exchange and the hunted animals were understood, to a certain extent, as merchandise, this transformation contributed to the perpetuation of hunting as a traditional Inuit activity. The range of firearms (greater than that of harpoons) made seal and walrus hunting more effective and less risky, as well as introducing an advantage when hunting larger animals – such as the musk ox. This possibility, together with the pressure to acquire a surplus of food and other animal products, increased the pressure on the lives of the animals with whom the Inuit shared their world. The commodification of these products and the progressive scarcity of animals undermined the possibilities for the reproduction of Inuit material life at the most basic level: by threatening their food sources.

Another consequence of contact was intra-Inuit interaction and changes in the routes followed in the migration process of these populations. Although the Inuit had a sense of shared identity before colonization, Mitchell (1996) points out that contact between different Inuit communities was sparse and not always peaceful. The conflicting history of relations between the different peoples of the Arctic, although difficult to access, is also commented on by Demuth (2019), including as a vector for contact, especially because of the possibility/necessity of acquiring firearms – an element of protection against attacks from other peoples/communities. Contact with whalers and the spread of Euro-American

goods among Inuit communities acted as a factor of integration between these peoples, promoting a deeper sense of Inuit identity. Even populations not involved in whaling and the logistics of this activity, such as the communities of the Central Arctic and Alaska (before the 1850s) entered the trade routes initiated by contact with the whalers.

These trade networks, as well as the development of whaling, had an impact on the routes followed by the Inuit in their typical nomadic movements. If, before, communities moved based on the presence of game, climate conditions and the search for subsistence, the construction of seasonal whaling stations in the same places made certain points inevitable in the permanent migration of the Inuit. The employment and earning opportunities represented by the stations meant that populations closer to the whaling territories decided to settle temporarily near the stations, actively seeking contact with the Euro-American crews for employment opportunities and imported products.

Throughout the 19th century, however, the whaling industry experienced its decline. As the results of expeditions in the Eastern Arctic and other seas declined, the industry sought new seas from the 1850s onwards, reaching the region of Alaska. Even before the purchase of Alaska, US whalers had already made contact with the Alaskan people. Predatory whaling in the Pacific caused crews to seek hunting further and further north (Demuth, 2019), leading them to the Bering Strait. Commercial whaling, in addition to employing the local population for their expertise, also created a chain of trade, linking subsistence activities of the region's peoples to global processes of capital accumulation and commodity circulation. Euro-American whalers initially sought contact with the populations of Beringia (Demuth, 2019) because of the need for logistical support for their activities, especially for the possibilities of rescue and shelter in the region. Over time, the use of indigenous labor became the norm, generating seasonal cycles of trade and employment for the Beringian peoples. With the advance of predatory whaling, especially with the increase in the number of whales killed throughout the 19th century, commercial fishing lost its profitability and faced a shortage of whales – which led to the exploitation of other forms of

life, especially walruses. The predatory hunting of these species, as Demuth rightly points out, has led to the disappearance of calories and forms of life that allowed the material reproduction of peoples in this region of the Arctic.

The purchase of Alaska by the US in 1867 facilitated the insertion of whalers into the Arctic while introducing a territorial division into Beringia. By encompassing Alaska under its territorial jurisdiction, the United States aimed not only to reap the economic benefits of the region, but also to increase its capacity to control the space and its populations, marking a qualitative turning point in the relationship between the Inuit (and other Arctic peoples) and the US state apparatus. With the subsequent discovery of gold, this control intensified, with the aim of bringing the "Eskimo" under the control of the state and "preparing" them for insertion into the market economy. It is interesting to note that despite having been acquired in 1867, Alaska was only incorporated into the Union as a state in 1959. During this period, the territory was the responsibility of different US government agencies, such as the Treasury Department and the Navy, showing a mentality of guardianship over an area populated mostly by non-white peoples.

As Demuth (2019) points out, both the colonizers and the indigenous people of the region made a living from the death of the whales. While the indigenous people used the meat, bones and baleen for their daily lives, turning the dead whale into food, clothing, part of their dwellings, needles and even ornaments, the American whalers aimed to turn the dead whale into money from these same products. Whale oil, in particular, was used as an industrial lubricant and for street lighting, and baleen was widely used in the clothing and accessories industry, being used for the production of bodices and umbrellas. Demuth (2019) points out, however, that Euro-American whalers viewed the whale as a commodity, or as a source of goods, to be hunted and harvested for profit. The indigenous people of Beringia, on the other hand, saw whales as companion species, as animals that gave themselves to the hunters and whose sacrifice had to be honored by distributing the results of the hunt within the hunter's community.

The capitalist orientation of the activity, as well as the payment of labor linked to the results of the voyages, acted as incentives for predatory hunting,

victimizing calves, nursing whales and animals in breeding season in order to cover the costs of the voyage, guaranteeing profits for the ship owners and ensure the payment of the crews. This violence took place not only against the whales, but also against the indigenous populations of the region. In addition, other resources in the region came under great pressure with the development of commercial whaling. Mitchell (1996) estimates that one ship in one winter consumed enough reindeer to sustain an Inuit family for a year. In addition, the whalers also became aware of the commercial value of the skins used against the cold, which brought commercial, profit-oriented demands to Inuit hunting.

The increasing scarcity of whales meant that Euro-American crews turned to other ways of earning money on their voyages to the Arctic. Whether through trade and barter with the indigenous populations, or by engaging directly in the hunting of animals such as the walrus. The trade in fox skins and walrus tusks – characterized by Demuth (2019) as the "ivory of the poor" – represented new pressures on Arctic life forms. Again, the killing of walruses was a central part of human life in Beringia – the meat being consumed as well as the skin, bones and tusks used in the daily lives of the indigenous populations of the Bering Strait. Walrus tusks, according to Demuth (2019), were viewed as a low-cost substitute for ivory in Euro-American societies, while meat, skin, bones and fat were not valued nor valuable. The search for profit and alternative products to supplement the income from whales again created a void in the Inuit (and other peoples') world by eliminating increasing numbers of walruses. The introduction of firearm hunting also contributed to hunting practices that drove walruses to near extinction in certain regions. The abrupt scarcity of two forms of life that served as a source of food and energy for these populations, as well as being a sign of the profound ecological imbalance that was to come, also brought misery, hunger and death from disease and all sorts of problems caused by hunger and malnutrition. In Demuth's words, "the market exchanged whale meat and blubber for empty metal pots" (2019, p. 58).

The decline of the whaling economy was mainly due to the emergence of new materials that replaced whale products. The discovery of the energy and

industrial potential of oil, the development of plastics and the steel industry made whale oil and baleen – as well as walrus ivory – obsolete. Contact with the whaling industry reshaped the way of life of the peoples of the Arctic and trade at the stations and with whaling ships became fundamental to the survival of these communities. Mitchell (1996) and Demuth (2019) discuss how this process affected the diet of indigenous communities, whether through the scarcity of traditionally consumed life forms (seals, whales, walruses) or the arrival of new products such as molasses, bread, alcoholic beverages and processed foods that were incorporated into the Inuit's daily lives. Due to the absence of animals used for subsistence in these communities, or the absence of subsistence trade, the end of the whaling industry has deepened the misery and hunger in Inuit Nunaat.

Despite the profound impacts brought about by contact and colonialism, however, the story of expropriation and exploitation was only just beginning. The region's economy and traditional subsistence practices would increasingly come to be instrumentalized by the state and the market in perpetuating interests external to the indigenous communities of the Arctic, reshaping the forms of the humanity/nature relationship for the sake of capital accumulation.

2.1.3 Gold, race and enclosure

When gold was discovered in various parts of the Arctic, especially Alaska and Canada, land occupation became an economic imperative. While hunting and fishing did not require strict territorial control, mining, in order to be profitable, requires the distribution of territory and the guarantee of property rights over the land and subsoil. The discovery of gold, therefore, marks the moment when a policy of occupation and direct control over the territory began to guide the actions of the state in the Arctic. Another central element in the functioning of the mining economy was the establishment of permanent settlements – towns and villages from which the miners departed, where they could access the products and services they needed to live and to carry on mining. At this time, in addition to

joining the global circuits of capital accumulation and the circulation of goods, the Inuit were faced with the need to enter the salaried economy.

The widespread poverty among the populations of the far north – the result of the expansion of capitalist exploitation of the ways of life found there – was instrumental in extending colonial control over the indigenous populations of the region. The socio-economic disarticulation of these communities was treated as a sign of the need to protect the non-European populations of the Arctic and pave the way for their insertion into the labor market – in subordinate jobs. In addition to religious discourses, this time also saw the emergence of structures for racializing the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and ideas about how to assimilate the "Eskimos" into American society. It is also in the midst of this process that experiences of indoctrination and separation of children from their communities emerge – residential schools aimed at the cultural genocide of indigenous populations, stifling the reproduction of cultures through a Christian education aimed at assimilation. The idea of the "Eskimo" as a race inferior to whites enabled a policy of enclosure aimed at making gold mining viable and keeping power over the land and resources in the hands of (white) American citizens (Demuth, 2019; Shadian, 2017).



Figure 8: Cartoon depicting Seward and the "new Senators", a heavily racialized "Eskimo" and a seal.

This period saw an increase in state control over the indigenous populations of the Arctic. The construction of the "Eskimo" as an inferior race meant that the state sought to regulate even their traditional activities such as hunting caribou and walrus. The idea of being able to scientifically manage economic activities in Beringia and other parts of Inuit Nunaat was umbilically linked to the quest for tutelage, control and assimilation of their populations. Part of the project to indoctrinate and integrate these populations into the market was to turn their traditional economic activities towards supplying the white population that was now settling in the region. This unfolded both through the establishment of restrictions, legislation and regulations on hunting, based on arguments of species conservation, and through projects aimed at giving new forms to subsistence activities. The creation of fox "farms" or attempts to encourage

reindeer herding as a market activity have sought, through the application of scientific (biological and economic) knowledge, to impose a new logic on the traditional activities of the indigenous populations of the Arctic. Moving away from a logic of subsistence for small-scale communities and groups, these activities have become responsible for

Here again we see how the relationship between indigenous populations and their respective territories is profoundly affected by the ecological impacts of colonialism. Traditional activities were not only geared towards supplying the demands of other populations arriving in the region but were also transformed so that they could be more efficient in this purpose – and in guaranteeing the material reproduction of the mining economy. Subaltern insertion into the labor market, in turn, was only possible through the dismantling of traditional ways of life in the Arctic. The absence of animals that were victims of predatory, capitalist hunting in the region, and the ecological imbalances brought about by colonialism, accentuated the already serious cycle of malnutrition, hunger and disease that already affected the region's populations. The decrease in the population of the animals that formed the basis of their diet and the increase in the frequency of hunts with insufficient results forced the Inuit to seek their survival through work.

From the point of view of the exercise of colonial power, the gold rushes and mining marked a fundamental moment in the process of striation (Duplessis, 2020). The concept of the striation of space can be characterized as the effort to subordinate the nomadic mobilities of indigenous populations to the sedentary logic of the nation state. It is the effort to subordinate the lines that characterize movement to the points through which the state exercises and seeks to assert its territoriality and power over a given space. Although Gitte Duplessis speaks of the striation of space in the Arctic as a contemporary phenomenon, it is important to note that the logic of the striation of space was already present as a political technology in the North American Arctic. The materiality of gold mining – the demand for machinery and energy for the machines, the need for legally established property rights and enclosures, the control of space that the solution of such demands brings – makes this activity a vector for the striation of space.

Thus, the discovery of gold and the rush for the mineral also marked the first great wave of enclosures. The need to establish property rights over the plots where the gold was found – a prerequisite for the activity to be attractive and profitable – was one of the driving forces behind the fencing process. From 1898, the date of the first gold rushes (Demuth, 2019, Shadian, 2017), it is also possible to observe the emergence of a demand for territorialization and the definition of portions of land as property. The need for enclosure had its corollary in the need to build and articulate a transportation network that would allow production to flow and supply mining in Alaska. Demuth (2019) argues that the process of enclosure, in a way, demanded a unique history of space and land, also marking the moment of separation between the indigenous populations of the Arctic and their lands. This period also saw the emergence of racialized narratives about the indigenous populations of the Arctic as a mechanism for assimilating and subsuming these populations into the labor market.

The period of the discovery of gold coincided with one of the most serious periods of hunger and misery among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic – especially in the United States. Hunger and deepening misery, as well as the suffering that these phenomena brought, were instrumentalized in order to blame the indigenous populations for their misfortunes – either for exploiting the resources of the Arctic in an "irrational" way, or for not having in their culture a virtuous "work ethic" like the American Christian ethic (Demuth, 2019). The same author also highlights the role of missionaries and state agents in seeking to "moralize" the expansion of capitalism in the Arctic, either by regulating economic activity or by spreading Christian morality among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. Economic regulation aimed to direct the gains of the gold rush towards the interests of the US government, and Christianization aimed to assimilate the indigenous populations of the region and reshape their subjectivity so that they could participate as full citizens – particularly as a workforce for the US economy that was developing in the region.

2.2. Colonizing Sápmi

While it is difficult to trace the first contacts with the Sámi, efforts of colonization and control over land, people and resources in Sápmi can be traced to the emergence and consolidation of nation states in Fennoscandia. Hansen and Olsen (2014) show how sustained contact with the Sámi can be traced to the early Middle Ages. Sápmi, the traditional territory of the Sámi people, was engulfed by geopolitical tensions and territorialization processes much earlier than Inuit Nunaat, due to the contiguity of Sápmi and the neighboring polities - Sweden-Finland, Norway-Denmark and the Russian Empire. In the late Middle Ages, the emergence of centralized states disputing sovereignty over the Fennoscandian peninsula put the Sámi in the course of international tensions. During this period, relations with the Sámi were important for contact and commerce among the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark and the Russian Empire, and were interesting for the Hanseatic League and traders of northern Europe as well. Hansen and Olsen (2014) point out how Sápmi was a strategic crossroads, where several important trading networks of Europe came into contact. Contact among such states and trade was either carried out by the Sámi in their migrations or with them acting as guides for merchants and caravans. Sápmi, for these polities, was a transitional space, a zone of contact among the different polities that claimed sovereignty over it. The Sámi acted as guides for merchants and their livelihoods - fishing and hunting, for instance - were important in the logistics of commerce and as products to be exchanged with outsiders. Hansen and Olsen (2014) remark that material evidence from archaeological sites indicate that there was extensive contact between the Sámi and the outside world, specially through the findings of sacrificial offerings in places of Sámi worship of materials from places as distant as Ireland.

This transnational contact zone, however, was in dispute among the Fennoscandian polities. There were doubts and conflicts over who had the right to impose taxes over Sápmi and over the Sámi, and doubts over who owned which parts of Sápmi. The traditional homeland of the Sámi was connected to the

commercial networks of the Hanseatic League and to the sphere of influence of the Novgorod city-state. Subsistence activities like hunting and fishing were gradually instrumentalized for the provision of products such as furs and smoked fisheries to be traded with the European and Russian merchants in exchange for weapons and metal tools. In this first period, Sápmi was a crossroads, a vector of integration between the different economies surrounding it.

An interesting element is that reindeer herding – one of the most prominent forms of subsistence associated with the Sámi nowadays – was initially restricted to very small herds (Hansen and Olsen, 2014; Lantto, 2010). The Sámi are a diverse people, with subsistence economies varying from community to community. Northernmost Sámi communities, dubbed Sea Sámi, relied on fishing combined with some forms of farming and hunting for survival. Inland Sámi, who lived far from the shores of northern Fennoscandia engaged in reindeer *hunting* for survival and the use of reindeer as decoys in the hunts is the most accepted hypothesis for the emergence of the first reindeer herds among Sámi dwellings (Hansen and Olsen, 2014). Reindeer herding is regarded as a Sámi response to the intensification of taxation over Sápmi, as well as a form of creating surplus for trade with foreign merchants, providing meat and furs, for example. As we shall see later in this chapter the conflation of Sámi with *reindeer herding* Sámi is also product of colonial policies aimed both assimilating non-herding Sámi and effectively controlling reindeer herding Sámi subsistence.

Direct control over land and territorialization policies were also largely absent from the geopolitical dynamics of the early incorporation of Sápmi. While encroaching from settlement and agricultural expansion and colonization efforts advanced from the 10th to 17th centuries, direct control over land and resources, as well as border-making came only to be an overt policy aim from the 16th century onwards. Before that, Sámi-State relations materialized mainly through taxation – both in products and in metallic currency gained in the trade with outsiders. According to Hansen and Olsen (2014) and Koch (2013), the polities disputing dominance over Sápmi – the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Sweden (Sweden-Finland) and the Kingdom of Denmark (Denmark-Norway) – sought to create

spheres of influence in the territory, related to the portions of Sápmi wherefrom such kingdoms would levy their taxes. In many cases, there were shared influence zones between two or more of these policies. The need to pay tributes to foreign powers represented a pressure over animal resources of Sápmi. Reindeer herding was an important strategy in response to these new pressures, combining subsistence herding with other activities in order to ensure the surplus needed to meet the demands imposed by taxation.



Figure 9: Map of Sápmi, divided by linguistic Sámi groups. Red line represents accepted contemporary limit of Sámi lands. Available at: <https://www.eurominority.eu/index.php/en/samiland/>

The intensification of encroachment and colonization from the 16th century onwards coincides with the transition of the Sámi from a hunting/gathering people to a nomadic, pastoralist way of life. This is the moment where the relation between the Sámi and the reindeer begins to take its contemporary shape.

Evidence indicates that the reindeer were first domesticated to serve as decoys in hunts. This social transition was heavily influenced by the deepening connection of the Sámi with the European trading networks that crisscrossed Sápmi, as well as by the need to pay tributes. After the 16th century, international pressures and conflicts in Fennoscandia and in the wider world came to affect Sápmi, be it by pitting polities directly against each other, be it by putting pressures to explore and exploit the resources of the region – as was the case with minerals like iron, silver and copper. These pressures also prompted states to seek to ensure exclusive influence over the shared spheres of taxation, and the response was trying to occupy what was perceived as an “empty” space. Policies of settlement, expansion of agricultural production and border making were adopted against this geopolitical backdrop. Later on, reindeer herding, for its nomadic character, also had an important impact in the interface between the Sámi and state authorities, specially via conflicts over land use and the dispute between the interests of herders and those of farming settlers from Denmark-Norway, Sweden and Russia.

2.2.1 The ores of Sápmi

Another important driver of exploitation of natural resources in Sápmi was the search for (and presence of) metals. The discovery of silver, copper and iron ore in regions of Sápmi was important in the occupation and integration of the region in the national economies (Koch, 2013; Nordin 2015; Ryden, Evans, 2013). Silver was important for coinage and luxury consumption, copper was important for its construction and industrial uses (Koch, 2013), being a commodity to be exported to the Netherlands and used in the refining of sugar that came from the Atlantic. Iron was important due to its military uses, but also employed in industry and agricultural tools, it was also an important export commodity for Sweden, being also used in the transatlantic slave trade. Mining activities were closely

related to the construction and exercise of political power over the producing areas.

An important geopolitical aspect of the 17th century is that the Kingdom of Sweden controlled large swaths of Sápmi with the incorporation of Finland and parts of Denmark-Norway. This amounted to geopolitical control over central Sápmi and allowed Sweden to expand its economic influence over the region. The search for metals was an important activity for the Swedish Crown. In a period when interstate conflicts occasionally erupted in wars, the control over the sources of ores and metals and over the production of tools and weapons was an important geostrategic asset.

2.2.1.1 Iron, copper, silver and the global entanglements of Scandinavian colonialism

Metals mined in Sápmi were important for the insertion of Sweden in the global economy. For instance:

The roofs of the Dutch cities were covered with copper plates and the copper kettles needed for the boiling of sugar in the Caribbean were made from the ore that often had been mined in Sweden and Norway. The cutting edges of the hoes of the American plantations were forged in Swedish factories (Evans and Rydén 2007). Metal making in Sweden was, and still is, intimately entangled with global markets (Nordin, 2013, p 249).

Metals extracted from early-modern Sápmi made their ways to the distant corners of the globe and performed different functions within the emerging capitalist world-ecology.

Iron produced in Scandinavia was important both for industrial uses and for the slave trade in the Atlantic, connecting Scandinavian internal colonialism to more global and globalizing forms of colonization – such as the expansion of sugar cane plantations and the commerce of African slaves. In these mines, it was common to have the Sámi working in the transportation and, to a lesser extent, in the extraction and refining of metal ores. Silver was important both in luxury

consumption of elites, for cutlery and decorative uses, and for the coinage of currency in the wider economy. Copper, also connected Sápmi to the global economy, being an important element for houses in Europe, but also for the ovens and refineries processing the sugar extracted from the Americas. The development of mining in Sápmi was an expression of Scandinavian “internal” colonialism entangled with the globalization of capitalist relations of production. Mining was also related to the expansion of the commodity frontiers in the Arctic and in the wider world. Here, we see the configuration of the Arctic as a global commodity frontier, both in itself, where capitalist agencies attempted to leverage its profits via the exploitation of historical natures hitherto independent from it, and also via the channeling of resources extracted from Arctic soils to deploy capitalist techniques of exploitation in other commodity frontiers.

The motivations for seeking metals in Sweden were not only economic, but also geopolitical. The specter of war imposed the need for a steady source of metals fundamental for military equipment – weapons, blades, armors – under the control of the (emerging) national State. By the 16th century, Central Sweden was already one of the greatest producers of iron in the world. From this moment on, the Crown took a more active role in the management and construction of mines and metalworks, aimed at securing supplies of raw materials employed in military equipment. This approach by the Crown was also instrumental in shifting the control of mining and metalworks from the hands of craftsmen to the hands of (often foreign) capitalists (Nordin, 2013). This denotes the class project aspect of the mining industry in Sápmi, a colonial enterprise that both asserted Swedish power over the region and composed the powers of the Crown with and emerging and already global bourgeoisie. It is also important to note that mines and metalworks opened in Sápmi were also further north from those in Central Sweden, representing an opportunity to occupy an “empty” space. In Sápmi, however, mines and metalworks created enclave economies around mining sites with heavy social and ecological implications.

The Sámi, for instance, were either directly employed in the mines and metal works or, more commonly, in the transport of goods to and from the mining

sites. Sámi workforce in the mines was quickly replaced by European migrant workforce, as indicated by archaeological studies of early modern mining sites. However, their role in the logistics of the mining sites and metalworks was important. Reindeer herds were used as draft animals and to transport ores from mines to metal works as well as trees and charcoal to these same sites, also being used to deliver the final products to their consuming markets. The metalworks relied heavily on charcoal as a fuel for furnaces. This is the first great ecological implication of the expansion of mining in Sápmi, forests near mining sites were generally exploited to the point of depletion for timber used in construction and charcoal used as fuel for furnaces. In some of these areas, the devastation drove Sámi groups away from traditional grazing grounds and migration routes. Small and short-lived as it was, the early modern mining boom in Sápmi was also extremely representative of the Arctic region as a commodity frontier, and of the social and ecological implications of capitalist development, especially in colonized areas.

2.2.2 Sámi-State relations

Over the 16th and 17th centuries, the Sámi-State relation changed in fundamental ways. Control over land became strategic in the geopolitics of Fennoscandia, and the consolidation of nation states also represented the emergence of exclusive sovereignty and border making as permanent political goals. These processes created competitive pressures over Sápmi. The development of agriculture in the Swedish and Danish-Norwegian context was of particular importance, especially due to the implementation of settlement policies, stimulating migrations from southern centers to the peripheral north. Encroachment from southern settlers significantly increased in this period, stimulated by States to access resources and exploit the land, but also to consolidate their spheres of influence by creating borders and exclusive spheres of taxation. States usually wielded tax benefits for settlers willing to go north,

exempting them from tax and conscription for extended periods. In this moment, also, there are registers of non-Sámi taking up reindeer husbandry as a livelihood, but in articulation with Sámi communities and practices.

The results of global conflicts, like the Thirty Years War, the Great Northern War or even the Napoleonic Wars were important in defining the division of Sápmi by creating the conditions for border making and the units that would dispute the region. The peace treaties and the regional arrangements that emerged from these global convulsions were aimed at fixing the region's borders. For the Sámi, this meant a new dimension of risk when crossing the national borders established by the Fennoscandian States. Although conquered, Sámi rights were more or less respected regarding transnational border crossing and traditional activities – with formal recognition of traditional resource use being a main theme of the Lapp Codicil of 1751 but taking different forms in each side of Sápmi. The growing importance of control over land - be it for economic or political purposes – was key for the changes in the political situation of the Sámi people. This moment also inaugurated assimilationist policies aimed at the Sámi, and the control over subsistence practices was a paramount measure.

2.2.3 1751 – 1945 – Changing borders, changing Sápmi.

In 1751, with the definition of the Swedish-Norwegian border and as part of the Stromstad Treaty, both kingdoms promulgated the Lapp Codicil, an addendum to the treaty that sought to define and protect Sámi rights, including to a nomadic life, to cross-border reindeer herding and traditional resource use in rivers and forests. The Codicil also protected the Sámi right to cross-border activity and gave them the possibility of choosing national citizenship and where to hold taxed land. The coastal Sámi populations, for example, had their subsistence based on fisheries, and it is common to find references to the Sea Sámi of Finnmark, for example, as opposed to the Mountain Sámi of the Sápmi hinterlands. Farming was also one of the means of subsistence adopted by some

Sámi communities. The Lapp Codicil, and the subsequent policies adopted by States occupying Sápmi were primarily aimed at pacifying understandings related to nomadic reindeer herding Sámi and to protect rights and traditional uses associated with reindeer herding – like the freedom of movement between grazing areas. The possibility of holding taxed land also did not protect the right of the Sámi to an agricultural livelihood – a settled life meant abandoning the rights as a Sámi and being assimilated into the “national society”. With time, the protection of Sámi reindeer husbandry became a conflation of Sámihood with the nomadic, pastoralist life of the reindeer herding Sámi. This was a fundamental step in the assimilation of non-nomadic/non-pastoralist Sámi populations. While reindeer herding Sámi communities had their livelihoods and social organization recognized as rights, other Sámi communities were not, and this created a situation of vulnerability.

One important aspect is that Sámi rights were treated in terms of property rights. Hansen and Olsen (2014) present a detailed discussion of the different forms of the right to property in Fennoscandia and their relation to Sámi property rights and practices. The type of property right enshrined in the Lapp Codicil, especially in the holding of taxed land, reflected practices more common on the Danish-Norwegian side of Sápmi. Despite the importance of the right to property of land, the question of the use of common lands was also a source of dispute, particularly at a time when agricultural settlement of the north was a policy goal. In Sweden, the transformation of common lands into crown land was a strategy to circumvent such conflicts, as the destination of common-use lands became a responsibility of the State. It is important to note that the Lapp Codicil was not signed by Russia, but the nomadic migration of the Sámi to the Kola peninsula continued fairly free of constraints until the beginning of the 19th century.

Lantto (2010), shows that the choice of property rights was also instrumental to enforcing a western-based concept and practice of private property among the Sámi. Päiviö (*Apud* Lanto, 2010) considers the possibility – in fact an obligation – of choosing citizenship and tax residence as a move to foreclose the possibility of holding cross-border taxed land, and points that this

made reindeer herding more collective, undermining Sámi claims to land ownership – treated in terms of private property, not open to communal regimes of land tenure. Patrik Lantto (2010) also points out that the need to choose a nation where Sámi individuals were to hold taxed land and citizenship was also an important move in trying to subordinate Sámi identities to the national identities being crafted at the time. The establishment of property titles also excluded Sámis who carried a nomadic life. It is important to note that, with the legal establishment of the borders and the peaceful Norway-Sweden relations, States had the political space to seek control over land in the domestic scenario, in a parallel process of removing control of land from the Sámis and transferring it to the State or to settling populations. In 1886, for instance, Sweden would adopt a new policy towards the Sámi, setting aside crown lands for traditional reindeer grazing. While this measure protected Sámi reindeer husbandry, it placed control over the grazing pastures in the hands of the State, subordinating Sámi subsistence to the properties and political will of the Swedish Crown.

2.2.4 – The 1800's and the new meanings of the borders

During the beginning of the 19th century, two new players emerged. In 1809, Finland was annexed by Russia, becoming an autonomous Grand Duchy. This devalued the Lapp Codicil of any significance in the Finnish side of Sápmi, since the treaty was never extended to Russia. The treaty of Kiel, in 1814, at the end of the Napoleonic wars, also changed the scenario by separating Norway from Denmark and forcing it into a union with Sweden. The matters regulated by the Codicil, product of an international agreement, then became more akin to domestic law produced by the Swedish State. In 1826, however, we see a definite turn in the treatment of the Sámi issues by the national states with the closing of borders and the attempts to stop cross-border movement and activities. If, as Lantto (2010) poses it, the period between 1751 – 1809 is marked by respect of Sámi rights, the border closures that would mark the Fennoscandian space from

1826 on denote not only the denial of Sámi rights, but also a gradual dispute to control and redirect Sámi traditional livelihoods to the economic and political benefit of the Fennoscandian States.

From 1826 to 1889, virtually all of the borders of the region would be closed to Sámi cross-border movement and living. In 1809, Russia annexed Finland, which became an autonomous Grand Duchy, part of the Russian Empire, foreclosing application of the Lapp Codicil in Finland. In 1826, Russia and Norway reached a border agreement that gave Sámi nomads three years to choose citizenship and six years of cross-border traditional resource use, after which such practices would be assessed by States. However, “Reindeer husbandry was not included in these rights, however, officially prohibiting the Sami from using traditional grazing land in the neighboring state”. (Lantto, 2010, p.547). In 1834, Russia and Norway abolished cross-border traditional resource use, closing their borders to reindeer grazing and imposing obstacles to Sámi mobilities. Moreover, this indicates a turn in the relative importance of national identity/citizenship status versus indigeneity and traditional rights – the Sámi could remain Sámi, as long as they were *Norwegian Sámi* or *Swedish Sámi*. In 1852, Russia closed borders to reindeer husbandry on the Finnish side of Sápmi, prompting Norway to do the same. With this, the right to choose (and switch) national citizenship became a strategic way to preserve Sámi rights to traditional land-use and would remain so for the rest of the nineteenth century.

The establishment of Fennoscandian borders and their gradual closure was a direct hit to Sámi resource use – especially nomadic reindeer herding. The area now crisscrossed by borders also represented an important portion of Sápmi. The Sámi reindeer herding tends to divide pastures between summer and winter pastures, oscillating between them according to the seasons. This pendular movement characterizes the nomadic migration patterns of reindeer and depends on the availability of good summer and winter pastures to ensure good nutrition and safety for the reindeer. The materiality of this movement entails not only the movement between summer and winter grazing grounds, but also the need for resting pastures and for an unobstructed way. The progressive striation (Du

Plessis, 2020) of Sápmi, thus, was already in motion through colonization and, during the nineteenth century, border-making practices and the changes in the territorialization of the region.

During the 19th century, Norway experienced (and stimulated) a growth in agricultural activity and settlement in Sámi traditional lands (Brannlund; Axelson, 2011). With international borders closed and closing and settlement expansion pressuring from within, the pressure over Sápmi grew and so did state attempts to control and regulate indigenous mobilities and livelihoods within the region. We can see this dynamic in two policies: the Norwegian approach of assimilation and Swedish partial assimilation policies. While Norway sought to occupy Sápmi and render it useful for economic activities like farming and forestry – outright excluding Sámi traditional uses of land – Sweden created policies that protected reindeer herding Sámi while seeking to assimilate Sámi communities whose livelihoods did not depend directly on the nomadic reindeer industry.

State-controlled definitions of what it means to be Sámi and where they could carry out their traditional activities began crystallizing in the Swedish Reindeer Grazing Act of 1886. One of the provisions of the Act was to set aside crown lands to traditional reindeer husbandry – not only not recognizing Sámi traditional use, but conditioning traditional use to State-defined spaces and mobilities. Lantto and Morkenstram (2007) point to how the act also had the effect of spatially segregating herding and farming Sámi, making the latter vulnerable to assimilation by instrumentalizing legal discourse to delegitimize their indigeneity. The end of the nineteenth century also marks the beginning of overtly assimilationist policies, like the process of Norwegianization. This period also marks the emergence of the state treatment of the Sámi based on racial discourses of cultural hierarchies.

Parallel to the growing striation (Duplessis, 2020) of Norway-occupied Sápmi and the placement of state regulations on traditional land-use in Sweden, Russia and Finland closed their borders to Sámi cross-border husbandry. By 1889, Sápmi's heartland no longer represented the possibility of communication, integration and transition it once did. It was now a space crisscrossed by

geopolitical tensions and borders that now meant barriers to Sámi traditional land use. Sámi communities not committed to reindeer herding were disregarded as Sámi and assimilated as Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish or Russian citizens. The space available for the traditional land and resource use – even for reindeer herding – was shrinking. Further development of agriculture in Norway prompted the State to privilege Norwegian settlers in land-use conflicts that emerged in Sápmi. In Sweden, policy towards the (reindeer herding) Sámi was not one of overt assimilation, but only because of the role of reindeer as an economic resource and of *Swedish* Sámi as a geopolitical tool to occupy the northern portions of Swedish territory.

2.2.4.1 Resistances to colonialism and political activism

During the nineteenth century, we also see political mobilizations among the Sámi resisting colonialism. The Kautokeino rebellion of 1852, for instance, is an important moment of Sámi struggle against State authority and colonialism. In November 1852, a group of approximately 40 Sámi herders attacked state authorities in the village of Kautokeino, in the northern Norway region of Finnmark. Bjorklund (1992) points out that at the same time a similar movement appeared amongst Sámi in the fjord of Kvaenangen but was quickly suppressed. A common element behind such uprisings was the religious movement known as Laestadianism, that had taken root among the Sámi during the previous decade. This movement takes its name from the preacher Lars Levi Laestadius, who worked among Sámi herders, and whose sermons stimulated a renewal of Sámi pride through an amalgamation with the Christian faith. While initially the adhesion of Sámi was attributed to insanity or to the “personal vindictiveness” of the herders involved (Bjorklund, 1992), the rebellion was markedly an upheaval against the social and economic conditions of the Sámi populations.

Despite the importance of the religious discourse, it is interesting to see how the adoption of the Christian faith by some of the Sámi herders was followed

by a renewal of Sámi traditions and values, especially in face of their socioeconomic situation. Lantto (2010) points out that, by 1852, assimilation of the Sámi had become a policy goal of the Norwegian state, and the closing of the Norway-Finland border also contributed to the unrest among the northern Sámi. “Sami were discriminated in the courts(*sic*), and alcohol was a problem. The revivalist movement had the goal of cleansing the region from alcohol and other negative external influences.” (Lantto, 2010, p. 548). Bjorklund (1992) also points to how the Laestadianists saw Finnish and the Sámi language as “holy” and the Sámi as a people chosen by God. An important contribution of Bjorklund’s analysis is the comprehension of how the recruitment pattern and wide geographical reach of Laestadianism was related to the social and economic organization of the Sámi, via the mobilization of *siida* and kinship relations for this particular political movement.

The 19th century is marked by a progressive closure of political and geographical space for Sámi traditional livelihoods. The emergence and consolidation of States and their borders - and the economic trajectories of said states – represented not only the construction of the Sámi as an “Other” to be assimilated or governed, but also of their livelihoods as undesirable for “modern” societies. While geopolitically instrumental as in the Swedish case, the Sámi were also seen as a population whose days were counted. The modernization of social life and economic development were to catch up with them and eliminate their nomadic livelihoods from the national scenarios of Fennoscandia.

In the dawn of the twentieth century, however, Sámi political activism took new breath. One of the landmarks of such renewal is the publication of the manifesto “*Infor lif eller död? Sanningsord i de Lappska förhållandena*” (Do we face life or death? Words of truth about the Lappish situation) by reindeer herder Elsa Laula Renberg, in 1904. This text is regarded as an important step in the effort of organizing the Sámi as a people and in their struggle for recognition of civil rights. Buhre and Bjork (2021) show how, during Elsa Laula’s lifetime, from 1877 until the publication of the manifesto, Scandinavian colonialism became progressively more aggressive towards the Sámi. The movement ignited by Elsa

Laula's mobilization eventually led to the first Sámi Congress, on February 6, 1917 – the date chosen for the celebration of the Sámi National Day. Once more, this movement was lead and focused on the reindeer herding Sámi communities, a pattern that would extend into the 21st century.

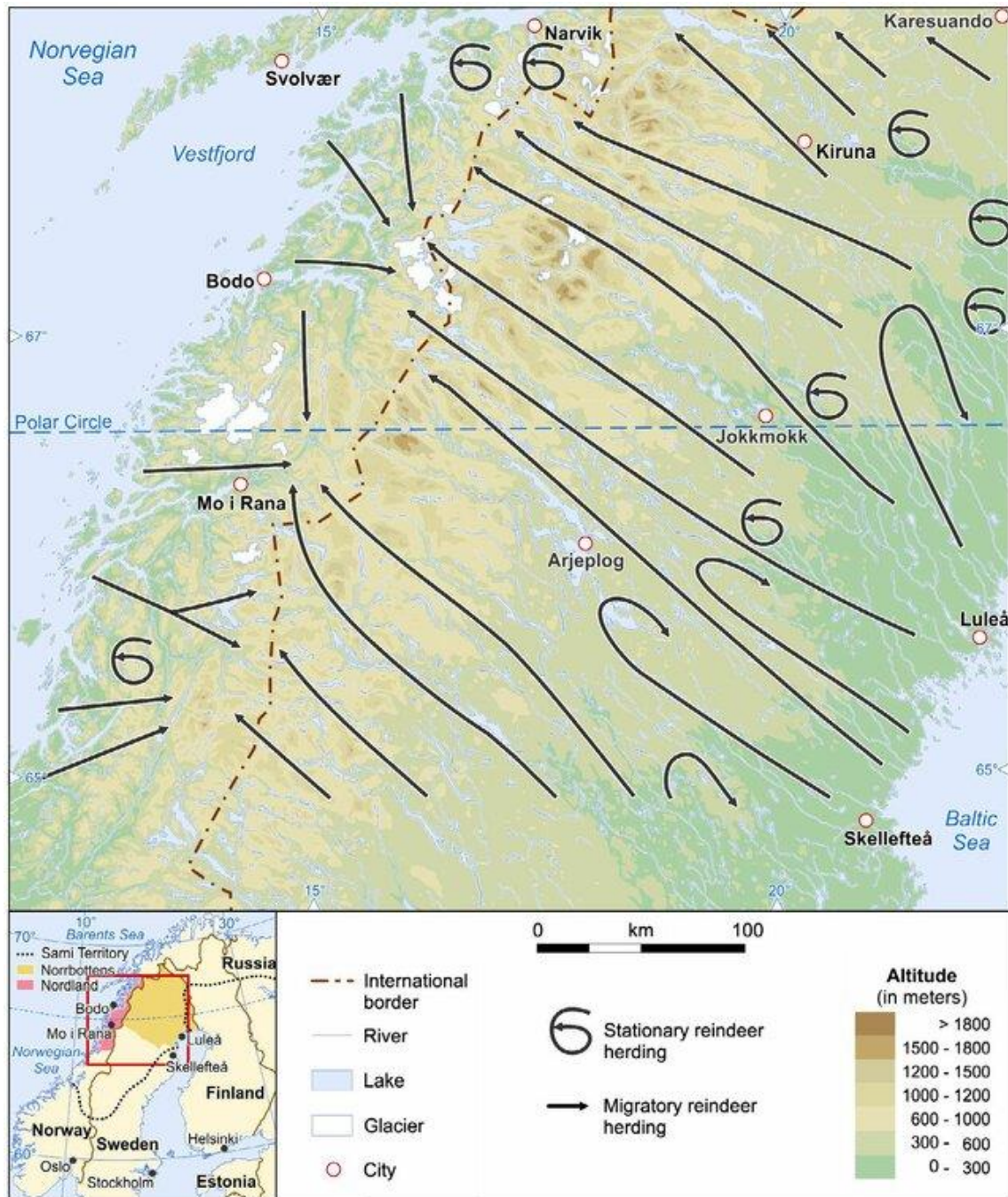


Figure 10 Traditional reindeer migration routes before 1905. From Risvoll; Hovelsrud, 2016, DOI 10.1080/2154896X.2016.1173796

2.2.5 – 1914 – 1945: Stabilizing borders

In the dawn of the 20th century, the border between Sweden and Norway was the only one that still afforded some liberty to traditional Sámi uses. The dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian Union in 1905, the October Revolution in 1917 and the independence of Finland would bring about further transformations to Sápmi's insertion in the geopolitical tensions of the 20th century. Moreover, these events would give the region most of the territorial configuration of contemporary Sápmi. The twentieth century is also marked by the decline in importance of the reindeer industry to States, rendering the Sámi's bargaining position more vulnerable over the course of time.

With the end of the Union and Norway emerging as an independent polity, the country would adopt a tripartite policy towards the Sámi and towards Sápmi: dispossession, expulsion or assimilation, a policy that came to be known as *Norwegianization* of the Sámi. Sweden and Norway, however, sought to grant cross-border reindeer grazing rights to the Sámi through the Reindeer Grazing Conventions, the first of which signed in 1919. Lantto (2010) points out that the rationale for Norwegian participation in the negotiations was controlling the flow of “*Swedish Sámi*” and “*Swedish reindeer*” using its territory. The regulation of Sámi mobility served both to assert sovereignty over the territory and to support the assimilationist policies of Norway.

The October Revolution, in 1917, the subsequent independence of Finland and the Winter War are regarded as a final blow to cross-border traditional reindeer grazing in the Finnish-Swedish and Russian-Swedish border regions. While the border closed off the Russian side of Sápmi, the Sámi of Russia enjoyed a relative autonomy in some matters. Despite closing such borders permanently, the revolution also left a part of the Sámi of Finland stranded in soviet territory, and the Winter War, the two World Wars of the period prompted successive relocation of the Sámi in Russian territory.

These geopolitical developments also prompted changes in Sámi political strategy, seeking to operate and claim rights within the national arenas thus defined. The growing tension between Fennoscandian polities (Sweden, Norway and Finland) and the Soviet Union was a vector of distrust in any movement claiming freedom of cross-border movement in both sides of the so-called Iron Curtain. Moreover, Sámi in the USSR were also subjected to forced migrations and dislocations. More than seeking to form a “Sámi polity” or a Sámi Nation-State, Sámi political strategy was based on instrumentalizing their status as national citizens to work to legitimate their claims within the national frameworks of Fennoscandia.

The end of World War II signaled the stabilization of the borders dividing Sápmi, with the region’s political borders assuming their contemporary configuration. Two great political developments and one great conflict would still mark the history of Sápmi and of the Sámi struggle for self-determination. Despite space for international and transnational political articulation of the Sámi being closed, struggles continued in the national arenas, and the preservation of Sámi traditional livelihoods was also a form of resisting colonialism. Changes in the geopolitical and economic scenario in the 20th century were important in fragilizing the Sámi *people’s* claims to rights but gave a growing importance to the Sámi territory. Occupation and seizing resources of Sápmi grew in importance for Fennoscandian countries, especially for Sweden and Norway, which led to social and environmental conflicts based on land use. In the postwar period, however, the founding of the Sámi Council in 1956, as an already transnational organization to defend Sámi civil rights, signals a change in political strategy by switching from the national arenas to an international/transnational kind of political activism. The founding of the Sámi Council, the Alta Dam controversy and the establishment of the Sámi Parliaments are Sámi responses to this background, and the struggle for self-determination their way or reclaiming control over the land.

Over the first half of the 20th century, especially from 1917 to the 1950s, Sámi political movements gained traction. Beginning with Elsa Laula and the Sámi Assembly of 1917, the Sámi people resisted the closing of borders they were

experiencing and still sought to articulate their claims as one people divided in four countries. One important element in Sámi political mobilization is that, while treated as a national minority by Scandinavian States, the Sámi posited themselves as *indigenous* from the start. Defending Sámi livelihoods, coupled with the quest for civil rights and struggles against discrimination were important instruments in identifying common interests of Sámi communities and in creating both national Sámi Parliaments and the transnational Sámi Council. In the 1970's, such mobilization would bring about a socio-environmental conflict that would impact the scenario for Sámi activism and political mobilization – as well as bring about effective changes for the self-determination of the Sámi people. The Alta-Kautokeino conflict – discussed in more detail in the next chapter – is an important step for our reflection, and to compare the solutions for self-determination and self-government of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic.

Final remarks

The main objective of the present chapter is to debunk the idea of an “empty” Arctic. By historicizing the territorialization of Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat, we seek to show that any contemporary discussion on Arctic economic development that leaves colonization untheorized and unexamined will miss the big picture. From the coloniality of the ecological crisis to the transformation of relation between humans and nature in the Arctic, it is necessary to understand how these regions came to be part of the US, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. These processes have to be treated as colonization processes, occupation of land inhabited by one (or more) people for economic and political purposes, the remaking of the space in benefit of the settlers' ways of life and the attempt to impose new forms of relation between humans and nature over native populations. These processes were also driven by attempts to spur and leverage capital accumulation of the southern centers via the exploitation of the northern peripheries' land and natural resources.

The reconstruction of Arctic colonization presented here also seeks to highlight the process dimension of capitalist, colonial world-ecology. Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat are very different frontiers, very different commodity frontiers. In Inuit Nunaat, contact by sea and the pressure over living resources was a continuum, and famine and hunger were instrumental in dispossessing the Inuit from their tools of autonomy and sovereignty. Control over land became important, especially with the discovery of gold. In Sápmi, control over land was a tension from the start. Sámi-State relations soured considerably when control over land came into play, and the incompatibility between nomadic spatialities, mobilities and livelihoods with state spatialities, mobilities political and economic projects was always solved by giving over control over land to the State. These projects and processes are also examples of the colonial inhabitation (Ferdinand, 2022)

In the 21st century, as Jessica Shadian (2017) often characterizes it, a global debate arises about the "ownership" of the Arctic – who owns the Arctic? This chapter seeks to interrogate this framing, as the emergence of such a debate is only possible because of long processes of colonization and the imposition of value as the main mediation of the relationship between humanity and nature in the Arctic. The idea of ownership and property rights over land and that of nature as a source of wealth and resources was brought to the Arctic and was instrumental in producing the transnational entanglements of the region and their indigenous peoples. Both in Sápmi and in Inuit Nunaat, colonial states claimed indigenous lands, leading processes of expropriation and imposing state-sanctioned controls over indigenous livelihoods to support their claims to sovereignty, seeking to stimulate capitalist accumulation in Arctic regions of these countries and abroad. As in the gold rush period, the need to define "ownership" serves as an endorsement for the exploitation of resources in the Arctic, seeking to divide the region between the states that occupy and to shift the control of land from indigenous communities to those of the Euro-American dominant classes so that they can then use these resources for their economic and strategic objectives.

A comparison can be drawn here. In Inuit Nunaat, sustained contact by sea delayed the imposition of a logic of property of land up to the gold rushes of the

late 19th century. Even so, as Eben Hopson would come to claim, it was only with the discovery of oil in the northern parts of Inuit Nunaat in the 1970's that the Inuit would come to face the full force of the desire southern settlers had for their lands. In Sápmi, control of land became an economic and geopolitical imperative far earlier, both because it was divided and disputed by much smaller polities (aside from Russia) and because sustained contact with the Sámi was already established by land from time immemorial. The economic activities developed by Fennoscandian economies demanded not only greater control over land, but also over Sámi mobilities. Mining and farming both were harmful for Sámi land uses and demanded greater control over space, even going as far as recruiting the Sámi to guarantee the transport of goods from the mines to their consumer markets.

The discoveries made in the 20th and 21st centuries about the region's mineral and hydrocarbon resources, as well as the physical effects of climate change in the Arctic, have meant that the attention and energies of the nation states interested in the region and its resources have been devoted to formulating answers to Shadian's question: who owns the Arctic? This chapter rejects the question in such terms and sought to discuss its conditions of possibility. Over the four centuries of colonization, the Arctic came to be thought of as "property", as territory to be known, compartmentalized, and exploited by Arctic States. In this way, our history once again merges with the history of the global expansion of capitalism and the attempts to incorporate non-European, non-capitalist peoples into the cycles and demands of the global market.

The incorporation of the Arctic as territory also marks its emergence as a global commodity frontier. Be it with the whales, the reindeer, the ores and land, the strategic value of the Arctic changed over time, despite the maintenance of its peripheral condition. New uses for the land, new resources to be exploited evinced new state strategies to control space, mobilities, peoples and their livelihoods over these centuries of colonization. The importance of control over land varied in time and scope, but eventually, became an imperative for the

colonial powers occupying the Arctic. The establishment of a commodity frontier also means the deployment of several techniques of capitalist and state control.

Beier (2009) argues that it is impossible to dissociate indigenous politics and diplomacy from international relations as a subject and even from international relations theory. These policies and diplomacies are already constitutive of the Westphalian state. From the perspective of International Political Economy, it is even more urgent to understand the process by which indigenous territories and populations were incorporated into the international system, but also the role of this incorporation in the expansion and consolidation of the capitalist mode of production. In this research, we do not conceive of the process of "primitive accumulation" as something localized in time and space, or even as a closed, one-off process. Rather, based on the dynamics of territorialization and economic exploitation of the Arctic and its peoples, it is possible to think of primitive accumulation as a continuous process of dispossession and expropriation, aimed not only at separating communities and workers from the land and their instruments of work, but also at constantly reproducing and retracing territorialities, mobilities and subsistence activities in favor of capitalist accumulation. The articulation between non-capitalist, non-European ways of life and production and activities geared towards capital accumulation is the dynamic engine of this process, fostering contact, transforming ways of life and even the climate in its voracious expansion.

The colonization of Inuit Nunaat began with contact by sea, where the creation of permanent settlements was a policy of secondary importance. Even so, this initial contact signaled the beginning of the insertion of Inuit Nunaat and its population into the logic of capitalist accumulation. The arrival of the whalers, although not the first contact between Inuit and Euro-American populations, was the first experience of sustained contact to leave its mark throughout Inuit territory. The economy that emerged around whaling, despite its seasonality, imposed new imperatives on the relationship between the Inuit and the non-human nature of their traditional territories. Although initially the impact on traditional subsistence activities was small, this period also began a cycle of ecological imbalances

caused by predatory hunting. Marybelle Mitchell (1996) describes a double movement in the various stages of contact: at the same time as transforming aspects of Inuit life and material culture – with the introduction of new tools, new techniques and a logic of profit – contact also reinforced traditional practices. Even with the increase in scale and the introduction of a commercial logic, the Inuit's activities at that first moment of contact still revolved around hunting and fishing.

The second moment in the colonization process can be traced back to the discovery of gold in different parts of the North American Arctic. While fishing did not require the construction of permanent settlements, and was loosely regulated by the Arctic nation states, mining marked the beginning of the process of enclosure of traditional Inuit territories. The establishment of property rights for white populations was accompanied by the expropriation of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, as well as an even deeper dismantling of their way of life. The growing difficulty of maintaining traditional ways of life has had far-reaching impacts on the lives and social practices of the Inuit. As we have seen, their subordinate position in the labor market was the result of the misery caused by the absence of whales and the need to guarantee their subsistence through money. Other impacts were the obligation to adopt a nuclear, monogamous family model that was not part of the life of these people and the abandonment of nomadism (Demuth, 2019), conditions imposed by the assistance programs of the governments of the United States and Canada. At this time, state and non-state agents (such as churches and missionary groups) acted to tutor the social life of the Arctic peoples, aiming to "teach" them to live as citizens in a market economy. This action also consolidated the separation between the Inuit and their traditional territories and established mechanisms to protect their economic practices in order to orient them towards the demands of the market and the white population that had migrated to the Arctic.

With the decline of the gold economy, the actions of states in the Arctic were marked by a militarized logic - especially with the end of World War II and the emergence of Cold War geopolitics. The proximity between the US and the Soviet Union meant that Alaska received military infrastructure and population.

Activities such as caribou hunting and the attempt to introduce reindeer herding (Demuth, 2019; Shadian, 2014) were instrumentalized to try to guarantee the material reproduction of the new population contingents arriving in Inuit Nunaat.

In the words of Eben Hopson, founder of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the discovery of oil made it clear to the Inuit that European immigrants were in fact coveting Inuit lands and were seeking to curtail their right to the land (*Apud* Shadian, 2014). Instead of the fleeting and cyclical interest that characterized the periods of whaling and even gold, the exploitation of hydrocarbons not only required a permanent presence, but also specific mobility, adapting the exploitation and circulation of goods to price cycles and the geography of the oil market. The solution created by the states, despite its declared aim of guaranteeing rights and normalizing relations, was instrumental in carrying out this greed. The land-claim agreements aimed to recognize the indigenous right of ownership to their lands while restricting the vision of indigenous sovereignty and self-government to a perspective of cultural rights. Coulthard (2014) demonstrates that the aim of these agreements was to open up new spaces in North America to capitalist exploitation (especially the oil and gas industry) while at the same time downgrading indigenous movements for self-determination, restricting the possibilities of indigenous self-determination to the field of culture, unrelated to the construction or perpetuation of non-capitalist socio-economic organizations.

In Sápmi, we see the coexistence of several colonization processes. With the Sámi divided up by changing borders and an unstable geopolitical scenario, their livelihoods could be conducted rather freely and their traditional rights were respected by some of the polities claiming Sápmi as territory. With the gradual stabilization of such borders, however, nation-states sought not only to change Sápmi, but to change the Sámi – by framing Sámi issues in terms of reindeer herding issues, and by reducing conflicts springing up from colonization efforts to land use conflicts and matters of ownership of land. Moreover, a region that sustained human and non-human life alike was progressively turned into a space thought out and devoted to capital accumulation. The exploitation of animal and mineral resources, as well as the land uses associated to them.

These processes were not unresisted. The history of the Sámi and the Inuit is punctuated by examples of rebellions and political articulation to resist colonialism. The Kautokeino rebellion or the political movement leading to the Sámi Assembly of 1917, show that these communities were active in seeking to defend their traditional land uses in the face of growing commodification of Sápmi.

The colonization process was a vector of the articulation between Euro-American capitalist economies and the subsistence economies present in these territories. The introduction of market imperatives and accumulation stimulated the emergence of a predatory, reified relationship with nature. By attacking the foundations of Inuit material life, this articulation has made it increasingly difficult to maintain traditional ways of subsistence. The main effects of this process were their forced insertion into an economy based on the valorization of capital and the extension of state power over indigenous individuals, communities and territories. The enclosure resulting from the development of mining and oil and gas extraction is only the most recent chapter in this process of colonization and the development of instruments to control territories. Recently, however, the importance of this type of activity has grown globally, especially with the emergence of the neo-extractivist mode of capital accumulation (Svampa, 2019), focused on the exploitation of natural resources. Within this logic, in addition to the huge mobilization of resources, there is a need to establish ever-greater control over the spaces where economic activities will take place – which evokes the need for spatial striation policies, aimed at building points and routes that allow for the consolidation of state control over territories (Duplessis, 2020).

From the point of view of the relationship between humanity and nature, or between the human and non-human elements of nature, the colonial encounter is characterized by the imposition of a Western, Euro-American, capitalist vision of nature. In a world where the barrier between the human and the non-human didn't matter much, an ethic of *inua* guided the actions of individuals and communities. With the need to seek money in order to survive, with the articulation between everyday activities and the capitalist demand for profit, an instrumental view of nature began to take shape and take hold in the Arctic. This view starts to think of

nature and even humans from the point of view of their instrumentality for the processes of valorization and accumulation of capital (Saito, 2017), a view that has been imposed on non-European and non-capitalist populations throughout history.

In ecological terms, it is important to stress how, in both cases, indigenous peoples bore the brunt of the ecological consequences of state-sanctioned economic projects. Be it with the degradation of areas in central Sápmi, the cycles of famine in Inuit Nunaat, the adoption of reindeer herding or the attempts to force herding on peoples used to hunt caribous, State and capitalist agencies sought to impose on Arctic indigenous peoples' strategies to adapt and mitigate to the social and ecological changes brought about by the colonial inhabitation. This process also turned, or tried to turn, the home environments of indigenous peoples in places hostile to their very socioecological metabolisms. By putting nature to work for the benefit of capitalist accumulation, capitalist and state agencies sought to remake nature in the image and likeness of capitalism, by the demands of production, circulation and accumulation. The materiality of this process – deforestation, pressure over living resources, alcoholism, toxification of soils, border making and legislation – rendered portions of the Arctic inhospitable for its aboriginal inhabitants and friendly too settler populations.

The emergence of the Arctic as a contemporary geopolitical hotspot is deeply related to an expansion of the global extractive frontier. Cycles of commodity price increases as well as strategic demands favor a new wave of resource extraction projects in the Arctic. Although the importance of resources for the geopolitics and development of the Arctic are often portrayed as new factors in mainstream literature, this is only possible by erasing colonization and its impact on the shaping of the Arctic as a geopolitical space, as a geo-economic frontier. Narratives of an "empty" Arctic, by erasing the history of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and the colonization of spaces such as Inuit Nunaat, act to maintain colonial structures and prevent critical reflection not only on economic development and geopolitics, but also on the links between colonialism, capitalism and climate change.

Chapter 3 – Indigenous self-determination in the Arctic

Introduction: many stories of self determination

Up to this moment, we can clearly state that the Arctic is a colonial space – a colonized region within Arctic states. This process of territorialization was based on plundering and expropriating indigenous communities and rearticulating their traditional economies and activities to the economic benefit – now dubbed development – of the metropolitan economies. Small differences due to the geographies of power, conflict and resources made the direct control over land more or less important, but it eventually became crucial both in Sápmi and in Inuit Nunaat. While repressive and assimilationist policies were largely instrumentalized to achieve this control over land, mobilities and subsistence activities, pressure from national and global civil society, as well as the mounting resistance and political articulation of indigenous peoples rendered such policies unacceptable. To cope with the ongoing resistance in important extractive frontiers, States had to resort to creating new political regimes and structures aimed at normalizing the relationship between the State and the indigenous peoples – and allowing further encroachment of state- and capital-led extractive projects in this region – while time integrating indigenous rights in the political-institutional frameworks of the State.

The present chapter discusses the processes of recognition of the right to self-determination in different parts of the Arctic. Our discussion will seek to understand the interface between political and economic variables influencing such processes in the different indigenous territories in the Arctic. Here, our guiding line is the comprehension of the relation between the political processes of including indigenous peoples and the economic aspect of such regimes. Reconstructing this history is important to assess how processes of recognition of the right to self-determination were important steps in opening the Arctic to capitalist exploitation and to understand its effects over the subsistence and

political mobilization of the indigenous populations and organizations in the Arctic. For this purpose, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first two are in chronological order, and they will address the normalization process of the Inuit territories in the United States of America and Canada – specially through the discussion of the land claims agreements and their impacts for Inuit livelihoods and territories. The next section deals with the recognition of the right to self-determination and citizenship in Sápmi, where our main interest are the formation of the Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Sweden and Finland and the functioning of the Finnmark Estate in Norway. In the case of Sápmi, we will also try to recount the Alta Dam controversy, a socio-environmental conflict in northern Norway that ignited the struggle for self-determination and the establishment of Sámi Parliaments and Sámi self-determination rights.

The last section will be dedicated to a reflection on how such (colonial) State-led processes impacted the social and economic conditions of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. Our discussion will turn to how the new regimes and institutions crafted as part of the effort of defining and recognizing the right to self-determination in the Arctic. Three of these institutions were created in these processes: the Sámi Parliaments, the Finnmark Estate and the Native Development Corporation. Each one, with their idiosyncrasies, contribute to indigenous self-determination in the Arctic, and our discussion will seek to determine the extent of the capabilities of such structures in defending and promoting traditional indigenous livelihoods in the Arctic.

3.1 Self-determination: many stories

The right to self-determination is globally recognized as a principle of international law. The many forms crafted to respect such rights vary from stories of national independence and state building (a traditional idea of self-determination) to different territorial regimes within the same polity. In the Arctic, both stories mix. Arctic States, while seeking to guarantee their survival and self-determination, colonized and trampled several other peoples. These peoples, in

time, came to claim the right to self-determination and self-government on several basis. For our research, indigeneity is the most interesting, whereby a people, united by common ancestry and traditions, claim the status of Indigenous People and the rights associated to it. Both the Inuit and the Sámi came to rely on indigeneity as basis for their claims to rights and also benefitted from the global struggles waged by several indigenous peoples of the planet. This creates a tension within nation-states. While claiming rights to self-determination and self-government, these peoples were not claiming the right to create and maintain a separate Nation-State for them, were not claiming for political independence from their colonizers. This chapter seeks to understand how this tension – and many others arising from it – was solved by Arctic States in North America and in Fennoscandia.

Within these processes, it is possible to see different conceptions of self-determination and sovereignty among the different indigenous communities, as well as two different models of dealing with the issue of indigenous rights – which we will call European and North American here, and whose differences we will elaborate on at the end of the presentation of the cases. A case-by-case analysis is necessary for a qualified discussion of the common and divergent elements between these two models – and their consequences for the construction of indigenous self-determination in the Arctic and elsewhere.

3.2 Inuit Nunaat – turning land into property

3.2.1 Inuit Nunaat in the 20th century: Cold War, oil and the geopolitics of recognition

Throughout the 20th century, mining advanced and diversified in the North American Arctic. The presence of different types of minerals in Alaska led states to seek to take advantage of the region's economic potential – which included projects for the logistical integration of these spaces with the rest of the national territories that share the region. Mining activity diversified, with the presence of

copper and tin, for instance in various parts of Inuit Nunaat. Over the course of the 20th century, however, the strategic value of the Arctic changed radically, particularly due to the proximity of the two great powers that dominated the geopolitical scenario of the second half of the century - the United States and the Soviet Union. This geopolitical dimension led the U.S to modernize and enhance the military garrisons engaged in the defense of the Arctic as a form of asserting sovereignty and monitoring airspace and the Beringian seas.

Another profound transformation that the 20th century brought about was in the strategic and geopolitical importance of the Arctic. During the Second World War, Alaska became a privileged point of insertion in the Pacific scenario, being used as a logistical support point for the US Navy and other US armed forces. Greenland, in turn, became home to air bases and personnel involved in the war, changing from a Danish colony to a US protectorate at the start of World War II. One of these air bases – Thule – is still active today. With the advent of the Cold War – and the geographical proximity of the Soviet Union – the region became an important part of the strategic plans of the US and Canada. The main vector for inserting the Arctic into these strategic plans was the NORAD (North America Aerospace Defense Command) project – a joint effort between the US and Canada to permanently monitor North American Arctic airspace. The initiative also includes the development of capabilities to respond to possible air threats, which included the construction of new air bases in the Arctic, such as Eielson, in Alaska, established in 1949. The NORAD defense system also counts on two Distant Early Warning (DEW) Lines and articulates military bases in the US and Canada in the defense and monitoring of the region.

This period also marks the recognition of Alaska as one of the states that make up the USA. Since the purchase, Alaska has been administered by various US governing bodies such as the Treasury Department, the Navy and others. In 1959, Alaska was recognized as a state and this moment was marked by the arrival of military personnel and also by a process of revaluing the state's strategic position within the geopolitics of the Cold War. This recognition marked greater autonomy for local governments and authorities over local Alaskan issues.

From the 1960s onwards, indigenous contestations of colonialism began to take shape in North America (Coulthard, 2014), while new data emerged regarding the resource endowment of the North American Arctic (Coulthard, 2014; Mitchell, 1996) – especially in Alaska and Canada. In Greenland, the resumption of relations with Denmark after the brief period of openness as a protectorate during World War II was marked by demands for greater autonomy for the island's government (Shadian, 2016, 2017, 2018). The energy crisis brought on by the oil shocks served as a stimulus for the state and oil and gas companies to seek to make hydrocarbon extraction in the Arctic viable. This exploration, however, ran into problems regarding the legal status of the land that would be used to develop the activity, especially in Canada and the United States. An important element in the territorial development of these countries was the normalization of relations with indigenous populations based on land cession treaties. Thus, there were ceded and unceded lands within US and Canadian territory – which created problems for these states' plans to exploit the resources in these regions. From this antinomy emerged the model of the comprehensive land-claim agreement (Coulthard, 2014; Mitchell, 1996), which became the basis of the policy of recognizing indigenous rights in North America – as well as being instrumental in opening up indigenous territories to capitalist exploitation.

2.1.1 Alaska Statehood and the discovery of oil

It is a striking coincidence that the recognition of Alaska Statehood comes at a moment when the region became strategically relevant to the US and was receiving new, non-native settlers to man the military garrisons implemented in Alaska as a response to the Cold War Scenario. In 1959, Alaska was granted the condition of State and began its land selection process – to define, from its territory, which lands would be federal, and which would be property of the State. This happened without the recognition or the cession of indigenous lands – and indigenous movements claimed the State in its entirety as Native Land. The land

selection process walked slowly up to 1969, when oil was discovered in the Prudhoe Bay (Coulthard, 2014; Mitchell, 1996; Demuth, 2020). Shadian (2014), notes that the discovery at Prudhoe Bay struck the “largest petroleum deposit ever encountered in North America” (*apud* Shadian, 2014), with an estimated endowment of 9,6 billion barrels of recoverable oil. While exploration efforts by energy firms took place, the State of Alaska was also involved in the land selection process. Demuth (2019) reports that, seeking to ensure their right to land, some indigenous individuals and communities registered land claims, in order to halt the process of expropriation before the process was decided without hearing Alaska Natives.

Alaska Native claims date back to the times of the purchase of Alaska (Berger, 1985; Shadian, 2014). After the transfer from Russia to the United States, the Tlingit people, from southeast Alaska, protested the sale, since they were the owners of the land on account of the aboriginal title to the land, based on land use and occupation since time immemorial. Similarly, during the gold rushes and the beginning of the 20th century, Tanana natives claimed their aboriginal right to land to defend their traditional rights to hunting and fishing in the face of encroachment from white settlers (Berger, 1985; Shadian, 2014). During the land selection process, several land claims were filed by indigenous communities (Demuth, 2019), seeking to protect their lands from the land transfers from the federal to the state government. Jessica Shadian (2014) shows how the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay in 1967 was a major driver in political development of Alaska, due to it being a trigger to “a state-wide land and resource battle” that pitched the federal government, state government and Alaska Natives against each other. By 1969, eight oil companies proposed the construction of the trans-Alaska Pipeline, connecting Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, in southern Alaska. Before that, the Inupiat (one of the groups that are part of the Inuit people) of North Slope founded the Arctic Slope Native Association and filed for self-government rights and a land claim over 58 million acres (~ 234 thousand square kilometers), including Prudhoe Bay (Shadian, 2014) and called for the recognition of Inupiat ownership of all traditional hunting land, referring to aboriginal land occupation and use.

Before the ANCSA, there were lawsuits revolving around the aboriginal title to land in Alaska. One of the central problems here was that the United States, up to 1969, had not addressed the question of aboriginal rights to land in Alaska. In legal terms, this represented an obstacle to finishing the land selection process, as well as for the exploitation of the recently-discovered hydrocarbons of Alaska – since protests and litigation by natives based on the aboriginal title to land were an obstacle in pursuing the land rights and right of way for the construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline. To settle the matter, the federal government took the responsibility to craft an innovative regime and a new institutional framework to grant the indigenous rights to self-determination while, at the same time, opening up the path for the solution of bureaucratic matters and carry the exploitation of oil and gas on.

Shadian (2014) and Hirschfield (1992) also bring up an important fact. Within the US justice system, the right to self-determination and sovereignty of Native peoples was first recognized in the *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, in the dissident vote of Justice John Marshall, which recognized Indigenous Peoples of the United States as “domestic dependent nations” (apud Hirschfield 1992). This amounts to a recognition to the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples, albeit of a limited type, different from the self-determination afforded to States and, as Shadian notes, a reversal of the *terra nullius* narrative that justified much of the process of colonization.

The main result was the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), passed into law in December 1971. While crafted to solve a particular issue, the model provided by the ANCSA proved influential, being adopted in Canada and, to a lesser extent, in Norway. The objective of the ANCSA was to trade undefined aboriginal rights by well-defined property rights and compensation, extinguishing the claims to aboriginal rights.

3.1.2 The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

The Cherokee Nation vs Georgia case provides an interesting framework to understand the relation between State and Native Peoples, as well as the scope of the self-determination rights afforded to indigenous communities. In a divergent vote, one of the members of the Supreme Court characterized indigenous nations as “domestic and dependent nations” (*apud* Hirschfield, 1992). This distinction was instrumental in recognizing the different status of indigenous peoples while, at the same time, denying the functions of sovereignty in an interstate relation (Hirschfield, 1992). According to Hirschfield (1992), this shows how indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in the US can be understood as a spectrum, and the ANCSA fits into these intermediate forms of sovereignty and self-determination.

The main objective of the ANCSA was to solve the tension between aboriginal rights of indigenous peoples and the economic and strategic objectives of the State in the region. This was mainly done via the construction of land-claim agreements, whereby indigenous associations engaged in the debate on aboriginal rights would receive a part of the land they claimed, while receiving pecuniary compensations for the land “lost” in such agreements. Over the lands selected by Native associations in the agreements, these associations and communities would exercise self-determination and self-government, limited to the maintenance of traditional livelihoods and aspects such as language, spirituality and cultural expressions. Moreover, to enter into the agreements and access its benefits, native associations would have to relinquish claims to aboriginal rights over land. The agreement was widely accepted in Alaska, established compensations of US\$ 962,5 million (approximately 7 billion 2020 dollars) to be distributed among indigenous communities and granted property title over 179 thousand square kilometers (44 million acres) of land to indigenous associations.

To manage such sums of money – as well as the property rights to land – the ANCSA established a new political and economic structure: the native development corporations. The maneuver, here, was switching the claims from the aboriginal rights to land use and traditional livelihoods to property right, and

especially the property rights over land. It is important to note how switching to land-use and property rights are also important in rendering the land not only into property – to be valued, developed, bought and sold – but also in commodifying the relation between the Inuit and their territory.

2.2.1 The Native Corporations

To manage the compensations of the ANCSA and to grant property rights to land, 12 regional corporations were established alongside 200 village corporations. These corporations were to be registered as for-profit enterprises under Alaska law, constitute corporate governance structures and seek profit in business ranging from the traditional indigenous livelihoods (like hunting and fishing) to participation in the extractive, industrial activities. Every Native Alaskan alive in December 1971 would be a shareholder in their local village corporation and regional corporation, with a ban on trading stocks of native corporations for 20 years. The act also established differentiated responsibilities for the two levels of native corporations. Regional corporations would be responsible for managing the compensations paid and subsurface rights, while village corporations were responsible for surface land use rights, as well as managing forestry, hunting and fishing activities. Hirschfield (1992) characterizes such relations as a complex interdependence, but the management of compensations created uneven power relations in favor of the regional corporations.

Another important element of the scheme comprised by the Native corporations was the revenue-sharing arrangements between the corporations. The arrangement sought to minimize regional inequalities via redirecting 70% of the revenue in the sales of timber among the village and regional corporations

The creation of the Native Corporations also represented a shift in the relation between (some) Inuit and their land. The native corporations, registered as profit-oriented organizations, were stimulated to gear traditional activities towards consumer markets. The regional corporations, specially, due to their right

to the subsurface rights, were also important in spurring the exploitation of oil and gas in Alaska. By seeking to ensure the continuity and sustainability of operations, these corporations became participants in the socio-ecological transformations of the Arctic. On the social plane, the creation of such organizations also led to the consolidation of a native elite compromised with the extractive economies that developed in Alaska. At first, the corporations were well received by the Alaska Natives.

For the Inuit, in particular, the Alaskan portion of Inuit Nunaat became the property of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. The ASRC received land rights over approximately 20 thousand square kilometers in the North Slope region of Alaska, where are also located the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska and the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge – areas that prevented the selection of the majority of the North Slope Region. In the company's website, it is possible to find a quick summary of its history where the company treats the land selection process as a challenge and says how the decisions were made with little information about the areas available for selection. The company also created subsidiaries for the exploitation of oil and gas and, again according to the company's own website, signed "signed oil and gas exploration leases with Union Oil, Amoco, Texaco and Chevron" (ASRC) and also constituted a subsidiary in the fields of oil refining, distribution of fuel.

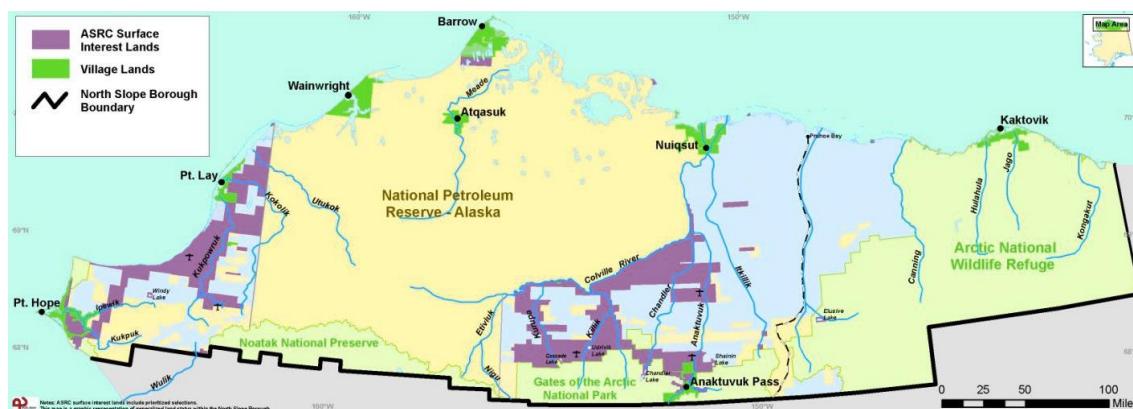


Figure 11:: Map of the North Slope Region, with the areas selected according to ASRC and the village lands.

The ANCSA was an important step in opening the U.S Arctic to the exploitation of non-renewable resources, especially hydrocarbons. The exploitation of oil and gas demand very specific forms of control over land and mobilities, due to the need to transport the products from one place to another, be it from the offshore or onshore rigs to the refineries and to the consumer markets. This was also important in enabling the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, for instance, facilitating the development of hydrocarbon exploitation in the Arctic by connecting the oil-rich regions of Northern Alaska to the ports in the South.

One important aspect is that the discourse of economic development was key to spread the idea of the native corporations. The idea of development – the possibility of employment, expanding domestic heating for indigenous communities, better transport infrastructure, solving the issues related to access of most basic rights for indigenous peoples in Alaska – had an important role. The promise of economic development was – and still is – mobilized as an answer to the aspirations of better material conditions of the Alaska Natives, and to cast the exploitation of land and non-renewable resources as a necessity for these peoples and communities. The “real economic and social needs of Natives” are invoked as a guiding principle in the text of the ANCSA. Alaska Natives, however, were involved in “a very radical effort at social engineering (...) done on a very, very calculated basis” (Van Ness *apud* Berger, 1985). Rather than aimed at solving the economic problems of Inuit and other Alaska Natives, the whole bureaucratic apparatus created by the Act was thought out as a new form of expropriation.

In discussing the criteria for land selection, for example, Congress took in consideration three kinds of land use: land for subsistence hunting and traditional economies, land for village and village expansion and “land needed by the Natives as a form of capital and economic development” (Berger, 1985, p.21). This last land use was treated as paramount, and from the 44 million acres available for Native land selection, US Congress considered that 39 million should be selected

according to the economic potential of the land. Moreover, after the passage into law of the settlement, Alaska Natives received 44 million acres, which correspond to 10% of the territory of Alaska, while, with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Act (ANILCA) in 1980, the federal government had control over 60% of the State territory (Berger, 1985). Another important aspect is that from the US\$ 962,5 million, 500 million were to be paid via a revenue-sharing arrangement for the mineral revenues from both state and federal land – tying the native corporations and their economies to resource-extractive activities (*idem*, p.26). Berger (1985, p.26) notes that, although called a “settlement”, the ANCSA does not protect nor guarantees the ownership of land – that is subject to the fluctuations, failures and demands of the corporate structure.

3.1.3 The Canadian land-claim agreements

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadian economy underwent transformations that led the Trudeau administration to seek to reposition the country as a net importer of hydrocarbons – specially through exporting oil and gas to the United States. The discovery of oil in parts of the North American Arctic, such as Prudhoe Bay in Alaska, and in the Mackenzie Valley Delta, and the possibility of importing this oil via oil and gas pipelines were key elements in changing the Canadian state's perception of its relations with the Inuit. The Inuit (and other indigenous populations such as the Dene), due to their distance from major centers of power and capital accumulation and the lack of interest in a more extensive colonial settlement of their lands (Coulthard, 2014; Mitchell 1996), did not have their rights established in treaties like other indigenous populations in Canada. The treaties formalized the cession of land from indigenous communities to the Crown and established some rights for the indigenous nations regarding land-use and was also a form of extinguishing or superseding the aboriginal right to land. From the 1970s onwards, Canadian government bodies such as DIAND (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) began to recognize the

need for the state to "negotiate agreements with native groups in areas of Canada where native rights based on traditional use and occupation had not been extinguished by treaty or replaced by law" (DIAND *apud* Mitchell, 1996).

The normalization of relations with indigenous populations, in addition to meeting strategic considerations in relation to the energy sector, was also aimed at maintaining activities such as mining in traditional indigenous territories. Mitchell (1996) notes that the land claims agreements were geared towards intensifying the exploitation of non-renewable resources in Inuit lands. To do this, the Canadian state needed a solution that reconciled the recognition of indigenous rights with the viability of economic activity in these regions. Following the example of the ANCSA, Canada opted for a land claim agreement model. This type of agreement aimed to affirm the rights of indigenous populations, making them a well-defined set of property rights (Coulthard 2014), opposed to the less defined "aboriginal rights", as well as established the creation of native development corporations that would manage the resources of the territories recognized as indigenous (Mitchell, 1996; Coulthard, 2014) and, in some cases, the creation of new administrative divisions.

Four major agreements have affected the Canadian Inuit: James Bay and Northern Quebec, the agreement proposed by Inuit Tapirisat and the creation of the Nunavut Province, the Labrador Inuit Association land claim and the Inuvialuit agreement. In all these agreements, the indigenous populations involved had to give up any claim to land and territory rights based on the aboriginal title related to traditional land use and occupation in order to access the negotiations and the compensations provided by them. In addition, the Canadian state, through the land claim agreements, created entities to manage the money and resources – native development corporations. All of these processes resulted in the recognition of indigenous *property* over portions of Canadian territory, as well as creating corporations responsible for resource management and to promote economic development of indigenous communities (Mitchell, 1996), in addition to serving as channels for the distribution of compensations paid by the Canadian state to indigenous communities. The decision-making structure of these

corporations is generally made up of a board of directors where each community in a given region is represented - and each inhabitant of these communities is a shareholder in the companies (Mitchell, 1996).

In addition to the creation of the development corporations, the land claim agreements had the effect of creating a new province in Canada, Nunavut, and the Nunatsiavut Government, in Labrador. This new province, where the Inuit are the majority population, was conceived as a way of strengthening resource governance and responding to the Inuit's desire for a greater degree of self-determination within Canadian territory. The province of Nunavut is a public government structure, a province in Canada where its government represents all of the population. Nunatsiavut, on the other hand, is recognized as an Inuit government, not public (Shadian, 2014). The agreements also formally recognized the right of the Inuit to maintain their traditional ways of life, as well as a certain degree of control over the exploitation of resources necessary for this way of life, especially hunting and fishing. The land selection processes, however, foreclosed the possibility of indigenous organizations and corporations from selecting land where resource-extractive industries had any stake or developing interest (Mitchell, 1996).

Two readings are important for understanding the process of recognizing and reorganizing Canadian indigenous territoriality. From the point of view of its political consequences and limitations, Glen Sean Coulthard (2014) presents an important analysis of the notions of self-determination and self-government that the agreements mobilized and their impact on struggles for self-determination. Marybelle Mitchell's (1996) analysis of the economic function of the agreements and the entities created to manage resources on Inuit lands is also fundamental to our debate. Both point to the limitations of a process based on the economic and strategic needs of the state.

Coulthard (2014) points out how the process of implementing the land-claim agreements was instrumental in demobilizing more radical perspectives of indigenous self-determination in Canada. The White Paper, the political framework of the normalization process, was largely a response to several,

Canada-wide movements by indigenous communities and people in defense of their right to land. The 1990 standoff between “the Mohawk nation of Kanesatake, the Quebec provincial police (...) and the Canadian armed forces near the town of Oka” (Coulthard, 2014, p.) that not only resulted in confrontation with state forces and the death of a corporal of the Quebec provincial police, but in a nation-wide engagement in solidarity activities by indigenous peoples. These ranged from informative campaigns to blockades in major roads, which was known as the “Oka crisis”. Coulthard also points that this movement was the culmination of a “decade-long escalation of Native frustration with a colonial state” and its refusal in implement and uphold indigenous rights. Among such movements, was the

Innu occupation and blockade of the Canadian Air Force/NATO base at Goose Bay. The occupation was led largely by Innu women to challenge the further dispossession of their territories and the subsequent destruction of their land-based way of life by the military-industrial complex’s encroachment onto their homeland of Nitassinan. (Coulthard, 2014, p. 117)

According to Coulthard (2014), the conceptions of self-determination and self-government formulated by the indigenous organizations present in the territory combined a discourse of cultural preservation with the defense of economic practices that challenged the logic of capitalism. Coulthard's analysis of the political and economic function of the agreements establishes that

(...) the purpose of the process remains the same: to facilitate the incorporation of indigenous peoples and territories into the capitalist mode of production and to ensure that alternative socio-economic visions do not threaten the desired functioning of the market economy (Coulthard, 2014).

On an ideological level, the operation to stifle alternative visions for the functioning of the economy and societies in indigenous territory was the reframing of aboriginal rights. Aboriginal rights are now understood and applied by the Canadian state as the recognition of cultural rights, detached from any notion of reorganizing and preserving economic relations developed by indigenous populations. Self-determination and even indigenous sovereignty are now

understood to be restricted to cultural aspects of indigenous communities' lives – like the right to maintain their language, spirituality and traditional rites. The recognition of indigenous territoriality was also framed by the capitalist, colonial key of property of land and resources. The relation between humanity and nature cultivated by the Inuit, expressed in the idea of *inua* – stewardship of land and non-human lives, was subsumed to an instrumental view of nature that does not correspond to the way in which indigenous populations develop their relationship with the land and the non-human environment – the key of property, control and resource exploitation.

It is possible to say that Coulthard's analysis of the historical and political development of the ideas of indigenous sovereignty and self-determination shows the result, on a political level, of the problems identified by Marybelle Mitchell (1996). The author, seeking to understand the transformations in the material reproduction of Inuit life, discusses how land-claim agreements were an instrument of expropriation. The author points out that the impetus for recognizing indigenous rights came from the Canadian state, in its project to exploit the hydrocarbons present on indigenous lands, but also to maintain the scale of the economic activities already present in the region. For the state, the central issue was exerting and establishing control over land and resources – not the recognition of indigenous rights – for the benefit of Canadian economy and its insertion in the global economy. An analysis of the agreements allows us to understand how the corporations were set up, the class divisions introduced by this model and the reinforcement of Inuit dependence on the state.

Another element that runs through the reflections of Glen-Sean Coulthard (2014) and Marybelle Mitchell (1996) is the observation of the emergence of class-based fissures within indigenous movements. Both show how the operation of native development corporations has generated a certain indigenous elite – an indigenous bourgeoisie (Coulthard, 2014) or, in Mitchell's terms, a "native corporate elite" (1996) committed to resource development and capital accumulation. In the reading of both authors, this elite, formed from the operation of the native development corporations, begins to think of the movement for self-

determination and indigenous sovereignty within the prism of the nation state and the promotion of capitalism as a form of socio-economic organization of indigenous territories. The logic of enabling capitalist exploitation rooted in the land-claim agreements then served as an instrument for co-opting and demobilizing indigenous struggles, transforming parts of these populations into participants in the colonial and capitalist project of expropriation.

Another interesting element of the Canadian case is that the agreements also generated a coupling between the idea of Inuit sovereignty and Canadian state sovereignty over the Arctic (Shadian, 2014, 2017) with a submission of Inuit interests to the projects of the State. In the Labrador land claim, for example, the presence of a military base and the use of space by the Canadian military was a main problem for advancing the agreement - as well as an important driver for State engagement in settling the claims. The adoption of the term Inuit Nunangat – a term that encompasses ice and sea – to refer to Inuit traditional territory in Canada, is also used as a reinforcement of the Canadian claim to sovereignty over the straits of the Northwest Passage.

3.3.1 The Canadian model of comprehensive land-claims agreements

While inspired by the ANCSA, the Canadian model of comprehensive land claims agreements had some important differences. While the basis is quite the same – aimed at extinguishing aboriginal title to land in favor of more defined property rights and creating native development corporations to manage land, resources and compensations – the recognition of cultural rights played an important role. For example, in the JBNQ agreement, there was the creation of a non-profit organization, responsible for education, cultural preservation and the creation of profit-oriented subsidiaries in order to ensure economic development. The agreements were also negotiated on a case-by-case basis rather than the creation of one agreement for all cases. Thus, the different measures that took

shape – the creation of Makivik Corporation in the JBNQ agreement, the creation of the province of Nunavut, and so on. It is also important to note the role of the exploitation of non-renewable resources, like hydrocarbons, in driving the motion in state action.

The minister's 1973 speech acknowledging rights based on use and occupancy was not the result of a national raising of consciousness, nor was it an accident of history. Just as the Alaskan settlement was put into motion to enable the United States to build the Trans Alaska pipeline and exploit oil reserves in the Arctic, the Canadian state sought land-claim settlements with Inuit to pave the way for massive exploitation of the reputedly resource-rich Arctic. Also important is how State agencies involved in the process, such as the DIAND, framed the process for non-natives. The Inuit were not seen as the main beneficiaries of the resource development in the Arctic, nor were intended to be so. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), for instance, claimed that

It is expected that the negotiated settlements will provide the aboriginal groups with land, money, wildlife harvesting rights, participation in environmental and wildlife management, and some subsurface rights as well as, or *instead* of, a share of revenues from non-renewable resources (DIAND *apud* Mitchell, 1996, p. 343, emphasis added by Mitchell).

Besides oil and gas, another important element for the Canadian settlement of land claims were the projects of seizing Northern Canada's hydroelectric potential via the construction of hydropower dams. In the JBNQ Agreement, for example, the development of a hydropower project was one of the drivers of the agreement. Just as the discovery of oil in the Mackenzie Valley Delta, the seizing of hydroelectric power was aligned with the strategic turn in Canada that sought to position itself as an exporter of energy to the United States. It is important to note that, during the 1970's, the two shocks in oil prices made new/previously unexploited sources worth exploring and exploiting due to the high prices of oil – and due to the strategic role of oil in the United States hegemony.

3.3.2 The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

The region of James Bay and Northern Quebec was traditionally occupied by the Inuit and the Cree. In 1971, the government of Quebec proposed the James Bay project, a hydroelectric power plant in the James Bay area, but the land had not been ceded by the Inuit and the Cree, and no agreement over the aboriginal title to land had been negotiated by the province's government. Mitchell (1996, p.351) estimates that, together, Inuit and Cree could claim two thirds of Quebec territory based on the aboriginal title. In November 1973, the Cree managed to get an injunction to stop the construction of the James Bay project that was quickly overturned but spurred the negotiation of the land claims. Over the next two years, the land claims were negotiated, resulting in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), involving the Government of Quebec, Société d'énergie de la Baie James, Société de développement de la Baie James, Commission hydro-électrique de Quebec, Grand Council of the Crees, James Bay Cree, Northern Quebec Inuit Association, Inuit of Quebec, Inuit of Port Burwell, and the Government of Canada (Mitchell, 1996, p.351). Mitchell (1996, p.351-352) notes that some of the indigenous organizations involved – like the Northern Quebec Inuit Association – were created by stimulus of State officials seeking to make the negotiations easier.

The federal government was involved in many aspects of the negotiation, seeking to steer the interests of indigenous communities involved in the agreements. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development helped the Cree and the Inuit with funding and advice, as well as pressuring the provincial government of Quebec to engage seriously with the matter. The main interests here were securing the execution of the James Bay Project, as well as the retreat of federal presence in Quebec. The agreement resulted in CA\$ 90 million (1975 Canadian dollars) for the Inuit and in the creation of a regional government structure, called Kativik (with powers similar to the southern municipalities) and the creation of the Makivik development corporation to manage the financial flow

of the compensations. Makivik Corporation served as a non-profit holding company, responsible for the economic development of the Inuit lands, with a duty to create for-profit and profitable subsidiaries. Kativik, the self-government branch of the agreement, had limited powers, unable to set its own priorities and regulations in matters of economic development, for example, and being subject to budget approval and cuts from Canadian bureaucrats. It was also completely dependent on the state for its revenue base.

In its 1974 annual report, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (*apud* Mitchell, 1996) states that “corporations are based upon the profit motive, thus forcing natives into non-native aspirations”. The agreement was ratified by Inuit communities in 1986, with 95.8% of the votes in favor of the agreement, but with extremely low turnout rates – only 66,5% of the eligible population voted and in the communities of Povungnituk, Sugluk and Ivujivik, only 15% of the eligible voters cast their votes. These three communities represented one third of the population of Northern Quebec and remained dissenting communities up to 1990. These recalcitrant actors engaged in long litigations, refusing benefits and services provided by the Agreement, but, eventually, members from these communities were elected to the executive board of Makivik Corporation and resistance caved. These dissenting communities justified their position in seeking stronger provisions of self-government, claiming a “true government, one that can make laws, be self-supporting financially, raise taxes and claim royalties from any activities in its territory” (Sivuak, *apud* Mitchell 1996, p.354)

The JBNQA was the first land claims agreement for the Inuit in Canada. Mitchell’s assessment is that its impact was divisive, pitting communities against the agreement, but also pitting Inuit against Inuit via the actions of the State. The creation of the agreement also put the Inuit cooperatives against the native corporations, and in the JBNQ case, one of the most prominent cooperative federations, the *Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau Québec* also supported the dissenting villages and formed a parallel Inuit Association – the *Inuit Tungavinga Nunami*, to oppose the implementation of the agreement and that questioned the powers gave to the Northern Quebec Inuit Association.

3.3.3 The Inuvialuit Agreement and the Nunavut Land Claim Settlement Act

In the Northwestern Territories, the first comprehensive land claim agreement took place. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement was signed in 1984 by Canada and the Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement, seeking to preserve the identity and culture of the Inuit of the Northwestern Territories while promoting economic development. Unlike the JBNQA, the IFA also had provisions regarding environmental protection and the renewable resources of the Arctic. The agreement affected 2,500 Inuvialuit from the regions of Sachs Harbor, Holman, Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik and Aklavik. The IFA was the first agreement in Canada to include land ownership among its provisions, with the Inuvialuit receiving \$ 45 million (1977) and the property title to 91 thousand square kilometers (of the 435 thousand they occupied). However, hydrocarbon-rich areas occupied by the Inuvialuit were not made available for selection, and the subsurface rights of the agreement were limited to 11 thousand square kilometers, and although the land can only be sold among Inuvialuit or to the Crown, if the Inuvialuit lands are needed for public purposes, they can be bought by other parties with approval of the Cabinet and, in some cases, even without this approval.

The IFA also established several development corporations to manage the benefits and compensations, but all of them were articulated and created within the same institutional umbrella. A major corporation - the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation - received the funds destined by the agreement and divided it with a constellation of other corporations: "six Inuvialuit community corporations that control the IRC; the Inuvialuit Land Corporation, which *administers the settlement lands*; the Inuvialuit Development Corporation, the Inuvialuit Investment Corporation which invests the settlement funds on behalf of the beneficiaries and the Inuvialuit Trust to *control income earned by the latter two corporations*"

(Mitchell, 1996, p.355, emphasis added). These bodies were designed to act as private corporations, acting as the resource management structures for the Inuit of the NWT “without government involvement or intervention” (DIAND *apud* Mitchell, 1996).

The IFA contains mainly economic measures, destined to put the resources in the hands of the Inuvialuit Inuit. Through the designing of such corporate structure and the provision of an investment corporation, the State put a wedge between the Inuit, their land and resources. While concerned with maintaining traditional subsistence hunting – even paying wages for hunters and trappers to stay out hunting – these are still enmeshed with the corporate structure and its drive for profit. In reality, the corporation controls great swathes of land and defines the priorities in pursuing economic development – that, once more, is conflated with capital accumulation, valorization, profit and the exploitation of land.

In 1993, Canada proclaimed both the Nunavut Act – dismembering the Northwestern Territories and creating the province of Nunavut – and the Nunavut Land Claim Settlement Act. The Province of Nunavut is a territory where Inuit were the majority, then representing 85% of the population, and its creation was a solution in providing greater self-government rights to the Central and Eastern Arctic Inuit. The Nunavut Land Claim recognized Inuit title to 350 thousand square kilometers, subsurface rights over roughly 10% of this area, as well as access to other lands used for subsistence activities. The Nunavut Land Claim was originally presented by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada but was carried on by the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut. Under the NLCSA, this organization took the name Nunavut Tungavik Incorporated, and became responsible for administering the land claim and its benefits. Mitchell (1996, p.359) states that the *per capita* compensations were calculated to be half of what was given to the Northern Quebec Inuit.

Due to the dismemberment of the Northwestern Territories, this agreement also entailed provisions related to the formulation of a constitution and of the Nunavut Government. This was important, especially for the Inuit. Paul Quassa,

one of the chief negotiators of TFN, claimed that, albeit the settlement of land titles and compensations were important, "What we wanted all along and what we negotiated is a series of management regimes that will eventually give us self-government" (Nortext, 1989 *apud* Mitchell, 1996). This priority also justified the insistence, by the Inuit, of separating land claim settlements from the self-government provisions, and also sought to create spaces where the Inuit majority of Nunavut would have strong decision-making powers. This was a struggle carried on by the TFN, and, despite initial opposition from the federal government, the creation of the Nunavut Province, with an Inuit majority was approved by 69% of the eligible population in November 1992.

Nevertheless, this victory also came at the cost of surrendering the aboriginal title to land, exchanging it for compensations and defined rights to land use and resource management. Among the Inuit, there was opposition to the agreement, especially because of it was seen as trading political rights for administrative rights - referring to the participation on the management boards and resource management regimes. Also, the land allotted to the Inuit by the agreement was a small percentage of the total territory of Nunavut, most of which would be split among federal and state land. One Inuk activist stated that

the Nunavut agreement is "asking Inuit to surrender up to 81.7 percent of the land and most of the ocean to the Government of Canada in exchange for most of the rights we always had in the first place before colonialism" (Mike *apud* Mitchell, 1996, p. 379)

It is also telling that the opposition to the agreement was not met with frontal rebuttal, but with the recognition and admission that the agreement was not exactly the best option for the Inuit. With the consolidation of several comprehensive land claims agreements in Canada, indigenous communities were pressured to settle their claims within the state-proposed framework of extinguishment of aboriginal rights, compensations, and creation of development corporations (Coulthard, 2014). Moreover, in the Nunavut case, some proponents of the agreement also had clear that the refusal to negotiate the land claims

settlement would signal the exclusion of the Inuit from the dream of Arctic resource development. Two quotes by Dennis Patterson – former MP of the Northwestern Territories – registered by Mitchell are important in showing how the agreement was seen as the *only* viable solution.

"if the Inuit reject their claim in the NWT, the Government of Canada and exploration companies will continue to act as if the land is theirs to develop, without any involvement of Inuit" (apud Mitchell, 1996, pp 359-360)

And, on commenting the possible alternatives for the Inuit:

"These are the alternatives to ratifying the claim: no hope of support from the UN [United Nations], and no revenues to finance a new country even if it was supported by the international community, expensive litigation in southern courts which have not shown sympathy to aboriginal rights to date, no way of getting into international courts, continued control of governments without any Inuit involvement in decision-making, and a long wait at the end of a long line to begin new negotiations."

Being negotiated at a later moment of the land claims settlement in Canada, the Nunavut agreement, albeit a success in creating an Inuit-dominated province, also suffered from the success of the other settlement processes. A look at the press release announcing the agreement in principle for the negotiations of the claims is interesting to understand the role of the Nunavut agreement for the Canadian State: "This agreement will also enhance the climate in the territories for economic and political development by removing legal uncertainty on use and disposition of land and resources in the eastern NWT." (apud Mitchell, 1996, p.360). While forcing the debate on matters of self-government and establishment of legislating capacity over an important territory for the Inuit was an important achievement, the State sought, once more, to establish its control over Inuit land and exploit it in benefit of the accumulation of capital and for the strategic purposes of Canada. Johnny Mike's remarks cited above are important in showing that, not only the rights provided by the agreement were less than what Inuit had before contact, but the agreement *per se* surrendered land and ocean that were important for Inuit material, social and cultural reproduction to the Canadian State,

and its use would no longer respond to the traditional uses of the Inuit, but be subject to the approval of the State – and in conflict with other uses from southern settlers and other branches of Canadian government, particularly the military.

The negotiation of the dismemberment of the NWT also represented the emergence of disputes not only among Inuit, but also with other indigenous populations of the territory. Before the creation of Nunavut by the Nunavut Act, the GNWT held plebiscites to decide on the division of the territory, involving Inuit, Métis and Dene.

3.3.4 The Labrador Agreement

On commenting the Labrador Agreement, Mitchell denotes the overlap between the economic plans of the State for the development of Arctic resources, Inuit interest in settling the claims and the military importance of the Labrador Area. The region has important mineral resources, that brought negotiations to a stalemate due to the insistence of the Labrador Inuit Association of not settling the claims without extensive subsurface rights, while the Crown and Province authorities were not willing to grant these rights over the oil and mineral exploitation that would develop in the region. Labrador also represents a deviation from the pattern established here, especially because the primary push for settlement came from the Inuit association, and not from the State. Another important source of tension was the strategic importance of Labrador within the Canadian Defence plans, and to the security of the capitalist bloc within Cold War-era geopolitics.

The Department of National Defence (DND), needed the settlement to open way for international military exercises, and due to the role of the region within the NORAD system. Since the 1940's, there was an US military base in Goose Bay, and others were implemented as part of the Distant Early Warning Line of NORAD – a line of radars and bases dedicated to preventing Soviet aircrafts to approach US air space unnoticed. The implementation of the DEW

Line also entailed exercises to simulate dissuasion and response to Soviet approach or aggression. One of the effects of this defense system was the partnership with NATO members, especially their Air Forces, and many exercises included low-altitude flights over the region – a practice that was opposed by Inuit and other indigenous populations of the area – due to its impacts over wildlife and, subsequently, over the traditional subsistence practices. Before the Labrador land claims were settled, the strategies of civil disobedience used by the Innu – an indigenous people of Labrador – forced the DND to enter in negotiations about the realization of low-altitude flights.

The Labrador land claim agreement would be settled only in 2009, after almost twenty years of negotiations. Like the Nunavut agreement, the Labrador Inuit Land Claim Agreement (LILCA) also created an Inuit-dominated administrative territory, the autonomous area of Nunatsiavut. Smaller and with less administrative powers than a province, the Nunatsiavut Government is also different since it refers to a regional Inuit government structure, not a public one, open to non-Inuit influence, like Nunavut. Shadian, in this respect, treats the LILCA as “the first Inuit land claims agreement to extend the right of self-government” (2014, p.77). With this, not only there is a recognition of self-government and self-determination as a right, but also an extension of such rights via the creation of an administrative division dedicated to Inuit land and run by Inuit alone. The agreement covers 72,500 square kilometers in Northern Labrador, of which 15,800 are owned by Inuit. The agreement also provided that Inuit are entitled to one fourth of provincial revenues on the Inuit-owned lands, and also received co-management rights over the remaining land. The Labrador agreement also included Inuit in the co-management scheme of 48,690 square kilometers of the adjacent Ocean Zone of Labrador. The compensations paid by the Canadian Government to Labrador Inuit amount to C\$ 296 million (US\$ 588.14 million in adjusted values), 140 million (US\$ 278.17 in adjusted values) of which were to be transferred to Labrador Inuit, and the remaining directed at the implementation of the agreement.

3.3.5 The unfulfilled promise of development

After 14 years of the settlement of the land claims in Alaska, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, a transnational organization seeking to promote the rights of the Inuit people, commissioned Thomas Berger to travel to the villages in the North Slope and to understand the effects of the ANCSA over the lives of U.S.-based Inuit. The result of this effort was the production of the book “Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission”, a collection of the conversations, assemblies and impressions by Thomas Berger – who would play an important role in the settlement of land claims in Canada. The book was published in 1985, 14 years after the settlement. The publication, important as a primary source, is also valuable for the insights on the general attitude of the Alaska Inuit, due to the open nature of Berger’s inquiries, giving the opportunity to several indigenous individuals to speak their mind and by registering the dissatisfactions and issues they raised with the Native Corporations.

Berger’s registers reveal a negative view on the corporations, especially due to the impact of the development of extractive activities over subsistence activities. Right at the introduction of the book, Berger states that “Today they [Alaska Natives] find that ANCSA is the very instrument whereby they could lose their land. Nothing, in fact, has been settled”. (Berger, 1985). This is in direct contradiction with the core promise of the ANCSA, that by settling the claims and extinguishing aboriginal rights in favor of well-defined, concrete property rights, indigenous land would remain in indigenous hands and grant these communities the right to self-determination and self-government.

At the Gambell village, for example, Paul Apangalook stated that

I’ve always believed this island was ours. All that [ANCSA did] was to recognize our ownership. But [three] other things were done: first, the stocks were *wedged between the land and its people*; second, a profit structure was imposed; third, all of what we gained under the act was under a timetable (Berger, 1985, p.8, emphasis added).

At New Stuyahok, for instance, asked “Who has ANCSA benefited? You, the Natives? No. It seems to me it benefited non-Natives. We got land, money. Where has it gone? Mostly to well-educated non-Natives, lawyers”. (Berger, 1985, p.8). The specific complaint about the money going to lawyers refers to the difficulties faced by native corporations in defining their land rights. Such juridical disputes drained capital from the corporations in the form of legal fees, diverting resources from the subsistence economies and the development of other economic activities during the first decade of their functioning. Overall, Berger’s work shows a very pessimistic view of the agreement and its consequences for Alaska Natives, or what he dubs “village Alaska”, those communities still dependent on subsistence activities and their economies.

One important element are the descriptions of the ecological imbalances brought about by the development of the oil industry in Prudhoe Bay. Upon reaching Barrow, the largest Inupiat village in Alaska, Berger discusses how the Inupiat are feeling the impacts of the oil industry, especially in the decrease in numbers and diversity of wildlife in traditional hunting and fishing grounds. One Inupiat reports that Nuiqsut, an area close to the oil drilling sites and to the ports used to transport offshore oil, is suffering from the scarcity of fish and game because of the development of oil industry. The testimony of Bessie Ericklook shows how this perception set in Inuit villages as soon as a decade after the ANCSA

We (...) are dealing with the strong lies of the oil companies in Nuiqsut. They are destructing the hunting grounds within Nuiqsut, in the east side and the west side. Because of the oil companies, there is scarcity of fish and other game animals. There used to be plenty of fish before the oil companies. We grew up in that land before 1920 and we lived there until 1950, and we have returned to that land. There used to be all types of animals, such as caribou, fish and other game. But they have decreased because of the oil activities. (Berger, 1985, p.16, emphasis added)

Besides the direct ecological implications, Berger also register an important testimony of the effects of the plunge into cash economy that the Inuit were forced to make. Ronald Bower, then vice president of the Barrow village corporation, states that:

Oil development is a problem, our people are finding out (...) They're starting up now in small areas, but *cumulatively the total will have devastating impact on our culture, because we are a hunting culture*. And that frame of mind has not left our people, even though we have been immersed into a cash economy. (...) *money has spoken over above all of those, and that money is being used against them*. You see, the oil-lease sales taking place in areas where our people have deep, sacred ancestral feelings. Well, oil development in the Arctic is destroying those feelings quite rapidly. You can see it in the loss of language that our younger generations are now experiencing. It's visible in the way our school children living today have an 'I-don'tcare' attitude. Why should we learn? What's the future of learning? You see generation gaps developing where there never used to be any, and language barriers developing between grandparents, parents, and grandchildren (Berger, 1985, p.17, emphasis added).

The creation of the Native corporations as for-profit enterprises was an important move in opening North Slope for capitalist exploitation. These corporations received the title to the land, circumventing traditional governance structures and hollowing their influence over land use decisions. This political choice was both a way of depowering these communities, facilitating assimilation into the capitalist mode of production, and turned land into an asset, and, as such, capable of being bought, sold, taxed.

The ANCSA was the final success of the colonial, capitalist project of transforming the relationship between humanity and nature in the U.S. Arctic. By the creation of the native corporations, not only the State consolidated its control over most of Alaska's land, but it also put value, money and capital accumulation as hegemonic mediators and objectives for humanity-nature relations in North Slope and elsewhere in Alaska. The native corporation prevented villages and communities from managing land and land use in traditional, non-capitalist ways by imposing profit as an objective and as a condition for the maintenance of the land title. Valorization and exploitation of natural resources – especially non-renewable ones, like oil, gas and minerals, became paramount activities promoted by such corporations, seeking to maintain their status as owner of lands. By extinguishing the aboriginal title to land in favor of property rights, the state not only immersed these populations in the cash economy, but also opened the way to the creation and consolidation of class divisions among indigenous

communities, and other divides that, as Bower (*apud* Berger, 1985) noted, made the Inuit of North Slope experience “(...) a very different form of a degeneration of our society, both physically, mentally, economically, spiritually, and culturally”. More than that, the consolidation of the ANCSA also created a native corporate elite, not only engaged with the management and direction of native corporations, but also compromised with the extractive economies that developed in Alaska.

Another important element is how the traditional lands of the Inuit became progressively hostile to their activities and mobilities. One important evidence of this is the process of settling of the Inuit and their abandonment of nomadic life forms. The testimonies gathered by Berger in his *Village Journey* also show how the development of resource extractive activities impacted hunting, fishing and how the organization of the relation between Inuit and the land on the basis of the development corporations imposed a wedge between Inuit and their lands. While not delivering promised high paying jobs and prosperity from the exploitation of oil, these activities also hindered Inuit capacity to maintain their traditional livelihoods – and an important dynamic here is the dependency of Inuit communities on welfare programs to gather the money to access some of the promises of modernity. This ecological injustice can be addressed on the basis of what Opperman calls “racist environments” (2019). Environments and ecologies created by colonization that turn the native life in the already mentioned “permanent struggle against an omnipresent death”.

In Canada and in the United States, Inuit were forced to face a trade-off situation. They were to relinquish their aboriginal title to land and the aboriginal rights based on land and resource use since time immemorial for a set of well-defined rights established in negotiations with the State. While, legally, the debates referred to which rights could and would be afforded to indigenous populations and how to achieve them, the political context shows just how important those agreements were in facilitating the access to resource-rich areas that were strategic for states and for the continuity of capitalist accumulation and production. This is embedded in the agreements – both in Canada and in the United States, resource-rich areas were excluded from the negotiation, as were

subsurface rights in some cases - and in the solution provided to grant “self-determination” and “self-government” rights to the Alaska Natives or to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The connection between self-determination and economic development played an important role in legitimizing the imposition of a corporate, profit-oriented structure between the indigenous communities and their land – the Native Development Corporation.

The creation and implementation of this political solution had the effect of reframing what both “self-determination” and “development” meant for the affected populations. Self-government was treated as the property title over lands, the management of state-issued compensations and defining how to invest this money in the interest of shareholders. Development came to mean the intensification of the exploitation of non-renewable resources, such as mineral ores, oil and gas while, at the same time, seeking to profit and to extract some social benefit from this process. From a socio-ecological point of view, this solution is important in revealing the process and project dimensions of capitalism and colonization. With the emergence of the Arctic as a commodity frontier, in a historical moment when hydrocarbons became extremely expensive, it was important to secure exploitation and appropriation over this frontier, seeking to expropriate the populations that lived there from their lands and establishing a regime that forced value, capital and money as the mediators of the relationship between Inuit and the historical natures of the North American Arctic. This is both a possibility enabled by the process of colonization in the Arctic, as well as an attempt to enforce the capitalist project of universal equivalence (Moore, 2015) through spurring “economic development” in the distant, harsh climate of the Arctic.

It is also possible to discuss the assimilationist effect of the settlements. While not an overtly assimilationist policy, the settlement of land claims and the agreements had the effect of forcing the integration of parts of the Inuit population into the labor market and in the cash economy. More than that, Inuit Nunaat resources - land, seals, foxes, whales - were forced to be extracted and valued according to the rules of a market economy and of profit-oriented institutions.

Even the money paid as compensation by land lost was to be channeled through the native corporations into capitalist enterprises – connecting Inuit with the broader processes of accumulation and circulation of capital, making them participants in the extraction of non-renewable resources from Inuit Nunaat's soil and seas to power capital accumulation elsewhere.

Shadian (2014, p.77) states that the negotiations between the Inuit and the Canadian government reflected a broader negotiation between the Canadian State and the aboriginal peoples of Canada. Stating that "(...) land claims agreements have affirmed that Canada's Inuit are Canadian citizens", the author also brings up how the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, in its 30th anniversary, expressed this sentiment. The company's new logo sought to symbolize this reality by placing "at its heart, Canada's maple leaf, circled by Inuit representing the four Settlement Regions". This placing of the Inuit as *Canadian* Inuit "demonstrate our cultural distinctions and unity, as well as our *commitment* to Canada. We are more than First Canadians, we are *Canadians First!*" (emphasis added). The comment shows the importance of the settlement process in quenching the questioning force of indigenous political organizations and movements, but also in how, through the agreements, both Canada and the US could assimilate indigenous identity into their national identities through the construction of an Indigenous Elite – an indigenous bourgeoisie or a native corporate elite – committed to the national project of economic development and to the perpetuation of capitalism as a social and ecological project.

3.2 Sápmi – Economic co-management and political representation

In the previous chapter, the closing of Sápmi for the Sámi was discussed. With the end of World War II and the consolidation of national borders in Fennoscandia, Sámi activism turned inwards, specially so in the Scandinavian countries, seeking to defend Sámi interests in national arenas and framing the Sámi as a national minority within the broader context of Scandinavian

nationalities. Over the second half of the 20th century, this situation would change, not only with the rearticulation of Sámi transnational politics via the establishment of the Sámi Council, but also with a growing awareness of the Sámi as “one people divided in four nations” and reclaiming themselves as an indigenous people. As in North America, where protests against the discrimination and erasure of indigenous peoples and in defense of indigenous rights were fundamental in pressuring for the settlement processes, in Sápmi, one episode served as a powerful catalyst for the struggle for self-government and self-determination rights: the Alta Dam controversy. The project of building a hydroelectric power plant in the Alta-Kautokeino region generated a socioenvironmental conflict spanning from 1969 to 1983, with wide and intense engagement from civil society in Norway and Scandinavia, and with important participation of Sámi activists.

A discussion of the Alta conflict is important *per se* – as the conflict mobilized impressive numbers against the project and was faced with impressive use of force by the State – but also as a moment catalyzing Sámi activism and awareness in defense of Sápmi. Dalland (1997) characterizes the Alta conflict as a turning point for Norway’s international policies regarding environmental protection, suggesting that the aftermath of the conflict is “in an odd way responsible for this green facade” (p.41). The controversy has even made its way into popular, mainstream media, with a fantasized retelling of the crisis figuring prominently in the plot of the movie *Frozen II*. An attempt to summarize the conflict is important, especially due to the deep engagement of Sámi communities in the Alta protests and the development of the Sámi Parliaments stemming from the political struggle – albeit one in which the Sámi and other popular forces were defeated.

3.2.1 The Alta Dam controversy

The Alta-Kautokeino region, in Northern Sápmi, close to the border between the Finnish and Norwegian sides of Sápmi, was (and still is) extremely important in the Sámi migration routes. The region is part of Finnmark county, and there is evidence of Sámi occupation and land use dating from at least the first century of the Christian Era (Olsen; Hansen, 2014; Dalland, 1997). It is estimated that, from the 50 thousand Sámis, approximately 30 thousand lived in Norway, mostly in Finnmark and Troms.

As discovered after the construction of the Alta Dam, the region had a rich biodiversity and was home to a plethora of socio-ecological relations. For the Sámi, it marked migration routes spread from the Arctic Coast of Finnmark to Kautokeino, near the Finnish border, accompanying the Alta River. The Alta River and its course was strategic for Sámi reindeer herders for millennia, an important passage of the pendular search for winter and summer pastures, as well as being an important transitional stage, for reproduction and nursing of young reindeers. Dalland (1997), also stresses that the valley where the Alta Dam was built not only had unique conditions for the development of life, with an “unique vegetation and spectacular salmon and bird life”, that were destroyed, severely affected by the construction processes, but also by the permanent damage after the completion of the Alta Power Station. The ecological conditions of the Alta and Tana rivers were also instrumental in the Norwegian resistance to fascism in World War II, with the river providing sustenance and tactical advantages for the Norwegian resistance and for the Sámi during this period.

As Johan Eira, chairman of the Norwegian Association of Reindeer-owning Sámis, puts it:

We need the terrain around the construction area for a migration route, for spring and autumn pastures and as a nursery for the young animals. During the autumn migration from the coast we need the area for the animals to graze while large herds are waiting their turn to pass through the narrow terrain further south. The new Reindeer Husbandry Act states that if anyone is going to make a major incursion into a reindeer pasture area, the district Chairman has to be warned three weeks in advance. In the case of Alta, when the development started in autumn 1981, no such warning was issued. We were certain that construction work would

have to stop because it had not been initiated in a legal manner. We were wrong (*Apud* Dalland, 1997, p.41).

The Alta Dam project was, for a long time, carried out secretly by the State and the original design involved the flooding of the Sámi village of Masi – “a key village in the Heartland of Sámi territory” (Dalland, 1997, p.43). Masi was considered Norway’s “most important reindeer herding village”, which potentialized Sámi engagement in the matter. Discovered by accident¹⁰ in the 1960’s, the project planned to build a hydroelectric dam in the Alta River with a reservoir that would impact an immense area. The original project foresaw the construction of a reservoir of 40 kilometers in length, reaching all the way to Kautokeino and a three-hundred-meter-high reservoir. Dalland (1997, p.43) also reports that even the compensations to be paid to the Sámis had already been estimated by then. With these plans in motion, villagers from Masi began to have applications to build houses denied by the State during the year of 1969, which aroused suspicions revolving around the use of the area. This was made to prevent construction and expansion of Masi since it was to be flooded as part of the Alta system. Despite the absence of public consultation regarding the project, the denials of the applications to build new houses showed that the project was already under way.

In this scenario, the matter was taken to the local government and local newspapers. Dalland states that 1970 was the first European Year of Conservation in Norway, which prompted the public attention to the case, together with a Sámi housing scheme starting the same year that provided relocation for affected communities. In the same year, a parliamentary committee visited Masi and met with a silent protest from 400 Sámis. Later that year, the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Administration (NWRA) was to present options for the development of the project in the Alta River, options that included the flooding of two villages, diversion of water from the Tana river to the Alta, that implied the

¹⁰ Dalland (1997) reports that a teacher from Masi saw the plans drawn in an engineering office when seeking to obtain maps for a drinking water supply scheme in Masi.

construction of several reservoirs in the plateaus of the region. One of the most important reservoirs was lake Iesjavri – which forms the boundaries between the municipalities of Alta, Karasjok and Kautokeino – and the project was promptly opposed by the populations in all sides of the lake. The Iesjavri basin also played an important part in reindeer migration routes, allowing for the migration of 40 thousand reindeer annually in the search for the southern winter pastures. The Tana River, whose waters were to be partially diverted into the Alta basin, also marks the border between Norway and Finland, which prompted the Finnish government to express its opposition to the construction of the dam.

In this first moment, resistance of the affected populations coupled with international pressure was very important and forced the State to drop the plans both for flooding Masi (1973) and for the Iesjavri reservoir system (1976). The drive to build the hydropower dam, however, was not defeated, and from 1975 through 1978, the population and governments of Alta and Kautokeino rejected the project at least twice. In 1978, Norwegian Parliament presented a new scheme for the Alta Dam, which would not flood Masi and was approved - albeit disputed and criticized by local governments. Once more, the move was met with widespread resistance, both from the Sámis and from wider civil society organizations and even transnational entities like the World Council of Indigenous Peoples joined in. The construction, however, was approved and efforts began.

With the green light to the project, a local movement, *Folke-aksjonen* (People's Action) organized in Kautokeino and sought to organize the resistance to the dam. In the summer of 1979, a protest camp was established near the construction site that mobilized thousands of activists to disrupt the construction works. At the same time, in Oslo, a group of eight Sámi youngsters placed a *lavvu*, a traditional Sámi tent, in front of the Norwegian Parliament and began a hunger strike. In the face of such popular pressure, the construction works, initially postponed by six weeks, were halted by one year. In 1981, construction began anew, this time with the protection of a police detachment made up of police officers from all over Norway and support from the Norwegian Army. This was also part of the tactics to disband the opposition encampments, which resulted in the

largest police operation in the history of Norway, with the police arresting activists and disbanding the camps with material and tactical support from the Army that provided winter equipment, lodging, helicopters and vehicles. The action involved the deployment of troops from the southern regions of Norway, infiltrating the region via Finnish and Swedish territory – without their consent.

Faced with such force, there were new Sámi hunger strikes, and Sámi women visited Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland¹¹, protesting the construction and the repression of activists. After a month, the government halted construction works one more time, only to be resumed in September 1981 – and met with a third protest camp. This last camp was disbanded in a new police action, with the arrest of 300 more people, prompting the surrender of the People's Action. From then on, the dam construction works were carried out without further obstruction until completion in 1987.

3.1.1 Ecological impacts of the Alta Power Station

After the whole Alata debacle, it is important to stress some aspects of the impacts of the problem. First, the Alta Dam was never economically viable, and its production capacity was never needed, nor capable of enhancing the “energy security” of Norway or of the Alta region. Dalland (1997, p.47) reports that, at its opening, authorities basically admitted to the uselessness of Alta for the energy security of northern Norway. Even without the Alta dam, northern Norway would still have an important energy surplus of 600 GWh, at least twice the winter production capacity of Alta that could be transmitted to southern Norway. In 1992, five years after the completion of the dam, the Finnmark County Energy Corporation, which had a 40% stake in the Alta Project, decided to sell its shares to the state and preferred to buy cheaper energy generated by other power plants.

An economic fiasco was accompanied by catastrophic socio-ecological consequences. Authorities grossly underestimated the impacts of the dam, stating

¹¹ Yes, the same from the Brundtland Report.

that no more than 21 reindeer would be affected. The estimates show that five reindeer herding districts were affected, with 30 thousand reindeers and 80 Sámi families, both directly by the Alta dam and indirectly, by the composition effect of other damming projects in the region. Moreover, the Masi region is extremely important for Sámi traditional reindeer herding, being located as it is in one of the core areas of Sápmi, with a great share of the Sámi population in the place. The damming of the Alta also had its consequences for other subsistence activities like fisheries, especially with the destruction of the breeding grounds of the wild Alta salmon - one of the last species not genetically affected by industrial breeding programs. This also reflected more generally on the ecological (im)balance of the Alta canyon and the Alta River watershed, which, biologists showed, had high levels of biodiversity (Dalland, 1997) due to its unique geomorphology.

3.1.2 The Sámi mobilization in the Alta Conflict

With the Sámi at the crosshairs of the Alta Hydropower project, their engagement was paramount. Sámi were present at the start of the protests, being capable of forcing the project to be redesigned and acted locally, nationally and transnationally. In the latest part of the conflict, in January 1981, a Sámi activist began a hunger strike, and the group of Sámi women who met with PM Brundtland to discuss the project had to be forcefully removed from the PM's office due to their unwillingness to leave without a satisfactory resolution of the conflict. After their removal, two of them went immediately to Rome, delivering a letter about the Alta case to the Pope, and another delegation headed to New York, to denounce the case in the United Nations and in global indigenous forums.

3.1.2 The Aftermath

Despite the defeat of the Popular Action and the violent disbanding of the protest camps, there were important results for the Sámi. In 1989, for example, the Sámi Parliament of and Norway was established. The Alta Conflict was an

important trigger for the reactivation of Sámi political mobilization and transnational activism. It was also important in the spread of Sámi awareness as an *indigenous people* and not – as was a common perception in Scandinavia – as a *national minority*. The creation of the Sámi Parliaments was important in seeking to ensure the right to self-determination and to conciliate these rights with the strategic control of land in Sápmi.

The Alta Conflict was also an important turning point in Sámi policies all over Fennoscandia. Until the end of World War II, Sámi policies had assimilation and settlement of Sámi land as explicit goals, enforced by the State. During the second half of the twentieth century, this had changed and Selle and Stromnes (2010) point to the emergence of a Sámi elite during the sixties, which led to greater political mobilization around Sámi social and cultural issues. The socio-environmental conflict was important in that it led State policies to aim for the normalization of relations with the Sámi, instead of the suppression of Sámi rights, especially due to the work of the Sámi Rights Commission in the Storting in Norway. The Sámi Act of 1987, for example, defines that “[i]t is the responsibility of the authorities of the State to create conditions enabling the Sámi people to preserve and develop its language, culture and way of life” (*apud* Selle; Stromnes, 2010, p.69). The same act also established the foundations for the creation of the first Sámi Parliament in Norway – an important development for Sámi rights all over Sápmi.

3.2.2 The Sámi Parliaments

While not addressing or reverting the damage from the Alta conflict, the establishment of the Sámi Parliament of Norway and the subsequent creation of Sámi Parliaments in Sweden and Finland was an important step in establishing and strengthening the right to self-determination in Sápmi. Due to their different locations and powers, each parliament is designed differently, with their powers differing from country to country. In general, the Sámi Parliaments are

administrative structures seeking to represent and ensure the interests of the Sámi populations of Fennoscandia. Parliaments just in name, they are generally branches of the Executive with no legislative powers but are regarded as important influence channels for the Sámi, as well as holding consultative status on policies, laws and measures that directly affect Sápmi.

Moreover, the Sámi parliaments, due to their representative function, are important elements in the political mobilization of the Sámi. The election of members and the engagement in the debate over policies and legislation are important drivers for a wider engagement of the Sámi in political issues. Contrasting them with the land-claim model of the North American Arctic, it is important to stress that the Sámi Parliaments are seen and established as governance structures, funded by the State and do not seek to abolish, surpass or replace aboriginal rights with property rights and compensations. This important difference, while also representing a political choice seeking to legitimize control over land and exploitation of resources in the name of “development”, did not foreclose the political mobilization of the Sámi as part of the solution to the tension between development and aboriginal rights. The choice for governance structures and the creation of co-management regimes in Fennoscandia was important in not tying the destiny of Sámi self-government and autonomy to the profitability of a corporation. It also allowed for Sámi influence over design and implementation of policies in Sápmi – and political space to question state policies aimed at resource-based development.

This can be seen in the struggles led by Sámi movements and supported by the Parliaments. One important example is the dispute on the development of mining in the Gállok region – one carried out by Sámi communities and organizations, but that was officially supported by the Swedish Sámi Parliament in its activities.

3.2.2.1 The Sámi Parliament of Norway

In 1989, as a fruit of the Sámi Act of the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament), the Sámi Parliament of Norway was established. In the Sámi Act, it was defined that the Sámi Parliament of Norway would be formed via elections, selecting people from among the Sámi communities. The eligibility criteria were the self-identification as Sámi and the usage of the Sámi language in the family's household up to the third generation. The Norwegian SP does not have legislative nor fiscal powers, only administrative powers. Semb (2012, p.1657) stresses that the establishment of such structure was important in recognizing that State-Sámi relations in Norway would be carried out not with the Sámi as Norwegian citizens, but as *Sámi* citizens. The same author also stresses that the main function of the SP was an advisory one.

It is important to stress that, initially, the Sámi Parliament (and neither the Sámi) was authorized to discuss self-determination of the Sámi as an *indigenous* people, but rather Sámi rights as minority rights. With the growing awareness of Sámihood as indigeneity, however, the Sámi Parliament integrated such demands and claims in its plans. In the first two plans presented by the parliament, the Sámi were framed as an ethnic minority, and the demand for self-determination would only appear in such plans in 1997. Also, the growing importance of self-determination and self-government is also accompanied by a greater emphasis on land and water rights - not only as "land use conflicts" but also as a dispute for the preservation of traditional practices and subsistence economies.

Throughout the 21st century, the Sámi Parliament managed to reposition itself within the Norwegian political system. It came to administer a considerable part of the Storting's Sámi affairs budget and has also made use of the delegated decision-making powers it is granted by the Sámi Act. However, its decision-making powers have been prominent in matters related to Sámi culture, language and education. Semb (2012) affirms that water and land rights are "the single most important issue that has affected the political role of the Sami Parliament" (p.1.658). These issues are also closely related to the growing claims to indigenous self-determination and self-government in Sápmi, affecting directly the socio-ecological relations that make Sámi existence viable in the first place.

This tension only grew with the ratification by Norway of the Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization – on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. The convention states, in Article 7, that

The peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own *priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development*. In addition, they shall participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development which may affect them directly (ILO 169, emphasis added).

The definition of “land” in the Convention “covers the total environment of the areas which the peoples concerned occupy or otherwise use” (ILO). In the Article 14 of the Convention is also important:

[t]he rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognised. In addition, measures shall be taken in appropriate cases to safeguard the right of the peoples concerned to use lands not exclusively occupied by them, but to which they have traditionally had access for their subsistence and traditional activities. Particular attention shall be paid to the situation of nomadic peoples and shifting cultivators in this respect.

The Sámi, as both a nomadic people and one that struggled persistently against denial of access to traditional grazing lands, saw this as an opportunity to strengthen the Sámi Parliament’s role as an instrument in achieving and ensuring self-determination within the Norwegian political system. The ratification of the ILO Convention 169 by Norway created an international commitment for the Norwegian state to respect its provisions and act by its spirit. This led, in Norway, to the creation of a parallel structure seeking to ensure the land and water rights – once more appealing to their definition in terms of property and ownership rights over aboriginal rights. The political solution for this issue is discussed in more detail later in this chapter and takes the form of the *Finnmarkseiendommen* (the Finnmark Estate), a structure similar to the land-claims agreements of North America, that seeks to translate aboriginal rights into property rights to land and use rights of water bodies.

3.2.2.2 The Finnmarkseiendommen

In 2005, Norway established a new structure for self-determination and for the management of Sámi rights – especially those related to land and water uses. the *Finnmarkseiendommen* - here translated as Finnmark Estate. This structure is closely related to the Native Development Corporation model, in that it seeks to trade aboriginal rights to land (and water) for those “well defined” rights to ownership and land use. The establishment of the Finnmark Estate was a move by Norway in seeking to compatibilize its objectives in the Arctic with the ratification of the ILO Convention 196 – which clearly stated the right of ownership, the preservation of indigenous land uses and the right to access lands needed for traditional activities and subsistence in the case of nomad peoples. It seeks to do so via transferring the ownership title over land from the State to the *Finnmarkseiendommen*.

Via the Finnmark Act, the Norwegian State sought to

facilitate the management of land and natural resources in the county of Finnmark in a balanced and ecologically sustainable manner for the benefit of the residents of the county and particularly as a basis for Sami culture, reindeer husbandry, use of non-cultivated areas, commercial activity and social life (Norway, 2005).

To do so, it transferred 96% of the Finnmark County area to the Finnmark Estate – “an independent legal entity (...) which shall administer the land and natural resources, etc. that *it owns* (...)” (Norway, 2005, emphasis added). The governance structure of the *Finnmarkseiendommen* is composed of six persons, three appointed by the Sámi Parliament of Norway and the other three appointed by the Finnmark City Council. The act recognizes both the authority of the Sámi Parliament of Norway and that it seeks to internalize the limitations and provisions of the ILO Convention 169. The Norwegian *Samediggi* not only is responsible for appointing half of the Estate’s Board, but it is also given the role of assessing the impacts of changes in land use over Sámi activities. These assessments,

however, are subject to further examination by the State, which gives the final word, and state and municipal authorities are tasked with defining how land use changes will affect Sámi culture.

Aside from resource management, one of the functions of the Finnmark Estate is to assess and recognize title to land based on traditional land-use for the Sámi of the region. First, it is important to emphasize that, in Finnmark, the Sámi constitute the majority of the population, being both nomadic, reindeer-herding Sámis and Sea Sámi, those whose subsistence is more related to fishing. Within the Finnmark Act, it is the task of the Finnmark Commission, a Crown-appointed body, to investigate and define rights of use and ownership of the land transferred to the Finnmark Estate. This, in particular, impacts the Sámi, since the Act recognizes at the same time their ownership and rights based on “prolonged use of land and waters” and, in the meantime, “does not interfere with collective and individual rights acquired by Sami and other people through prescription or immemorial usage”. The full extent of such rights, however, is to be investigated, defined and recognized by the Commission. This represents a concentration of power in the hands of the Finnmark Estate, diluting any gain on the side of the Sámi, giving it power not only over defining what constitutes enough evidence of traditional land and water use, but also in controlling Sámi access to land based on its bureaucratic controls of the whole process.

3.2.2.3 The Sámi Parliament of Sweden

As with its Norwegian Counterpart, the Sámi Parliament in Sweden also has administrative powers, but a more restricted participation in policy – and decision-making processes. It is also an elected, representative body of the Sámi. An important element, here, is how the establishment of the SP helped to broaden images of Sámihood by granting protection to non-reindeer herding Sámi communities. Lantto and Morkenstam (2007) state, however, that the design of the Parliament is representative of a “hierarchical foundation” of policies, due to restrictions imposed on the activities of the Sámi Parliament. For example, there

are financial restrictions imposed by the state, and the field of incidence of the SP is extremely limited – once more with cultural policy being the main activity.

Lantto and Morkenstam (2007) also stress that the functioning of the Parliament was paralleled with an encroachment of the Swedish Crown over Sámi land-use rights. Hunting and fishing rights on the crown lands set aside for Sámi uses were given to non-Sámi hunters and fishers, putting pressure over subsistence hunting and fishing and creating a tension with the tourism industry, for instance.

Sweden has not ratified the ILO Convention 169 and, although it has avoided the tensions that characterize the Norwegian experience of the Sámi Parliament, there has been a mounting pressure by the Sámi for the ratification and implementation of the Convention in the Swedish context. This pressure has been an important element in Sámi political mobilization in Sweden. Lantto and Morkenstam also show how Sweden has maneuvered to evade the ratification, specially by claiming that the extent of Sámi right to land, hunting and fishing is unknown and, therefore, that it cannot fulfill the obligations established by the convention. Despite its limited role in the formal political structure, the Sámi Parliament of Sweden has also been very vocal and active in its criticisms of Swedish development policies, which can be seen, for example, in the campaign against mining in the Gállok region.

3.2.3 The Sámi Parliament of Finland

Established in 1995, the Sámi Parliament of Finland represents an advancement in Sámi rights within the Finnish scenario. In 1949 and in 1971, there had been two Sámi committees on State affairs, both recommending the creation of a central Sámi representative body seeking to secure Sámi economic development and cultural rights. In 1973, these efforts resulted in the creation of the Finnish Sámi Council and of the Sámi Delegation, both of which were voted by Sámi to represent their interests and voice concerns over minority matters. In 1995, the Act on the Sámi Parliament and the Decree on the Sámi Parliament

were published, officially establishing it as part of the governance framework of Finland.

In Finland, the Sámi Parliament is part of the Ministry of Justice, keeping with the trend of *Samediggi* as administrative structures with no real legislative power and with the role of managing funds and resources allocated by the State to Sámi projects. The Finnish SP is also the first to explicitly devote itself to representing the Sámi in international affairs, dedicating an area of expertise and personnel to matters discussed at the Sámi Parliamentary Council – a transnational forum composed by the three *Samediggi* and participation of a Russian Sámi delegation. The responsibilities of the Finnish *Samediggi* are closely related to the two others, with education, language and cultural preservation playing an important role in their actions.

3.2.4 The Sámi Parliamentary Council and the Sámi Council

While the *Samediggis* are entitled to national representation of Sámi interests, it is important to recognize, as the Sámis do, that they are one people divided in four countries. Transnational Sámi articulation and engagement has been an important hallmark of their political mobilization since the late 20th century, with their participation in international fora such as the United Nations and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and even, more recently, in the Arctic Council. One important, more local forum is the Sámi Parliamentary Council – a space of debate for the three *Samediggis* and the Russian Sámi seeking to create a Sámi Parliament in Russia.

This council, apart from coordinating agendas and offering a space of intra-Sámi cooperation, has also had great impact in consolidating understandings of self-determination, self-government and a critique of state-oriented development policies. In the 2005 Jokkmokk Declaration, for example, while educational, linguistic and broadly defined cultural concerns are present, there is an important emphasis on self-determination in its material reproduction/economic aspect. The document emphasizes the importance of Nordic States and Russia to guarantee

Sámi subsistence and claim Sámi control over economic development as a Sámi right. More than that, there is an important focus on this economic aspect of subsistence and economic development as integral to the Sámi right to self-determination. There is an important reaffirmation of a basic principle of Sámi politics: Sámi as one people, divided in four countries, and of Sámi politics as independent from state-defined borders and as distinct from interstate politics. Another important element is the defense of the Nordic Sámi Convention (which has been stalled since 2016) and of the UNDRIP (approved in 2007). This defense is not only an appeal to state diplomatic efforts, but also a claim to the right of Sámi engagement in both negotiation processes.

Another important transnational Sámi organization is the Sámi Council. Seeking to represent all the Sámi of Sápmi, the Council is a member of the Economic and Social Council of the UN and recognized as one of the Indigenous Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council, granting it consultative status and permanent representation in the Arctic Council. The Sámi Council also seeks to coordinate Sámi politics within the national contexts of Finland, Norway and Sweden and in the wider context of the European Union policies. With a vast array of functions, the Sámi Council also present a vast array of policies and documents, even publishing an Arctic Strategy of its own, seeking to establish guidelines for Sámi engagement with Arctic international politics and its new elements.

3.2.3 Co-management, resource management and self-determination in Sápmi

Self-determination in Sápmi, as in North America, has tended to be redefined based on cultural aspects of indigenous life. While preservation and promotion of language, culture and spirituality is important at both individual and collective levels, the focus on these issues becomes problematic when the economic basis of colonization and expropriation remain untouched. While these

have been reinforced, with the parliaments seeking to legitimize national sovereignty over traditional Sámi land, the European model has not linked the destiny of indigenous self-determination to the development of resource-extractive initiatives aimed at capital accumulation. There has been significant mobilization of the Sámi against mining and other projects that seek to appropriate and exploit the historical natures of Sápmi, and significant political space granted to question and struggle against such projects.

Shadian (2017) defines the European model of indigenous rights as one based on co-management. This means that while the state is the sole responsible for some matters of policy, it can (and does) delegate some of these functions to the *Samediggis*, while holding the parliaments as consultative bodies, allowing for the Sámi to voice their concerns and desires within the Fennoscandian institutional frameworks. However, with the recent developments of climate change, for example, new tensions appear in the horizons as the Arctic becomes a global frontier for new commodities and as its land starts to play a bigger part in more global agendas - from energy transition to the expansion of NATO and the tensions with Russia.

3.3 Involunteers of Arctic Homelands: Indigenous self-determination and economic development in the Arctic

A homeland – as Brazilian poet Mário de Andrade rightly states – is a conjunction of chance and subsistence¹². The process of colonization and expansion of political control over the Arctic territories was neither peaceful nor unresisted. With the advances of settler colonial states and their practices, indigenous livelihoods were progressively articulated to market-oriented capitalist economies, both national and global. Indigenous populations that underwent such processes were heavily affected in the web of social and ecological

¹² From the poem “*O poeta come amendoim*”, in a free translation “Homeland is a happenstance of migrations and of Our God’s bread wherever we find it”.

transformations brought about by the consolidation of the Arctic as a commodity frontier, as a zone of appropriation, expropriation and impoverishment of traditional communities and their economies, geared towards the exploitation of Arctic resources. Throughout the twentieth century, the global political scenario shifted, and assimilationist and genocidal practices became politically unsustainable. At the same time, increased interest in Arctic economic potential demanded that the matter of indigenous rights was settled in conformity with the interests that sought to appropriate Arctic historical natures in the benefit of capital accumulation.

The steps taken by Arctic States to normalize their relations with indigenous peoples were taken in the spirit of assimilating their rights into their institutional and legal frameworks while, at the same time, producing a new, national and indigenous subject. In North America, this new subject took the form of the native corporate elite (Mitchell, 1996) or of an indigenous bourgeoisie (Coulthard, 2014) and, most importantly, with the creation of the Native Development Corporation. In Europe, this new subject was the Sámi – the reindeer herding, nomad Sámi. This process, while different, was also aimed at reframing the content of aboriginal rights as well as of the ideas of self-determination and self-government, seeking to compatibilize their realization with strategic and economic interests of States, to avoid that political mobilization around these sets of rights disrupt state projects and capitalist accumulation. In both cases, the normalization process was instrumental in co-opting aspirations to self-determination, self-government and development to legitimize resource-extractive initiatives. This, in turn, has not translated into “development” for the indigenous populations of Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat, but in a growing ecological bill for the activities that seek to infiltrate these lands. Mitchell’s (1996) hypothesis – that the land claims agreements represent the more recent stage of primitive accumulation in the Arctic – is quite correct in capturing this reality: the formal recognition of rights to self-determination and self-government corresponded to a growing control of capitalist agencies over land and resources – renewable and non-renewable alike.

In North America, the land claims agreements of Alaska and Northern Canada produced a native corporate elite – a social force compromised with capital accumulation as a societal goal within the Inuit. This process was central in legitimizing and intensifying the exploitation of non-renewable resources and in defending indigenous engagement with such projects. Elsewhere (Silva, 2023), I have analyzed the tension around the approval of the Willow project, in Alaska, discussing how indigenous actors – Native corporations, indigenous congresswoman Mary Peltola and others – lobbied heavily in defense of the expansion of oil extraction in the region of Nuiqsut, even in the face of the opposition of the city's mayor and the well recorded social and ecological impacts of the oil industry in the region. This shows the strength of this elite as part of the dominant historic bloc of the United States and its role in maintaining Alaska's fossil-dependent economy as it is. It is also telling that fifty years after the ANCSA and more than thirty since the start of the Canadian land claims process, the discourse of development and of the benefits of resource exploitation remains the same – the never-fulfilled promises of material well-being.

In North America, the process was more effective in creating such a class division among the indigenous peoples. The suppression of aboriginal rights in favor of the right to property of land and the creation of economic resource management units, the Native Development Corporations co-opted parts of the indigenous communities into the logic of capital accumulation, and the imposition of profit as an objective of these structures favored the emergence of a capitalist class and of a dispute for the definition and implementation of indigenous interests in the Arctic. Another important element of the North American model is how the implementation of the claims model was instrumental in breaking the momentum of indigenous political activism and mobilization, channeling their political engagement through lawsuits and diminishing their political incidence.

In Sápmi, the process has not produced such outright divisions, nor has it had a great impact on Sámi mobilization. The Sámi Parliaments have played an important role in fostering political engagement among the Sámi, taking the lead on campaigns against issues that directly affect the socio-ecological conditions of

life in Sápmi. They have also played an important role in debating and tensioning the meaning and objectives of “economic development” policies, specially via putting self-determination and self-government as policy objectives. The pressure for the ratification of ILO 169 – and for its implementation in the Norwegian case – are also important elements for Sámi political mobilization in defense of their traditional livelihoods and rights to land and water resources *vis-a-vis* the extractive, non-renewable resource-based development policies. This is a direct result of the Fennoscandian model of indigenous governance, one that sought to guarantee institutional space for the Sámi via the *Samediggis* and making these structures Sámi-run political structures – albeit with limited power. This has also served to strengthen and thicken Sámi transnational political activism, both in Sápmi-related issues and in wider fora of international governance. While the establishment of the Sámi Parliaments did not have an immediate economic aspect, there has been a progressive change in state policy towards reindeer herding - crystallized in the Reindeer Herding Acts of Fennoscandia – that seeks to transform this activity from a traditional subsistence mode into a market-oriented activity.

Both models, however, are deeply related to a greater need to control indigenous land, livelihoods and mobilities in benefit of processes of capitalist production, distribution and accumulation, seeking to attach indigenous activism, indigenous rights and their implementation to the needs of capital. It is telling that, in both cases, the initial array of self-determination rights and autonomy was restricted to the fields of culture and education, conflating self-determination with the use of native languages, preservation of culture and traditional ways of self-expression. More important, for trying to preclude control over land and resources from the debate of self-determination and self-government and by de-politicizing aboriginal rights via putting traditional subsistence and land uses in the same level as other, settler-defined and oriented land uses.

For Arctic indigenous peoples, the recognition of the right to self-determination is related to a wider economic project of “transforming the Indian into poor” and political project of “a world 100% commons but privatized by the

1%. (...) The State as World and the World as a Common State” (Viveiros de Castro, 2017, translated by the author). In the public lecture titled “*Os Involuntários da Pátria – Elogio do Subdesenvolvimento*”¹³, Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro presents an interesting distinction between “Brazilians” and “indigenous”:

Being Brazilian is to think, act, and regard oneself (and perhaps be regarded) a “citizen”, that is as a person defined, registered, watched, controlled and assisted – in sum weighed, counted and measured by a territorial nation-State – Brazil. To be Brazilian is to be (or ought to be) citizen, in other words *subject* of a *sovereign* – that is transcendental – State. This condition of subject (one of the euphemisms for subject is “subject of rights”) has absolutely nothing to do with the aboriginal, vital indigenous relation with land, with the place where one lives and wherefrom one takes sustenance, where one *makes life* together with kin and friends.
(Viveiros de Castro, 2017, p.4, translated by the author, emphasis on the original)

As with “Brazilian” in this excerpt, I believe this dialectic between indigenous and citizen is also applied to Arctic indigenous peoples. To be Canadian, American, Norwegian, Swedish or Finnish is to be assimilated into these national communities, to be part of these controlled populations. The processes of recognition and of self-determination were important in expanding to indigenous peoples of the region the set of rights to which *citizens* are entitled. Once more, Viveiros de Castro provides an interesting reflection on the condition of citizenship: “[t]o be a citizen is to be part of a *controlled* population (at the same time “defended” and attacked) by a State” (idem). In Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, the State posited itself as a defender of indigenous peoples and livelihoods while, at the same time, undermining the conditions of reproduction of life for Inuit and Sámi alike. The processes briefly studied here were means to establish this control over indigenous livelihoods in the Arctic via their insertion into these national communities and their legal frameworks.

Indigenous communities, due to the expansion of extractive, capitalist economies over their lands, are losing their traditional subsistence activities and

¹³ In a free translation to English: The Involunteers of the Homeland – A praise for underdevelopment”

facing a growing ecological degradation of their homes. The perception of poverty and harshness of living, important in the colonization efforts in both regions were exacerbated when the effects of market-oriented exploitation of living and non-living resources made themselves felt. Once more resorting to Viveiros De Castro:

“to transform the Indian into poor is what the ‘explorer’ intends (...) this conceptual metamorphosis turns the Indian into the welcome object of a pressing need, to transform him, paternally, in a ‘non-poor’, to take him out of his abjection and turn him into a ‘citizen’” (2017, p. 7, emphasis on the original, our translation).

The need to lift indigenous peoples from poverty is one of the main aspects of the promise of development. Material wellbeing, access to basic services, jobs – and high paying jobs – are presented as the conveyor belt from poverty and abjection to citizenship, and the means to make it work was the exploitation of non-renewable resources that just happened to be strategic for the processes of capitalist accumulation of Arctic States. The development of these resource-extractive activities represents a loss of space for traditional activities. This is also a loss of autonomy relative to the state, placing Inuit and Sámi in a situation of dependency from the State – be it in welfare programs and funding to survive or in the imposition of economic development (defined as resource development) to these peoples.

Definitions at play here – development, self-determination – were greatly determined by the settler-colonial agencies that sought to organize Arctic spaces and integrate them to their economies and to the sphere of sovereignty and political influence of the USA, Canada and the Fennoscandian states. The recognition of indigenous right to self-determination was followed by a greater degree of control by State actors over land, land use rights and resources in the Arctic and is at the basis of what, in the twenty-first century, came to be known as “Arctic geopolitics”. The greater control and ability to develop these lands and resources are at the forefront of strategic policies and projects formulated during the current century. This represented an intrusion on indigenous lands of Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, a growing influence of market-oriented and profit-oriented definitions of development and economy over traditional practices in these lands.

Another important aspect was the ideological operation of reframing self-determination, repackaging it via the land-claim agreements, restricting economic definitions to capital accumulation and definitions of self-determination to its educational and linguistic aspects.

Chapter 4 – Arctic Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century

Introduction – The end of Arctic exceptionalism?

It is common, in the literature on Arctic geopolitics, to find references to the 2010 decade as the end of “Arctic exceptionalism”. This idea is based on the view that the Arctic is a region of peace, where the use of force and military action are distant from the array of solutions to international controversies in the region. More than that, the “exceptionalism” narrative is based on the perception of isolation between Arctic governance fora and geopolitical issues from those that, even when involving Arctic States, unfold outside the Arctic. With the growing economic and military interest, and with the arrival of new, extra-Arctic actors interested in debating regimes and arrangements for the region, and the growing geopolitical tension between NATO and Russia, there is a growing perception of a dying exceptionalism. This is based on an uncritical reception of state discourses on Arctic governance, which frame some actors as the outsiders, responsible for disrupting the peaceful relations that once characterized Arctic geopolitics. This vision is also oblivious to how global the processes of Arctic colonization and politics have been, seeking to frame the “global Arctic” as a contemporary emergence – a symptom of a vision of geopolitical issues divorced from economic factors.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, diplomacy and multilateral governance were, in fact, the main elements of international relations in the Arctic. The Ilulisaat Declaration and the founding of the Arctic Council were achieved in such spirit of fostering cooperation in the region and seeking to address common challenges and provide an important framework for politics in the region. However, this pattern of peaceful relations was short-lived, and, at least since 2004, there has been a reversal in such trend, both for global and regional factors. Globally, the largest NATO expansion and a progressive deterioration of US-Russia relations provide a larger framework for geostrategic initiatives in the region. Since 2007, growing interest in knowing and seizing Arctic resources and strategic potential

has been a driver of the region's geopolitical issues. Coupled with a general deterioration of the US-Russia relations and, more recently, with growing tensions between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, practices of dissuasion and the specter of war made their way back to the Arctic.

In this chapter, I seek to outline the main geopolitical dynamics of the Arctic in the 21st century. The discussion starts with a presentation of three important elements composing such scenarios – the resource endowment of the region, especially hydrocarbons and mineral resources, the growing effects of climate change and of a warmer Arctic, and the emergence/possibility of perennially navigable routes in the region. After that, I turn to two global geopolitical matters affecting the Arctic, the growing deterioration of NATO-Russia relations and their effects for the governance of the region, but also in the transformations in the physical geography of the Arctic. Our analysis, then, turns to the discussion of the Arctic strategies produced in the period between 2007 and 2021 and how they seek to establish a new logic of relations in the hyperborean spaces. Finally, the analysis looks back at the indigenous territories of the Arctic and seeks to superimpose and understand how the growing geopolitical tension and the responses crafted by states also deeply affect the Inuit and the Sámi – with attention to the Arctic strategies formulated by the Inuit Circumpolar Council and the Sámi Council and how they present different framings and different strategic priorities for Arctic geopolitics.

4.1 The Arctic in the twenty-first century

The end of the Cold War signaled important political space for cooperation in the Arctic. This can be seen in the signing of the Ilulisaat Declaration, as well as the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996. Both are important, multilateral instruments seeking to foster cooperation and create the conditions for a cooperative political environment in the region. It is also important to note that the Ottawa Declaration, the founding document of the Arctic Council, also established

a place for the indigenous peoples of the region as Indigenous Permanent Participants in the Arctic Council. The improvement of the economic situation in Russia, especially with the predominance of the hydrocarbon industry, was also important to open space for economic cooperation in harnessing Arctic resources. Before 2014 and the first round of sanctions on Russia due to the annexation of Crimea and the Euromaidan protests, several companies from the United States and Europe – like Shell, Exxon-Mobil and Eni – were participating in drilling projects in the Russian Arctic.

Since the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010 decade, however, this scenario changed substantially. While the presence of important resources can explain greater interest in Arctic economic exploitation, it must also be explained how a region regarded as inaccessible and inviable for economic activities became a major resource frontier, as well as a logistical corridor for relevant actors in the global geopolitical scenario.

4.1.1 Climate change in the Arctic

One of the main changes in Arctic geopolitics stems directly from changes in the physical geography of the region. The Arctic warms four times faster than other regions of the world, at least since 1979, as Rantanen *et al.* (2022) show. Effects of such warming are already being felt in North America, with the polar vortexes and cold waves – which are a result of weaker northern jet streams, which let cold masses of air escape from the Arctic and go further south. In an ecosystem as the Arctic, such rapid warming also manifests in the form of dwindling ice coverage and shorter cold periods. Three important initiatives monitoring and generating data on climate change – Copernicus Climate Change, NOAA and NASA – also show how, in the last 50 years, the sea ice extent has been diminishing in the Arctic and that such anomalies are increasing over time.

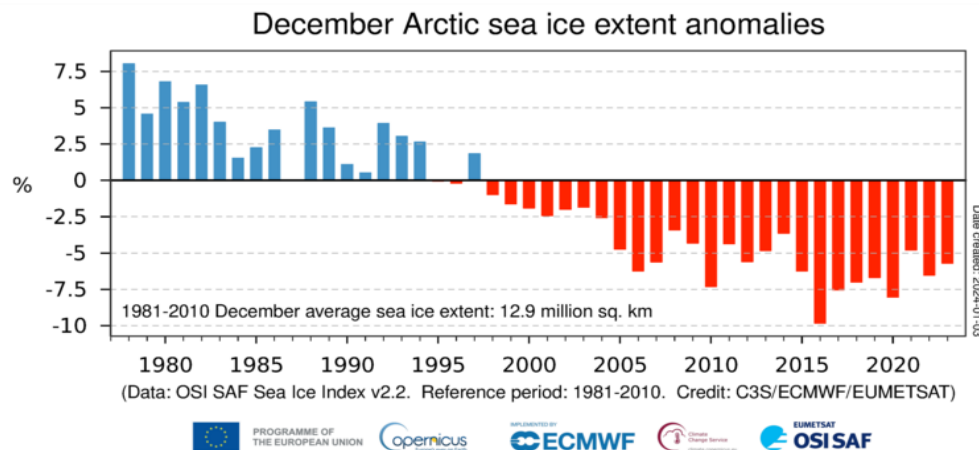


Figure 12: December Arctic Sea ice extent anomalies (1981 – 2020). Available at: <https://climate.copernicus.eu/sea-ice-cover-december-2023>, last accessed 10/01/2024

Figure 10 shows the anomalies in sea ice extent in December, over the period from 1981 to 2020. Up to 1995, the graph shows mostly positive anomalies, with sea ice extent growing 7,5%, but with a negative overall trend. From the second half of the 1990s onwards, the anomalies have been consistently negative, with sea ice loss prevailing over sea ice gains anomalies. This is a regional manifestation of the effects of global climate change, effects of a warming planet and a warming sea surface. Figure 2, similarly, shows how the yearly minimum sea ice extent has also been diminishing in absolute numbers, showing a loss of 3 million square kilometers over a 40-year period (1980 – 2020). Figure 3 shows the age of the ice in two different moments, 1985 and 2022, and in a historical series, showing how multi-year ice layers in the Arctic are being replaced by increasingly younger ice layers – indicating an accelerated rate of ice loss and a reduction in the total volume of sea ice. It is important to note that, in the case of image 3, the measurements were taken in the central Arctic Ocean, an important core, which has been greatly reduced overall. Also, younger ice tends to be thinner than older ice – being less resistant to breaking and traversing by ice capable ships.

ARCTIC SEA ICE YEARLY MINIMUM

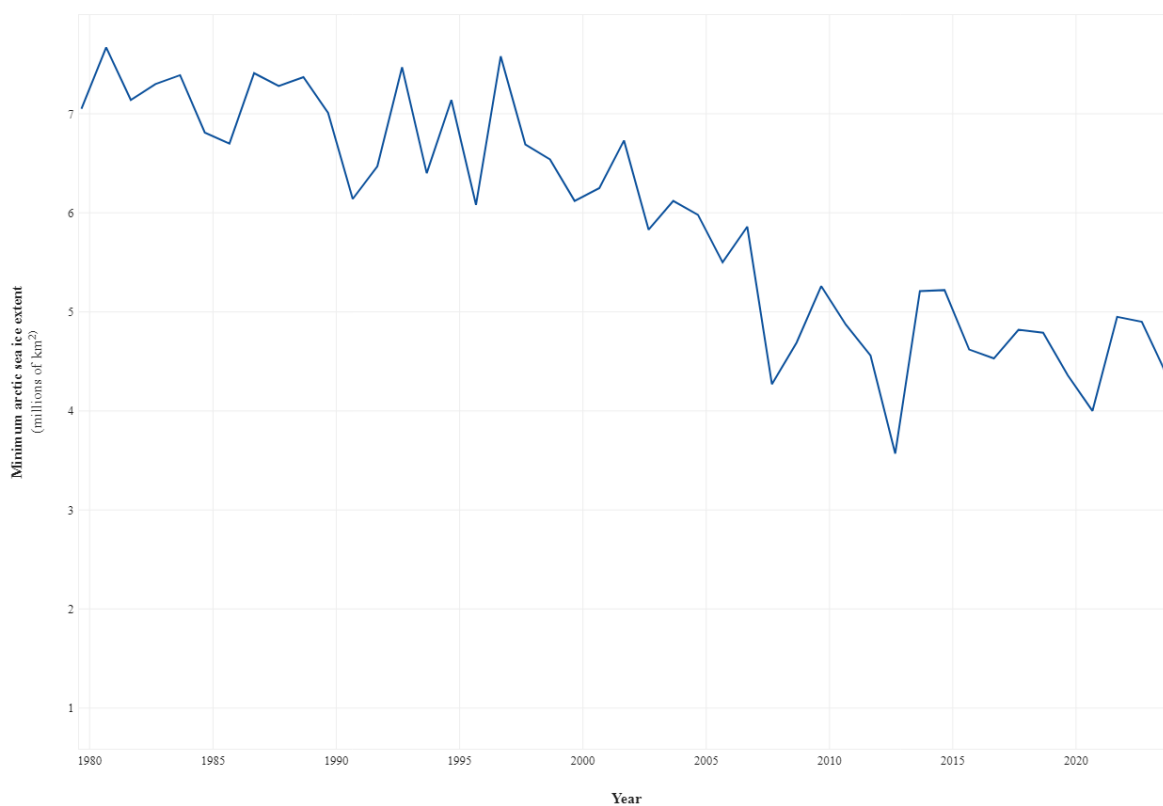


Figure 13: Arctic sea ice yearly minimum extent in millions of Km² from 1980 – 2020. Available at <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-arctic-sea-ice-summer-minimum>, accessed 07/01/2024

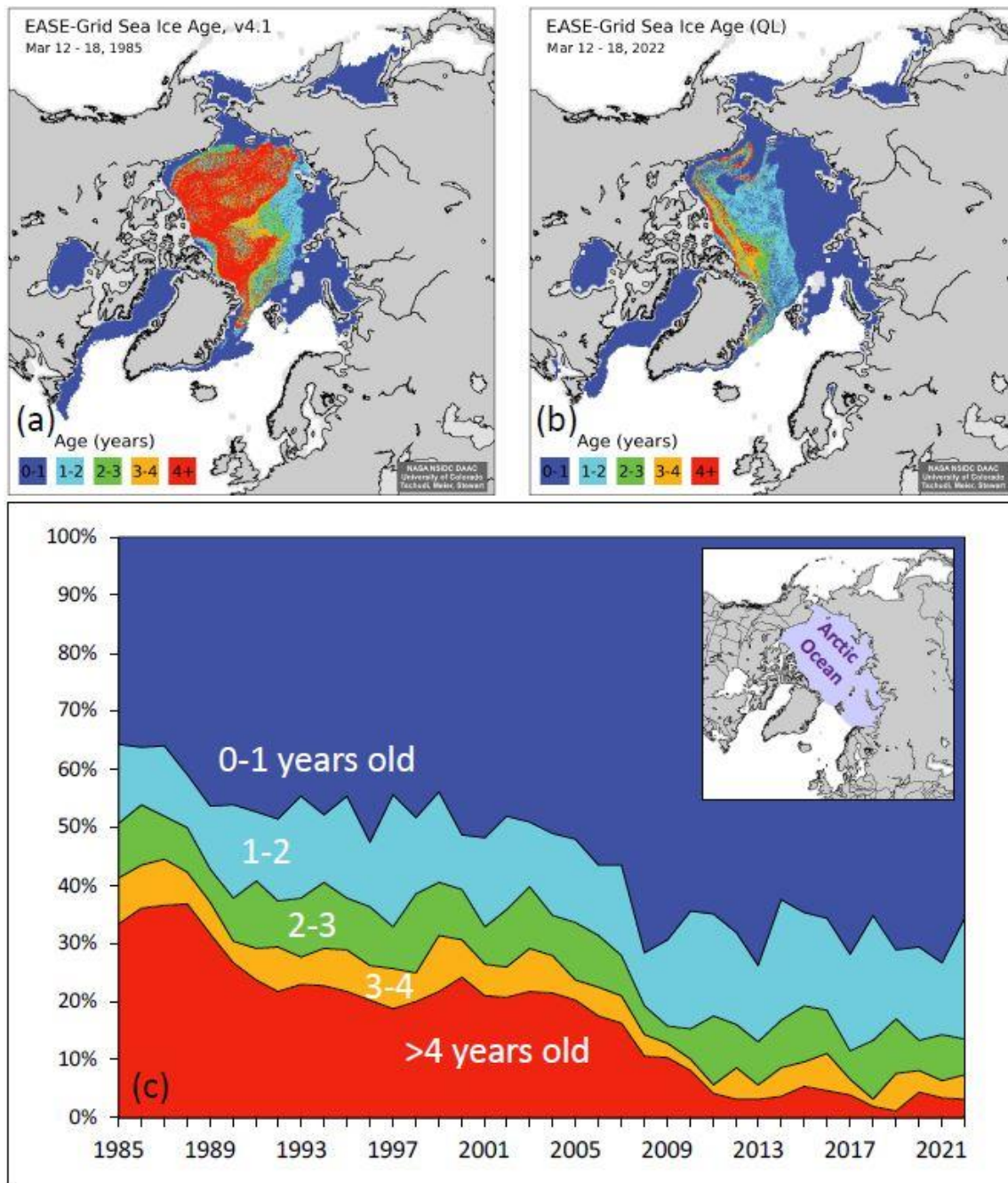


Figure 14: age of Arctic Sea ice for the March 12 to 18 period in (a) 1985 and (b) 2022. The oldest ice, greater than 4 years old, is in red. Plot (c) shows the timeseries from 1985 through 2022 of percent cover of the Arctic Ocean domain. By M. Tschudi, W. Meier

Finally, the changes in sea ice extent and sea surface temperature are heavily impacting multi-year ice, with older layers of ice diminishing greatly over the last 40 years. In the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is stressed how Arctic ecosystems are extremely vulnerable to temperature changes, and how intensification of commercial activity has impacted the ecological equilibrium of the region. Sea ice extent has been declining every month since 1979, with losses being registered both in summer and winter months. The IPCC report estimates that half of these losses are driven by the increased concentration of greenhouse gasses. This reduction in sea ice and the warming of the region is creating a feedback loop, the ice albedo loop, where “increased air temperature reduces sea ice cover, allowing more energy to be absorbed at the surface, fostering more melt” (Perovich and Polashenski apud IPCC, 2023), indicated as a main driver of ice cover loss. Moreover, the ice cover loss favors a transition from permanent, multi-year ice coverage (ice that survives more than one summer) to seasonal ice coverage which, again, reinforces the ice-albedo feedback loop.

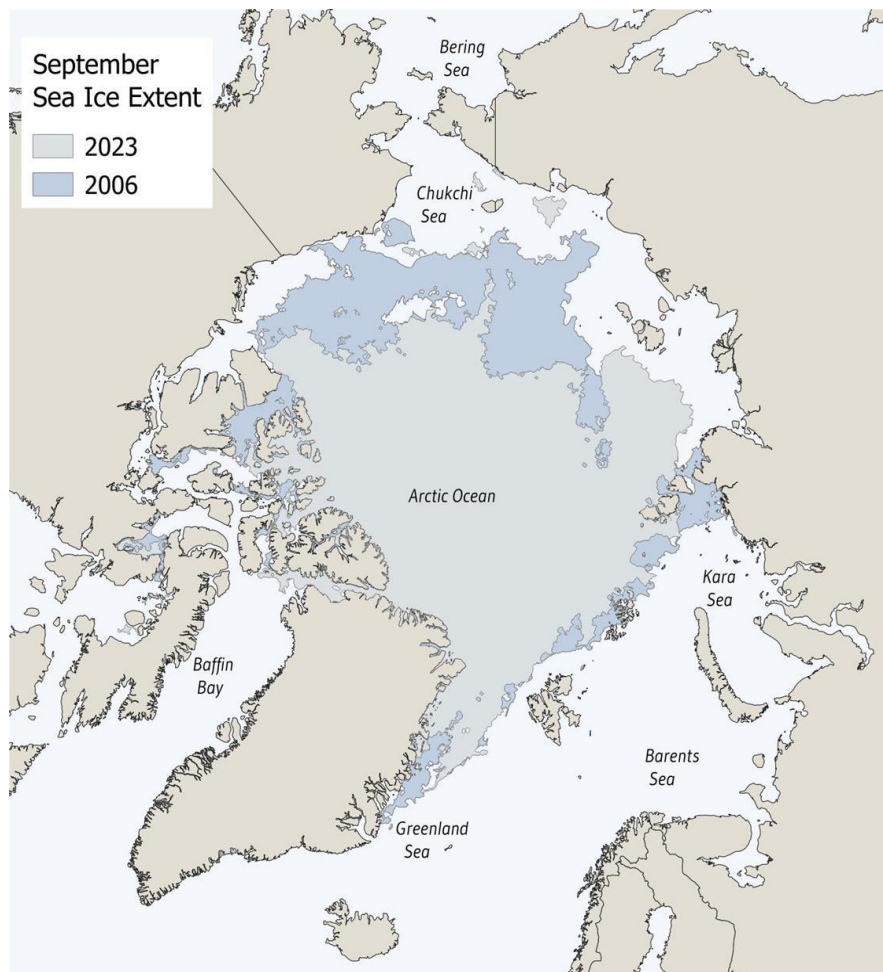


Figure 15: Map showing sea ice extent in the Arctic in September 2006 and 2023. Arto Vitikka / Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. Source: NSIDC, Multisensor Analyzed Sea Ice Extent – Northern Hemisphere.

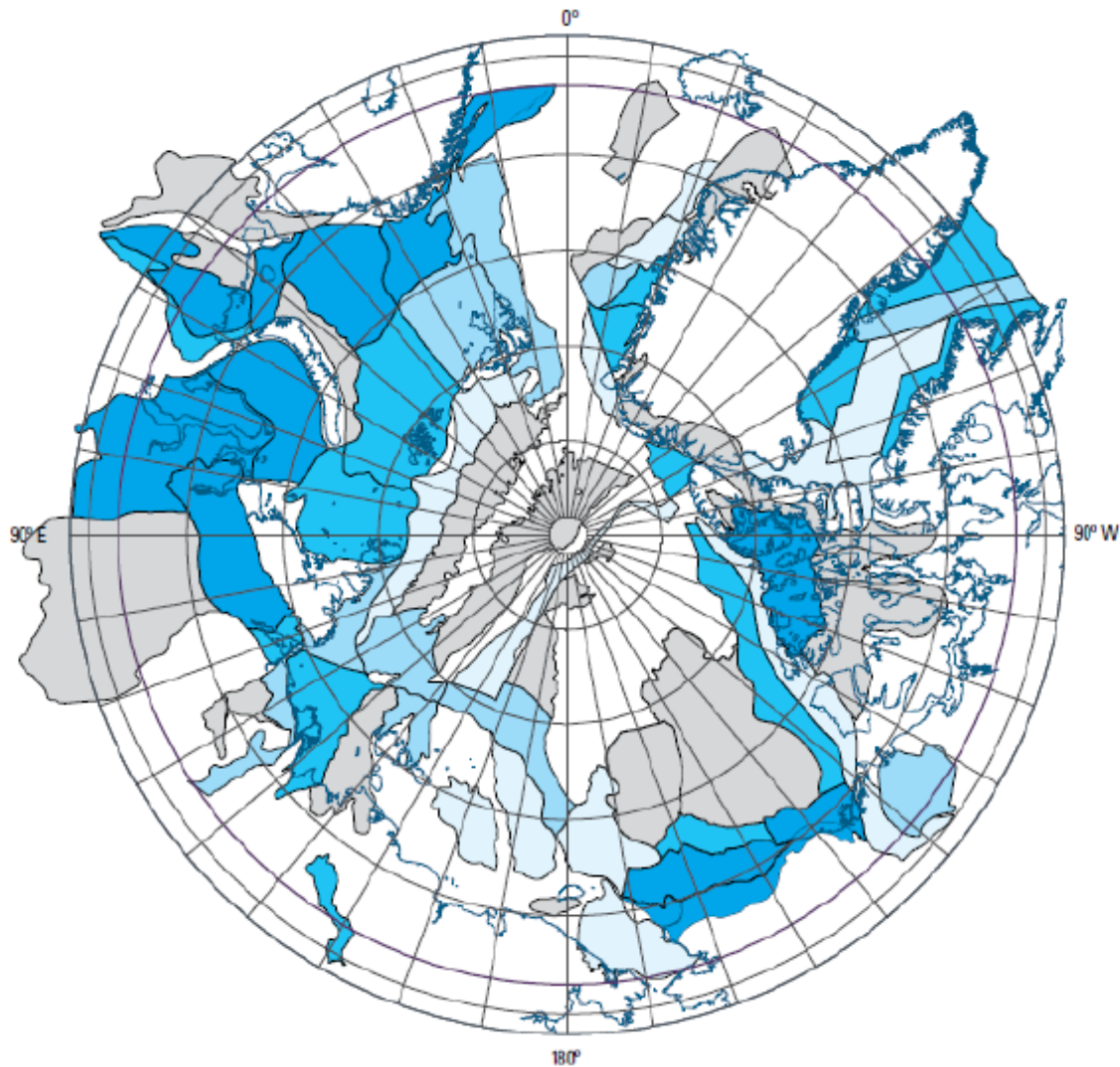
The loss of sea ice coverage is also an effect of warming sea surface temperatures. Timmermans (2022), in the NOAA Arctic report card, shows that in August 2022, the surface temperature of the Arctic Ocean was higher and projected a warming trend for almost all areas of the Arctic Ocean that were ice free in August. A warmer Arctic also means a loss of permafrost area, which function as natural carbon sinks. This loss of permafrost is already turning the Arctic into a net emitter of greenhouse gasses (Ramage, 2024) since the melting of permafrost areas releases gasses trapped in the ice. Another problem of permafrost loss is the possibility of erosion, loss of soil and destruction/damage

to infrastructure. All these changes are a glaring alert on the effects of capitalist development, also brought about a new reality: an ice-free Arctic, or an Arctic Ocean that has little ice capable of disturbing ship travels. This greater accessibility signals not only that it is possible to navigate Arctic waters, but also that regions whose climate was hostile to extractive activities now may become profitable due to increased accessibility and reduction in ice extent and permafrost. In the 21st century, the great transformation in Arctic geopolitics is the manifest changes in the physical geography of the Arctic, coupled with enhanced knowledge on the region's resources and with a global reconfiguration of commodities' markets that led to this old commodity frontier to be once more valued as an accumulation strategy.

4.1.2 Oil, gas and mineral resources

Two important landmarks of the changes in Arctic geopolitics are the 2007 voyage of the *Arktika* submarine, which planted a Russian flag in the maritime floor of the North Pole and the publication of the Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal, by the United States Geological Service in 2008. While seemingly unrelated, they are both representative of changes in the strategic approach to Arctic geopolitics states would take from then on. The *Arktika* voyage was part of the Russian Federation's efforts to extend its Economic Exclusive Zone and was part of a surveying team that sought to prove that the continental platform of Russia extended all the way into the North Pole. The research part of the voyage is a legitimate procedure under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and seeks to grant, for the petitioning state, "sovereign rights" over a part of the sea, granting it the exclusive right to exploit its maritime and subsurface resources. In 2008, the Russian Federation published its first Arctic Strategy claiming, as the "Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation" (Russian Federation, 2008) the land and seas contained between Russia's

northern borders and the north Pole. In the same year, the publication of the CARA report also enhanced knowledge about the potential resource endowment of the Arctic. The map below was presented in the report and shows the probability of presence of untapped oil fields with at least 50 million barrel of oil equivalent



EXPLANATION

Probability (in percent) of the presence of at least one undiscovered oil and (or) gas field with recoverable resources greater than 50 million barrels of oil equivalent

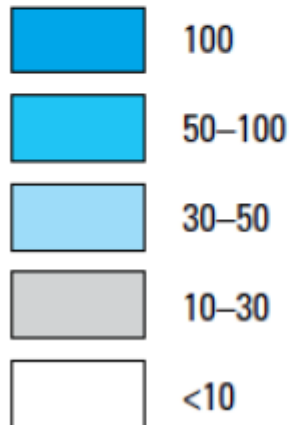


Figure 16: Map of probability of oil presence in the Arctic published on the CARA. Moore, T.E., and Gautier, D.L., eds., 2017, *The 2008 Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1824*, <https://doi.org/10.3133/pp1824>.

Another interesting aspect is how deeply Arctic states are involved in the hydrocarbon economy. Canada, Russia and the United States are among the top 5 global producers of crude oil and top 5 global exporters. Norway is among the top 10 global exporters of oil. Russia, the US and Canada are also among the top 10 global oil consumers. In the natural gas sector, this same trend appears again. Hydrocarbon extraction has been an important element in the economies of all of these countries, especially so in the 21st century. Russia's economic and geopolitical repositioning after 2008 is unthinkable without its oil and gas companies, and the oil industry has been fundamental for the economic development of Alaska. Norway's economic dynamics are also deeply tied to the

extraction of hydrocarbons. In the hydrocarbon arena, Canada stands out due to its moratorium on offshore oil drilling in the Arctic that, since 2016, has halted new licenses and suspended oil and gas activities in the Arctic.

Another important economic activity in the Arctic is mining, and mineral extraction both played an important historical role in the colonization of the Arctic, as well in the economic trajectory of these regions. Russia houses some of the largest suppliers of nickel and platinum. Finland and Sweden are responsible for half of the total mineral production of the European Union. Alaska is home to some of the largest producers of zinc concentrate. The Arctic has several operational mining sites and, while detailed descriptions of the metals present are hard to find Farré *et al.* (2014) list phosphates, copper, bauxite, iron ore and nickel.

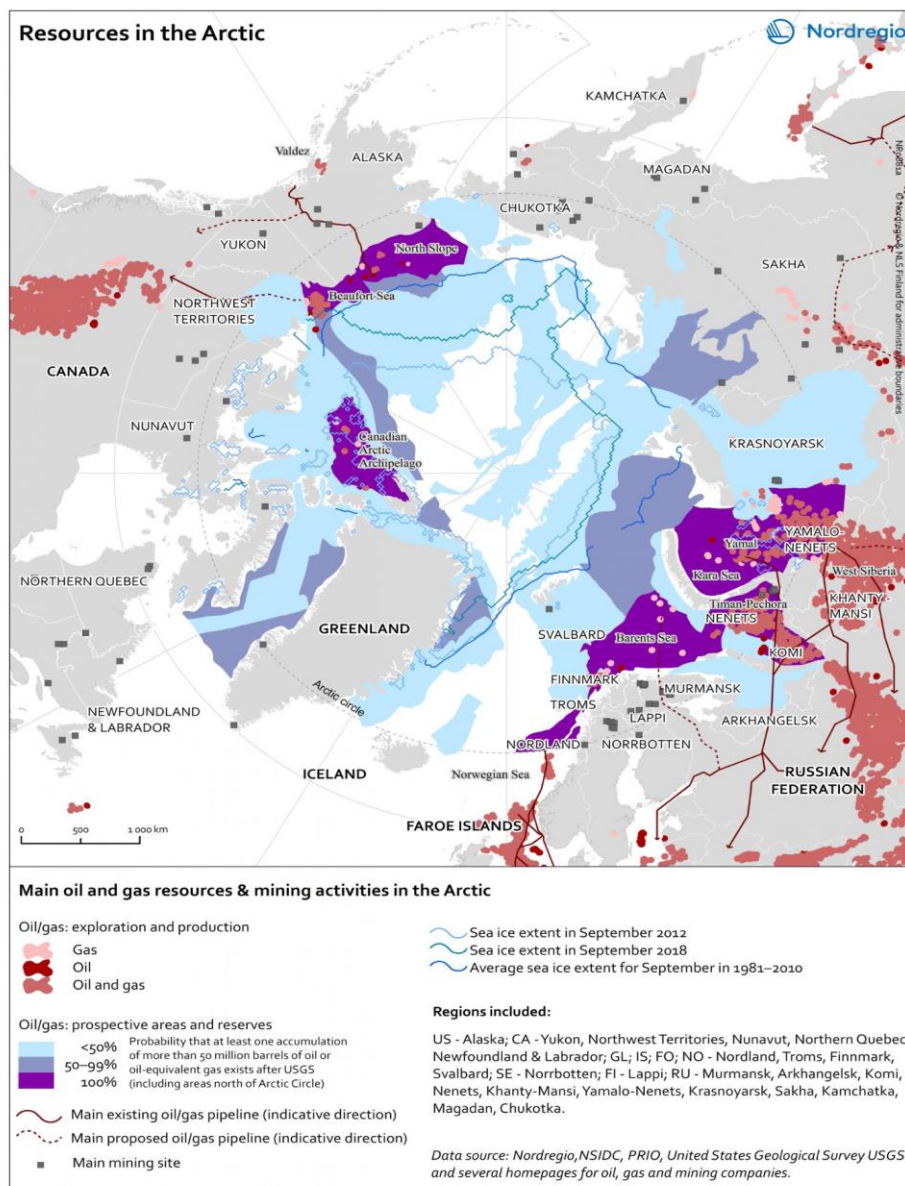


Figure 17: Map with oil and gas resources and mining sites in the Arctic. 2019
<https://nordregio.org/maps/resources-in-the-arctic-2019/>

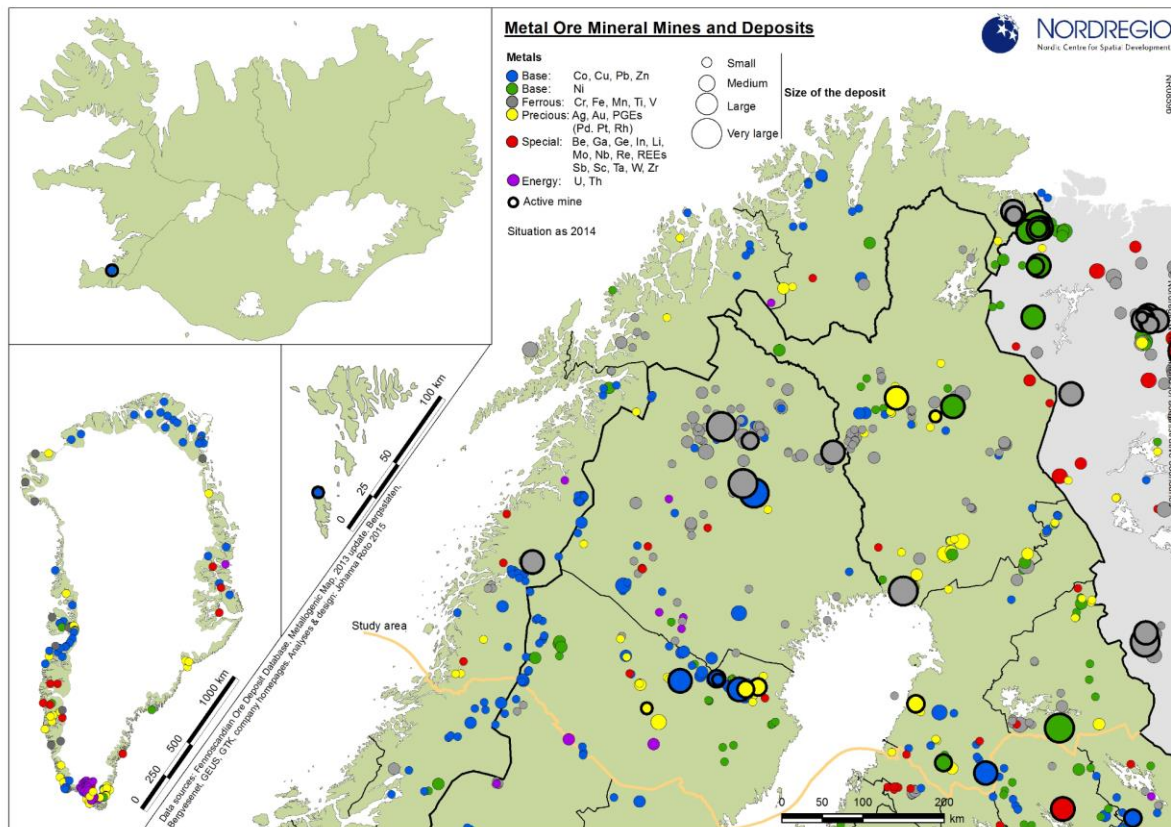


Figure 18: Mining sites in the Nordic Arctic. locations of almost 600 significant metal ore deposits and 29 mines in Fennoscandia, Greenland and Iceland. <https://nordregio.org/maps/metal-ore-mineral-mines-and-deposits/>

Besides these, and critical to many Arctic strategies, there is the issue of the presence of rare earth minerals and what has been dubbed critical minerals. These minerals are considered critical for objectives such as electrification of vehicles, reduction of carbon emissions and energy transition-related initiatives. While one of the main sources of rare earths is Greenland, not discussed in the present research, there has been one important discovery of rare earth deposits in Sweden in 2023, the Per Geijer Deposit, close to an already active mine in

Kiruna¹⁴. The Per Geijer Deposit is the largest rare earth deposit in Europe¹⁵¹⁶. According to reports, this rare earth deposit exceeds one million tons of rare oxides. Canada and Alaska are also endowed with important deposits of rare earth minerals that are already being developed. The rare earths market is dominated globally by Asian producers – together, China, Burma and Malaysia provide 59,1% of the exports in rare earths. China is the top destination of the minerals, accounting for 44,3% of global imports putting pressure over other markets. The EU in particular is dependent on Chinese imports of REE's to supply its markets, and commitments with decarbonization and the green transition demand the mitigation of the EU's dependency on China - that provide 98% of the REE's consumed in the European Union.

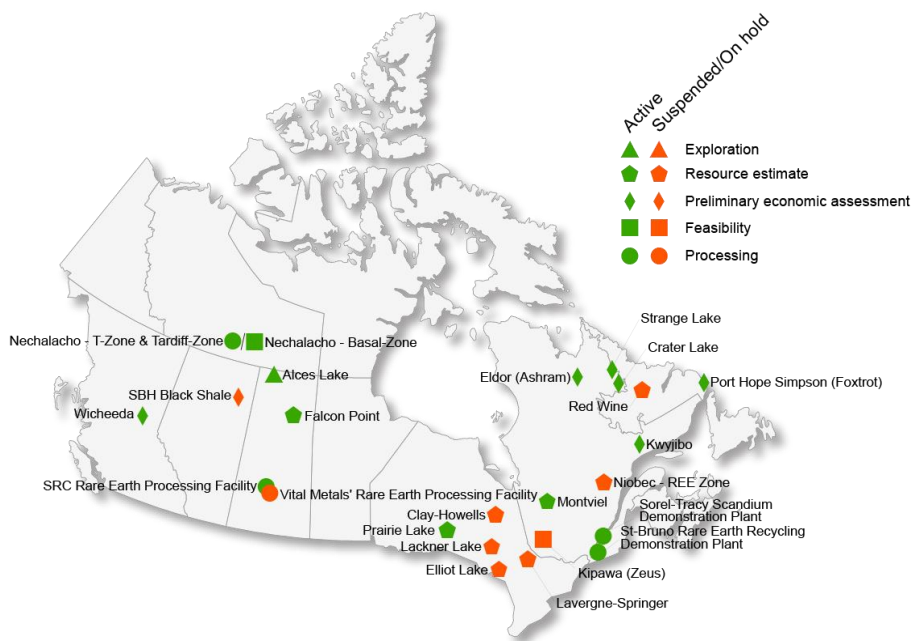


Figure 19: Rare earth elements projects in Canada. <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/our-natural-resources/minerals-mining/mining-data-statistics-and-analysis/minerals-metals-facts/rare-earth-elements-facts/20522>

¹⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64253708>

¹⁵ <https://lkab.com/en/press/europes-largest-deposit-of-rare-earth-metals-is-located-in-the-kiruna-area/>

¹⁶ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11627573/Huge-rare-earth-elements-deposit-Arctic-Sweden.html>

4.1.3 Sea routes

As noted, one of the main aspects of climate change in the Arctic is the reduction of the extent, volume and age of sea ice. A major driver of Arctic colonization and exploration was the discovery and usage of alternative sea routes connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. In Europe, this was crystallized in the exploration of the Northeastern Passage, one that, traversing the Russian Arctic, leads in the Northern Pacific via the Bering Strait. This route has come to be known as the Northern Sea Route, especially after the decline of British hegemony¹⁷ and the emergence of the Northern Sea Route as an important internal route for the USSR. In North America, there were immense efforts to explore and make viable the Northwestern Passage, accessed via the Labrador and Baffin Bay, past the Northern Coast of Canada and Alaska, reaches the Beaufort Sea and goes into the Northern Pacific via the same Bering Strait. Recently, as shown in figure 4, there has been the theorization of a new route – the Transpolar Route, one that connects the Northern Atlantic to the Northern Pacific entering into the Sea of Greenland, crossing the North Pole and going through the Bering Strait.

¹⁷ The Northeastern and Northwestern Routes were so named due to their relative position to the British archipelago.

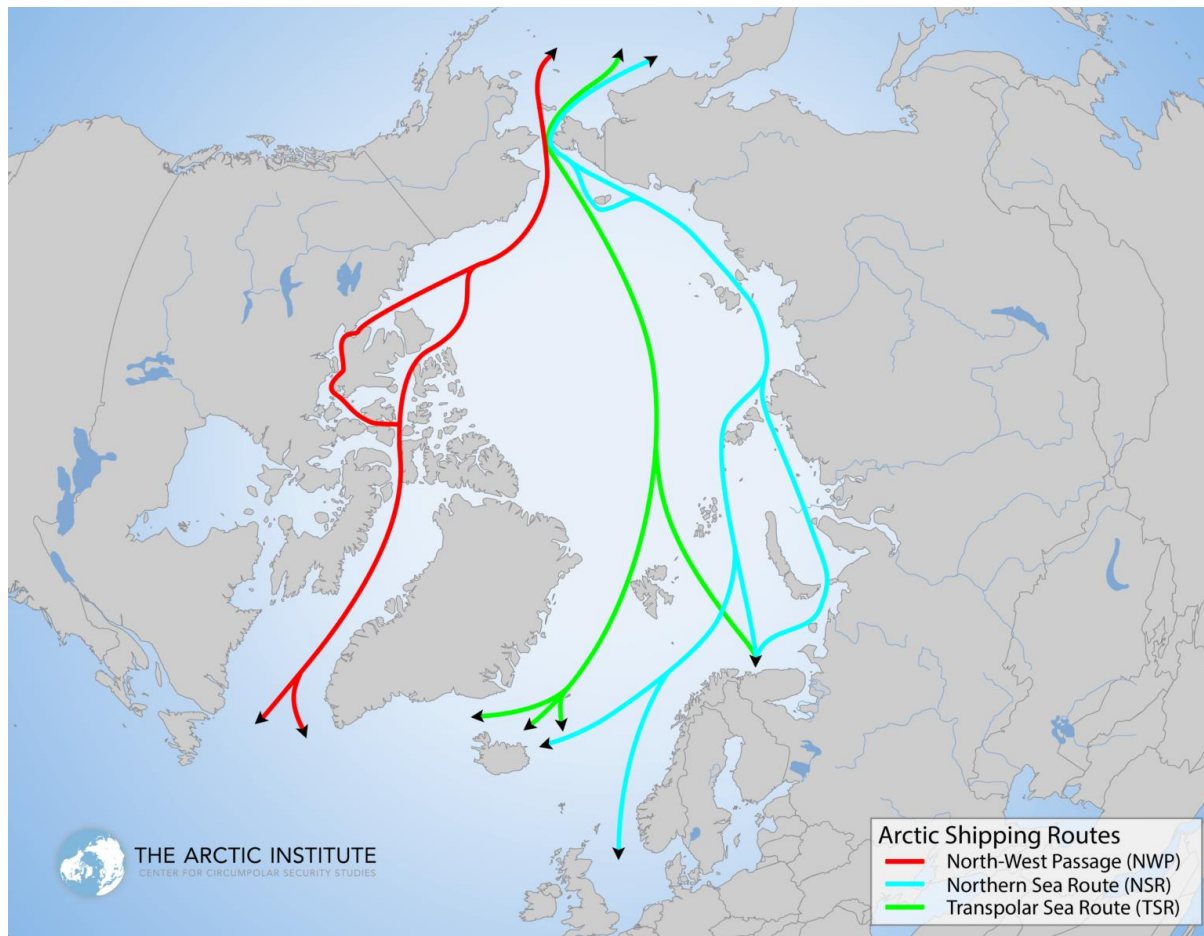


Figure 20: Arctic shipping routes <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/future-northern-sea-route-golden-waterway-niche/>

Over the last ten years, both the increasing effects of climate change and the increased use have turned Arctic navigation into a reality. This is much more pronounced in the case of the Northern Sea Route, whose development has been rapid as it has become an important element in the Russian Arctic Strategy – for economic and military reasons – and for the strategic objective of NATO countries – some of which are coastal to the Atlantic exit of the Northern Sea Route. For the indigenous peoples of the region, both routes are important due to their proximity of their traditional lands. The Northern shores of Sápmi are located at the Atlantic exit of the Northern Sea Route and policies aimed at taking advantage from the intensification of the activities of the NSR directly impact Central Sápmi via striation activities (Du Plessis, 2020) like the construction of railroads, roads and other transport infrastructure needed to do so. Inuit Nunaat, on the other hand, is encircled by the Northwestern Passage, and the increase in activity on the seas of Greenland and on the Bering region, has been heavily impacting maritime wildlife.

Arctic shipping is a main concern of all Arctic states. The development of maritime routes in the region also entails the updating and building of ports in the Arctic. The development of Arctic navigation has been closely related to resource development initiatives, with a special role played by oil and gas fields. In Russia, for instance, the development of new projects – such as the Yamal-LNG and Arctic LNG I and II, are coupled with the development of new capacities, such as icebreaking capacities and even the creation of a new category of vessel – the tanker/icebreaker. The construction of ports and shipping infrastructure has also been important in stimulating the construction and integration of logistic corridors in the Arctic, with projects like the Arctic corridor or the expansion of the ScanMed freight corridor into the Arctic putting the increased transit of the NSR as a reason for new and improved road and rail corridors in the Arctic.

4.2 Global tensions, local impacts

Arctic geopolitics in the 21st century is often characterized as signaling the “end of Arctic exceptionalism”. Arctic exceptionalism characterizes the strategic situation of the region based in the fact that, although a zone of contact between geopolitical rivals of the 20th century - namely the USSR and the USA – the region’s defense and security measures and debates were based on the logic of dissuasion and containment, rather one of confrontation. Arctic exceptionalism also highlights the distinguished role of diplomacy and cooperation in the region, in the face of the geopolitical rivalry that traversed the relations between Arctic states in other geopolitical scenarios. The perceived end of Arctic exceptionalism is deeply related to the growing interconnection between Arctic geopolitics and more global geopolitical dynamics, ruining the illusion of Arctic insularity. In the present section, we will discuss some of these dynamics and how they are impacting the Arctic and deepening the importance of the Arctic as an extractive frontier and as a geopolitical hotspot.

Three new dynamics are key to understanding this. The physical effects of climate change, described briefly earlier, are coupled with a growing need for new resource sources for the global economy and with the geopolitical tensions between the Russian Federation and NATO that are increasingly, deteriorating the Arctic security scenario and bringing the specter of war closer and closer to the region.

4.2.1 NATO-Russia tensions

Over the first decades of the twenty-first century, a key dynamic of global geopolitics has been the growing tension between NATO and the Russian Federation. From 2004 to 2024, there has been one major expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in 2004 and, since then, multiple actors have adhered to the organization. This has greatly expanded the influence of the US and Western Europe into the former Soviet sphere of influence and has been pointed as a security and defense concern on the Russian side for many years. With the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the relation has only deteriorated, and such actions have been invoked by Arctic states as reasons for seeking to bolster their defense and security positions, as well as redirecting resources to Arctic strategical theaters.

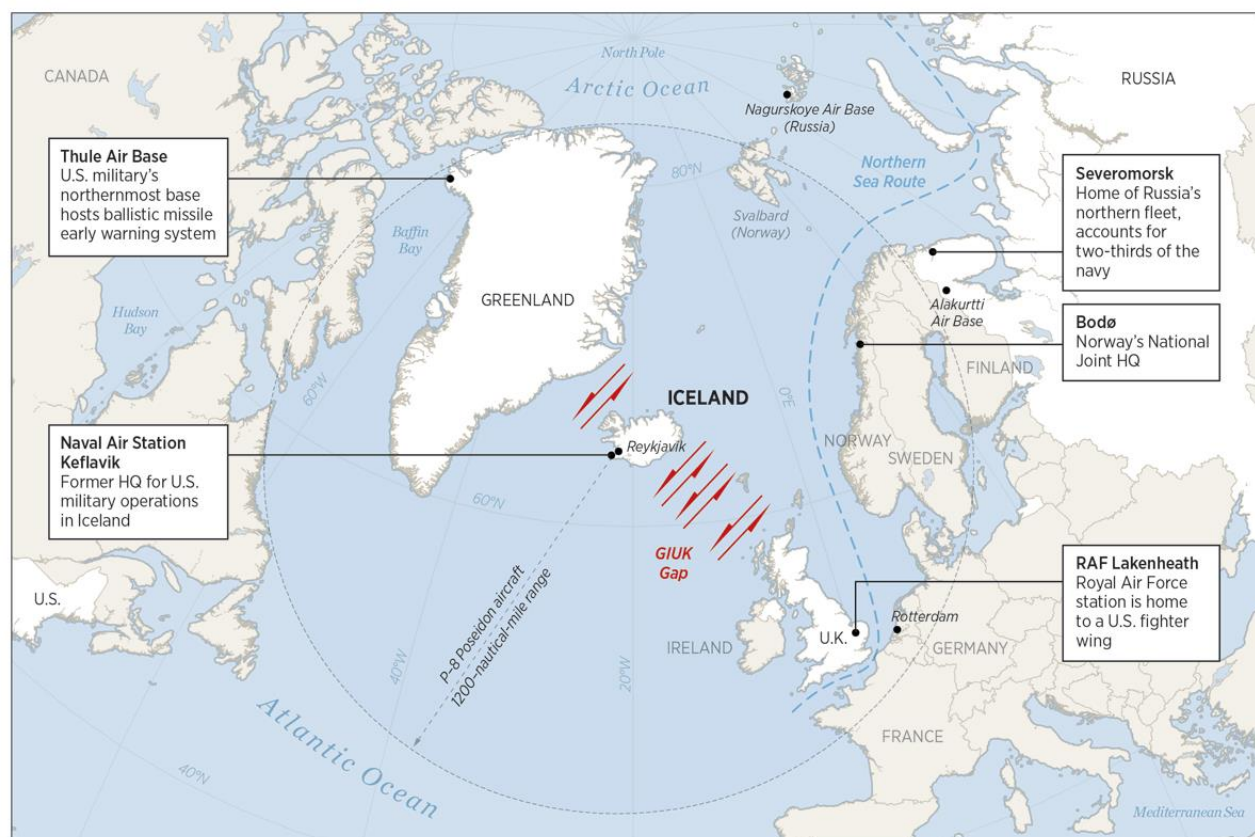
In the Arctic, more specifically, Norway has been a part of NATO since 1949, and has declared on multiple occasions that being a bastion of NATO was part of its strategic goals for the region. Finland and Sweden, on the other hand, only recently joined NATO officially, in 2023 and 2024 respectively. However, these countries already played important part in NATO exercises in the Arctic, acting as Enhanced Opportunity Partners and supporting such exercises. In the North American Arctic, both Canada and the US are founding members of NATO, engaged in Arctic deterrence and containment since the beginning of the alliance.

As said previously, one of the main instruments of US and Canada's Arctic strategies is the NORAD system, involving the air forces of both countries, dedicated to monitoring of activity in Arctic airspace. To understand the importance of the Arctic for the geo-strategy of NATO in the 21st century, it is necessary to recall some facts regarding the geography of NATO power in the region.

The Barents and Norway seas are important for their proximity of the naval base of Severomorsk, where up to two thirds of the Russian Navy are anchored. The monitoring of the region of Barents, for example, is important for the situational awareness of NATO, as is the sea of Norway. More to the south and to the west, the seas between Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom are often referred to as the GIUK gap, a mandatory passage point for Russian naval forces seeking to exit Arctic waters and enter the Atlantic Ocean. Not only it is important for the logic of geopolitical containment – or neo-containment, but also as a vector of insertion, in the case of open war between the parties. Moreover, the region was already important for exerting the US power over the North Atlantic, with the presence of the Thule air base and the Keflavik air base – closed in 2006 and reopened in 2017.

MAP 1

Iceland's Strategic Location in the North Atlantic



SOURCE: Heritage Foundation research.

BG 3121 heritage.org

Figure 21: map detailing Iceland's strategic position in the Arctic. 2016 Available at <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/iceland-outsized-importance-transatlantic-security>

Due to the expansion of NATO (both formally and via the EOPs), Arctic geopolitics has been increasingly influenced by geopolitical tensions and conflicts in other scenarios. Of particular importance were the political developments in Ukraine, particularly the *Euromaidan* protests and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the deflagration of the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022. Both have directly affected the Arctic scenario, not only souring the relations between Russia and other Arctic states, but also by providing opportunities for extra-Arctic actors – specially China – to insert themselves in important ways for Arctic geopolitics and economic development.

Aside from security reasons, the Arctic has also been drawing attention due to its economic potential. Even though the Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal brings out new information, it is important to stress that most of the activities states seek to develop in the region were already developed in earlier centuries or decades. Mining, in some regions of the Arctic, has been taking place since early modernity, and the more recent oil and gas industry were already present in the Arctic for around thirty years by the publication of the CARA. The novelty, here, was the coupling of such enhanced knowledge with the emergence of the neo-extractive modes of development, and their demand for new frontiers of appropriation. Russia, United States and China, despite differences in their modes of exploiting nature, all depend on natural resources be it for maintaining the current level of economic activity or to exploring new opportunities for capital investment and capital accumulation. In both cases, resources present in the Arctic are useful for such strategies – hydrocarbons and mineral ores like tin, gold copper in the first case and rare earth minerals in the second. As before – with whales, gold, iron and silver – these potentialities are measured and thought of in terms of development of extractive activities.

4.2.1.2 Ukraine, China and the end of Arctic exceptionalism

In 2014, the NATO-Russia tensions reached a new peak, with the *Euromaidan* protests and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. With the end of the Yanukovich pro-Russian administration and the emergence of the Poroshenko Administration, Ukraine sought to enhance its security status by leaving the sphere of influence of Russia, approaching the European Union. The actions of the Russian Federation met with rounds of sanctions by Western States – specially from the European Union and the USA - seeking to demote Russia from the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. One immediate effect of such sanctions was the paralysis of joint projects of oil and gas exploitation in the Arctic. Many Western companies – ExxonMobil, Chevron, ENI, among others – had

partnerships with Russian oil and gas companies such as Gazprom and Rosneft. These partnerships were halted, and at the same time oil prices went down, causing a currency crisis in Russia. Nonetheless, in this period, Russia subsidized new Arctic oil and gas projects, especially the Yamal-LNG, which received approximately US\$ 2,4 billion so that Novatek could start its implementation.

In years before the annexation of Ukraine, there was a significant change in Chinese foreign policy, specially via the announcement of the (then) New Silk Road, now called Belt and Road Initiative. In 2013 and 2014, China announced several initiatives that would fall under the umbrella of the New Silk Road, mainly investments in infrastructure and transport integration over Asia, Africa and Europe. This expansion was important as a way to redirect surplus capital in China from its economy to these new projects, as well as expanding China's influence over a number of geopolitical scenarios. One of the drivers of these initiatives was the "Malacca Dillema" (Yu, 2016), the economic and strategic vulnerability posed to China by its dependency on the sea transit in the Malacca Strait. So, by building ports, railroads and seeking new supply lines, China sought to diminish this vulnerable position and secure the continuity of its economic processes. The Arctic, then, represents an important alternative, not only to channel capitals outward (preventing overaccumulation crises at home), but also in securing new sources of oil and gas for the Chinese economy, which could be accessed without needing to resort to the passage at the Malacca Strait.

In January 2018 the Council of State of the People's Republic of China published the first Arctic strategy of China, where the country claimed the status of a "near Arctic State" and also advocated for a Polar Silk Road. In the document, many reasons are mobilized to justify China's greater involvement in the region – the warming of the planet, for instance, drive fisheries north. Greater need for critical minerals and their presence in the Arctic also demands Chinese engagement, as do the need for more research on the growing impacts of climate change.

4.3 Arctic strategies and the new role of the Arctic as a geopolitical scenario

In this “new” scenario, it is important to understand how Arctic states have revalued the region. From sparse, limited documents, Arctic strategies became a really global complex of documents and policies aimed at defining priorities and guidelines for acting in the Arctic. In the United States, for example, the US Arctic strategy grew from a single presidential directive in 2009 to two separate strategies – one national and the other from the Department of Defense – to at least eight strategy documents outlining principles, guidelines and priorities of operation in the Arctic region around 2020. Not only the White House and the DoD, but also the Navy and the Coast Guard published white papers on their Arctic strategies. Norway and Sweden have also regularly published Arctic strategies and even non-Arctic States like China and India have published their own Arctic policies. While an extensive discussion of such strategies are outside the scope of the present work, we seek to present strategies that directly affect Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, and how they are seeking to produce a new strategic spatiality for the Arctic and how they relate to the configuration of the Arctic as a global extractive frontier - i.e. look at them in the context of their functionality to perpetuating old colonialisms and spurring new ones.

The analysis turns mainly to the Arctic Strategies published in the 21st century and will seek to contextualize them in the socio-ecological framework of the current work. That means that the discussion of threats and opportunities will not only be countered to a geopolitical context, but in how they cast, recast and seek to organize the relationship between the human and the non-human in the Arctic.

4.3.1 Canada, USA and Inuit Nunaat in the new Arctic scenario

“A place of great promise” and “an amazing place” are some of the ways in which national strategies from Canada (2005) and the US (2013), respectively, have framed the Arctic. With the gathering of new evidence on Arctic resources and the possibility of greater accessibility, Arctic States sought to organize their actions via the publication of Arctic strategies. In Inuit Nunaat, the Arctic strategies of the United States and Canada have grown from presidential directives and priorities defended speeches, or limited statements from specific parts of the government to broad, whole-of-government policies for the Arctic region. Before 2007, only Canada had a comprehensive body of policies for the Arctic region. Before the white paper titled *Your Northern Strategy*, in 2005, Canada had documents on Arctic policy and strategy dating from 1970. As we saw in the chapter on self-determination, Canada’s strategy for the Arctic rested on a state sovereignty-oriented basis, seeking to appropriate and exploit resources and Arctic lands as a means to both exercise sovereignty and to fuel economic development processes. The geopolitical shifts of the end of the twentieth century, together with the results of the indigenous mobilization and the recognition of indigenous right under the aegis of the land claims agreements, however, demanded that Arctic strategy was updated. Another important element of Canada’s Arctic strategies is the importance of the Arctic and its resources for the international insertion and repositioning of Canada. Our focus in this section is on the Arctic policies and strategies produced between 2010 and 2022, and in this period, Canada has only released one strategy document – the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. Before that, in 2010, a *Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* was also released by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. In the 2019 strategy, some innovations appear. One important change is the inclusion of the partner chapters, parts of the strategy produced by partner organizations like the Inuit Tapiirisat Kanatami or by regional governments, such as the Government of the Northwestern Territories and the Government of Nunavut (created by the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement). An important element in this Arctic strategy is how it integrates the Crown-Indigenous agreements in the framework for the Arctic and Northern Strategy, both via their

contributions in the partner chapters, and by placing the rights of indigenous peoples as a driver of Canada's Arctic strategy. This signals an important turn in the sovereignty discourse where, albeit indigenous self-government and presence in the Arctic are still mobilized to justify Canada's ambitions in the region, they are, nonetheless, not treated in overtly assimilationist terms, neither as obstacles to the strategy.

Canada's Arctic strategy also stands out for the lower importance given to external factors or to the diagnosis of the geostrategic situation in the Arctic – a hallmark of Arctic policies elsewhere. While concern with domestic capabilities and guidelines are among the main concern of Arctic strategies, Canada's strategies are, in general almost exclusively geared towards domestic capabilities and issues. Another element present in all of the Canadian strategy documents and statements of the twenty-first century is the connection between exercising and strengthening Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic and the need for resource development in the region.

In the 2010 *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy*, for example, the document states that the "Arctic also represents tremendous potential for Canada's future. Exercising sovereignty over Canada's North, as over the rest of Canada, is our number one Arctic foreign policy priority" (Lackenbauer, 2020, p.111). and that "[a]s global commerce charts a path to the region, Northern resources development will grow ever more critical to Northern economies, to the peoples of the North and to our country as a whole" (*idem*). An interesting element here - and that appears once more in the 2019 Arctic strategy, is the justification of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic based on Inuit presence, use and occupation of land since time immemorial (*idem*, p.112), and the justification of the exercise of sovereignty as based on "good governance and responsible stewardship". The section on sovereignty also relates it deeply to the defense and security of the region, with the announcement of the acquisition of a new icebreaker for the Canadian Coast Guard and the expansion of the Canadian Rangers - a branch of the armed forces recruited from the indigenous communities. These measures, in

turn, are also related to the resolution of the boundary disputes in the Arctic, mainly with the United States and Denmark.

The 2010 *Statement* also dedicates a section to economic development and promotion of wellbeing. Declaring that “a dynamic, sustainable economy” is “essential to *unleashing the true potential* of Canada’s North”, the document also cites a speech by then-prime minister Stephen Harper in Iqaluit that frames the Arctic as region of rich culture, but that “also holds the potential to be a *transformative economic asset for the country*” (*apud* Lackenbauer, 2020, p.116). In the section, the mainstay for promoting development and wellbeing in Canada’s Arctic is resource development, and it establishes guidelines for resource development in the Arctic. Among the measures are the “sustainable development of oil and gas”, justified based on Canada as an emerging “clean energy superpower”. The importance of extractive activities is coupled with the priority to develop the transport infrastructure in the region, especially Arctic marine shipping. The document cites the 2009 Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment, showing that not only Arctic shipping has increased, including voyages to the Arctic and intra-Arctic shipping transit.

The last section of the *Statement* is dedicated to the governance of the Canadian Arctic. The point, here, is to develop a governance structure that allows Canadian Northerners to have more control over their economy and their politics. The land claim and self-government agreements are showcased as means to spur “made-in-the-North policies and strategies to address their unique economic and social challenges and opportunities”. To strengthen the role of such communities in Canada’s Arctic policies, the government commits to engaging with the communities in Arctic foreign policy and to support the Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations in Canada, as well as engaging the youth in circumpolar dialogue.

The next Arctic strategy document of Canada is *Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*, published in 2019. This document differs from other Arctic strategies in the sense that it features partner chapters, dedicated to outlining the vision, interests and priorities of Inuit, Métis and First Nations,

bringing indigenous voices of Canada to the official Arctic strategy. The Inuit Chapter is developed using the “Inuit Nunangat approach”, seeking to be a strategy for all Inuit in Canada, considering the multi-scalar reality of Inuit self-government in Canada. The Crown-Indigenous agreements are also fundamental part of this framework, which expands greatly on the range of issues and on the approach adopted to frame and develop the Arctic policy. The treatment of the Canadian Arctic is framed, mainly, by the regional inequality and regional development key, seeking to address not only State interests and priorities in the region (a hallmark of previous policies) but also the economic aspirations and necessities of Arctic populations and communities. The strategy also adheres to the UN 2030 Agenda in its formulations, addressing Arctic strategy and development in a broader basis.

The 2019 *Framework* repeats the claim that Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic is a title granted by the presence of Inuit since time immemorial, and once more presents a heavy emphasis on resource development, with specific mentions of mining and energy resources. Resource development is seen as the main driver of economic growth, seeking to ally exploitation of (living and non-living) resources with the traditional economies of Arctic indigenous peoples. The economy in the Arctic is characterized as

“a mixed economy: some people depend on traditional economies of hunting, fishing, and gathering, others depend on a wage economy, and some depend on both. The cultures and lifestyles of the peoples of the region provide them not only with subsistence and cultural continuity and strength, but also a bridge to the wage economy” (Lackenbauer, 2020, p.141).

This vision of the Arctic economy is also a vision for the Arctic economy. It treats the development of traditional livelihoods as a conveyor belt to a “modern” economy, based on extractive definitions of development. The insertion of indigenous peoples in wage economies is assumed as a necessary and desirable policy goal, specially so if it can be coupled with the exploitation of non-renewable resources that is so important for the Canadian State.

The 2019 *Framework* also shows in interesting ways the entwining of the economic and geopolitical dimensions of Arctic geopolitics. The treatment of the defense and security measures, for example, state clearly that “safety, defense and security and are essential prerequisites for healthy communities, strong economies and a sustainable environment”, while, at the same time, establishing the need for the enhanced presence of the armed forces (CAF, RCMP, CBSA) and the need to improve situational awareness and monitoring of the Arctic. Once again, the NORAD defense system is treated as an important element, as well as the need for the construction of Maritime Security Operations Centres – which link the defense needs and policies of the State to the perceived need for development of marine shipping lanes in the region.

As said above, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami contributed to the *Framework* with a chapter, formulated following the Inuit Nunangat Approach. Inuit Nunangat comprises Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, a region that encompasses 65 thousand Inuit living in Canada and constitute the majority of the population in these regions. The Inuit homeland also represents 50% of Canada’s littoral, putting it front-and-center into the greater geopolitical importance of the Arctic. As said before, the name Inuit Nunangat is the Inuit homeland in Canada, and the meaning of the name is said to encapsulate the seas and sea ice as part of the traditional territories. This turn in language becomes important when we take into account that Canada claims the presence of Inuit as a basis for its claim to sovereignty in the Arctic, together with the importance of the rights to navigation on the Arctic straits for the Canadian foreign policy – being one of the main issues of attrition with partners such as the US and Denmark. This move is meant to anchor the Canadian claims to sovereignty over Arctic waters, reinforcing it via the adoption of the Inuit Nunangat approach.

The Inuit Nunangat chapter reinforces the foundation of Canada’s sovereignty over the Arctic as based on the presence of Inuit. This is framed as an Inuit-State partnership, manifested in Inuit ownership, co-management of resources and the well-being of Inuit communities. The chapter also presents an important emphasis on the inequalities among Inuit and non-Inuit, both within Inuit

Nunangat and in the rest of Canada. Inuit Nunangat is described as “the least developed geographic region of Canada” (ITK, 2019, p.2), and while concerns with economic development are present, the focus of the strategy is on the promotion of policies aimed at health, education and social development. It also features an important inversion of the relation between healthy communities and security adopted by the *Framework*, stating that “[e]conomic prosperity, national security and public safety all depend on healthy communities and inclusive economies and systems of governance”. As part of this rights-based approach, putting the elimination of inequalities at the center of the policy, the strategy adopts the UN 2030 Agenda as an important framework for investments in the region and for the Inuit-defined priorities in the region, and the Sustainable Development Goals are elected as frameworks for assessing the success and progress of the Arctic policy. The treatment of climate change issues is addressed based on the recognition of the greater impacts of climate change to Arctic environments and to how these, in turn, can deepen the inequalities experienced by Canadian Inuit.

In order to deal with these pressures on policy decisions, the chapter puts as a central measure the respect to the right to self-determination and the need for the recognition of Inuit Nunangat as a geographic region. The implementation of Inuit Nunangat policies, for instance, is framed as the respect to the land claims and self-government agreements, by upholding the distinct relation between the crown and the Inuit. Also, the main goal of what is termed “Inuit Nunangat Approach”, besides recognition of the region as a distinct geographical region, is creating social and economic equity in the region, by addressing policy gaps such as the infrastructure gap, and the creation of social and physical infrastructures geared towards the needs of Inuit Communities. The need for better transport infrastructure – both maritime and aerial - is coupled with the necessity to expand telecommunications and digital infrastructure. An important element of the infrastructure section is that the elimination of the infrastructure deficit is thought as part of the construction of the economic self-reliance of Inuit Nunangat. In this sense, Priority C puts the shaping of effective climate action and policies as an

objective in eliminating the infrastructural deficit, advocating for the reduction of oil dependency and the adoption of renewable energies - but also for the Inuit ownership and control over the energy systems of Inuit Nunangat.

The Nunavut chapter, written by the Government of Nunavut (GN), starts by framing the Nunavut agreement as a way to promote Inuit way of life *while participating in the modern world*. It then discusses the uniqueness of the Nunavut region, a jurisdiction created by the agreement for indigenous peoples, as well as the fact that Inuit are the majority (86% of the population of the territory). The chapter also highlights the governance structure, in which the Government of Nunavut, the federal government and the Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated - the native development corporation created by the agreement, representing Nunavut Inuit - share responsibilities of territorial governance. Nunavut population is 38 thousand people, living in 25 isolated communities. Inuit own 17.7% of the land in Nunavut territory, with the federal government owning most of the remaining land. The negotiation of the terms of devolution, thus, is an important objective of the GN, seeking to achieve the transfer of province-like powers from the federal to the Nunavut sphere. GN is also responsible for the preservation and promotion of Inuktitut as a language.

The chapter recognizes two main elements for Inuit welfare and self-government: the centrality of land to Inuit culture and the transition to settled life - life in the communities as the document terms it - of Inuit as a dramatic change. These factors drive the definition of land use as a reflection of Inuit priorities – access to country food, safe drinking water, strong economy that generates business and employment opportunities – with other Nunavumiut (Nunavut inhabitants) interests. Climate change is presented as a hazard to built landscape, especially for homes, which are generally built on stilts and grounded on the (melting) ice. Climate change also makes traditional hunting and access to hunting and fishing grounds more hazardous, due to the thawing of ice and to physical changes in roads and trails. The government of Nunavut also identifies energy transition as a priority for Inuit and non-Inuit alike, and the need of sustained and sustainable federal funding for this, mitigating diesel dependency

of communities - an initiative coherent with Canada's and the world's commitment of reducing GHG emissions. The infrastructure deficit of the region is also discussed in detail, due to its impacts on the costs of doing business, as well as the high costs of building and maintaining structures in the Arctic. Another important aspect of the infrastructure is that while the transport infrastructure is present in the document, the housing crisis in Nunavut and the need for expansion of social infrastructure – schools, kindergartens, access to healthcare – are treated as important infrastructure issues for the government of Nunavut. The isolation of communities is cited and treated as a problem, since none of the 25 communities are connected by road or rail, depending on air and sea transport for the supply of basic needs, as well as the arrival of the workforce involved in resource development in the region. Marine access to communities is also limited to a one-to-four-month yearly window, and there is a marine infrastructure deficit the needs to be addressed.

In economic issues, the public sector on all levels, GN, federal and municipalities, accounted for 28% of Nunavut's GDP in 2019, and the public sector is also the main employer in the state, with 5 thousand out of a 13500 workforce employed by the state. The mining sector is responsible for 20% of Nunavut's GDP, and the province is an exporter of gold and iron, and has untapped reserves of diamonds, copper, zinc, uranium. 25% of all Canadian potential for petroleum development in sedimentary basins and surrounding waters is also in Nunavut and, in this scenario, resource extraction is framed as a guarantor of future development, and the GN stresses the need to diversify the economic structure of the province to mitigate effects of price swings of mineral commodities and hydrocarbons. Regarding the development of the mining industry, two interconnected matters are seen as challenges: the dependence on fly in-fly out workers for the mining and processing sites and the lack of Nunavummiut experienced and skilled workforce. With this, income gains from mining sector workers are channeled out of the territory, harming the potential economic effects of the jobs generated in this industry. The importance of the formal economy is complemented by a strong traditional hunting sector, and

important potential gains of developing the exploitation of living resources. Here, emphasis goes to the fishing sector, to the development of unexplored fisheries as important contributions for Nunavut's economy.

The chapter, then, turns to the priority actions and the initiatives to address them. There are five priority fields - wellbeing of Inuit communities, facilitating economic development, closing the infrastructure gap, raising employability through education and training and strengthening Nunavut as distinct territory in Canada and the world. The wellbeing sector is the longest, with ten listed initiatives. Access to basic rights and service delivery is the main emphasis here. This entails measures driven to enhance access to healthcare, housing and other physical and social infrastructure. There is a need to comprehend the bottlenecks of service delivery and gaps in infrastructure to address their impact in funding. An important element is how access to "safe, abundant and sustainable" drinking water, as well as climate change mitigation, adaptation and "addressing the causes of climate change" are framed as part of the wellbeing initiatives of the Nunavut chapter.

In economic terms, there are five initiatives, all of them revolving around the double objective of stimulating Nunavummiut participation in the mining industry, diversifying the economy and preserving the traditional sector. The creation of a mine training center seeks to supply firms with Nunavummiut workforce, seeking to generate high paying jobs and promoting significant Inuit participation in the industry. At the same time, the strategy seeks to strengthen the harvesting economies in communities, as well as creating programs to facilitate access to country food. As previously said, unexplored fisheries are framed as an emerging industry to be stimulated – as well as tapping into a new commodity to insert Nunavut in the global economy – together with the cultural and tourism industry. Inuit arts and crafts played an important role in the insertion of the Inuit in the cash economy (as described in the previous chapter), and many Inuit cooperatives were organized to produce and create arts and crafts - soapstone sculptures, for instance – and the marketing of these goods is treated as a chance to diversify Nunavut's economy. Similarly, the tourism industry seeks

to take advantage of the natural landscape and the possibility of leisure activities such as sports hunting and fishing, eco-tourism and educational activities to attract tourists and the economic benefits of this industry.

The infrastructure gap is directly identified with the shortage of 3,000 housing units as well as the expansion of housing supply to deal with populational growth, as well as remedy the high percentage of inadequate housing units, seeking to remedy the precarity of habitational structures in Nunavut. As is common in Arctic strategies, the expansion of telecommunications structure and internet access and connectivity is a priority, as is the expansion and improvement of land, marine and air transport infrastructure. The chapter also outlines the expansion of social infrastructure as a priority for Nunavut. Another important element is the provision of an energy review, focusing on spreading renewable energy and mitigating fossil fuel dependency of Inuit communities. Related to this, but treated under a different section are the initiatives regarding employability, with emphasis on education and training programs. These include the promotion of Inuit employment in the public sector and in other sectors of the economy. Improvement to adult literacy and numeracy programs, as well as expanding in-territory training and certification programs to provide skilled labor for the mining sector.

When dealing with the distinction of Nunavut, cultural management issues are central. The recognition and promotion of Inuktitut (Inuit language) as an official language is treated as an important priority due to the possibility of including Inuit Elders in processes of decision-making and granting them access to public services, as well as ensuring the transmission of traditional Inuit knowledge to the next generations. This is particularly important due to the importance of the elders in traditional Inuit political structures, articulating these ways of making politics with the modern, state-defined ways.

One important continuity in Canada's Arctic policies is the aim of strengthening Canadian sovereignty over the Arctic. Be it on the more hawkish definition of the Harper administration, with a strict focus on resource development and little to no participation of indigenous communities in the

strategy, of the broader, inclusive approach implemented by the Trudeau Administration. While the inclusion of indigenous organizations in policy formulation efforts is an important step in democratizing governance, we should take such inclusion with a grain of salt, especially in the face of the land-claims and elite-building processes studied in previous chapters. The ITK, responsible for the Inuit Nunangat Chapter, as well as the governments of Inuit Nunangat, were created in the effort of giving the Canadian State more power over the Arctic and access and control over Arctic lands by trading aboriginal rights for rights of ownership and co-management of resources. The role of this inclusion should be read critically, especially when we see the Canadian State seeking to justify and ground its Arctic sovereignty on the presence and traditional land use of Inuit in the Arctic. This discursive, cultural recognition of Inuit self-determination and sovereignty is not only used to reinforce Canada's claims to sovereignty in the Arctic, but also to justify resource development.

While the emphasis on rights and on socioeconomic justice represent a departure from the interests of the State it is important to note that the economic aspect of the strategies is very similar. The ITK contributes to the Canadian Arctic Policy without, at any moment, mentioning the defense of traditional livelihoods, and the theme appears only *en passant* in the chapter, not treated in separate and the demands and challenges associated to it are neither listed nor addressed in detail. Similarly, traditional livelihoods of Arctic indigenous peoples are treated, in the 2019 *Framework* as a way of assimilating Inuit into wage economies, opening the way for the development of extractive economies in the Canadian Arctic with indigenous participation. It must be said, though, that even this controlled inclusion of Indigenous peoples' priorities yields important differences from state-centered formulations of Arctic strategies. The ITK chapter presents important dimensions of Arctic policies and politics, such as the need to take into account the regional inequalities that characterize Arctic regions, not only in terms of infrastructure and economic development, but also in expansion of telecommunications, provision of health and mental health services – as well as

putting the control of energy systems as an Inuit-formulated priority (absent in the broader framework).

4.3.2. US Arctic Strategies in the 21st century

Since the Directive 66, the Arctic strategy of the US grew from a single document to a complex of strategies and white papers. The first national strategy was published in the Obama Administration, in 2013. In 2020, the Trump Administration released a memorandum seeking to safeguard interests in the Arctic. In 2022, the Biden Administration released the latest national strategy white paper. Between them, the Department of Defense published an Arctic strategy in 2019, the same year as the strategic outlook published by the US Coast Guard. The USAF published an Arctic strategy in 2020, and the Navy also published a strategic blueprint for the Arctic in 2021. In the same year, a bill was proposed in the US Congress, outlining the “Arctic Strategic Initiative”.

The 2013 National Arctic Strategy departs from the common diagnosis of the changes in the Arctic Sea ice patterns and their impacts on accessibility and resource development and draw lines of effort based on this. The security of the region is placed as a top priority, the protection of “the American people, our sovereign territory and rights, natural resources, and the interests of the United States”. (US, 2013, p.6). While the common measures of improving Arctic capabilities of armed forces and state agencies are present, an important element in the defense section of the 2013 national strategy white paper is the preservation of freedom of the seas in the Arctic. This is framed as “preserving all of the rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea and airspace recognized under international law”, this objective posits the United States as the guarantor of transit and prosperity, as well as brings the responsibility of developing Arctic waterways and the regimes needed to develop the marine passages of the Arctic. Energy security is also a high priority in this strategy, and Arctic hydrocarbons are important in the

energy strategy of the United States for they provide previously untapped domestic sources of energy resources.

The second priority of the 2013 strategy is the development of responsible Arctic Stewardship, which demands the conservation of environment and a balanced resource management. Under this header, we see the efforts of making economic development and resource-based development compatible with environmental protection and the integration of scientific and traditional knowledges in the construction of responsible stewardship. The third section of the white paper deals with international cooperation, and one element stands out: a unique proposal of accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is treated as a way to protect the US rights and freedoms in the Arctic, as well as giving legal protection to measures such as the extension of the US continental shelf. This element disappears from future Arctic strategies, and, while claiming to establish actions compatible with international law, the proposal of accession to the Convention of the Law of the Sea is not repeated. Indigenous peoples or organizations are only briefly mentioned, mainly in the responsible stewardship section, and play a passive role here and in future Arctic strategies. Not being called on to the formulation process of such strategies, they are implied as providers of traditional knowledge, and their environments are objects to be protected from the harm of developing energy resources.

An important element in this strategy is how Arctic resources are conflated with energy resources, with mining not being explicitly mentioned and energy security being a strategic priority for the US. While this has changed substantially, with the US now becoming the largest producer of hydrocarbons in the world, the focus on resource development remains in the 2022 National Strategy. Another continuity is the need for ensuring that the Arctic remains a peaceful and stable operating environment - a shared goal of the strategies studied here. One of the main changes in the time between the publication of the two strategies is the heightening of geopolitical tensions in the nine-year gap between them. From 2013 to 2022, the NATO-Russia tensions rose to new levels, as well as the global projection of China, specially through the Belt and Road Initiative (under the

various names it assumed). The Euromaidan protests and the greater role of China in international affairs - including the publication of an Arctic strategy in January 2018 calling for the construction of a “Polar Silk Road” - reflect themselves in the specific strategies issued by different departments of the US government.

In the 2019 DOD Arctic strategy, for example, there is a heavy focus on the changing geopolitical landscape, especially in the projected competition with Russia and China in the Arctic. While Russia is treated as a geopolitical rival due to its position and military reforms, China’s role is seen as destabilizing due to the connection of Arctic policies to the broader framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, and its presence is seen through its economic outreach in Arctic economies. An interesting element here is the extension of the GIUK gap to the GIUK-N gap, including Norway in the containment string around Russia. In a similar fashion, the changing Arctic environment is treated as a source of new challenges, such as the creation of new lines of communication in the 2021 strategic blueprint of the Navy department. Naval presence and cooperation with NATO are of paramount importance, especially the intensification of readiness and joint exercises.

In 2022, the United States issued a new Arctic strategy white paper, the National Strategy for the Arctic Region. The policy still seeks a secure and stable Arctic and defends the preservation of the rules-based order in the region as a cornerstone to achieve the desired end state. Another important element is the inclusion of the freedom of navigation principle as part of this rules-based order, even in the face of the US abandoning its intentions to accede to the UNCLOS. Freedom of Navigation is also invoked to criticize Russian claims and policies regarding the navigation of the Northern Sea Route. Another key element is the need to develop a “prosperous Arctic”, strengthening the State’s presence in the region as a means to guarantee the safety and security needed to further develop Arctic economies. The diagnosis presented by the Arctic strategy follows the same line as the DOD Arctic strategy, with the main difference being published after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and recognizing its impacts for Arctic

geopolitics. Russia and China are still seen as the main geopolitical rivals, with Russia presenting a more concretely military threat and China being seen as a destabilizing presence due to its heightened interest, manifest in the greater investments in Arctic science, as well as in the higher demand for critical minerals.

The 2022 strategy is based on four “mutually reinforcing pillars”: security, climate change, sustainable development and international cooperation and governance. The strategy also seeks to frame investments and initiatives in the Arctic as a long-term effort. Security encapsulates actions seeking to enhance US presence in the Arctic, especially in the military sense, for protection of US sovereignty, deterrence of threats. The main objectives in this issue-area are expanding the US situational awareness in the Arctic, with emphasis on monitoring airspace, sea and subsurface marine activity in the region. The exercise of US power in the region is also crystallized in the realization of joint NATO exercises in the US and abroad. The modernization of the US Coast Guard icebreaker fleet is also framed as an important measure due to the possibility of offering logistical support in Alaska and in the European Arctic. In terms of deterrence, Russia is, for the first time, named as a geopolitical rival in the Arctic, and the strategy exhorts NATO to seek unity of efforts and shared responsibility in deterrence in the Arctic - especially so with the intensification of NATO-level exercises in the Arctic.

Regarding climate change, the main objective is building resilience in Arctic communities, supporting the adaptation of communities to climate change, as well as their mitigation efforts. Mitigation measures also include the reduction of localized emissions and the protection of existing carbon sinkholes in the US Arctic. We also see, in this strategy, the trend of seeking to insert traditional knowledges in policymaking, via the co-production of knowledge and of nature-based solutions for local problems coming from climate change. This conjunction is also seen as important to “accelerate work to clean up contaminated lands in Alaska” and “(...) reduce flood and erosion risk, increase ecosystem resilience, store carbon, and deliver co-benefits such as habitat protection” (White House, 2022, p.11). Here, also, co-management of environmental initiatives, especially

environmental conservation, as the means to achieve climate-related objectives, and such initiatives are to be supported by the US government.

In the sustainable development section, we see the familiar framing of the receding ice as “a stark indicator of accelerating climate change” and as the creator of new opportunities. Also, the dependency on the revenues of hydrocarbon economies is also diagnosed as a problem, with the strategy aimed at diversifying the Alaskan economy. The need to invest in infrastructure and telecommunications is aimed at tackling the issue of the high living costs of Alaska and spurring multiplier effects with such investments, not only increasing access to basic services for Alaska communities, but also reaping the economic benefits of building (or updating) transport and communications networks. The strategy also elects as a priority the need to support “sustainable and responsible critical mineral production in Alaska” (p.13). The development of Alaska’s resources is framed for their importance for the whole of the US economy, since they can strengthen the supply chains of the United States. While the “regional development” discourse is absent from the US strategy, most of the actions in the sustainable development section are focused on Alaska and outline the importance of engaging the State of Alaska and native communities in planning and implementing actions under this Arctic policy. Another important departure from the 2013 National Arctic Strategy is that the emphasis on oil is replaced by an emphasis on critical minerals as the axis of resource development initiatives.

The international cooperation and governance section is the smallest of the document and the only difference from the 2013 strategy is the focus on the defense of the principle of freedom of navigation in the Arctic. Another important element is the determination to delineate the outer limits of the coastal shelf of the United States “in accordance to international law reflected in the UNCLOS” (White House, 2022, p.14). While accession to the convention is no longer a strategic objective, the “widespread adherence to the international rule of law” (idem) is framed as a situation that serves the interests of the United States in the Arctic.

4.3.3. Arctic strategies in Inuit Nunaat

As with the Canadian strategies, the Arctic strategies of the United States grew in scope and in detail. While initially concerned with national security issues, they came to incorporate elements such as concerns with climate change, the need to conciliate resource development with environmental protection and the guarantee of access to basic services to the populations of the Arctic. The centrality of national security and defense, however, means that the military aspects of such strategies rank higher in priority lists than other concerns, and the expansion of military infrastructures is seen as a strategic demand of the contemporary geopolitical scenario. This, together with the objectives of increasing military activity - be it via exercises and deployments, be it via the expansion of military infrastructure – by itself counters the narrow environmental considerations of such strategies. In the case of the United States, it is also worth noting that the focus of resource development shifted from the hydrocarbon economy and the concerns with energy security to the critical minerals, the control of which is a critical step in new industrial processes and in the efforts of energy transition.

The common element to these strategies is that resource development is always presumed. The necessity of exploiting minerals, oil or natural gas is a given, not to be questioned or considered, but to be implemented. This also generates a tension in such strategies between what is termed “sustainable” development and the environmental concerns expressed by the Arctic states of North America. In several instances, these tensions have emerged, as in the case of the Clyde River hamlet or in the more recent Willow Project approval in the United States. As seen before, hydrocarbon extraction was already a big driver of changes in the relationship between Inuit and their environment since the 1970’s, and the attempts at harnessing such resources have generally been defended because of their potential of creating prosperity for the Arctic communities and to further the socioeconomic conditions of the indigenous peoples of the region.

These results, however, have not come to pass, and the region, besides being an extractive frontier internal to these states, is also spatialized as a sacrifice zone, a region where heavy-impact extractive industries develop their activities to further capital accumulation and strategic objectives of extra-Arctic actors.

An important difference, here, is the role attributed to indigenous peoples in the formulation of the strategies. In the Arctic strategies of the United States, they are generally passive in role, being treated as one among many “stakeholders”, not active in policy-making process, neither occupying a central role in the formulations of development and investment priorities. In the latest strategy of Canada, on the other hand, not only the ITK provided a chapter, but also some of the Inuit majority governments such as Nunavut contributed with the partner chapters. While this offers an important insight on the priorities and desires of Canadian Inuit, it is important to stress how these chapters also take resource development as a given, unavoidable fact for the fulfilling of the economic and social aspirations of Arctic indigenous peoples.

4.3.4 Fennoscandian strategies and the striation of Sápmi

The Arctic strategies affecting Fennoscandia went through a different process. While in North America Arctic policies grow from limited documents to broader policies, embracing a variety of themes, the Arctic strategies of Fennoscandia in the 21st century are, from the start, broad policy documents outlining priorities and state action in a range of issue-areas. Since 2010, Norway, Sweden and Finland have published two strategy documents each, with, once more, a heavy focus on resource development and investment in infrastructure. More than that, the strategies of Finland, Norway and Sweden are generally longer and more detailed in their objectives and strategic measures, and also tend to place climate and sustainability concerns on a higher priority. Duplessis (2020) formulates the concept of “striation activities” to describe how State action, especially in Norway, is increasingly putting pressures and attempting to control

the spatialities and livelihoods of the Sámi. The discussion offered here about Arctic strategies take this striation as a guiding thread to the development of such strategies.

4.3.4.1 Norwegian Arctic Policy

The first Norwegian Arctic policy document after 2010 is published only in 2017. To achieve the desired end state - a peaceful, innovative, sustainable region - Norway places an important emphasis on the development of a sustainable and adaptable business sector. Future growth of Arctic economies is seen to be deeply affected by the spin-off effects of the development of resource-based industries, and, accordingly, puts the offer of skilled labor as a high priority in the development of Norway's Arctic regions. A mark of Norway's Arctic policy is the attempt to advocate a market-oriented approach when treating the business challenges of the contemporary Arctic. An important element in the strategy is how the idea of economic development is coupled with the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gasses and with strong labor markets. Another important element of the sustainable development section is how business development is framed as a means to move up the value chain, seeking to better position Norwegian capitals and firms in the value chains in the Arctic. Growth is always understood to be deeply related to the "better use" of Arctic resources, with the importance of the development of ocean-based activities like oil and gas extraction, traditional fishing and the stimulus to seabed mining. Once more, investment in infrastructure figures prominently in the strategy, but here we see an important caveat: the investment in infrastructure is thought to support the green transition. Transport systems that are efficient and safe must take into account the transition to a low-emission society. Another important environmental concern expressed in the strategy is expansion of the generation of renewable energy resources as a basis for business development in Northern Norway.

The strategy also mentions that North Norway has shown higher growth rates from 2008 to 2017 than the “mainland economy” and the strategy is seen as a framework to harness economic potentials in the ocean-based industries (offshore oil sector, maritime transport and so on), “green power intensive manufacture”, mineral extraction and space infrastructure. To address the challenges related to the development of these sectors, the strategy aims at promoting “well-functioning capital markets” in the Arctic, as well as the promotion of training programs for promoting the specialization of the North Norway workforce through acquiring and spreading the skills needed for these businesses.

While it does not mention Sámi livelihoods explicitly, the Sami Parliament of Norway is said to have an important role in the formulation of the Arctic policy, as well as a promoter of economic development among the Sámi, but with no sap. When addressing development priorities, consultation with the Sámi is also an important step in developing new economic activities. Also, the importance of Sámi traditional activities or knowledge are not mentioned in the measures related to environmental protection. When addressing international cooperation, Norway – as do the other Fennoscandian states – describes the many international fora where they participate and their interests in the Arctic. The main organizations are the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Sámi Parliamentary Council. In this first strategy, co-operation with Russia is still seen as a key element in Arctic policy for Norway.

In 2021, a new Arctic policy was published, which starts by defining the Arctic as a home and source of livelihood for many Norwegians. There is a preoccupation with the definition of the Arctic region, defined as the area between the North Pole and the Arctic Circle, as well as the internal borders of the Arctic space of Norway. The importance of international cooperation and international law is stressed, as well as the growing connection between what happens in the Arctic and the rest of the world. Developments in Arctic politics are treated as global shared concerns. The Paris Agreements and the Green New Deal of the European Union are treated as an important framework for climate action in the

Arctic, and the reduction of greenhouse gasses emissions and the transition to a low-carbon society are also important aspects of this policy. Once more, here, we see the Sustainable Development Goals being treated as an important guide for policy priorities, as well as the need to restructure northern economies after the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing these challenges, however, must be done in ways that promote both job and value creation in the region. One concern is the promotion of what are called “viable communities”, an attempt to reverse demographic trends in the Arctic. Indigenous livelihoods and economic activities play a larger role in this strategy. For instance, the role of the European Union as a main market of fisheries, as well as the promotion and protection of indigenous cultures through fostering the cultural industry and tourism.

Reindeer herding is also explicitly treated in the 2021 strategy, especially because the Herding Conventions between Norway, Sweden and Finland had expired and the Nordic Sámi Convention, an international agreement on the cross-border rights of Sámi among Norway, Sweden and Finland has not been approved yet. It is stated in the Norwegian Arctic policy that the Draft Convention achieved in 2016 is satisfactory, but that the Sámi Parliamentary Council wants to review parts of it and negotiations are not to be reopened. It is important to note that this is the only strategy where this situation is described, as well as the only where the opening of new negotiations is explicitly removed from the options regarding the Nordic Sámi Convention. The Annexation of Crimea and the military reorganization of Russia in the Arctic are invoked as part of the geostrategic scenario and for the intensification of NATO military activity in the region. In 2020, for example, there was the first operation of surface vessels in the Arctic with the US and the UK since the 1980s.

Norway’s overall approach to Arctic politics tend to treat Sámi issues as minor priorities. In the case of the 2021 strategy, for example, Sámi culture and tourism in Sápmi is treated as a commodity and as a business opportunity. The *Sámediggi* is treated as an important input partner but its specific contributions and demands are not specified, nor do they participate in the making of Arctic strategies, centered in the economic and strategic objectives of Norway and in

establishing the guidelines for the actions of the State in relation to its Arctic territories. Another important element, here, is that the definition of the Arctic adopted by the Norwegian government differs from the definition adopted by the Sámi Council, for instance, especially since it excludes parts of Sápmi from the Arctic territories of Norway (while the Sámi Arctic Strategy states that all of Sápmi is in the Arctic). While the focus on resource development aggregates some of the more progressive resources - like renewable energy resources - resource development is still treated as a given. The adoption of a more market-oriented approach for economic activities in the Arctic is an important objective, since its impact for the Sámi, especially regarding traditional livelihoods like reindeer herding. Also important is that, while ensuring the “sustainable” development of business opportunities and new economic activities - like deep sea mining - the criteria for this sustainability are never discussed in concrete terms.

4.3.4.2 Swedish Arctic Policy

The first Arctic strategy of Sweden since 2010 was published in 2011. The document starts by outlining Sweden’s ties to the Arctic and seeks to position the country as an important Arctic player. It is also interesting to note how this document stresses important frameworks for cooperation in the Arctic, like the Ilulisaat Declaration, as well as establishing the promotion of good relations between the US and Russia as an important aspect of the Arctic strategy. The Barents border agreements are also upheld as an important framework for Arctic co-operation, especially the solution of the border controversies in the Barents region. Similar to other strategies, we see the litany of international fora described as an important axis of cooperation, the Arctic Council, the European Union, Nordic Region, Barents Region and even the United Nations to solve regional controversies and for boundary-related agreements. In its economic dimension, Sweden highlights its historical use of Arctic resources, like mineral extraction, forestry, and the industries of pulp, paper and wood engineering.

The 2011 strategy also presents an important focus on the climate aspects of Arctic policy, bringing up the ecosystem services provided by Arctic environments and showing a concern with the development of extractive activities – that are already characteristic of Sweden’s Arctic economies. Intensifying economic activity in general, and extractive ones in particular is conflated with a growth in local emissions and with greater social environmental impacts. This Arctic strategy also outlines an industrial policy focused on the development of ore and mineral extraction, forest and fisheries *assets* and to prioritize energy and raw materials sectors. Swedish economic policy is based on a free-trade approach, seeking to exploit the resources and human capital of the Arctic, not only in Sweden, but also in the Barents Sea. An important element, here, is the awareness of Swedish capital’s role in Arctic oil and gas exploitation, occupying the contractor branches of drilling arrangements. Reindeer husbandry is briefly addressed, especially in its relationship with Sámi mobilities. The 2011 strategy compromises on guaranteeing the continuity of traditional reindeer herding, not only by the guarantee of freedom of movement, but also of the integrity of migration routes, resting pastures, and of the connection between the central grazing areas in each season.

The 2020 Arctic policy starts by outlining dramatic changes in rhythm and scope of climate change and in the geostrategic scenario of the Arctic. Security and stability are the main objectives for Sweden, and they are addressed by advocating the expansion of Swedish capabilities in the region. While there is a reaffirmation of the institutional and legal framework for Arctic cooperation, the Nordic Sámi Convention is advocated as an axis of international cooperation in the Arctic. According to the government of Sweden, the Convention is important to “strengthen the Sami People’s influence and their possibilities of preserving and developing their culture and community life”. Climate change and environmental issues play a larger role in this strategy, attributing a leading role to the implementation of the Paris Agreements and its targets as important strategic objectives and benchmarks for the policies. The attempt to limit the planet’s warming in 1,5°C, as well as the transition to a low-emission society are

objectives assumed by the Swedish State, for instance, as well as the development of a non-toxic, circular economy in the Arctic.

In its sustainable development section, Sweden adopts the 2030 Agenda definitions of sustainable development and even goes on to specify, after each section, which Sustainable Development Goals are being furthered by each set of measures and policies. Also important is the familiar characterization of the receding ice in the Arctic and warming of the region as a source of threats, but also as a source of economic opportunities. The Green Deal of the European Union is also pointed as an important framework for policymaking and cooperation in the protection of Arctic environments. The green transition - and Sweden's role as a leading actor in this process - is part of the central measures related to environmental protection, especially due to the potential reduction of emissions it represents. Another important focus is the deterrence of unregulated Central Arctic Ocean commercial fishing - due to its potentially harmful effects for the Arctic environment. Infrastructure also figures prominently since the construction of a sustainable transportation system integrating Fennoscandia with the European transport networks is seen as a priority. International cooperation is also seen as key to achieve sustainable development objectives, both with Russia and other Nordic countries, but also via the Arctic Economic Council. In this last forum, it is highlighted the importance of an Arctic Investment Protocol that serves as a Corporate Social Responsibility Instrument for businesses investing in the Arctic. Another important initiative here is the Global Deal, through which Sweden seeks to promote inclusive economic growth and decent working conditions in its Trade and Investment strategies, as well as in their Trade promotion policies.

Three areas are central for the development of sustainable economic activity in the Arctic for Sweden: use of natural resources, transport and infrastructure and tourism. In this strategy, there is an important recognition of the harms to biodiversity and environment caused by the promotion of oil extraction, both sea and land based, as well as how they are counterproductive for the achievement of the Paris Agreements goals. This recognition lies at the heart of the adoption of a green transition approach, seeking to ensure a sustainable

economic development that allows for the reduction of local emissions, and of emissions as a whole. Despite not having oil resources in its own territory, Swedish capitals participate in many oil-related activities, especially in logistical support, like the sea transport and in “knowledge-based services” like consultancy. The energy policy of Sweden also aims to make Sweden 100% supplied by renewable energies, using what it identifies as a “prominent position in hydropower and wind power, solar and bioenergy and also in technology for improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon dioxide emissions” (Sweden, 2020, p.45). This compromise with energy transition and with the transition to “circular, fossil-free energy technologies” increase the demand for Arctic minerals, especially rare-earth minerals, found in Arctic lands and seas. The strategy states the need to develop a regulatory framework for deep sea mining, seeking to take advantage and leadership developing this new branch of activities and to steer the creation of new value chains in the direction of circular economies and efficient use of extracted resources – as well as recycling of metals. Central Arctic Ocean fishing is presented as a new possibility due to new distribution of species and new migration routes of fisheries due to effects of climate change. Here, regulatory action is also required in the form of creating a global framework for sustainable fishing, as well as upholding the provisions of the 2018 Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement.

In face of the development of so many new activities in the Arctic, development of infrastructure is fundamental. Sustainable transport systems, as well as densification of transport and communication infrastructure are priorities, specially to reduce operating costs in the Arctic. The Swedish Arctic strategy connects this development to the integration of the transport systems of Sweden and the rest of the European Union, by completing the ScanMed corridor (a logistical corridor connecting the Mediterranean Sea to Scandinavia) to Narvik and Oulu. With these conditions and priorities in mind, the business interests of Sweden in the Arctic are outlined, and an important objective is the achievement, by 2045, of fossil-free mining. Renewable energy production is also a priority,

aiming to provide access to stable supply of energy, making it attractive to energy-intensive industries to settle in the Arctic region.

Another important strategic objective outlined in the 2020 Strategy for the Arctic is “securing good living conditions”. Here, we see a rights-based approach, seeking to remedy regional inequalities via ensuring material conditions for life in the Swedish Arctic. Not only access to basic conditions – like telecommunications – is seen as important, but also the climate resilience of Arctic communities, especially in its gender dimensions. The Sámi Parliament is also expected to map problems related to gender inequalities among the Sámi. The relation between environmental protection and living conditions is also laid out as one of heavy dependence of indigenous peoples on intact climate and on preserved ecosystem functions. Right to retain traditional livelihoods like reindeer herding is reaffirmed, together with plans for reconciliation with the Sámi. Another important element is the recognition of the need for Sámi protagonism on Sámi issues, especially language planning and language cooperation.

Swedish Arctic strategy is unique in assuming energy transition and “green transition” as an overarching strategic objective for Arctic policy. At the same time, it also takes important provisions in outlining the extractive economies and associated logistical demands, increasing the pressure on Sápmi’s land. Another important element, in line of Sweden’s concerns with gender in foreign policy, is the need to map and address gender inequalities in the mitigation and adaptation efforts regarding climate change - as well as the determination for the Sámi Parliament of Sweden to do so. Once more, here, we see that the indigenous issues and demands are only addressed in their “cultural” dimension, as the Sámi are explicitly mentioned only in regard to language planning and linguistic sovereignty. The maintenance of indigenous livelihoods, especially nomadic reindeer herding, singles out this strategy from the Norwegian, for instance, where traditional livelihoods are thought of as in need of a “market-oriented” framework, and Sámi mobilities are not mentioned explicitly. Business interests outlined in Swedish strategies, however, do not mention traditional livelihoods, not even, as

in the Norwegian case, the view of Sámi culture as a commodity and as a market to be promoted.

4.3.4.3. Finnish Arctic Policy

Finnish Arctic policy also consists of two strategies. The first was published in 2013, outlining an Arctic vision for Finland, seeking to position Finland as an active actor, capable of balancing its business interests with environmental sustainability concerns. Finland seeks to do so not only for its position as an Arctic state, but also by providing and developing Arctic expertise and drawing on international cooperation. Regarding sustainable development, the 2013 strategy seeks to think the development of Lapland – the only strategy to refer to Sápmi by this name – by showcasing its economic potentials. The main obstacles identified by the strategy are the poor conditions of accessibility to Finland's Arctic and the absence of skilled labor in the region - a kind of labor whose demand tends to increase with the development of new economic activities in the Arctic. The Nordic Mining School of Finland is showcased as a policy example to try and diffuse knowledge and remedy the skilled labor gap. Sámi rights are treated as a human rights policy issue, and the protection of Sámi rights by the Finnish constitution is reaffirmed, especially their right to preserve and develop "their language and culture and their traditional livelihoods.

An important emphasis is placed on Finland's Arctic expertise, due to the participation of Finnish labor and capital in several Arctic businesses. This expertise gives Finland the capacity to seize new economic opportunities, but also to develop new ones, specially to support with knowledge and human resources the expansion of Arctic businesses. The array of activities includes piloting of icebreakers to environmental services such as hazardous waste management, oil spill prevention and knowledge regarding energy efficiency and energy saving. The presence and role of Finnish capitals in resource development in the Arctic is similar to Sweden's, not having oil in its territory, it participates in accessory

activities and logistic support, and, because of this, can offer expertise on Arctic drilling and production systems adapted to Arctic conditions. The exploitation of oil and gas is specifically treated due to its pressure on the transport infrastructure and energy systems. In transport infrastructure, for instance, we see the role of Finland in providing maritime transport as the global leader of Arctic shipbuilding, building both icebreakers and specialized offshore vessels. This is seen as an opportunity due to the projected increase in the demand for icebreakers due to the plans to increase Arctic resource development.

The expertise on the use of renewable energy, with emphasis on wind power, is to be deployed in the opening of new transmission lines, as well as through the decentralization of generation and distribution schemes. The use of other renewable resources is also given importance in furthering living conditions and welfare, but also to stimulate local entrepreneurship. Here, reindeer husbandry is addressed both as Sámi and non-Sámi issue, and it is established as a challenge the balance between the efforts to develop and give (more) scale to reindeer herding and the carrying capacity of grazing grounds in Finland. In the forestry sector, it is reminded that the Finnish state holds a percentage of all forest *assets* in Finland, and that it will use this position to pressure the development of this industry into a sustainable trajectory. To achieve this sustainable trajectory, the management of nature plays an extensive role, from environmental risks associated with business opportunities to the management of forests and living assets like game birds.

In the non-renewable resources section, there is, once more, an emphasis on mining in Finland. Mining is framed as an important activity due to its potential as a job creating sector, and one that can benefit from Finnish expertise in clean technologies. The vision for Finland in mining is to maintain its position as a global pioneer in “eco-efficient” mining. Once more, resource development is linked to the development of logistical corridors in the Arctic, with special attention to the need to develop an Arctic railway corridor, with connections to Norway, Sweden and Russia as a means to integrate the transport networks and the sources of resources to their consumer markets. Objectives related to mining involve the

promotion of Finnish mineral exports, the development of solutions for eco-efficient mining and the attraction of investments for R&D in the mineral extraction industry.

Regarding Sámi rights, it is established that the Finnish state will seek to ratify the ILO Convention 169, the convention on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. Sámi issues are framed as educational and cultural responsibilities. Indigenous issues are briefly treated and play a secondary role in the strategy. The powers of the Sámi Parliament, for example, are said to give the Sámi sovereignty over education, culture and decision making in “matters affecting their status as indigenous peoples” (Finland, 2013, p.50).

One important element in this strategy is the attribution of responsibility in its strategic objectives and measures, with the Ministry of Economy and Employment playing a protagonist role, absorbing many responsibilities in strategic fields. Infrastructure measures are directly connected to the control over land, seeking to plan ahead for the land-use of the expansion of the railway system, specially the Sodankylä-Rovaniemi section, as well as guaranteeing the smooth flow of cross-border traffic in the border posts. Curiously enough, Finnish strategy of 2013 does not mention the cross-border movement of the Sámi reindeer herders. Another important element is how the idea of stability and environmental protection are entwined, creating a connection between environmental issues and the defense and security aspects of the Arctic strategy.

In 2021, a new Arctic strategy was published by Finland. In it, we see the familiar desired end state of a peaceful, stable Arctic. The effects of climate change and their acceleration are an overarching concern, and the control of *global* emissions becomes important to control climate change and the pace of warming in the Arctic. The emphasis on Finnish Arctic expertise, Finland as a provider of skilled labor and knowledge for Arctic economic activities, remains central for the country’s position as an Arctic actor. An interesting element is how sustainability concerns become of greater importance in the strategy:

“Biodiversity and the carrying capacity of nature, protecting the climate and the environment, the principles of sustainable development, the welfare and participation of the local population as well as indigenous peoples’ rights will be addressed in all economic activity in the Arctic region”. (Finland, 2021, p. 15)

The diagnosis of the operating environment highlights the heightened interest in the Arctic but framed in a different way than seen in strategy documents up to this point. While interest in the Arctic is generally interest in exploiting Arctic resources, the government of Finland frames this interest in terms of the experiences and policies regarding the effects of climate change in the Arctic. Mitigation and adaptation policies are deemed central to address climate change effects, as well as the increase in economic activity in the region “[a]s weather conditions become more variable, the prerequisites for the construction and maintenance of transport and communication infrastructure are changing. We must prepare for and adapt to these changes.” Attention to Russian and Chinese activity are given, due to their pressure on resource development projects, as well as the strategic consequences of their greater development and involvement in Arctic geopolitics and economic matters. In the case of China, the larger role it seeks to play is seen as causing potential conflict of interests and to deepen tensions. The stability and security approach, thus, is advocated as the main condition to secure the achievement of Finland strategic goals in the Arctic.

Another important reframing is the statement that the Arctic is not “a remote hinterland”, but a home for many Finnish communities, which need to be granted equal rights and opportunities. Even here, the security aspect of the policy is given greater importance as the delivery of public services depends on the secure and stable operating environment.

The opening of new hydrocarbon extraction fronts is, once more, treated as incompatible with the Paris Agreements objectives, and demands from Finland the construction of capacity to mitigate emissions and adapt to climate change. The commitment to climate action is expressed in the objective of strengthening carbon sinkholes in the Arctic. In terms of policymaking, the Climate and Nature Panel are given important role to outline measures and assess impacts of climate

change, and there is also the commitment to create a Sámi Climate Council to integrate the traditional ecological knowledges in climate planning and in the science-policy nexus. This is also one of the important aspects of international cooperation via the Arctic Council, framed as an important provider of data and information, as well as a forum for coordinating climate action in the Arctic and to formulate Arctic-specific climate policy goals such as reduction in GHG emissions. The value of nature is affirmed in itself, as the basis for many human lives in the Arctic as well as a source of solutions for mitigating climate change and adapting to the warming of the Arctic region - a certainty for the near future envisioned by the strategy. Nature's value is also affirmed in its contribution for the vitality of the Arctic and as a source of food and an enabler of food security for Arctic inhabitants.

The strategy draws a chart for a socially just transition to carbon neutrality, support for Arctic cooperation, promotion of food security in the Arctic, halt biodiversity loss, deploy nature-based solutions for mitigation and adaptation, as well as the co-management of resources with the Sámi. One interesting measure is the creation of a network of marine protected areas in the Arctic.

When addressing the well-being of Arctic inhabitants, it is noted that Sápmi comprises 30% of the Finnish territory, holding 3% of the population. Fundamental for the promotion of well-being of Arctic inhabitants is the creation of a diversified, strong economic structure, promoting equality of opportunities and access to basic rights such as healthcare and education in Lapland. Increase in economic activity in the Arctic is also seen as narrowing the room for traditional livelihoods like reindeer husbandry and fishing (due to land use disputes). Strategic measures in these areas include the creation of a platform for Arctic inhabitants to participate more effectively in international cooperation, strengthening the access to basic services for Sámi and Arctic residents, the promotion the arts and cultures to stimulate economic vitality as well as the promotion of new employment opportunities via digitalization. In its Sámi rights section, it is stated that ten thousand Sámi live in Finland, 60% of which live outside their homeland. The 1996 Sámi Act, which established the Finnish *Sámediggi* is framed as a

means to realize Sámi *linguistic and cultural* self-government in their homeland. Cross-border cooperation within Fennoscandia, as well as the elimination of border obstacles are established as strategic measures to further Sámi well-being under the 2021 strategy. Moreover, the strategy advocates for the protection of traditional knowledges and cultural expressions of the Sámi via the expansion and protection of indigenous intellectual property.

The harnessing of Finnish Arctic expertise also figures in this strategy. In an operating environment where economic activity will increase in sectors where such expertise exists, it becomes important for Finland's economy to channel its efforts in sectors such as “maritime industry, tourism, circular economy and bioeconomy, forestry, health technology, construction, sustainable mining, environmental and energy efficiency and the fish industry, without forgetting the traditional livelihoods of the Sámi people, have links to Arctic expertise and business.” The strategic measures in this sector seek to make skilled labor available for firms and businesses seeking to operate in the Arctic and creating a business environment favorable for new, high-value jobs. The promotion of bioeconomy and sustainable tourism are also strategic measures.

As is common, infrastructure figures as a prominent concern for the Finnish state. One of the priorities is the integration of Finnish transport network with the European transport network – a shared objective of Finland and Sweden. There is also a concern to integrate the development of transport and communication infrastructure, as expected from the emphasis on digitalization of Arctic economy. The main objective is also identified as a challenge, which is ensuring access to transport and communication services to all parts of Finland while reducing carbon emissions. The strategic measures here are shared by Sweden, with the completion of the Scandinavia-Mediterranean core network as a way to integrate Fennoscandia to the broader European transport system. In maritime transport, we see the renewal of the Finnish icebreaker fleet.

4.3.5. Managing nature: Sápmi in Fennoscandian Arctic strategies

In general, Fennoscandian strategies are more explicit in addressing Sámi issues, integrating their demands in the strategies, and the main concerns with expansion of economic activity are how to balance them with the preservation of Sámi livelihoods. Norwegian Arctic strategies are an exception since they do not cite explicitly concerns with Sámi livelihoods and traditional economies. Another trend that can be seen is the redefinition of self-government in strictly cultural/linguistic terms, especially in the Swedish and Finnish strategy documents (Norway, once more, does not cite self-government explicitly). This goes so far as to frame Sámi culture as a touristic commodity to be exploited. These strategies also have been addressing climate change for a longer period than Canadian or US Arctic strategies. An interest feature is how the environmental concerns are framed within global and regional frameworks for climate policy and action like the 2015 Paris Agreements and the European Green Deal. Regarding Sámi livelihoods, the emphasis on reindeer herding is a continuity, and there is a shared concern with the approval and ratification of the Nordic Sámi Convention. The approval of the Convention is complemented by the determination to eliminate or mitigate obstacles to cross-border movement of the Sámi reindeer herders.

At the same time, however, we see a growing interest in the integration of Fennoscandian infrastructure both among the polities in the region and with larger transport networks, with the European transport system figuring prominently. From the formulations, we see how the ScanMed corridor is a strategic priority for the expansion and integration of transport systems. The choice for the railway systems, as well as to prepare for increased maritime transit in the Arctic directly affects Sápmi, deepening the striation tendency in the region, putting more pressure over seasonal grazing grounds, resting pastures and on the routes between them. More than that, the construction and operation of these structures

would make the environment hostile to the reindeer as the noise and other intrusions can disrupt their feeding process and can increase the herd losses through accidents.

4.4 Inuit Nunaat, Sápmi and the new dimensions of old colonialisms

The discussion of Arctic strategies is important to see how states see themselves while Arctic agents, how they spatialize the Arctic, how their priorities are outlined and how they see the indigenous communities and people present in their Arctic territories. More than that, in our socio-ecological framework, they are also important to understand how the Arctic polities are seeking to regulate and organize their metabolic interactions with Arctic historical natures. Defense and security issues play a big role in these strategies, one that has only deepened since this research started, and are an important indicator of the mix of market and state structures regulating the metabolism between humans and nature – and also an indicator of deep interstate and intercapitalist tensions affecting the development of Arctic economies. At the same time, these documents reveal important aspects of the project dimension of capitalism, of how capitalist and state agencies are seeking to appropriate and exploit historical natures present in the Arctic, and, as with any project under capitalism, reveal how a share of humans seek to regulate and redraw the relation between other humans and nature to better serve the demands of capital accumulation.

One aspect common to all of the strategies is the presence of resource development as a strategic goal. Resource development – be it renewable or non-renewable – under the control of capitalist agencies and in the benefit of the objectives defined by nation states is treated as a given. The emphasis is generally placed on the development of non-renewable resources, with hydrocarbons and mineral resources playing the central role. Be it for energy security or to ensure transition, the extraction of oil, natural gas and minerals is

treated as a strategic necessity by states, to be promoted “in a sustainable way”, to guarantee the execution of plans and goals formulated outside the Arctic Circle, with little to no regard to how Arctic inhabitants feel about it. More than that, an important part of these plans is the generation of high paying jobs in the mining or oil and gas sector, seeking to link the elevation of living conditions of Arctic inhabitants with neo-extractive modes of development. This is more or less explicit, be it explicitly articulated, including traditional livelihoods as a transition mechanism from traditional livelihoods to modern, neo-extractive economies, or in more nuanced statements, like making skilled labor available or adopting a market-oriented approach for Arctic policy.

Another important, omnipresent concern is the need to develop the transport and communications infrastructure in the Arctic. Be it to support greater marine traffic, be it to integrate the Arctic to greater transport networks, there is a shared concern and a recognized need to build, update and adapt transport networks. This is fundamental for ensuring the safe circulation of commodities, to access resource deposits and to ensure costs are not a hindrance to new economic activities in the Arctic. However, all these investments represent not only direct environmental impacts in the Arctic, but also promote a long-term increase in emissions and other impacts brought by noise, sustained human and machine presence and the direct effects of mining and oil and gas on soil and waters – not to mention eventual impacts of accidents. This neo-extractive consensus – the perceived economic need to develop resources as quickly as possible in new extractive frontiers - reveal an important turn in the spatialization of the Arctic as a resource frontier. While Arctic resources always played an important role in the colonization, settlement and territorialization of the region, the new turn is to intensive extractive activities, like mining and offshore oil exploitation, that demand a greater control over land and over Arctic spaces, but also a greater control over mobilities and circulation between the sources and the consuming markets of resources. Duplessis (2020) correctly capture this process in her discussion of striation activities in the Arctic, albeit not articulating the

economic dimension and its relation to the political and material control over the space.

The Arctic, thus, is in a crossroads of old and new colonialisms. Old colonialisms in the sense that the previous processes of primitive accumulation and dispossession of indigenous peoples are being re-enacted via the implementation of strategies geared towards resource development and narrowing the already narrow space for traditional livelihoods in Sápmi and in Inuit Nunaat. Control over land and resources, as well as the use of modernizing discourses to justify interventions and policies are all manifestations of old colonialisms, continuities of the colonization of the Arctic. These practices, in turn, are being deployed for new objectives – the energy transition, ensuring energy security – or in search for new resources - rare earth minerals, new sources of hydrocarbons. These new elements, especially in the late capitalist, neo-extractive phase of the global economy, demand new forms of control and new investments, especially in building an Arctic transport network and the need to integrate this to broader transport networks. These investments in physical infrastructure represent new and more intense intrusions in traditional indigenous territories.

With respect to the resources, we see two important trends in the implementation of Arctic strategies, spatially localized in the different Arctic territories studied here. One is the unjust transition – a plethora of practices and spatialization more typical of Sápmi, where energy and the green transition are strategic objectives. I call this process unjust transition because it disproportionately burdens Arctic indigenous peoples (and non-humans) with the toxification of soils and the closing of space for traditional Sámi activities – the ecological “costs” of economic development. The strategic objectives related to the transition are also being mobilized by states and capitals to impose on the Sámi and on Sápmi spatial practice, mobilities and activities that would be unacceptable to do elsewhere, seeking to remedy the negative effects of such initiatives with state-centered, market-oriented management of living resources. In the North American Arctic, on the other hand, we see the non-transition, the

persistence of a hydrocarbon-based economy, and the expansion of hydrocarbon extraction in Inuit Nunaat, be it in Canada or the United States, as a bet to spur economic growth and to seize these economic opportunities while redistributing their monetary gains a means of compensating for the dwindling biodiversity, loss of traditional livelihoods and of space. These two trends are also related to the role of the Arctic as a global extractive frontier, both historically and with the emergence of new environmental concerns and their economic counterparts. We see the reconfiguration of the Arctic as an old extractive frontier for new resources – rare earth minerals, solar, hydro and wind power generation – but also as a new frontier of old resources – oil, gas, gold, fisheries.

4.4.1 Inuit Nunaat - A new frontier for old resources

While energy transition and climate change appear as minor concerns for the United States and Canada, what we see in Inuit Nunaat is the consolidation of the region as an extractive frontier for hydrocarbons. Since the publication of the first Arctic strategies of the United States and Canada, there has been an increase in interest and in the extraction of oil and gas in the region. The extraction of hydrocarbons in the Arctic were a main concern of Canada's and the US's strategies for the region. Energy security, the need to generate more jobs or even the post-Covid recovery were invoked in making it viable. In 2017, the Trump administration passed *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*, which included provisions for leasing the 1,002 Area of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling. As of 2017, this was the fiftieth attempt to legalize oil and gas drilling in the ANWR, which, caught in the bureaucratic procedures, was halted in 2021 by the Secretary of the Interior and then cancelled in 2023 by the Biden Administration. However, in 2023, the same Biden administration gave the green light for the Willow Project, in the National Petroleum Reserve, despite protests from local authorities, Inuit social movements and other agents. Similarly, in Canada, there is the

paradigmatic case of Clyde River, which prompted a five-year moratorium on Arctic oil drilling by Canada

The process of expanding the production of hydrocarbons and minerals in the North American Arctic has not been unresisted. The Clyde River case, the opening of the ANWR to drilling leases and the Willow project were all met with resistance and organization from indigenous peoples, Inuit and others, which sought to defend their lands from further encroachment by capitalist exploitation, with varying degrees of success. In 2015, in the Nunavut Hamlet of Clyde River appealed to justice to block seismic testing activities in its near waters, related to mapping maritime floor and to efforts to understand the geology of the Davis Strait. A consortium of companies sought to map the geology of Baffin Island in search for untapped oil reserves in the region, and the seismic testing emit high-intensity sounds, which, hamlet inhabitants and hunters argued, was harming and driving away maritime fauna – fundamental for their survival. Clyde River was joined by the communities of Baffin Island and, despite losing its first appeal, in 2016 the case was analyzed in the Supreme Court and the decision favored the hamlet and suspended seismic testing activities in the region. Invoking the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement, as well as the duty to consult and plan with the indigenous communities, the supreme court halted seismic testing activities and, shortly after, the Canadian Government imposed a five-year moratorium on Arctic oil and gas activities that is still in place in 2024.



Figure 22: Map showing the location of the Clyde River hamlet. Source <https://time.com/arctic-meltdown/>

Despite its importance for indigenous communities, it is interesting to note that the Arctic drilling moratorium was criticized by the heads of the Nunavut government and of the Government of the Northwestern Territories based on the harms to the provinces' revenues and on the interference of the federal government in activities¹⁸. In recent news, for instance, even the Clyde River community hunters have had to argue their position on the basis of not being opposed to development as such but seeking to make resource development in the Davis Strait compatible with Inuit traditional hunting practices. The organization representing the Clyde River hunters has declared that “[o]ur community needs jobs and we are not opposed to development; however, we believe that certain conditions must be met before we can support oil and gas activities in Baffin Bay and Davis Strait,”¹⁹. It is important to note how economic development, and resource development in particular dominate the discussion. Be it as a source of revenue for government – even governments where indigenous peoples are a majority – or as a source of jobs and wages for Inuit communities, these disputes seek to reconcile two dimensions of economic

¹⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-premier-slams-arctic-drilling-moratorium-1.3908037>

¹⁹ <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/extend-arctic-oil-gas-ban-for-five-more-years-clyde-river-says/>

activities that, by all available evidence, cannot be reconciled without great harm to either side of the equation.

While at first the Arctic drilling moratorium was a joint Canada-US initiative, with the arrival of Donald Trump to power, oil drilling in the Arctic became a priority for the United States. As previously said, prior to 2019, there had been 49 attempts to license oil fields within the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, with the fiftieth being carried out by the Trump Administration. The flexibilization of environmental regulations to facilitate drilling in the Arctic was not successful due to a combination of lack of interest from the oil industry, protests from indigenous peoples on behalf of the Gwich'in population in the area and the election of Joe Biden, who killed the licensing process as one of his first measures. The banning of drilling in the ANWR has been marketed as a symbol of the Biden administration's commitment with mitigating climate change. However, this ban only came into place once the US government gave the green light to another hydrocarbon extraction project, in the same region of the ANWR of North Slope, but in the National Petroleum Reservation of Alaska (NPR-A). ConocoPhillips' Willow project was objected by several organizations, and the disputes around its clearance are interesting in exploring a little further on how class divisions among Arctic indigenous peoples of North America operate.



Figure 23: Willow Project area. <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/14032023/willow-conocophillips-arctic-oil-biden/>

The Willow Project is a project to expand drilling capacity in the North Slope region, around the community of Nuiqsut. Allegedly, the project will have the capacity to produce 180,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day at its peak, and ConocoPhillips highlights the job creation potential of the project as 300 in long term employment and 2500 temporary jobs. The company estimates the

generation of US\$ 8 billion in revenues from taxes and royalties. In the letters and documents surrounding the case, it is interesting to contrast the positions of the organizations that represent native development corporations, such as the ANCSA Regional Association, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC, the regional corporation responsible for North Slope) and the Alaska Federation of Natives with those of the Mayor of Nuiqsut, its village corporation and the Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic (SILA Inuat), an Inuit environmental activist organization.

Organizations representing regional corporations, the ASRC as a regional corporation and even the Alaska Federation of Natives were instrumental in defending the project. So was the first Alaska Native Congresswoman, Mary Peltola, who shouldered with other Alaska representatives (senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan) to pressure the Interior Secretary to greenlight the project. The main instrument of pressure was reminding the Biden Administration of its economic challenges and commitments, such as the initiatives under the Inflation Reduction Act, the complicated international landscape and the post pandemic shocks in energy prices. On the Alaska organizations side, the royalties and financial benefits of the project were stressed as important for Alaska, like the royalties and revenues, but also as important for the solution of the infrastructure gap in the state and to grant access to basic rights for native communities. These resources, as well as the development of Alaska's economic potentials are framed as a condition for the material realization of the right to self-determination in Alaska.

When we look at the Mayor of Nuiqsut's testimony to the Interior Department we see a different picture. Rosemary Ahtuanguaruk details the impacts of hydrocarbon extraction in every aspect of Inuit life, discussing how oil extraction pollutes the air, soil, water and the animals that are hunted. The noise and increased, sustained human presence in the oil fields also drive animals, especially the caribou, further away from the communities, increasing the risks of hunting expeditions and rendering them more taxing on the hunters. Increased maritime activity due to the new terminals also harm traditional whale hunting,

driving the whales away from the coast and making whaling expeditions longer and riskier for Inuit. Incredibly, this testimony closely resembles the discussions on hydrocarbon extraction in Nuiqsut mentioned in the *Village Journey* by Thomas Berger, forty years ago. The letter of the Kuukpik Corporation - Nuiqsut's village corporation – to the Bureau of Land Management does not echo the enthusiastic defense of the Willow Project. Rather, the letter presents a lukewarm acceptance of the project, but putting emphasis on the relation between the Inuit and the Nuiqsut community to land, their dependence on the non-human natures present in the region and threatened by the project. The SILA Inuit letter denounces the environmental racism that underlies the project, diagnosing the Nuiqsut region and its surrounding area as a “sacrifice zone”. The Willow project was ultimately authorized by the Biden Administration. The disputes around it are important to see how class divisions among the Inuit were instrumental for the expansion of the hydrocarbon activity and how the idea and promises of development are used for further encroachment of capitalist and state agencies in the Arctic.

This is representative of one of the main operations of colonization – the transformation of indigenous peoples into poor people (Viveiros de Castro, 2019). Not only the state sees these communities and peoples as “poor”, and, in fact, has contributed for this poverty in many ways, but indigenous agents themselves, when dealing with the State and involved in policy- and decision-making processes tend to frame issues in terms of development and modernization and in reconciling the expansion of resource development with indigenous traditional economies. The evolution of the State-indigenous relations in Inuit Nunaat also contributes to this, especially due to the land claim settlement model. Besides creating a native elite aligned with the interests of capitalist and state agencies, it has also created a constellation of organizations that depend on generating revenues and profits for their survival, as well as being entangled in the neo-extractive projects that seek to put the historical natures of Inuit Nunaat – especially those of the mineral resources – to work in the continuous functioning of global capitalist accumulation.

However important, resistances to extractive industries have, at best, generated short term gains, only for long enough for industries to come up with ways to reconcile resource development with demands of indigenous communities. The encroachment continues and the argument of development, employment are also mobilized to justify this expansion, with great participation from indigenous corporations and organizations committed with the exploitation and resource development. This points to an important element in Inuit politics, the fragmentation of political representation among several organizations, organizing and acting in different scales with important differences in access to resources, agenda-setting power and incidence. While this responds to the project of creating class divisions among indigenous peoples, the relations between these different organizations and scales needs to be better studied to understand how they play out and how they represent conflicting projects of Inuit self-government and sovereignty – and what are the main elements of these different projects.

4.4.2 Sápmi – an old frontier for new resources

Sápmi has been a frontier since early modernity. Control over land has been a geopolitical driver of conflicts and tensions since the consolidation of Fennoscandian nation-states and has represented a tension between Sámi and the states for centuries. Freedom of movement and of maintaining traditional livelihoods have been, for a long time, the main political claim made by Sámi movements. With the gains in terms of organization – both national and international – since the Alta controversy, the Sámi have created important instruments to defend their rights and pressure the state to attend to their demands – the *Sámediggis*. The Sámi Council and the Sámi Parliamentary Council are transnational organizations that grow out of Sámi political activism in the same spirit. However, such instruments have been reframed, in domestic strategies and in policymaking in the transnational level (Medby, 2019), to better

suit the interests of the Fennoscandian states. Domestically, in the Arctic strategies, the *Sámediggis* are framed as important elements for “cultural development” or “linguistic sovereignty”, and not as legitimate players in defining the organization of economic activity in Sápmi. More than that, the adoption of “market-oriented” approaches to Arctic economic development has been instrumental in efforts to control and effectively restrict Sámi traditional livelihoods, clearing the terrain for more capital-intensive infrastructure and mining projects.

Gitte Du Plessis (2020), analyses State intrusion in Sápmi through the lenses of striation activities. Striation, as well as the strategies discussed here, are important in unveiling and problematizing the project dimension of capitalist ecologies. A study by Stoessel, Moen and Lindborg (2022) give an important glimpse on the process dimension of the striation and ecological transformations in Fennoscandia. The authors produced an interesting analysis of cumulative pressures on Fennoscandian summer grazing areas, by analyzing different pressures, some related to human intrusion and land use – presence of private cabins and outdoor tourism structure, road and rail networks, presence of industrial facilities, forestry and land-based wind power plants – and other related to non-human causes – rising temperatures and presence of predator species for reindeer. Below, I show three of such maps, showing the intrusions of road and rail network presence, land-based industrial facilities and presence of land-based wind power plants in Fennoscandia.

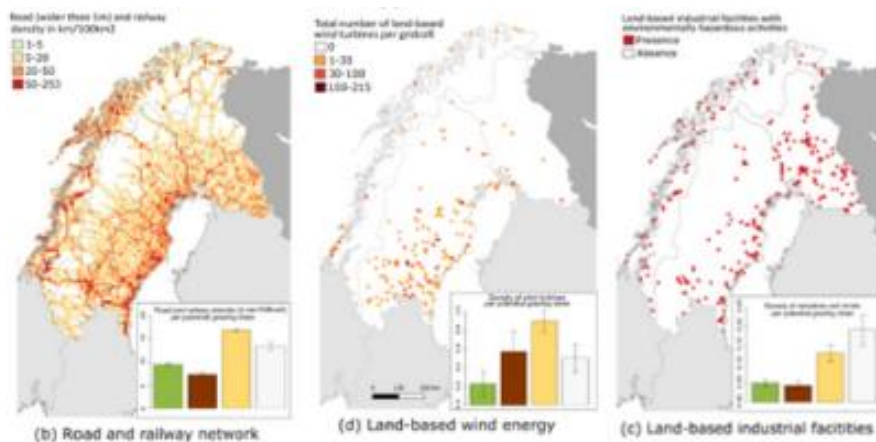


Figure 24: Maps with pressures of road and rail, land-based wind energy and industrial facilities in Fennoscandia. In Stoessel, Moen and Lindborg (2022) p.6

The road and railway networks cover 66% of Fennoscandia. There are 235 wind turbines concentrated in 3% of the region and 600 industrial facilities in 5% of it (Stoessel, Moen and Lindborg, 2022). 60% of the region present two or more concurring land use exerting pressures. According to the authors, “40% of Fennoscandia been assigned as pastures for traditional herding” but only 15% of it is free from competing human land uses. An interesting move by the trio of researchers is to create a map showing the composition effects of human land use, changes in temperature and presence of predators to visualize and measure pressure over reindeer grazing grounds.

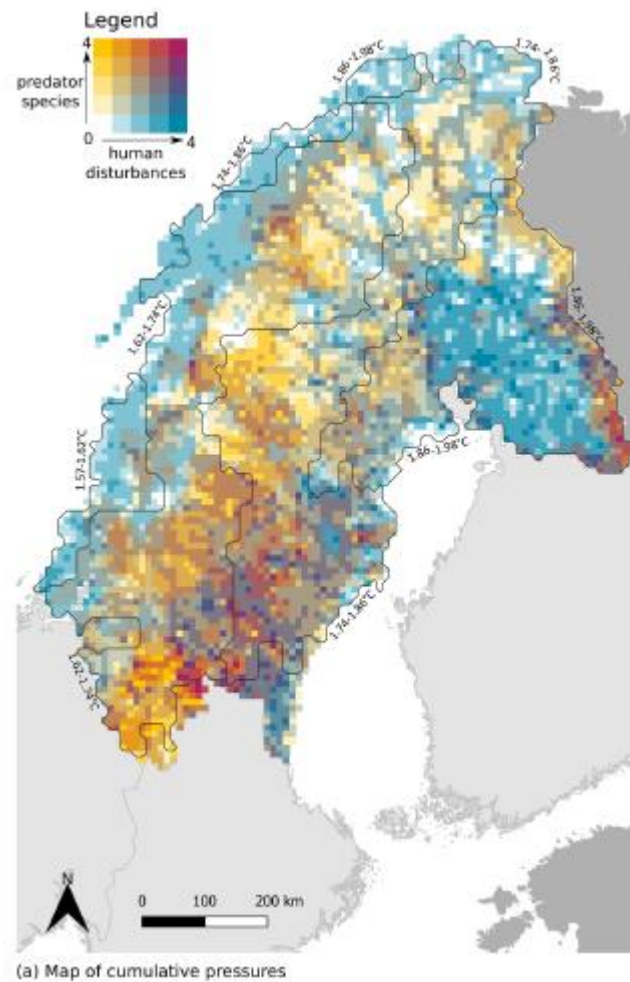


Figure 25 Cumulative pressures in Fennoscandia from: changes in temperature, human land uses and presence of predators. From Stoessel, Moen and Lindborg (2022), p. 8

The map of cumulative pressures from competing land uses, plus changes in temperature and presence of predators can be read as one expression of the process of striation of Sápmi. More than that, it shows just how much of the region is increasingly affected by other activities that reduce the space available for Sámi traditional reindeer herding, making the region increasingly hostile to it. Not only it shows the environmental racism on the basis of Fennoscandian capitalist development, but also what Opperman calls “racist environments” – a *milieu* that is growingly hostile to its natives all the while being appropriated and used by settler colonial polities in their political and economic processes.

The strategies promote the control over Sámi mobilities and livelihoods through striation activities, while, at the same time, creating the conditions for a relation with nature increasingly based on value. The tension between Sámi rights and the development of non-renewable resources is not addressed in these strategies, and recent developments are important to show how Sámi livelihoods are losing their ground to the interest of capitalist and state agencies in Sápmi resources. In Norway, Finland and Sweden, Sámi people are engaged in struggles regarding the protection of their livelihoods in tandem with interests promoted by the state in the exploitation of resources. In Norway, there are growing protests against state-mandated culling of reindeer herds, as well as a trend in solving land-use issues involving windfarms in Sápmi via financial compensations. In Sweden, there are the already mentioned protests to mining in Gállok and in Finland, the Sámi are preparing the second International Indigenous Salmon Peoples Gathering in protest for the prohibition of salmon fishing in the Deatnu river.

The Fosen windfarm, operated by a Norwegian state-owned enterprise, is the largest wind farm in Europe, and has been the subject of Sámi protest for some time. After the recognition, in October 2021, that the construction of the Fosen wind farm in Sámi land was a violation of Sámi human rights. The construction in Sápmi was seen as a violation of the right to culture, due to the impacts on reindeer herding, based on the Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. However, the wind farm continued to operate normally, evincing protests from Sámi activists. The movement set up of a camp in Oslo, in front of the Norwegian Parliament²⁰, with traditional Sámi *lavvu*. The protest lasted until an agreement was reached between the Sámi and Norway, which involved a pecuniary compensation of approximately US\$ 635,000 a year²¹,

²⁰ Sámi activists, accompanied by Greta Thunberg, were arrested by the Norwegian police during this protest

²¹ <https://www.windpowermonthly.com/article/1851728/sami-group-accepts-annual-compensation-deal-statkraft-wind-farm>

together with the opening for new grazing grounds and “a future-oriented solution that safeguards the reindeer farming rights”²² according to the Norwegian energy minister.

Norway has also faced Sámi protests regarding state-mandated culling of Sámi reindeer herds. In 2022, in the Venice Biennale, the Nordic Pavillion was opened for Sámi artists, among them Máret Ánne Sara, known for the installation “Pile O’ Sápmi”, created in 2017 as a protest against the culling of her brother’s and other reindeer culling occurring in Sápmi, by order of the Finnmark County. The installation is composed of 400 bullet-ridden reindeer skulls that were hanged in front of the Norwegian Parliament. Finnmark is home to 73% of Norway’s reindeer population²³, and the justification mobilized by state authorities is that the population has overgrown the carrying capacity of the region. It is important to note that Sámi have culling practices of their own, but that the state-mandated cullings are planned and ordered disregarding these knowledges and techniques – and even evidence gathered and presented by scientific institutions of Norway.

²² <https://apnews.com/article/norway-sami-wind-farm-energy-indigenous-54f4cafbee29578dc9de1f206df3f9ff#>

²³ <https://partner.sciencenorway.no/government-indigenous-people-nmbu/the-norwegian-government-ordered-massive-slaughterings-of-reindeer-indigenous-sami-reindeer-herders-disagreed-but-were-not-heard/1644157#:~:text=2020%20%2D%2011%3A13-,For%20more%20than%20a%20decade%20the%20Norwegian%20Government%20has%20implemented,of%20nearly%2040%20000%20reindeer.>



Figure 26: Storting building, seen through the curtain of reindeer skulls mounted by Maret Anne Sara

In Sweden, one of the pressing issues is the development of mining activities. The struggle against mining in Gällöf. The Swedish government has already authorized the expansion of an iron ore mining enterprise in the region of Gällöf, even in the face of warnings from UN experts and protests on the part of the Sámi. Iron mining is an important sector in Sweden's economy and has been a driver of colonization in Sápmi since the 17th century. According to Lawrence (2017), Swedish iron extraction accounts for 90% of Europe's iron extraction, and the iron reserves in Sweden represent 60% of the identified iron ore deposits in the continent. The mines in Sápmi, in the Swedish region of Norrland, produce 96% of all the iron in Sweden (Mining Inspectorate of Sweden, 2020). Since 2013, Beowulf Mining, a British mining company has been prospecting in the region, with a Sámi anti-mining movement brewing in its wake (Persson, 2017), especially due to conflicts with traditional reindeer herding communities in the area.

In 2022, the Swedish *Sámediggi* issued its final position on mining in Gállok²⁴, opposing the concession of mining rights for the Kallak nr 1 license. The document states how reindeer herding is already pressured by a number of developments, like hydropower, power lines, quarries and the effects of climate change. It also advocates for an environmental assessment that deals not only with the direct area of mining, but also those impacted by increased transit, construction of routes, as well as stating the mine will foreclose the possibility of using reindeer migration routes that pass through the area. Parallel to this official position, Sámi and environmental activists have been involved in protests against the mining in Gállok²⁵. It is interesting to note that the project is not only being opposed by the Sámi, but by an array of movements and institutions such as UNESCO and even the Church of Sweden.

In Finland, a brewing tension is related to Sámi traditional fishing in the Deatnu/Tana River. The Deatnu is reportedly one of the most important rivers for the reproduction of the Atlantic salmon and houses 30 populations of this species of fish. The Tana River runs along the Finnish-Norwegian border, and is considered one of the oldest European borders, established as it was by the 1751 Stromstad Treaty, and has been the subject of numerous agreements between the two countries. In 2017, the most recent version of the Deatnu Agreement came into force and sparked widespread discontent, leading to Sámi mobilization, the occupation of an island in the river and, more recently, to the protests against the prohibition of weir and net fishing of salmon. The 2017 Deatnu Agreement establishes a number of provisions regarding the sustainable fishing of salmon in the river. To do so, the Agreement creates two categories of fishers, the first are entitled to fish freely based on their rights – which stem from ownership of land along the river – while the second category will need license to fish. While many Sámi fit the first category due to traditional use and occupancy of land, there has

²⁴ <https://www.sametinget.se/164992>

²⁵ These protests were also joined by Greta Thunberg at one point

been growing encroachment from non-Sámi acquiring land along the Deatnu, with or without the establishment of holiday cabins (Kuokkanen, 2020; Kuhn, 2020). On the Finnish side of the river, *siida* collective rights and fishing cooperative rights are in tandem, which has not been addressed nor resolved by past land reform and fishing rights regulations. On the Norwegian side, occupation of land and fishing rights were distributed and created as part of the assimilationist policies called *Norwegianization* and sought to stimulate settlement along the Deatnu combining fishing rights with the development of farming activities along the river.

According to Kuokkanen (2020), the 2017 Agreement aims to reduce fishing in the Deatnu river by a total of 30% to “restore the salmon stocks to a ‘sustainable level’”, but cuts in fishing rights disproportionately impact the Sámi fishers – whose fishing rights were cut by 80%, in contrast to the 40% reduction of tourist fishery. The agreement has also eliminated traditional fishing rights for those Sámi who no longer live permanently in the Deatnu Valley, while, at the same time, protecting and augmenting the fishing rights of non-local landowners. This composition of injustices evinced response from the Sámi in the form of the *Ellos Deatnu* movement, who occupied the Tiirasaari island in the Utsjoki river in 2017, but also declared a moratorium on fishing regulations on the river in the defense of Sámi traditional fishing rights. The movement gathered support from the Sámi and the Finnish *Sámediggi* supported the mobilization and the moratorium due to the violation of traditional fishing rights. Since 2021, however, the Finnish government has established a total ban of salmon fishing on the valley, renewed in May 2023 and that continues in place in 2024. As the writing of this research comes to an end, traditional salmon fishing in the Deatnu has been prohibited for two consecutive fishing seasons, and the Sámi are organizing a global gathering of salmon fishing peoples in protest against the prohibition.

In Sápmi, we also see how the strategies aim to reframe the relations between the Sámi and their traditional territories. Be it via the culling and forcing a market approach for reindeer herding or the authorization of mining and construction of wind and solar power complexes in Sápmi, what Duplessis dubs

striation activities are the imposition not only of new spatialities, but of new mediations in the relationship between humanity and nature in the Arctic - a hallmark of extractive frontiers. The striation of space, the creation of circulation and communications network for capitalist development, represent a continuity of colonial practices in Sápmi, reorganizing the space according to demands, mobilities and interests that are defined outside of Sápmi seeking to reap the benefits from resource development in the region. This is manifest not only in direct state action, but also in the political solutions to deal with the contradictions arising from this process. The establishment of pecuniary compensations in the Fosen wind farm case, or the total ban on salmon fishing on the Deatnu Valley both reveal different aspects of the settler colonial solutions: either seek to compensate the loss of activity with money, creating new grazing grounds defined by state authorities, or to exert control over traditional livelihoods like salmon fishing, prohibiting traditional fishing, harming the transmission and employment of traditional knowledges all the while establishing the State as the sole responsible for establishing regimes for “sustainable” activities.

4.5 Final remarks – the closing of the Great Frontier

The reproduction of capitalism is predicated on the existence of a sphere of exploitation and a sphere of appropriation. The expansion of accumulation cycles depends fundamentally on the appropriation of historical natures “outside” the circuits of capital, which are turned dependent on capital for their reproduction. With the Great Navigations and the expansion of the capitalist world-ecology, the Great Frontier was opened and made the expansion of capitalist relations of production viable for almost four hundred years. Colonized regions of the world served as a repository for historical natures untouched by capital that made growth and development possible, commodity frontiers where exploitation and appropriation served to sustain the accumulation processes in the core of the capitalist world ecology. The Arctic is also part of the Great Frontier, and its

colonization, not driven immediately by economic purposes, was important for the development and deployment of techniques of capitalist exploitation, assimilation of historical natures and of imperial technologies of control over people and space.

This process generated colonial ecologies in the Arctic, predicated on the exploitation of Arctic resources and peoples for the Southern centers of capital accumulation. In the twentieth century, these techniques and the role of the Arctic as a frontier changed radically, especially due to its connection with global geopolitical tensions and the need for new sources of raw materials. In the dawn of the twenty-first century, we see many signs of the closing of the Great Frontier. Capital can only solve the socioecological contradictions it engenders via a *fuite en avant*, a new cycle of expansion, new imperialisms and new appropriations. In the 21st century, this solution is not possible and, especially in the face of the existential threat for humanity that is the ecological crisis, this solution cannot be implemented as it once was. We see a multiplication of commodity frontiers and the efforts of territorialist and capitalist agencies drive to commodification on different spaces. The Arctic, the Amazon, outer space, cyberspace, deep sea, all represent more or less defined commodity frontiers for global capital. In the current stage, capitalist development, both in its fossil-fueled and in its transition-driven facets are now predicated on the intensification of extractive activities on a global scale. Global commodity frontiers multiply, from the cyberspace to outer space, passing through the deep seas and the Arctic, each demanding new forms of primitive accumulation and new forms of assimilating historical natures external to the circuits of capital.

While this “economic” dimension is easily identified, it is necessary to understand the political implications of such drive. One of the main elements in current debates on energy (or green) transition is the maintenance of the political control of transition processes in market- and accumulation-oriented hands. Frameworks for transition or for the sustainable development of non-transition are all thought to place the control of such processes on the hands of States and of capitalists.

The Arctic is warming faster than the rest of the world. The region is also much more sensitive to climate changes than others and has, over the last years, become a net carbon emitter (Ramage, 2024) due to the releasing of methane trapped in the now dwindling permafrost. All of these have dire effects over the livelihoods of indigenous peoples - and potentially for all of mankind. The colonial inhabitation and the colonial ecologies of Arctic geopolitics and economic development have created and are creating the conditions for an accelerated deterioration of the conditions for human life on Earth. Arctic indigenous peoples are at one of the forefronts of the global race for resources, and the plans for seizing the economic opportunities via resource development are set to perpetuate the environmental racism that characterize Arctic ecologies. The resource development plans are turning the Arctic into a sacrifice zone, and the costs of toxification of land and seas, as well as the insistence of States in pursuing strategies and policies based on neo-extractive modes of economic development – albeit their concerns with its environmental sustainability – are a new dimension of colonization. This insistence is also a signal of a capitalist world economy seeking to assimilate these historical natures - the minerals and hydrocarbons of Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi, the reindeer herds, the deep Arctic seas and the Central Arctic Ocean – into the circuits of capital.

One of the main effects of this process is that these historical natures become dependent on capital for their reproduction, and this has led to massive ecological changes. In the ecological crises of capital, further capitalization of nature, further expansion of commodity frontiers and the spatial practices and political technologies associated to it, serve to bring new natures – human and non-human – into the circuits of capital, make them legible and manageable for capital and subject their reproduction to the cycles and demands of capital reproduction. This is the project dimension of capitalism as a global metabolism, which meets many obstacles in its process dimension. As seen here, some of these resistances can have transformative impacts in the exercise of political and economic control over land and people, but, within capitalist frameworks of humanity and nature, these can also lead to political synthesis that ultimately

reinforce capitalist instrumental views and practices of the relation between humanity and nature. The solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation proposed by States all follow this path. Energy transition, the management of living and non-living resources, a socially just transition that nonetheless relies on extractive, environmentally harming activities. All of these objectives are being pursued by turning the Arctic in a sacrifice zone, perpetuating environmental racism and injustices created by colonization and exploitation of resources in Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi.

This shows the need to politicize climate policy and to understand the material implications of ecological transition plans. The resources upon which we base the process of energy transition, as well as the structures of production and distribution of new kinds of energy can bring about important reductions in the emissions of greenhouse gasses, but, on the other hand, can only do so based on practices that reinforce the very injustices that brought about the ecological crisis we now face. More than that, even when justice is taken into account, the definitions of justice tend to be compensation-oriented, capitalist definitions of justice that try and implement capitalism's project of universal equivalence via money, seeking to pay away problems that money cannot solve. Money cannot compensate the loss of reindeer, nor can it be a measure for the loss of space for traditional hunting and fishing. Development can't consider the relations between the human and the non-human that are obliterated via over-hunting, toxification, destruction of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity. More and more, the limits of capitalist management of nature make themselves felt, and the analysis of process and project need to create the instruments to build new frameworks and new references regarding the solutions for the preservation and regeneration of ecosystems damaged by capitalist exploitation of the planet.

On the other hand, the process dimension of capitalist appropriation of nature reveals important struggles and interesting new sites for policy making, new frameworks for environmental policy that have been developing for time immemorial. While indigenous communities face state and capitalist agencies in their own terms, appealing to state-defined sets of rights and duties, their

struggles also show ne elements to inform decisions and policies seeking to deal with environmental issues. Be it in the dispute for salmon fishing in the Deatnu river or the struggle against the implementation of the Willow project, the discourses and practices of indigenous communities, as well as the alternatives they seek to implement, put in question the definitions of politics, economy, wellbeing and the scales of the projects for energy transition or the green transition. A further research agenda would include the discussion of how these movements are articulating understandings

Conclusion

Even an entire society, a nation or all simultaneously existing societies taken together are not owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as *boni patres familias*.

Karl Marx, Capital, book III

During the ten years since I started studying Arctic geopolitics, great transformations have come to pass. While in 2014 the increase in Arctic shipping was seen as a novelty and the freezing seasons made ship transit in the region nearly impossible, in the closing moments of this research, the Globe and Mail has published a headline that reads “Ice is clogging the Northwest Passage, thwarting hopes for improved shipping as Arctic warms”. The Arctic, previously a global carbon sink, has become a net carbon emitter due to warming conditions, melting ice and the liberation of trapped methane into the atmosphere. There are reports on the impact of increased activity on Arctic non-human life such as the narwhal, whose reproduction has been harmed by the increase in maritime and submarine activity in the region. Moreover, the geopolitics of the region have moved from local tensions and local issues to its present connection with global tensions and global geopolitical issues.

This research sought to present and discuss the impacts of climate change, economic development projects and geopolitical tensions in the Arctic through a socio-ecological framework. Departing from Marxist perspectives on the humanity-nature relation, I sought to discuss Arctic geopolitics and economic development based on how phenomena in these two issue areas impacted and impact indigenous territories. Another important element - maybe central to the development of socio-ecological research in International Relations - was to try and de-naturalize the spatialities and the spatial practices of the nation state. For this reason, rather than discussing “Canada” or “Norway” I chose to debate in terms of Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat, Arctic homelands to indigenous peoples that are

now subject to new projects and processes of expropriation, striation, state control and economic exploitation.

Before dealing with the ecological tensions of the twenty-first century, however, it was important to understand how Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat were incorporated into the capitalist interstate system. The focus on the indigenous territories required the recognition and the theorization of the Arctic as a colonized space, and an understanding of the different processes of colonization that allowed for the emergence of “Empty Arctic” narratives. The historicization of Arctic geopolitics was an important step in this research since it made possible to understand the new drivers of colonization in the region, as well as the techniques and colonial technologies employed by state and capitalist agencies to control indigenous lands and to try and assimilate indigenous peoples in the circuits of commodity production. It stands out that the search for resources, living or not, is an aspect of the *longue durée* of the geopolitical scenario of the Arctic, and even that the “global Arctic” narrative falls short on a historical scale. The colonization of Sápmi and Inuit Nunaat was driven by the search for resources and by the reorganization of traditional livelihoods and mobilities towards the demands of capital accumulation in distant cores. Each step in the integration of these regions in the national economies that sought to reorganize and colonize them was taken to better exploit and use the resources of the region.

Arctic colonialism is deeply related to the “closing of the Great Frontier”, as Moore (2015) puts it, and to the insertion of the Arctic as a northern periphery in the capitalist world ecology. In North America, this periphery was an appropriation zone for important sectors of the American and Canadian economies, be it the whale or the gold, and, and settlement was not directly stimulated except for sporadic surges, like the gold rushes. The harsh climate and the absence of geopolitical rivalries in the region made direct control over land and occupation a lesser priority. Since the end of the twentieth century, however, the discovery of resources crucial to contemporary dynamics of capital accumulation created incentives for such control and occupation. The main political solution was the settlement of indigenous land claims, be it via a comprehensive law, the ANCSA

in Alaska, or several, localized, agreements as was done in Canada. As we saw in the reconstruction of this history by Marybelle Mitchell and the analysis of Coulthard, in these agreements, the economic interest in exploiting resource reserves in indigenous lands - i.e. appropriating previously unexploited historical natures - and in creating a developmentalist, neo-extractive consensus among indigenous elites was of paramount importance for states and capitalist social forces leading them. With different political unfoldings, both processes represent the same maneuver: pacifying land claims, curbing growing political mobilization by indigenous peoples, opening new frontiers for capital accumulation and co-opting parts of these indigenous peoples to the capitalist project of exploitation of human and non-human natures, specially via the native development corporations.

In Sápmi, control over land and border-making was a geopolitical imperative from a much earlier period. In the seventeenth century, for instance, territorial claims and disputes were a common feature of Fennoscandian and Russian geopolitics. Sustained contact with the Sámi involved trade, employment in mining enterprises, and some integration between the Fennoscandian polities. Their inclusion in the emerging national economies was also their insertion in the global circuits of capitalist metabolism. Mining in Sápmi not only served for domestic production processes, but also to propel global processes of appropriation and exploitation - from the iron used in agricultural tools in the sugar plantations of America and as currency in African slave trade to the copper used in homes in Amsterdam and kettles and furnaces for processing sugar extracted from American soils. Borders in Sápmi stabilized much later than in Inuit Nunaat, and until the nineteenth century, the establishment of taxation spheres in Sápmi was the main driver of geopolitics in the region. This impacted the Sámi, forcing the choice of citizenship, as well as subjecting parts of the Sámi population to assimilationist policies that sought to produce “proper” Sámi to protect and promote.

During the nineteenth century, a progressive closure of the space for Sámi nomadic practices took place, with the effective nullification of the Lapp Codicil

and the closing of frontiers for cross-border movement. In the twentieth century, Sámi political mobilization began to achieve new heights, with national and transnational organizations emerging in the beginning of the century and, by mid-20th century, the Sámi Council was founded, and the Sámi began to identify as an indigenous people and to mobilize as such. In the 1970's, particularly due to the Alta Dam controversy, Sámi rights to self-determination began to be recognized and implemented in Sweden, Norway and Finland. The main model for self-determination was the establishment of the Sámediggis - Sámi Parliaments, with different structures and functions across Sápmi. In Norway, we also see the attempt to establish self-determination in the key of right to property of land via the Finnmark Estate. The Sámediggis, as we saw, are though as structures to promote and manage Sámi plans regarding cultural self-determination - language, education, spirituality - and have no power over defining economic regimes and/or land use in Sápmi. The Finnmark Estate, while posited as a means to ensure self-determination and recognition of Sámi ownership of land, has not recognized such ownership for no lands.

A common trait to both regions, however, is the progressive culturalization of indigenous right to self-determination and self-government. By "culturalization" I mean the progressive restriction of the right to self-determination and self-government to the cultural aspects of human life, and the foreclosure of discussions on the material reproduction of indigenous communities and societies, and of the alternative economies and policies needed to ensure such survival. Land claims processes in Inuit Nunaat have yielded political authority over swaths of Canadian territory to the Inuit, but this has been mobilized at times to reinforce Canadian claims to sovereignty over the Arctic via Inuit presence and land use since time immemorial. Moreover, indigenous self-determination processes in the Arctic have not given indigenous peoples the power to define the political structures of their communities, but also the economic organization of their traditional territories - a feature ensured by the creation of native development corporations in North America and by the limited authority of the Sámediggis of Sápmi. Self-determination for indigenous peoples was framed as

the right to define, promote and preserve cultural aspects of indigenous social formations, divorced from any project of economic transformation or from the material aspects of self-determination and the reproduction of indigenous cultures. Moreover, from the perspective of States, the economic destiny of Sámi and Inuit alike are deeply entangled with state-defined economic and political priorities – specially the projected benefits of their adhesion to the neo-extractive consensus these states seek to implement. The possibility of sharing in the revenues of extractive activities is used as a flag to promote the adhesion of these peoples to developmentalist projects - mostly based on the exploitation of non-renewable resources.

State- and capital-oriented intrusions in Arctic indigenous territories have intruded not only over “land” but also over the development of indigenous economic practices. With the need for “modernization”, “development” and, nowadays, “just transition”, these modes of production, already under great stress due to the process of colonization were targeted by states via their processes of normalization and recognition of indigenous rights in their interest of turning land into property, nature into money and Sámi and Inuit into citizens.

What, then is the novelty of twenty-first century Arctic geopolitics? A cynical answer would be that the changes are in intensity - the melting ice, the greater accessibility to the region only deepen the trend towards the exploitation of non-renewable resources. Changes, however, are qualitative and systemic: the perceived scramble for the Arctic and its role as a global extractive frontier are symptoms of the limits of capitalist world-ecology. Worldwide interest in Arctic geopolitics and resources is deeply related to the presence and enhanced knowledge of the presence of critical resources in the region - be it for the continuity of a fossil economy or for the transition to a low emission capitalist economic mode of development. Arctic resources grow in importance due to the current moment of capitalist world-ecology: the closing of the Great Frontier (Moore, 2015). There is a need for ensuring the exploitation of previously untapped resource reserves, but also a scarcity of this kind of space. This necessity is manifest in the need for new processes of primitive accumulation,

new imperialisms and new dispossessions, but the capacity of these techniques to perform their functions in the capitalist world-ecology – integrating previously untapped historical natures to the global metabolism of capital – are much narrower than they were in the past.

In the current ecological crisis of capitalism, however, the old techniques of capitalist domination - colonization, dispossession of indigenous peoples, racialization, and assimilation - tend to be redeployed in the attempt to perpetuate capitalist metabolism and its permanent drive for resources. Deep sea mining, offshore oil extraction, rare-earth mining, all of these require the striation of space to create capitalist spatialities and mobilities docile to capital accumulation, all of these not only depend on the dispossession of Sámi, Inuit and other indigenous peoples, but also demand that non-capitalist, non-state mobilities and spatialities are controlled and guaranteed not to disrupt the circulation of commodities. Be it in the unjust transition that develops in Sápmi or in the non-transition in Inuit Nunaat, the intensification of control over land and mobilities is a trend. Even with the participation of indigenous peoples, communities and organizations, the capitalist world ecology can only seek to solve the contradictions and conflicts arising from this expansion of global extractive frontiers via the project of universal equivalence - seeking to replace the irreplaceable with money. This project led to the creation of techniques to seek to value land, resources and of political solutions to give indigenous peoples limited control over land and participation in capital accumulation. However, many of the relationships that characterize indigenous livelihoods and cultures cannot be repaired with pecuniary compensation, neither are they related to the logic of value, and they are being and will be deeply affected by resource development in these new extractive frontiers.

Analysis of Arctic strategies of States are an important window into the project dimension of capitalism as a world-ecology. Despite differences in the colonial relation between the State and indigenous peoples, as well as different approaches of states, control of land and space and making resource development viable are still central goals of such strategies. Even when resource

development is recognized as counterproductive to the Paris Agreements and to the global commitments to mitigate climate change, mining, oil and gas extraction and the construction of extensive transport networks in the Arctic are still laid out as strategic interests of states. Geopolitical tensions in the region reveal a dispute for this new extractive frontier, a dispute to create the capabilities and expertise needed to exploit and develop these resources. At the same time, the matter of controlling indigenous land remains, with an important focus on how to either connect indigenous communities to resource development initiatives and how to compensate for the narrowing of the indigenous world - be it via the promises of welfare, heating and telecommunications, ownership of land or pecuniary compensation for the land, ice and seas subtracted from their worlds.

Inuit and Sámi have created a vibrant political activism, both domestically and transnationally. The Sámi Council, the *Samediggis* and the Sámi Parliamentary Council not only make their presence felt via the institutional frameworks of states, but also in the political struggles of Sámi communities all over Sápmi. Be it against mining in Gállok, or in defense of traditional fishing in the Deatnu river or protesting state-enforced reindeer culling, these organizations make themselves present. The Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Inuit Tapiriisat Kanatami and other Inuit organizations also have tremendous engagement in international governance fora, as well as extensive production of data, strategies, recommendations and analyses for governments and organizations. Inuit grassroots movements have been important in the Clyde River case, as well as in the moratorium for oil drilling in the Arctic that ensued, as well as in the resistance to the Willow Project in Alaska.

One element that goes unproblematicized in Arctic Strategies and in many of the most influential scholarship on Arctic geopolitics and economic development is the environmental racism. Be it from a more conventional perspective, as in the unevenness of the distribution of ecological burdens in Arctic economic development to the more critical and radical definition of Opperman (2019) – the Arctic as a progressively racist environment, and its spatial configuration towards capital accumulation making it more hostile to

traditional livelihoods and to the free development of Arctic indigenous peoples. This is a fundamental, yet overlooked, aspect of the just transition and of broader concerns with *ecological* justice. Security, sovereignty, economic and environmental concerns have been mobilized to justify state encroachment in the Arctic and the exploitation of non-human natures in the region at the expense of the space and resources needed for the material and social reproduction of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. As discussed in the beginning of chapter 4, the Arctic is already more sensitive to climate and temperature changes than the rest of the planet and has been suffering intense changes in climate and temperature due to global, external activities.

A future research agenda on Arctic geopolitics and Indigenous politics should delve more deeply in the intricacies of indigenous struggles. The relation between international organizations like the Sámi Council and the Sámi Parliamentary Council, or the capillarity and mobilization capacity of the *Sámediggis* as well as discussions on the everyday politics of Sámi resistance are important issues for future studies. The matter of class divisions among the Sámi and their impacts in Sámi politics could not be assessed in the current research but remains an important factor in the analysis of their political struggles. A broader issue to be of importance in the coming years is the geopolitics of the global extractive frontiers. The Arctic, cyberspace, the Amazon rainforest, outer space, and deep sea are spaces that, more and more, are being discussed and instrumentalized for economic and strategic purposes of States and of capitalist agencies. These new extractive frontiers are drawing growing interest due to the pressures felt by global metabolism due to the closing of the great frontier and due to global commitments towards energy transition that seeks to ensure current levels of consumption and production and enable further economic growth via the exploitation of new commodities present in these spaces. These new activities and their materialities not only have deep environmental and political implications, as well as the global regulatory frameworks to be produced and make these activities - and the class structures that will determine their development.

Indigenous political activism, in many of these cases, is engaged in resisting such practices through the defense of their traditional territories and livelihoods. Pressuring states, international organizations, and businesses, as well as bearing the brunt of the environmental impacts. At the same time, the political articulations of Indigenous communities mobilize concepts of politics, economy, well-being and the role of nature that challenge and have challenged modern capitalist states' spatial and political practices for long. While postponing the end of these non-European worlds, they are also crafting ways out of the current conjunction of crises that face humanity, through political practices and economies that are grounded in an immemorial history of resistance and struggle. Understanding the politics of indigenous peoples and traditional communities and their struggles at the global extractive frontiers remains an important element in this debate, not only pointing to the problems and tensions of the actual and coming ecological crisis, but also to alternatives and counter-hegemonic social forces prefiguring new political practices.

From the political economy of climate change to the political economy of ecological transition

Attention to the control, ownership and exploitation of land and the centering of the Arctic as a colonized space important in highlighting the progressive integration of the region in the global circuits of capital. It was also important to understand how Arctic geopolitics emerged from this process of colonization and how it put states in the role of negotiating, exploiting and disputing these regions. Shadian's question – *who owns the Arctic?* – can't be altogether dismissed, as it reflects an important reality: capitalist and territorialist agencies do dispute ownership of the Arctic and dispute the right to use land, seas, rivers and exploit resources. The answers crafted – appealing to international law, interstate arrangements and agreements, as well as to intra-state frameworks of ownership and recognition of indigenous rights – all tend to blur the distinctions between sovereignty, territoriality and property, a confusion

that, as has been demonstrated, stems from projects that sought to do away with debates on colonialism, exploitation and self-determination. My own answer stems from a critique of this framing. As the epigraph of this conclusion says a whole society or even the sum of all human societies are not owners of the earth, but merely its possessors. And, while sustainable development definitions stress the need to *not compromise* the reproduction of future generations, I also believe we should seek to give this earth in an improved state to them. To do so, I believe we must begin to move from the political economy of climate change to the political economy of ecological transition.

Climate change and the other aspects of the ecological crisis of capitalism are some of the hottest topics for contemporary academic and political debates. In International Political Economy the conversation has been developing around the political economy of climate change. A heavy focus on abstract social nature (Moore, 2015, p.) characterizes such conversation, with its emphasis on quantifying, measuring, valuing and managing ecological impacts of economic development all the while discussing the adequate regimes and frameworks to make capitalist development sustainable. The policy focus of discussions on climate change – mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and so on – also tend to frame the problem in terms of value and on the frameworks for mobilizing economic resources to achieve certain environmental goals. These have been producing limited understandings of ecological crises and imbalances, of the role of humanity in nature and of limited tools of political action. Particularly, most of these debates are still developing under a framework to interpret humanity-nature relations through the lenses of the one-sided, instrumental view of nature developed by capitalist world-ecology.

Another important element are the implications of state-centered understandings of politics and political action when dealing with the construction of ways out of the current ecological crisis. This results in approaches of environmental justice and ecological transition characterized by appeals to the (capitalist) polity, with little space for critical inquiries on socioecological contradictions of the global metabolism of capital and on developing alternative

ecologies and socioecological struggles. The main implication of this approach is that the control of the process is assumed to be in the hands of state agencies that ought to mobilize capitalist agencies towards socioecological goals. While the current direction of the ecological transition is being carefully scrutinized, this framework of control still has to be interrogated, as is the case with the class composition of the social forces leading or intending to lead this process. To begin with that, we must understand Arctic colonization and colonialism as one ecological transition – and seek to understand how other transitions can come to pass.

This discussion on Arctic geopolitics and economic development, shows how capitalist and territorialist agencies are mobilized by social forces committed to perpetuating and expanding, whenever possible, the global metabolism of capital. I sought to highlight the class dimension of the ecological crisis, in the sense that it stems from the integration of the Arctic to specific social and economic formations, and from the global and local actions of such class. Another important element is how geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions in the Arctic orbit the implementation of more or less green versions of the capitalist world ecology – be it via an unjust transition that already burdens the Sámi with loss of space and grazing grounds, be it via a non-transition and a deepening of the fossil capitalism elements of this world ecology as in the United States. Attention to extractive frontiers and state practices of economic frontier-making also point to the need to politicize debates on ecological transitions and on the materiality of associated processes – like decarbonization or energy transition. The implementation of such solutions to global ecological problems are shaped by the colonality of interstate relations and global governance.

I believe the discussion on Arctic geopolitics and economic development from the perspective presented here – one that privileges indigenous territories and their history – is fundamental to move from a political economy of climate change to a political economy of ecological transition. More than count and make climate change and its impacts countable, measurable and manageable, we should discuss problems money cannot solve. While it is certainly important to

understand and develop frameworks to try and mitigate the effects of climate change, we also need to chart a new world ecology. As the Sámi and the Inuit have been able to do, this charting will come from a combination of scientific and traditional ecological knowledge.

While it is important to criticize and analyze the problems and contradictions of capitalist world ecology, IPE research needs to delve into socio-environmental conflicts on which subalternized populations are engaged to understand the ways they point out of our current Age of Global Boiling. Commodity frontiers are privileged sites of struggle due to the direct effects of these projects and processes and due to the unfolding of socio-environmental conflicts. A further research agenda on the political economy of ecological transition must delve in the tensions and struggles developing in these sites and, specially, to understand the ecologies and socio-ecological arrangements being promoted, defended and created by the populations and movements engaged in these struggles. It is necessary not only to comprehend the immediate struggles and tactics, but also if and how they point to socio-ecological projects and processes that can inform an ecological transition away from the capitalist world ecology and from value as the main mediation in the humanity-nature relation.

Indigenous politics, in many instances, are engaged in resisting such practices through the defense of their traditional territories and livelihoods. Pressuring states, international organizations, and businesses, as well as enduring most of the environmental impacts. At the same time, the political articulations of Indigenous communities mobilize concepts of politics, economy, wellbeing, and the role of humanity in nature that challenge and have challenged modern capitalist states' spatial and political practices for long. While postponing the end of these non-European worlds, they are also crafting ways out of the current conjunction of crises that face humanity, through political practices and economies that are grounded in an immemorial history of resistance and struggle. Understanding the politics of indigenous peoples and traditional communities and their struggles at the global extractive frontiers remains an important element in this debate, not only pointing to the problems and tensions of the actual and

coming ecological crisis, but also to alternatives and counter-hegemonic social forces prefiguring new political practices.

In the Arctic and elsewhere, indigenous communities are resisting the encroachment of extractive projects and economies in their lands. Commodity frontiers in minerals, new sources of oil and gas, deep sea mining, wind and solar power are developing, putting more pressure over natural resources, indigenous territories and over the biosphere as a whole. Far from localized struggles, they are responses to global economic processes, to the proliferation of extractive frontiers and the techniques of domination deployed to put human and non-human nature to work. While pointing to limits, the political mobilization of indigenous peoples, even when inside the institutional framework of settler colonial states, also point to how politics can be thought with other priorities and other elements guiding mobilization.

Brazilian historian Luiz Antônio Simas frequently discusses the social and spiritual role of crossroads across many cultures. From Ancient Greek cults of Hecate to popular Catholicism and contemporary African-Brazilian religions like the Umbanda and Candomblé, crossroads are sites of reverence, contact with the spiritual world, reflection, choice of ways, self-doubt and, mainly, change. Being on a crossroads is predicated on the possibility of assessment and on the possibility of choice, of changing ways. The history told by strategy documents in the Arctic – even those crafted in cooperation with indigenous peoples – is a history of a single avenue. Resource development, economic development, diffusion and expansion of wage economies are givens of the future of the Arctic and its indigenous peoples. Hopefully, they will generate enough money to remedy their own ecological costs.

The same author has also stated that many of our contemporary political problems come, exactly from *not being* at crossroads, from the ominous inevitability of modernity, capitalism, development. I believe one of the main tasks of researchers committed to understanding and transforming reality, especially in a post-capitalist direction is, now, to bring humanity to a crossroads. As Luiz Marques puts it “It is as encouraging as it is ‘unfalsifiable’ Marx’s hypothesis that

'humanity only applies itself to tasks it can solve'. But there is a prior question: it will not be able to solve a problem if it is not recognized as such." (2015, p.15). With this hope, this research sought to bring questions and problems unaddressed as such, in the hopes of starting to chart solutions for them.

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