

Dáiddakárta

Cartography in Contemporary Sámi Art Practices

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Abstract This article explores contemporary art practices in Sápmi which utilise maps as a tool and medium. The importance of the artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen's abundant maps from the mid-1970s is acknowledged, and furthermore the article looks into examples from the next generation Sámi artists who create *dáiddakárta*, which literally translates to art maps. Although not a traditional Sámi way of mapping and orientating in the landscape, *dáiddakárta* is significant in representing Indigenous people, in knowledge production, decolonial resistance, and reconciliation. Various *dáiddakárta* broaden the concept of what a 'map' has been, and could be, and contribute to the cartographic representations of other forms of being. Emphasising the concept of worlding helps understand mapping as a constant formation, relation and negotiation, and as a forceful and sometimes activist process, not only rendering or representing a world 'already there'. Instead, the art maps serve as interpretative, aesthetic and even speculative actors in contemporary society.

Keywords Indigenous cartography. Counter-mapping. Worlding. Sámi Art. Hans Ragnar Mathisen. Katarina Pirak-Sikku. Outi Pieski. Sissel M. Bergh.

Summary 1 Sápmi. – 2 Mapping as Worlding. – 3 The Sámi Atlas – *Ourselves in the World*. – 4 The Drum's Time. – 5 Meahcci, *Mapping and Memory Work*. – 6 Kiss from the Border – *Decolonial Interventions*. – 7 Slow Cartography – Healing Land. – 8 Guided by *Dáiddakárta*.



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1 Sápmi

From where the world is rendered, is a pivotal issue in cartography. In 1974-75, the artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen (aka Elle-Hánsa aka Ke-viselie, b. 1945) visualised the world seen from his northern homeland in a map entitled *Sápmi*, the name of the land of the Indigenous people in the northern part of Fennoscandia.¹ The colourful map was offset-printed in 5,000 copies and disseminated all over Sápmi. As the first map of the entire Sámi homeland,² it was a significant symbol in the coeval ethnopolitical and cultural struggle for Sámi rights in the 1970s and 1980s. Mathisen adopted the ornate and abundant style of the maps produced during the time of European exploration and imperial colonisation of the world, including the north. In particular, his map invokes elements of Olaus Magnus' *Carta Marina* (1539), the first known map of the Nordic countries, which changed the southern European's common imaginary of the northern regions as a *Terra nullus*.³ However, Mathisen's map from 1975 replaced the colonial and mythical cartes-à-figures with Sámi cultural and spiritual signs, amongst them the *noaidi* drum, a number of *duodji* objects, and the symbolic sun.⁴ He added 920 old Sámi place names - including "Sápmi", as handwritten in the cartouche - which he had collected over many years through oral sources, old topographic descriptions, and from pioneer researchers in Sámi history and language.⁵ Finally, he removed the national state borders that had come to split the Sámi people.⁶ The map "can exclude people, but it also can include people, it can highlight and ignore. My maps are highlighting an Indigenous culture", the artist states in the biographical film, *Cartographer* (2019) [fig. 1].⁷

1 The name is written differently in the Sámi languages. Mathisen's Sabmi was a tentatively naming. The three main spellings today are Sápmi, Sápmie, Saepmie. In this article Northern Sámi is used as a rule, however also other languages when relevant, mainly Lule Sámi, Ume Sámi, Pite Sámi, and Southern Sámi.

2 Cf. Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2020, 301.

3 Olaus Magnus (Olof Månsson, 1490-1557), Swedish naturalist, ethnographer and titular bishop of Uppsala. The map is considered to be the earliest approximately correct map of the Nordic countries illustrated with people, creatures, real and mythical, related to the area. *Carta marina*, woodcut, 170 × 125 cm, printed in Venice 1539.

4 *Noaidi* (in Northern Sámi) is the most common Sámi word used to designate a Sámi religious or ritual specialist. *Duodji* (in Northern Sámi) is the term for traditional craft, but also comprehends creative production, aesthetic form, practical use as well as spiritual knowledge.

5 Some of Mathisen's suggested place names are disputed within the local communities.

6 Sápmi is part of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The national borders were decided in 1751 and in 1826. The area is historically referred to as Lapland, a name no longer considered suitable.

7 Cf. M. Ranis, *Cartographer*, film by Hans Ragnar Mathisen, 2019, 48 min, HDV. The quotation is at 00:44'45" (Author's transcription). The film was shown at the exhibition



Figure 1 Hans Ragnar Mathisen, *Sápmi*. 1974–75. Digital print on paper, 50 × 55,5 cm. (Printed in a variety of sizes). © Author

During the next decades, Mathisen made roughly 50 maps of different Sámi regions, naming, claiming and changing the dominant perspectives of the northern world from Western to Indigenous.⁸ He implemented the simplest counter-mapping method by turning the world map ‘upside-down’, thereby questioning the cemented global order. Mathisen inspired the global Indigenous movement with his maps, and also through his extensive travels to other Indigenous lands. In Sápmi, his collection and use of local place names became

of Mathisen’s map in 2021 in Oslo Kunstforening, titled *Kartografen*.

8 Most of Mathisen’s maps are presented on his home page, now archived: <https://keviselie-hansragnarmathisen.net/>. They are drawn on multilayered plastic foil, reproduced photographically or scanned and printed on paper.

an important issue for Sámi activists, and Mathisen was instrumental for activism and engagement among Sámi artists to take back their people's past, present and imagined future (Holm 2022, 188). Despite this pioneering Indigenous cartographic work, five decades later the Sámi vocal artist Sofia Jannok (b. 1982) uttered, in the context of new governmental and capitalist colonisation and exploitation of Sámi land, that "according to the maps, we do not exist". Through her lyrics and video works she underscores the importance of telling "We are still here" and "This is my land".⁹

Mathisen's cartography is the point of departure in this article, and in addition to *Sábmi 1975* I will highlight artworks that were created in the 1990s, and which demonstrate the great variety in his *dáiddakárta* motifs.¹⁰ Furthermore, I will investigate Mathisen's legacy and continuation by looking into more recent art projects related to Sápmi, which all use maps in various ways, as a tool and medium, and as aesthetic images. Rather than give an overview of Sámi artists who use maps in their practice, some significant cases are chosen, which widen the scope of cartography, as well as appraising the contemporary art world of Indigenous presence and relation to the land. The Sámi-Swedish artist Katarina Pirak Sikku (b. 1965) enters the realm of cartography through her profound project on tracing her ancestors' hiking trails and reindeer marks. The Sámi-Finnish artist Outi Pieski (b. 1973), the art-activist Jenni Laiti (b. 1981), and the poet Niillas Holmberg (b. 1990) worked together on *Rájáccummá / Kiss from the Border* and use maps as a political and decolonial tool. Sissel Mutale Bergh (b. 1974) has worked in the last decade on participatory and deep map projects in the Southern Sámi region of Norway, where she lives. Thus, the art projects for this study are chosen from several parts of the Sápmi, with artists of different generations. Rather than operating with pre-given categories, the varied *dáiddakárta* extend the terrain of Indigenous cartography in a Sámi context.

⁹ Cf. Jannok 2021, 106. Jannok, lyrics and video *We are still here / Mii Leat Dás Ain* (together with the visual artist Anders Sunna) and *This is my land (Sápmi)*, both 2016.

¹⁰ Mathisen's art production as such is varied, as demonstrated in the retrospective exhibition *ČSV terra cognita*, in Romssa Dáiddasiida/Tromsø Kunstforening in 2021, curated by Leif Magne Tangen and Gry-Kristine Fors Spein, see Fors Spein et al. 2021; Bouvier 2021.

2 Mapping as Worlding

Indigenous cartography encompasses a wide range of practices and forms and serves various purposes across cultures. However, scholars highlight some common features.¹¹ Traditional Indigenous maps are often process oriented and take the form of bodily performances, oral descriptions and experiential modes of mapping. Indigenous cartography is defined by Robert A. Rundstrom as *processual*, which underscores that maps are ‘incorporate’ *practices* rather than ‘inscriptive’ *products*.¹² Furthermore, Indigenous maps describe space phenomenologically, as the way places are experienced and used, rather than rendering the landscape from a disembodied viewpoint. Indigenous maps convey situated and traditional knowledge, thereby connecting to the ancestors’ use of land, and to spiritual dimensions. The knowledge embedded in the names of places and landscapes are important sources, but remain empty words, reduced to “mere labels”, if not contextualised (Cogos et al. 2017, 49). The overall challenge in Indigenous cartography is how to transfer place names, the situated knowledge, and oral and performative modes of mapping, into modern maps – or even to conceive new forms of cartography “that can guarantee the transmission” of the deep Indigenous relation to the environment to future generations (Pearce, Louis 2008, 108).

While Indigenous cartography is a broad research field, it also embraces artistic cartographic practices, which so far have been little studied. This article connects to the discourse of Indigenous cartography, which resonates with the demands of recent critical cartography to embrace “multiple forms of knowledge, including the affective, embodied, oral, cognitive and cultural”. With reference to the geographer Ângela Massumi Katuta “we need to broaden the concept of what a ‘map’ is in order to include ‘other’ epistemologies or cosmovisions and, therefore, make cartography a tool for the creation of new worlds”. Humble study of maps in contemporary art practices in Sápmi is my attempt to meet these demands to “develop a different imagination of the world and our relations with and within it”.¹³

Dáiddakárta does not refer to a common concept in the Sámi languages, but is a compound word which literally means ‘art map’. Thus, the term *dáiddakárta* underscores that the maps chosen for this inquiry are not maps in the ordinary sense, nor are they a traditional

11 Cf. Rundstrom 1998; Pearce, Louis 2008; Sletto 2009; Brattland, Nilsen 2011; Lucchesi 2018; Joks et al. 2020.

12 Cf. Rundstrom 1998 (and other publications). Tim Ingold has identified a similar distinction between ‘mapping’ as parallel to speaking, and ‘mapmaking’ to the privilege of writing (cf. Ingold 2000).

13 Kollektiv orangotango, quoting Katuta in Schranz 2021, 68-9.

Sámi way of orienting oneself in the landscape. They are visual and material artworks whose functions vary from personal to historical, and political to aesthetical. As both *dáidda* and *kárta* are loanwords of more recent origin in the Sámi languages, the concept does not convey the maps of land and connections, which have been transmitted orally, mentally and performatively in the long Sámi tradition.

The traditional Sámi way of mapping is not rendered on a visual map. Rather, the traditional Sámi mapping gives oral descriptions of geographical features of the landscape that also include methods of finding the way, knowing the sites for vital resources, as well as animal migration paths, environmental dynamics and climatic conditions, and the connections to the sacred and spiritual dimension. Such maps still live on in the storytelling, yoiks¹⁴ and place names, and witness the deep knowledge of the Indigenous art of living. The extent to which *dáiddakárta* is able to embed the knowledge and aesthetics of these oral, mental and performative maps is a question to be explored and can further contribute to the “new arts of noticing” the land, its connections and connectivity (Guttorm et al. 2021, 135). Indeed, the function of *dáiddakárta* is more than just a description of the landscape, and more than highlighting an Indigenous culture. The maps are interpretative, aesthetic and even speculative actors in our contemporary culture.

Worlding as a multifaceted concept encompasses this study, although not as a utilitarian tool to find the way, but rather as a sphere to step into and be embraced by. Worlding refers to a manifold of philosophical, conceptual, critical and methodological understandings, firstly rooted in the existential phenomenology of being as a constant, and poetic, formation of the world (Heidegger 1927). The concept also embraces a productive and symbolic world-making in art and language (Goodman 1978). Furthermore, the postcolonial *counterworlding* indicates expressions of agency and resistance to imperial worldviews (Spivak 1985; 1990). Not least, a speculative and fabulating worlding-*with* also embraces a multispecies perspective of immense importance today and tomorrow (Haraway 2008; 2016). Thus, varied understandings of worlding deem different aspects of the concept as essential and help understand mapping and *dáiddakárta* as a constant formation, relation and negotiation; and as an active and ontological process not rendering or representing a world ‘already there’. Worlding expands upon the concept of world view, which has long been significant in Indigenous studies and cartography.

14 Yoik is traditional Sámi chanting, a vocal genre. The function of it is wider than being just music, and can be considered representative of the entire Sámi culture and world view, in its structure and meaning. In this context, of interest is the function of yoik to recall *memories* of places and landscapes, and also to describe those places. However, it is important that the description is not *about* a place (or animal or person), rather one yoiks the place (or animal or person), or *invokes* the landscape.

As a non-Sámi speaker and interpreter, I recognize that my knowledge is situated and partial, striving to be attuned to Sámi knowledge and worldviews.¹⁵ Aware of the danger of appropriation, my use of Sámi terms and imagery is discussed with Indigenous scholars. The artwork *Markarna (The Fields, 2018)* by Carola Grahn and duojár Nils-Johan Labba serves as a land acknowledgment, to which I give my consent: a small globe-shaped box of wood and antlers encircled by an inscription in Swedish and Northern Sámi. Accompanying the globe is a speech, stating: “We acknowledge that the lands on which we gather are the traditional homelands of the Sámi people. Here, Sámi people have lived and herded reindeer since time immemorial. Now, we strive towards respectful relations with all peoples and work for the healing of both land and hearts”.¹⁶

3 The Sámi Atlas – *Ourselves in the World*

The first *Sámi Atlas* was published as late as 1996 and gives us a broader understanding of Sápmi and important views on land, history and cultural heritage (Mathisen, Aikio, Henriksen 1996). The atlas was edited by Hans Ragnar Mathisen and made in cooperation with Sámi historians. The map sheets are quite similar to any didactic school atlas, showing well-known worldviews of the European continent and the Nordic region. However, the focus, language and topics differ. The publication manifests Sámi archaic history up until the contemporary political situation, as it maps rock carvings (*báktegovat*), places of sacrifice (*bálvvossajit*), trapping sites (*bivdorustegat*), traditional reindeer grazing grounds, various Sámi language areas (*sámegielat*), summer residences and winter residences for the nomadic population (*siida* boundaries), historical borders and today’s national borders. Producing this atlas was one important way to pass on knowledge of Sámi history, geography and land use, and to claim ownership of the cultural heritage inherent in the landscape. The conventional format of the atlas is utilised, as a language of science and authority, but produced by Indigenous scholars for the Indigenous people in their own language.

The endpapers that carefully embrace the Sámi Atlas are hand-drawn maps created by Mathisen. The front map centres on the North Pole and showcases the Indigenous peoples of the North

¹⁵ The International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Convention 169, 1989. In Norway, it is clear that the Sámi population satisfies the criteria stipulated in this definition. For the ethics of Indigenous methodology, see amongst other Porsanger, Seurujärvi-Kari 2021, 26-39.

¹⁶ For the artwork and translation, see Danbolt, Pushaw 2023.

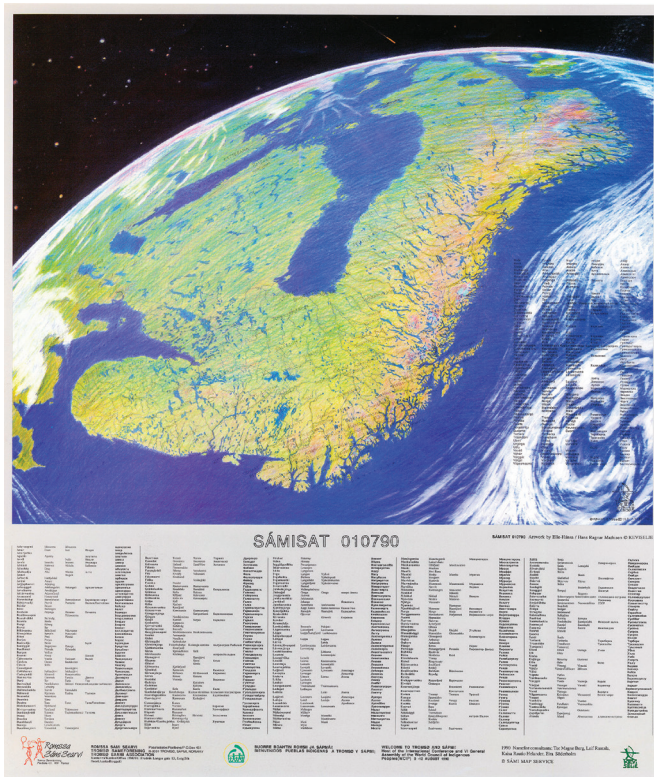


Figure 2
Hans Ragnar Mathisen, *Sámisat*
010790. 1990.
Poster with place names,
70 × 60 cm.
© Author

(*davviálbmogat*) and their homelands in the circumpolar Arctic, including Nunavut, Kalaallit Nunaat, Nenetsia, and Sápmi. Surrounding his pastel-coloured map are Arctic animals, reindeer, walrus, salmon, and polar bear. The front endpaper presents a different perspective: a spherical representation of the world seen through the lens of a fictional satellite. Titled *Sámisat 010790*, this depiction reorients the conventional map, highlighting and magnifying Sápmi.¹⁷ Mathisen appropriates the technological optics of Earth images from space in this hand-drawn rendition, linking it to the satellite as a modern visual tool for Earth observation and research, also beneficial to the Indigenous peoples of the North. Just as satellite imagery has trained the modern eye to view ourselves from a planetary perspective, it simultaneously draws our attention to familiar, localized places. In the Sámi Atlas,

¹⁷ Cf. Mathisen's website: <https://keviselie-hansragnarmathisen.net/>. His website is now archived; it belongs to the Hans Ragnar Mathisen archive of Arran julevs-áme guovdásj / Arran Lule Sámi Centre.

these place names are meticulously integrated into the landscape. In the mass-produced poster version of *Sámisat 010790*, the names are also provided below the map in a multilingual parallel format [fig. 2].

Utilising the master's tool to amplify marginalised voices, highlight their perspectives, and articulate their reality, the *Sábmi* map of 1975, the *Sámi Atlas*, and further Mathisen's extensive collection of maps from all Sámi regions serve as counter-mappings. Counter-mapping emerged from Indigenous groups, initially in the northern territories of Canada, in the 1960s and 1970s, as an act of agency and resistance, allowing Indigenous communities to control how their land was depicted and represented. In a broader context, these maps align with Spivak's theories of counter-worlding, offering alternative narratives and representations that challenge the hegemonic world view (Spivak 1985, 263-4).¹⁸ While Mathisen's maps are situated within this discourse of resistance and are viewed as tools for interrogating power-knowledge inequalities, they are more. The principal recipients are the Sámi people themselves, not the colonisers. And, Mathisen's aesthetic and abundant cartographic style celebrates 'ourselves in the world', rather than expressing resistance or critique.

4 The Drum's Time

Mathisen's extensive body of work demonstrate antipodes in his *dáiddakárta*. The woodcut entitled *Tacitus '98 A.D. / Goahti* (1999) offers a starkly contrasting perspective to that of the satellite. Here, Mathisen re-situates the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus regarding the Sámi (finni) in his literary work *Germania* from the first century in Western time: "Securi adversus homines, securi adversus deos, rem difficillimam adsecuti sunt". 'They do not need to fear either people or God, because the conditions they live in are already miserable'.¹⁹ The Sámi people are not unknown, but have rather been thoroughly studied from ancient times up till today, but for a long time devalued and exotified. In Mathisen's picture, the ignorant and devaluating Latin words of Tacitus are remediated, as they are inscribed as the oval plan form of the traditional Sámi arched tent (called *goahti*), and as they witness survival despite difficult circumstances throughout history. The pictorial perspective is from the ground inside the tent, where the eyes follow the colourful *goahti* construction upwards to the central opening and into the blue sky. Regarded as a two-dimensional graphic plan or map of the *goahti*, this oval form with its

¹⁸ For elaboration and examples of counter-mapping, see Kollektiv orangotango in Schranz 2021, 65-93.

¹⁹ The translation of Tacitus relies on Holm 2022.



Figure 3

Hans Ragnar Mathisen, *Tacitus*
'98 A.D./*Goahti*. 1999.
Coloured woodcut,
62 × 55 cm.
RiddoDuottarMuseat, SD 1042.
© M. Miller / RDM

radial forces extending from the centre, is often repeated in Mathisen's artworks as a profound symbol in Sámi culture. When moving the tent to follow the herd during the seasons of the year, the centre of the world moves with it [fig.3].

Many of the old Sámi drum membranes, of which Mathisen has made 32 replicas, have a similar structure to the goahti map. These drum drawings can be conceived as 'cosmic maps'. This is elaborated on in "The Drum as Map: Western Knowledge Systems and Northern Indigenous Map Making" (Keski-Säntti et al. 2003)²⁰ in which the authors present the different ways the Sámi drum could have functioned as a map: as the individual naoidi's spiritual journey, as hunting maps, as a shared and ritual orientation in space and time, as astronomical orientation, and thus as a connector of microcosmos and macrocosmos. The map, then, is not solely limited to the pictorial representations on the drum skin. It also encompasses a material aspect, such as the rear side with its handle. Furthermore, it encompasses the experience of the drum in use: the rhythmic tapping and the voice of the naoidi, the gathering around the fire in the interior of a tent, the opening up into the constellation of the stars. Obviously, to interpret the image of the drum skin solely "as a representation of an indigenous cartographic knowledge system - a map" is too simple and "fails to do justice to the Sámi world view as a whole" (Keski-Säntti et al. 2003, 122).

²⁰ See also Mathisen in *Cartographer* (2019): 00:38'.



Figure 4 Hans Ragnar Mathisen, *Trommens tid* [Goabdesjágge / The drum's time]. 1994. Woodcut, monotype on paper, 75 × 56 cm. Troms fylkeskommune, TFK. 1192. © Jan Martin Berg

In Hans Ragnar Mathisen's woodcut entitled *Trommens tid* (*Drum-Time / Goabdesjágge*, 1994) the pictorial outline of a drum skin fills the surface, but printed on a background that seems to be a landscape. In an interview Mathisen clarifies that out of all his graphic drum prints, "this is the only drum that can also be perceived as a map", which more precisely represents the Lule Sámi area.²¹ The

²¹ Confirmed in personal conversation, cf. Mathisen 2024.

drum's membrane is rendered transparent against a light blue background and is embraced by a brightly coloured landscape. In the top field, the line curves like a horizon, and the mountains, the sea and fields of land are represented in a coherent and vigorous palette. The dominant green and blue colours signify a rich landscape of plants, trees and valleys, rivers and waters with fish and sea birds, and animals like deer and fox and their tracks in the snow. Signs of the sun and the moon anchor each corner of this world, and the glimmering North Star is fixed at the top. In the bottom field, the planetary perspective is reduced to a strip of overlapping zones, dominated by green letters in between the mass-felled trees, upside down most likely saying "Láhppun", which means felled, lost, absence, and also hints to Lapponia, the colonial name on Sápmi (Mathisen 2024). Hidden in the landscape, the artist has left a comment on the capitalist driven and eco-destroying felling of forests in Lule Sámi areas.²² However, the linguistic meaning of 'Láhppun' also implies 'the possibility of coming back' [fig. 4].

The red outline of the drum is a replica of an old Lule Sámi drum, as it is represented in Ernst Manker's ethnologic monography *Die Lapplische Zaubertrommel*, vol. 2.²³ The separating horizontal line inside the oval drum is a significant part of the iconographic programme: in the upper part of the pictorial field there are images of gods and holy places. Underneath, and in the middle, the ordinary world is represented. And at the very bottom, there are varied scaffolds, amongst other used in rituals of sacrifice. In the centre is the sun symbol, encircled by the four cardinal directions, and in its innermost space a figure which is suggested by Manker to represent a bird (Manker 1950, 411), and by Mathisen perhaps a bear, a holy animal in Sámi tradition. In any case, the human is not in the centre in this worlding.

If *Trommens tid* can be considered a map, its two layered print (the drum outline upon the landscape) opens our eyes to a world of connections, between beings of humans and more than humans, and between the spiritual realm and contemporary realities, bridging the past and the future worlds, and healing the broken and lost. At least, that is a hope expressed by the younger artist Sissel M. Bergh "Can the magic be rediscovered, so that everyone can live with and in our surroundings?"²⁴

²² Lee, J. (2023). Unpublished interview with Hans Ragnar Mathisen on his *Drum Motifs*, for *Troms fylkeskommune* (00:10'20'').

²³ Manker 1950, Abb. 145, Nr. 63, 410-12.

²⁴ Cf. S.M. Bergh, *Elmie*, short film (2023).

5 Meahcci, Mapping and Memory Work

To an outsider, vast northern landscapes may seem uninhabited and uncultivated. A central task in Indigenous cartography is to represent a world that is inhabited for generations, and to dismantle the misconception of wilderness. Such misconceptions laid the ground open for cultural colonialism, as well as legitimise today's 'green', environmental colonialism.²⁵ In the Sámi lifeworld, the seeming wilderness is *meahcci*, as unfolded in the article "Verbing *Meahcci*: Living Sámi Lands". The Sámi scholars describe the plural, *meahcit*, as places for practical and productive relations between humans, animals and nature (Joks et al. 2020). *Meahcit* are *tasksapes*, to use the anthropologist Tim Ingold's term, as the time-and-space specific use of the land throughout the shifting seasons. This also encompasses the complexity of the Sámi land use and sharing of resources, which according to the authors is hard to explain in academic terms and even harder to represent on a map. *Meahcci* is to some degree embedded in topography, and in wayfinding and task-oriented words and place names, in which the Sámi language is rich. These toponyms provide the basis for mental and cognitive maps through which the landscapes are expressed and remembered. However, the place names and their meaning are in danger of disappearing, even from central Sámi areas where the Sámi language is used in everyday life.²⁶

The oral transmission of *meahcci*, which conveys the knowledge of connectivity, boundaries, and where to find resources and shelter, so crucial for humans and other beings in Sápmi, is a profound source in Katharina Pirak Sikku's art practice. Pirak Sikku often devotes herself to slow wanderings through the landscape and through the history of her ancestors. She also follows the trails of the reindeer herd; when following the reindeer, she follows her ancestors. In the exhibition *Dollet* ('Grasp', 2006) she drew trails on the walls and floor corresponding to the migration path. These trails led through installations of reindeer stomach adipose and shattered glass, reminiscent of slaughtering or a place of sacrifice (Jørgensen 2017, 254).

²⁵ 'Green colonialism' is used to describe the ongoing colonialism in Sápmi, similar to such concepts as 'energy colonialism' used elsewhere. See amongst others: <https://www.arcticwff.org/the-circle/stories/climate-change-and-green-colonialism-in-the-sapmi/>.

²⁶ The reasons for this loss are manifold. One reason Mathisen states in *Cartographer* is that people travel faster, and thus do not need the small names on the locations in between the main destinations. While Sámi scholars reckon this threat, they also argue that today's modern way of living and herding, using snowmobiles and GPS rather than reindeer and sled, not only imply loss. The new experiences of the land, according to their findings, are embedded in the old stories, and new places are added to the collective maps. However, today the mapping process becomes lesser collective and more individualised. *Cartographer* (2019), 00:11'. See also Nergård 2006, 127; Cogos et al. 2017, 45-8.

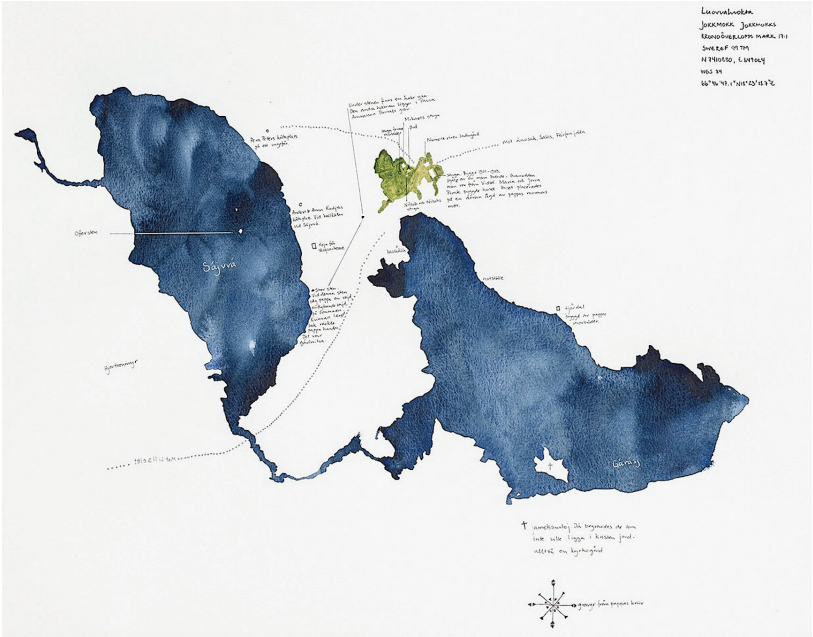


Figure 5 Katarina Pirak Sikku, “Luovva Luokta”. Katarina Pirak Sikku vuorkkás: Birága ja Klementssone johtolagat ja máddariid boazomearkkat / Katarina Pirak Sikku’s Archive: Pirak’s and Klementsson’s hiking trails and ancestral reindeer marks. 2021. Ink and watercolor on paper, 145 × 193 cm. © Katarina Pirak Sikku

The installation was accompanied by an oral narrative about a small Sámi settlement, Luovva Luokta. As a whole, this highly sensual exhibition can be considered a map that opens a world of connections between peoples, animals, land, the living and the dead.

In her more recent work created for the exhibition *Down North/Contemporary Art in the Arctic* (opened in 2021), among other artistic outcomes are two paintings to which Pirak Sikku refers to as maps [figs 5-6]. The body of work as a whole is titled *From Katarina Pirak Sikku’s archive: Pirak’s and Klementsson’s hiking trails and ancestral reindeer marks / Katarina Pirak Sikku vuorkkás: Birága ja Klementssone johtolagat ja máddariid boazomearkkat* (2021). For a long time, Pirak Sikku has collected stories from people living in the Jåhkåmåhkke district in the interior part of Sápmi and searched the archives for lost knowledge. For this project, she has incorporated a study of the patterns of her families’ reindeer marks and their hiking trails, thus adding another layer of visual and historical narrative to the geographical terrain and trails.²⁷ The two maps, each measuring 145 × 193 cm,

²⁷ The work was produced for the first “North Atlantic Triennale: Down North” at



Figure 6 Katarina Pirak Sikku, “Baksjön”. Katarina Pirak Sikku vuorkkás: *Birága ja Klementssone johtolagat ja máddariid boazomearkkat / Katarina Pirak Sikku’s Archive: Pirak’s and Klementsson’s hiking trails and ancestral reindeer marks*. 2021. Ink and watercolor on paper, 145 × 193 cm. © Katarina Pirak Sikku

depict fields of blue paint representing lakes and rivers, with green spots marking the sites of her ancestors’ self-built houses and sheds. The map named ‘Luovvaluokta’ refers to the small settlement we know from her former exhibition. This is where her father grew up. The place name means ‘bay of supply’, as Pirak Sikku explains in a written essay about her father, the artist Lars Pirak Sikku (2021, 205-14). The other map on display provides insight into her mother’s home place further south in Sápmi (Pirak Sikku 2024).²⁸ Both maps feature hand-written text referring to different layers: GPS coordinates, names of lakes and places, fragments of secret and collectively forgotten stories, and private memories. Some of the locations that Pirak Sikku has marked are places she got to know while growing up, while others are added based on oral descriptions and archival findings.

Pirak Sikku’s maps document traditional knowledge of the environment, as they locate where to find vital resources like water

Portland Museum of Art, Maine, February–June 2022. In 2023 the exhibition opened at Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden.

28 Pirak Sikku, mail correspondence, 14 march 2024.

springs and cloudberry marshlands, the best places for fishing, and materials for the work of duodji, and to build shelters to rest. Included are also landmarks like the offer stone, 'the haunted house', and long-kept secret places, like the hidden burial site on a small islet with a written inscription on the map, explaining: "for those who did not want to be buried in Christian soil". Pirak Sikku underscores the importance that the geographical locations of significant Sámi places were not known. They were kept secret to protect them, because if discovered, they would most certainly be visited by ethnologists, who would dig them up and take everything of value to a museum. However, the better protected, the less the places were mentioned, and the more the places fell into oblivion.²⁹ Similar concerns about keeping secrets are also recognised in other research projects on mapping Indigenous cultural knowledge, which makes us aware that mapping itself may leave Indigenous knowledge vulnerable (Pearce, Louis 2008, 110).

While Pirak Sikku searches historical tracks in place and memory, her visual maps are developed little by little, more like storytelling than pictorial maps. The ink and the fluid watercolour set blots on a white surface, which are further connected with dashed lines and text. These maps may be likened to the mental maps' structure, visualising paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. The body-scaled size of her maps evokes and involves phenomenological experiences, and invite entering the artist's landscape of memory. Obviously, these large-scale maps that are exhibited are not intended to be the end-product of artistic research, but rather seem to be entranced to the reciprocal process of recalling and mapping. The blank paper surfaces that are not filled out are forgotten places, hidden stories and potential histories. The maps thus function "as mnemonic devices, where stories from the past, a memory or shared memories are remembered", as Sámi poet Niilas Helander writes on Indigenous maps in his *Nomadtekst* (Helander 2022, 38).³⁰

In Katarina Pirak Sikku's art project, the intricate interplay between history and land is emphasised, where kinship becomes inseparable from geography. Ultimately, the artwork reminds us that the land is interwoven with the lives and histories of our ancestors. Stories and knowledge about specific places are deeply embedded within families and individuals, but are not written down, instead living on as mental maps, orally through storytelling, or bodily through movement in the landscape. Pirak Sikku's research and mapping project thus becomes a poignant work to negotiate personal and collective memories.

²⁹ Cf. Sikku's website: <https://www.katarinapiraksikku.com/katarina-pirak-sikku-vuorkk%C3%A1s-bir%C3%A1ga-j>.

³⁰ Helander refers to and quotes Azoulay 2019 and Tuck, McKenzie 2014.

6 Kiss from the Border – Decolonial Interventions

In the same spirit as the *Sábmi* map of 1975 celebrated the Indigenous people, free of national borders, regardless of nature interventions and other regulations restricting Sámi way of life, the art project *Rájáccummá* from 2017-19 praises the large and rich landscape of the river, Deatnu/Tana (Holmberg, Laiti, Pieski 2021, 154-9). The translation of the project's title to English as 'Kiss from the Border' is both inviting and, at the same time, serves as an ironic commentary on the complex relationship between Sámi rights and the national state regulations between Norway and Finland. This multimedia project includes a graphic map signed by Outi Pieski with the title "Ellos Deatnu!", literally translated as 'Let the Tana river live!'. Interpreted against its historic-political backdrop, this map stands as a sharp comment to the national states and their power. It reminds us of the slogan "Ellos Eatnu!" (Let the river live!), which was used in the most known conflict of land and water in Sápmi, the Áltá/Alta conflict, which escalated throughout the 1970s, reaching a full controversy in 1981 [fig. 7].³¹

The current political conflict to which the *Rájáccummá* map refers (and even intervenes) is more recent, but still concerns the ongoing conflict with governmental regulations and the right to land and water. Outlined on Pieski's graphic map is the jagged coastline of the northern part of Norway and Sápmi. The main motif is the Deatnu river, one of the major rivers in the northern Norwegian part of Sápmi, rich in salmon and a connector between people. However, the river has also come to be the border between the two nation states of Norway and Finland.³² On Pieski's map, against a light monochrome background, Deatnu is rendered as a vital organ, similar to a heart or a

31 The conflict was between the Sámi people and the environmental protection movement on the one side, and the Norwegian State on the other, which was to conduct a large-scale hydropower development in the river connecting Áltá and Guovdageaidnu. This consequently would disturb the life of plants and animals and destroy the Indigenous people's vital use of the river and the nearby land.

32 The borders which split the Sámi people into different national states were created in the mid eighteenth century, the addition to the treaty ('Lappekodisillen' of 1751, called the Sámi *Magna Carta*) was to secure the Indigenous people's right to move freely across the borders to follow their reindeer herds or for fishing, hunting or gathering. However, as Sámi scholar Veli-Pekka Lehtola states: "in the 1800s Sápmi, the Sámi homeland was split into four parts by the national borders [...]. Reindeer nomads were prohibited from crossing the border; likewise residents on the Finnish side were denied the right to fish in the Varanger Fjord [...]. The border closing caused upheaval for Sámi culture" (Lehtola 2002, 36). The question of Sámi rights to land in the northernmost County of Finnmark was mostly settled through the 2005 Finnmark Act which transferred state ownership of the county's land to the inhabitants of Finnmark. Historic Sámi rights to land and water, however, is still an unresolved issue (Raymond-Yakoubian et al. 2020, 303).

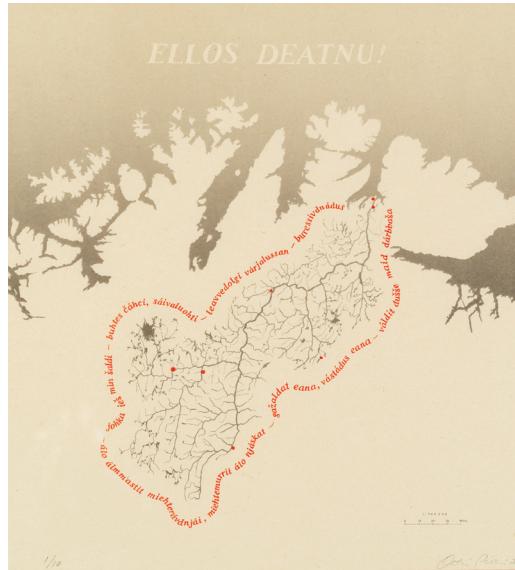


Figure 7
Outi Pieski, Jenni Laiti,
Niillas Holmberg, *Ellos Deatnu!*.
The collective environmental
artwork *Rájáccummá / Kiss
from the Border*.
2017-19. 50 × 45 cm.
Lithography by Outi Pieski

lung with a network of life-giving veins. The organic flood is encircled by red-coloured text lines, which is a poem written by Niillas Holmberg in the Northern Sámi language. It starts and ends with “gažaldat eana, vástáduš eana”, which is translated to ‘land is the question, the answer is land’, and in poetic terms expresses the Indigenous people’s close and sustainable relation to nature, and how to harvest its resources, and only take what is needed, “váldit dušše maid dárbbáša”.

The map and the poem were part of a more extensive collective art and activist project, which intervened with the geographical landscape around the Deatnu river. Lines from the poem were printed on signs and put up at the borders of the river, and the sites were marked as red dots on the map. Also, signs with more forthright political content were put up, proclaiming: “Moratoria. Decolonized Saami Area. Colonial laws not applied”.³³ A moratorium was declared to halt the new fishing agreement concerning the Deatnu river, which restricted the local people’s traditional fishing rights and increased pressure from commercial recreational fishing on the salmon stocks. A ‘moratorium office’ was established in a building on one of the river islands, accompanied by a website, to give information and offer tools to empower and activate the locals to resist colonial laws, and to build connections between the Sámi across the nations’ borders [figs 8a-c].

Rájáccummá connects art, design, cartography, geography and

33 <http://niillas.com/moratorium-office>.



Figures 8a-c Outi Pieski, Jenni Laiti, Niillas Holmberg.
The collective environmental artwork *Rájáccummá / Kiss from the Border*.
Niillas Holmberg, Jenni Laiti and Outi Pieski. 2017-19. © Outi Pieskis

activism, and thus fits the concept of radical cartography. It is inherently political, as its multimodal layers are embedded in the ongoing political, legal and economic processes, and violation of the Sámi people's right to land and water and ways of living. Defined as "the practice of mapmaking that subverts conventional notions in order to actively promote social change", radical cartography is an important tool for Indigenous peoples.³⁴ In this Sámi context, such attempts to reveal structures of power, to enable democratic processes, and to promote change, are also practises of decolonialisation (Homborg, Laiti, Pieski 2021, 156-8). Thus, the Deatnu map itself is of less importance, subordinated to the overall goals of the *Rájáccummá* project.

The afterlife of the environmental artwork *Rájáccummá / Kiss from the Border* is binary. In the first stage, the 'Ellos Deatnu!' map was

³⁴ Mogel, Bhagat 2008, 6-7. See also Schranz 2021, 31-2.

reprinted on a black background with a heading shouting ‘Creating justice’, and sold as posters and t-shirts in the campaign to support the Sámi river anglers in their fight and trial against the Finnish government which in 2016 swept away their rights to fish the Deatnu river.³⁵ This resonates with traditional Indigenous processual cartography that often stretches into the landscape as an extension of the map, as marks in stones or trees, but in this case extending through contemporary means such as inscriptions on clothes and on signboards at the riverside, through websites and activism (Pearce, Louis 2008, 110). In the next stage, the map and the photographs of the poetic signs in the landscape were purchased by the governmental Public Art Norway as a permanent installation at the Sámi upper secondary school in Kárášjogas.³⁶ Surrounding the school’s busy canteen, the artwork’s appreciation of the life-giving river is upheld for the younger generations.

To the activist part of *Rájáccummá*, the musician Sofia Jannok contributed a yoik. She continues the Sámi tradition of yoiking the land, the wind and the river. In one of her written pieces, mourning Sápmi as a ‘stolen land’, she refers to the Sámi belief in the spirituality of nature, as still prominent in her own mother’s world. However, nature is threatened by industry’s interventions, and she finds a deep fear for the future: “The mountains are sacred. Imagine they start extracting Goabddá and Ráska. That would be like sticking a knife straight into the heart”, her mother says. “How would a map for this heart look like?”, Jannok responds (2021; Author’s transl.).

7 Slow Cartography – Healing Land

The knife has pierced the map entitled *Luonddu gáržžideamit* (Nature interventions) drawn by Hans Ragnar Mathisen, at the beginning of the 1990s [fig. 9]. This map is the opposite of his well-known and celebrated *Sápmi* of 1975. Against the bleak blue outline of Fennoscandia, black holes and red fields bring up central issues in a critical praxis of Indigenous cartography. At the upper left, the indexes for the nature interventions are listed: cities and industry; hydroelectric plants; mining; military; dams and catchment areas; nuclear power plants; gas and oil drilling fields. The intertwined issues of

³⁵ For the campaign, see <https://www.samihumanrights.org/post/thank-you-for-your-support>. The fishery in Deatnu river has been regulated since 1873, however in ongoing renegotiations and confrontations between the Norwegian and the Finnish governments and the local population.

³⁶ KORO – Public Art Norway is the Norwegian government’s professional body for art in public spaces, and the major producer of art in Norway, cf. <https://koro.no/english/about-public-art-norway/>.

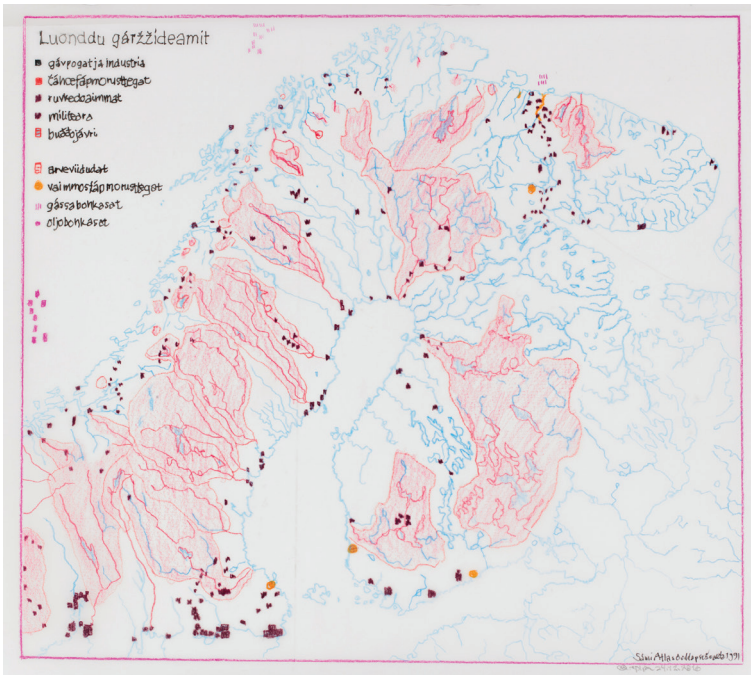


Figure 9 Hans Ragnar Mathisen, *Luonddu gáržžideamit* (Natur interventions). 1991. Handdrawn reproduction on tracing paper, 2016, 31 × 36 cm. © RidduDuottarMuseat, SD 1036

coloniality and environmental destruction are of no less relevance today, as the colonising new waves flow over Indigenous land all over the world. Green colonisation, military control and the commercial mining industry occupy Indigenous land, extract the rivers, wetlands, forests and mountains, and build borders that hinder the movement and migration of fish, birds, mammals, and people.

For several years, the artist Sissel Mutale Bergh has followed such processes of nature restrictions in the Southern Sámi region, of which the construction of the controversial industrial wind power plants on the Fovsen mountain plateau is the largest, and actually the largest in Northern Europe. In 2021, the power plant was judged by the Norwegian Supreme Court to be in conflict with the Sámi reindeer herders' use of the land and their fundamental human rights.³⁷ Bergh's response to this urgent situation is addressed in recently published short films, amongst them *Elmie* (2023), "a documentary poem about air, breath, wind, birds and mountains – and wind power".

37 Cf. Norwegian Supreme Court, "The Fosen judgement", HR-2021-1975-S.

Despite the political urgency, Bergh has also devoted herself to a slow mapping of the region. One of her driving forces is to question the Norwegian history writings and mappings. For her exhibition *Dalvedh* at the art museum in Tråante / Trondheim in 2014 she organised series of public lectures and workshops aiming to reveal and gather hidden and forgotten knowledge. The Southern Sámi word *dalvedh* means the “re-emergence of that which have been long gone” (Jørgensen 2017, 262).

For a long time, Bergh has searched for Sámi traces and presence in the counties of Trøndelag and Møre, a region which for most people is recognised as Norwegian rather than Southern Sámi. Her art project thus responds to the long story of erasure and ignorance of the Sámi’s existence in this area. One of her comprehensive projects, started in 2009 and still ongoing, is the etymological and historical mapping project *Ajmoejimh ajtoejimh*, in Southern Sámi, which may be translated to ‘washed out’, ‘faded’ or ‘erased’. Here, Bergh investigates the connections between landscape and language, and how old and local place names can be a key to uncover the past. In her work, history and land is seen as archived within language. Thus, it is through the knowledge we have of language that we can unravel the past and reconnect to our environment.

As part of this mapping project, Bergh is working on the monumental map *Noerte Miere Fuelhkie* (Northern Møre County 2018-), measuring 5,6 × 5,3 m [figs 10a-b]. She is adding old local place names to the sites and landscape, which convey rich knowledge of the topography as well as the land use. When exhibited, the public is invited to bring their knowledge and stories, to give historical depth to the names and landscape, and to fill out the blank spots on the map (Furseth 2020, 5-10). Bergh invites to take part in the deep and slow mapping as a work of memory, and as a work of reconciliation.

Due to the size of the map, the artist needs to be involved bodily when writing place names and drawing informative signs on the paper. Her cartographic practice can be characterised as deep mapping in the sense of adding archaeological and historical layers to the topographical map; and slow mapping, owing to the long research process, the public involvement in naming and tracing, and the large-scale, hand-drawn materialization of topography and history. These are methods which to some degree evoke ‘incorporative’ and performative aspects of Indigenous mapping and knowing, and which resist the ‘inscribed’, Western cartographic form (Rundstrom 1998; Cogos et al. 2017, 49-50). Some of Bergh’s performative and participatory map works even appear as a kind of healing process, where the wounds of the land and the loss of history are in the slow making of being repaired. This practice resonates with other Indigenous cartographers, who see map making as a healing process (Lucchesi 2018, 24).



Figures 10a-b Sissel M. Bergh, *Noerte Miere Fuelhkie*. 2018-ongoing. Map of Coastal Møre, Norway, with old and local placenames. BIC-pen, ink, coloured pencil, collage on paper, 565 × 530 cm.
© Amalie Marie Selvik / Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art, 2020

Bergh brings her maps into the realm of fabulation. Through etymological studies and parallel art projects like the *Hovren Gåetie*, she delves into possible and speculative connections between the past and the present, between humans and animals, between land and the cosmological dimension (Hemkendreis 2023). She investigates how to relate to and understand the physical and invisible world(s), questioning how we can reconnect to the land, the memory, the power and the magic.

8 **Guided by Dáiddakárta**

In this article I have examined a limited number of art maps from the period 1975 to the present day, all of which depict Sápmi from a global perspective and from various local contexts. Through a diverse range of artistic processes and media, utilizing various cartographic methods, strategies, and objectives, these art maps offer an enhanced comprehension of Indigenous mapping practices. They illuminate knowledge and relationships that are in danger of fading away. As artworks, these maps also beckon interpretation as responses to broader global issues, while remaining firmly grounded in local contexts.

The article demonstrates how the art map, *dáiddakárta*, activate Western cartographic practices used in the modern world's discovery and colonisation of 'the other', although changing the perspective and the power to name and claim their own land. Such counter-mapping has long been used as Indigenous resistance to colonial forces, but also to celebrate cultural differences. Furthermore, artists have employed maps as radical, experimental and instrumental tools to effect political changes, both locally and globally - in particular in opposition to governmental and global capitalism's extraction of natural resources that threatens livelihoods and the environment. The art maps contribute to exposing power mechanisms that are generally invisible or oppressed.

However, the urgent decolonial and political context, the article discusses how these types of political and decolonial counter-mappings have little to do with the Sámi's ability and traditional form of orientation in the landscape, with their knowledge about places, how to find resources and ways to survive, and their relationships with animals and other living beings. This Indigenous mapping of the inhabited and utilised landscape may be summarised as *horizontal* maps. They are transferred orally and in place names, through bodily movement, and duodji practices. The article also shows how contemporary Sámi artists are concerned with what we may conceptualise as *vertical* maps. This is the mapping of a landscape that also belongs to ancestors, that connects the underground people and the mythological star constellations, and further opens to new spiritual possibilities. These horizontal and vertical relations set up the phenomenological space which I enter through the concept of 'worlding'.

All of these art maps are processual and continually evolving, as new place names, stories and memories, archaeological and archival material, are added - thus giving new depths to the knowledge of the landscape. They are obviously time-consuming to create, as thousands of names and varied topographies express their richness. On the other hand, the slow mapping also acknowledges the processes that coming to terms with a painful past demand.

As material and visual object, *dáiddakárta* is characterised by multimodality. The use of visual and linguistic signs is abounding, and some maps recall a wider sensory apparatus of rhythms and sounds, and socio-spatial experiences. Furthermore, the art maps are spatial installations, whether they are mass-produced map posters in everyone's homes, canvases that fill gallery spaces, or installations that extend into natural, political, juridical, and digital landscapes.

The article's compilation of various art maps becomes a collective and polyphonic mapping, adding a layer to Indigenous cartography. Some of the art maps oscillate between map and image, which is partially liberating from their referential role, and opens towards a more imaginative or even speculative power of art maps. In this article, I argue that art has the potential to reembed Indigenous knowledge. Artistic practices enable the consideration of Indigenous territorial dimensions - such as the social, the sacred, and the spiritual - as well as deep ecological aspects, and the interconnectedness with land and other beings and entities. This is not just an internal matter for the Sámi population and Sápmi itself, but aims to adjust and guide the course for individuals, and for a society and a planet that are getting lost.

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