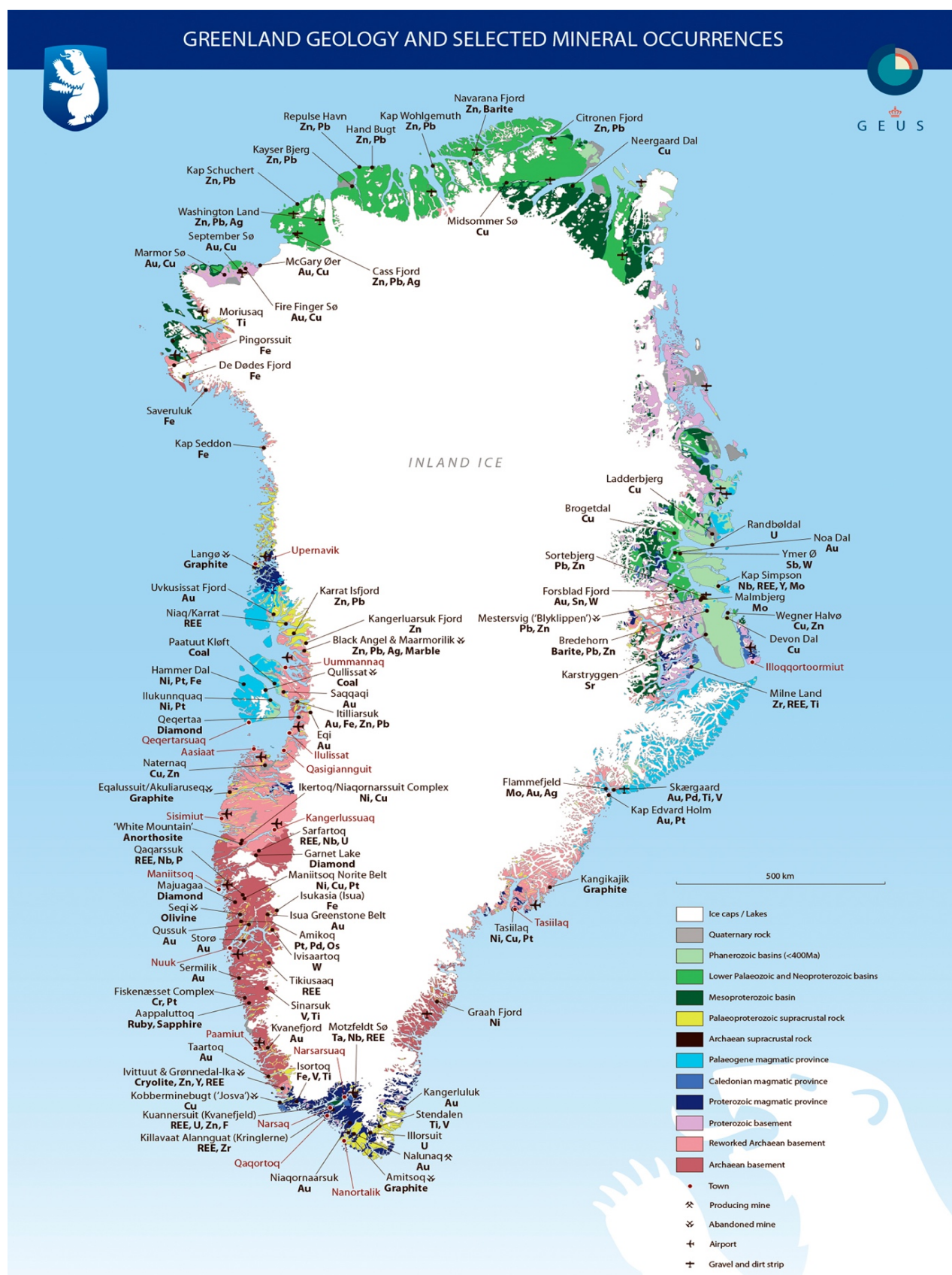


Unearthing Greenland's Resource Frontier: Mineral Resource Extraction and Naalakkersuisut's Bid for Greenlandic Independence / Aoife Blanchard



Statement

I declare this dissertation to be my own unaided work which does not exceed 20,000 words (excluding this statement, acknowledgements, abstract, table of contents, lists of figures, terms, acronyms and the appendix and reference list, as per the course guide).

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Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Richard Powell for all the helpful insights and guidance he has provided over course of this MPhil. Secondly, my thanks to Dr Lill Rastad Bjørst for taking the time to discuss her research and share her extensive knowledge of the politics surrounding mining in Greenland. Thirdly, I am very grateful to all my friends and family for their words of encouragement and support - this dissertation would not have been possible without you. Lastly, I extend my deepest gratitude to Emmanuel College for four wonderful years and the honour of a Newton Trust Scholarship which has enabled me to undertake this master's.

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Abstract

This dissertation analyses the role that mineral resources have played in visions of Greenlandic Independence over the last decade of Self Rule. As climate change and melting ice make Greenland greener, the trope of a “New North” increasingly open to exploitation is reinforced. However this depoliticising trope tends to erase any narrative of the Arctic as a homeland, making an engagement with political framings emerging from the Arctic countries themselves and a consideration of the ways their governments are co-opting such ideas crucial. This investigation endeavours to do just that by offering a more sustained engagement with the political discourses employed by *Naalakkersuisut* [the Self-Government of Greenland] regarding mining, building on previous work concerning non-renewable resource extraction and its significance for increased autonomy in Greenland. By carrying out a critical discourse analysis of recent government acts, speeches and policy documents which have not been subjected to scholarly scrutiny before, it will be able to offer new insights. Accordingly, this dissertation will seek to reinsert the ‘geo’ back into critical Arctic geopolitics by answering two research questions: ‘How has *Naalakkersuisut* constructed Greenland as a resource frontier?’ and ‘What priorities and challenges does *Naalakkersuisut* foresee for securing Greenland’s mining future?’. By considering the material and symbolic significance of the subsurface for territorial claims to statehood, it breaks new ground in the field of political geology, proving highly relevant for scholars interested in resource geographies, indigenous rights and self-determination.

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List of Terms and Acronyms

TERM	TRANSLATION	LANGUAGE
<i>Kalaallisut</i>	Greenlandic language	Greenlandic
<i>Kalaallit Nunaat</i>	Greenland, literally 'Land of the Kalaallit'	Greenlandic
<i>Naalakkersuisut</i>	Government of Greenland	Greenlandic
<i>Inatsisartut</i>	Parliament of Greenland	Greenlandic
<i>Inuit Ataqatigiit</i>	A Greenlandic socialist and separatist political party, currently led by Sara Olsvig and the main opposition party, literally 'Community of the People'	Greenlandic
<i>Siumut</i>	A Greenlandic social democratic party which also favours self-determination, currently led by Kim Kielsen who is Premier, literally 'Forward'	Greenlandic
<i>Folketing</i>	Parliament of Denmark	Danish
<i>Rigsfællesskabet</i>	'Community of the Realm'	Danish
<i>Kongeriget Danmark</i>	Kingdom of Denmark	Danish

ACRONYM	MEANING
SGA	Self-Government Act
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
GME	Greenland Minerals and Energy Ltd
IA	<i>Inuit Ataqatigiit</i> , see above
MMRL	Ministry of Mineral Resources and Labour
MRA	Mineral Resources Act
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
PDAC	Prospectors and Developers Association Canada

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

“We have to choose on the one hand between unrestricted exploitation of our resources in order to gain more independence, and on the other hand the protection of our nature, which is so dear to us in order to maintain our cultural heritage.”

- Josef Motzfeldt, Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2008

The above quotation from Motzfeldt which was given prior to the establishment of Greenlandic Self Rule perfectly pinpoints the central conflict in the case for Greenlandic Independence: that resource development in the name of increased autonomy is not without its risks. With such high social and environmental stakes at play, it is crucial to critically evaluate the role of *Naalakkersuisut* [Self Government of Greenland] in strategising Greenland’s mineral resources. By taking a unique methodological approach which analyses state-crafted documents that have not been comprehensively considered before, this dissertation offers a new entry point into the Greenlandic resource debate. This represents a move away from the more common socially or environmentally attentive approaches which focus on the attitudes of the general public or non-governmental organisations (see Hansen et al, 2009; Dingman, 2014; Ackrén, 2016; Nuttall, 2012, 2013; Bjørst, 2016). In contrast, the primary focus of this dissertation is examining the ways in which *Naalakkersuisut* have constructed and naturalised Greenland as a resource frontier, actively promoting an image of Greenland as an emerging mining nation more than capable of ruling itself.

This research aim will be achieved through a critical discourse analysis of the Self-Government Act, the Mineral Resources Act, formal speeches given by the respective premiers of *Naalakkersuisut* over the last decade, and by careful consideration of the recent mineral resources strategy. The 2014-2018 Oil and Minerals strategy also allows for an evaluation of the likelihood that Greenland can achieve the priorities and overcome the challenges it has laid out on its path to becoming a mining nation. By temporally delimiting the research to the period of Self Rule, this dissertation will be able to chart the relationship between geology and geopolitics more closely, with Poppel (2018: 11) describing the years following 2009 as “epoch making” for Greenland. In doing so, it will not only deepen understandings of the role *Naalakkersuisut* have played in normalising extractive discourses, but will also make an important contribution to the emerging fields of critical Arctic geopolitics and political geology. These areas of scholarly research have just begun to flourish in the geographical

discipline's current era of more-than-human geographies which renegotiate society-nature relations, and so are better positioned to conceive of a critical geopolitics of earthly resources (Whatmore, 2006, 2013; Clark, 2011; Elden, 2013; Dalby, 2013; Dittmer, 2014; Kama, 2019).

1.2 Contextualising Greenland

On June 21st, 2009, a momentous shift in Greenland's politics was initiated with the establishment of its Self-Government (Powell, 2016). Greenlandic Self-Rule represents a substantial step towards full autonomy from the Kingdom of Denmark, of which it is currently an autonomous overseas territory. It is worth expanding on what is meant by the 'Kingdom of Denmark' as the different terms for the constellations in which Greenland and Denmark are enmeshed are often used loosely. The Kingdom of Denmark or '*Kongeriget Danmark*' refers to the geographical territories of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands (see Figure 1). An additional term, '*Rigsfællesskabet*', which can be translated as the Community of the Realm, refers to the broader national imagination, collapsing the idea of the state, the nation, and the wider Kingdom into one (Powell, 2016). Although Greenland is self-governing under the 2009 Act, it remains part of the Kingdom, meaning Denmark retains authority over international matters like foreign policy and security. In many ways Greenland can be seen as a country of contradictions. Despite its name, 81% of Greenland's landmass is covered by ice, meaning that although it is the world's largest island, it has one of the smallest populations at just over 56,000 people who mostly inhabit the ice-free western coast (Statistics Greenland, 2018). Although Greenland is geologically associated with the North American continent, it is geopolitically considered a part of Europe due to its aforementioned 300-year relationship with Denmark, one which Rud (2017: 1) argues is still "deeply marked" by the legacy of colonialism.



Figure 1: A map locating the Kingdom of Denmark.

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/24/Kingdom_of_Denmark%2C_administrative_divisions_-_en_%28zoom%29.svg

Greenland was colonised by the Danish-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede in 1721. Egede had been sent to find the long-lost Norse population and convert them to Lutheran Protestantism, but upon failing to find them, he set up base near present-day Nuuk and evangelised the Inuit instead (Powell, 2016). Greenland remained under Denmark's 'civilising' mission until 1953, when it was officially decolonised through integration into the Kingdom of Denmark. Petersen (1995) notes that the Danes used the term *koloni* for both their trading station and the colonial mission, with the Danish colonial model being paternalistic and perhaps more benign than many of its European counterparts. However, this does not negate the epistemic violence and displacement that Greenlanders were subjected to under colonial rule (Rud, 2017). It was not until 1979 that Greenland gained limited autonomy in the form of its first Home Rule Government, which has been significantly advanced by Self Rule since 2009. This decolonising process has left Greenland with a "distinctly transitional character" and the sense of a national project yet to be completed (Gad, 2017: 11).

In recent years, Greenland has garnered greater global attention as its melting ice sheet and calving glaciers have become emblematic of global warming. In tandem with climate change concerns has come increased international interest in the economic opportunities a greener Greenland could present, particularly in terms of increased access to natural resources and shipping routes (Wilson, 2017). Powell (2016) points to these multifarious and at time competing visions of Greenland, from a global laboratory for scientific research, to the epicentre of climate change, to a potential partner for Asian states seeking resources, and for its inhabitants, 'Kalaallit Nunaat' - a homeland. Indeed, Greenland is one of the few jurisdictions globally with an indigenous majority, meaning Self Rule has put Greenland on a path towards potentially becoming the world's first Inuit state (Kuokkanen, 2017; Nuttall, 2008). The largest stumbling block to achieving statehood is Greenland's economic dependence on the Danish annual block grant of 3.5 billion DKK, accounting for a mammoth 60% of its budget revenue (Nuttall, 2012). Currently, the majority of Greenland's export income comes from fishing, but it will need to expand and diversify its economy because it cannot hope to enter negotiations with the Kingdom of Denmark regarding full political independence until it is economically independent (Strandsbjerg, 2014). With this in mind, *Naalakkersuisut* has sought to build a stronger economy by developing Greenland's mineral resources sector, positioning Greenland as a new frontier for oil, gas and minerals.

1.3 The Arctic as a Resource Frontier

In the twenty-first century, the Arctic has come to be positioned as a new energy province and resource frontier capable of feeding global demand for hydrocarbons and minerals. This has led to the Arctic being heralded as a “trove of opportunities for states, corporations and individuals [who seek] extraction of riches” (Steinberg et al. 2015: 16). Dodds and Nuttall (2016: 116) describe this extractivist rhetoric as part of a ‘scramble for the poles’ where an ‘El Dorado complex’ prevails, generating the idea that it is only a matter of time before desirable resources are exploited. Kroger (2019) considers this ‘race for resources’ within the context of the contemporary global land rush, arguing that there has been a notable increase in resource extraction in the Arctic since 2005. This has been in tandem with rising tensions over state’s sovereign rights to the North Pole seabed, following the sensationalisation of the Russian flag planting in 2007 (Dodds, 2008). The desire of Arctic states to assert their sovereignty and protect their mineral interests can also be seen in the recent proliferation of strategies and mineral policies aimed to attract investment, not only by *Naalakkersuisut* but across northern governments. Examples include the new wave of investment taking place in mining in northern Norway which now hosts 18 mines, accompanied by a new mineral law issued in 2010 and a specific mineral strategy in 2013 (Dale, Bay-Larsen and Skorstad, 2018). In Murmansk, northern Russia, mining has been the primary economic activity for the last century, but a new federal government ecological policy was implemented in 2012 requiring greater environmental respect by industry (Newell and Henry, 2016). Despite the fall in market prices for many mineral resources in recent years checking the optimism of the early 2010s, most Arctic states have still made efforts to secure their place in the mineral market by modernising their legislation and so have retained the global gaze (Dale, Bay-Larsen and Skorstad, 2018).

Steinberg et al. (2015) contend that the resource frontier has become the most dominant and influential imaginary of the Arctic in recent years, obscuring environmentalist and indigenous discourses. Although it could be countered that climate change remains the more prevalent imaginary, global warming has in fact become closely tied to the resource frontier imaginary as its catalyst in what Stuhl (2013: 94) calls the ‘New North’ trope. This phrase draws attention to the collision of unprecedented global warming (affecting the Arctic at twice the average rate) with growing global demand for resources, whereby melting ice is thought to provide increased access to the hydrocarbons and minerals beneath. However, Stuhl (2013) is very wary of the dehistoricising nature of the “New North” which would appear to erase a long history of resource exploitation in the Arctic. In the case of Greenland, mining has a history extending back to the eighteenth century,

with the geostrategic significance of certain resources such as cryolite and uranium becoming apparent in the mid 1900s (Secher, 2002; Berry, 2012; Nielsen and Knudsen, 2013). Furthermore, mineral extraction has been closely entwined with European exploration and imperialism as exemplified in Cameron's (2015) discussion of the Bloody Falls massacre in Nunavut, Canada. Although considerable progress has since been made in terms of indigenous land rights, the Arctic continues to be viewed by outsiders as a '*tabula rasa*' open to exploration and exploitation, with some viewing international mining companies' endeavours as a form of neo-colonialism (Craciun, 2016). Indeed, the well-documented idea of a 'resource curse' dictates that natural resource wealth does not necessarily translate into increased wellbeing for local populations, particularly when Arctic communities are only consulted in a cursory manner (Soros 2007; Gilberthorpe and Hilson, 2014). This being said, Nuttall (2010) argues that more indigenous communities are engaging in dialogue with governments and industry to express their interests regarding resource development, with institutions like the land claims agreements in Alaska and Canada and self-government in Greenland facilitating this.

In Canada and Alaska, land claims agreements act as "key building blocks" for furthering Inuit rights (ICC, 2009: np). However, the indigenously run institutions are not fully empowered because federal laws continue to restrict Inuit input and control over the subsurface still remains contested (Gerhardt, 2011). Of all the nationally separated Inuit, it is worth noting that the Russian Inuit of Chukotka have made the least progress towards political autonomy as their cause is low on Moscow's political radar (Gerhardt, 2011). In a way, Greenland is in the best position to pursue statehood because as Eide (2009) reminds us, it is a large island isolated from Denmark, meaning it is faced with fewer challenges than Nunavut for example when working at a sub-state level. Loukacheva (2007) has written on legal and political autonomy in Greenland and Nunavut, comparing their visions for Inuit self-governance. Whereas Nunavut was carved out of the Northwest Territories of Canada as an integral part of the Nunavut land claims settlement, Greenlandic Home Rule was not rooted in indigenous use or occupation of the land (Loukacheva, 2007). However, as Shadian (2014) argues, the Greenlandic government is often seen as a *de facto* indigenous authority due to the Inuit majority which elects it. Whereas the Government of Nunavut has sought a more Inuit inspired approach to decision-making via the incorporation of *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* values ['that which the Inuit have long known' i.e. traditional values] and through political decentralization, Greenland has pursued a process of political recentralisation (Henderson, 2007: 35; Weber, 2014; Hicks and White, 2015). By centring politics in Nuuk and reducing the number of municipalities from 18 to just 5, Gerhardt (2011) argues that *Naalakkersuisut* has

borrowed heavily from the Danish institutional structure and has largely sought to embrace the Westphalian imaginary of a bounded nation-state.

1.4 From Home Rule to Self Rule: The Importance of Mineral Rights

Greenland's push for autonomy has been tied to the pursuit of rights over its mineral resources for far longer than the last decade on which this dissertation focuses, thus some contextualisation is required. The formal incorporation of Greenland into the Kingdom of Denmark in 1953 can be viewed within the context of the global decolonisation movement following World War II, with Gad (2014) sceptically noting it served to defer true decolonisation by presenting Greenland as equal to Denmark, but with no power beyond two seats in the *Folketing* (Dingman, 2014). Dissatisfied with this arrangement and with an awareness of growing indigenous rights internationally, political mobilisation against inequality and a lack of cultural and political recognition culminated in the Home Rule Act of 1979 (Gad, 2017). Under Home Rule, Greenland set up its first government to which Denmark transferred several administrative functions (Erdal, 2013). Despite these achievements, debates around mineral resources were central to negotiations and were far from the success Greenland hoped for (Powell, 2016).

Poppel (2018) argues rights to the subsurface went unsolved by Home Rule because in accordance with the 1965 Legal Act of Mining, "all mineral resources in Greenland belong to the [Danish] state" and this judicial assertion was not wholly overturned by the Home Rule Act. The Home Rule Commission's Report (1978: Section 8, 1) concluded that the "population of Greenland has fundamental rights to Greenland's natural resources", but this was a compromise as the Greenland delegation had strongly argued for a wording underscoring "*the* fundamental rights" (Petersen, 1995). Poppel (2018) points to the way in which the Commission was able to use the omission of 'the' to argue the term "fundamental rights" was merely a declaration of political principles, rather than offering a judicial foundation. The battle for Greenland's full authority over its own resources was therefore left for another day, namely the 1st of January 2010 when the Mineral Resources Act came into force in line with commitments made in the Self-Government Act, representing a landmark achievement following over thirty years of disagreement with Denmark. In addition to securing Greenland's absolute jurisdiction over all underground resources and territorial waters, the Self Rule Act recognised Greenlanders claim to peoplehood, allowing for the possibility of full independence one day (Kuokkanen, 2017).

Discussions regarding ownership and development of Greenland's mineral resources have been critical to both the Home Rule and Self Rule debates and continue to be so in present day politics. This was well exemplified in 2013 where the general election was fought over the prospect of uranium mining and associated labour law, with *Siumut*'s Aleqa Hammond taking back control from *Inuit Ataqatigiit* (IA) on a pro-uranium but fairly anti-foreign labour campaign. (Scrutton, 2013; Powell, 2016). The Greenlandic parliament (*Inatsisartut*'s) decision to repeal the Danish ban on uranium mining later that year was highly contentious, representing a ground-breaking shift in the pursuit of Greenlandic independence via resource extraction (Nuttall, 2013). The uranium debate has remained topical, flaring up in both the 2014 and 2018 general elections as a subject over which the two biggest political parties disagree, with *Siumut* in favour and *IA* in opposition (Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2018; Thelocal.dk., 2018). This is an important point of division because both parties are broadly left wing and in favour of independence, although *Siumut* is more centrist and pro-independence than *IA* as is usefully summarised in Gad's (2017: 24) diagram (Figure 2).

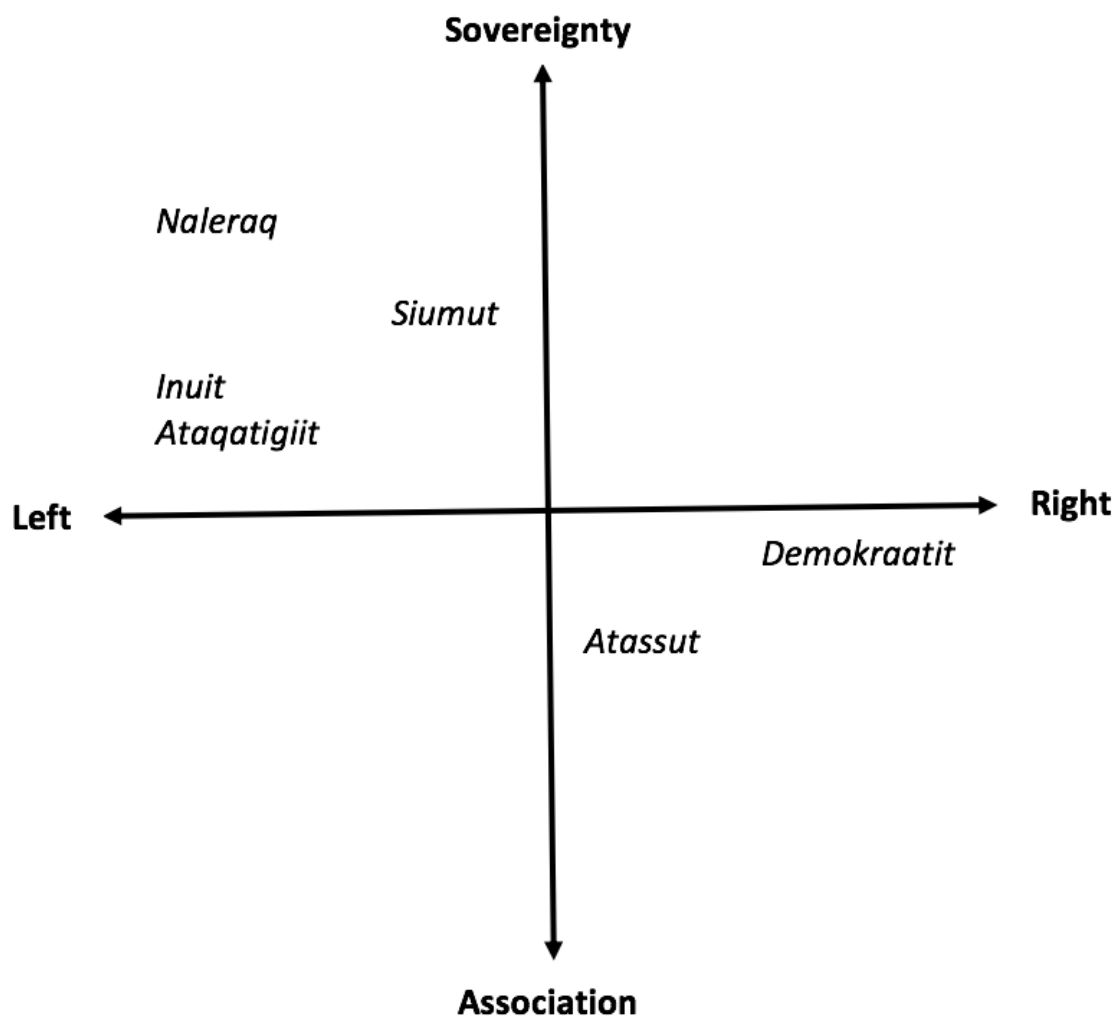


Figure 2: The Greenlandic party system organised along two axes: the traditional economic right-left wing axis and an axis define by the emphasis given to questions of sovereignty and national identity. Source: Adapted from Gad (2017: 24)

That *Siumut* have dominated *Naalakkersuisut* since 2013 (see Appendix B for a summary of general election results over the period of Self-Rule) reveals the power of the resource frontier imaginary in visions of Greenlandic independence, as will be discussed in the following chapters. Chapters one to three contextualise this research, and chapters four and five offer a discussion regarding Greenland's mining future based around a critical discourse analysis of parliamentary acts, speeches, and the most recent mineral resources strategy, with chapter six drawing the findings to a conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: Arctic Resources and Critical Geopolitics: A Theoretical Grounding

2.1 Reinserting the Geo into Critical Arctic (Geo)politics

“Greenland’s minerals constitute a symbolic as well as economic bridge between Greenland of the past and a future independent nation. Any discussion about the island’s mineral wealth is therefore by its very nature (geo)political” (Vedby, 2013: 3)

By its very definition, geography is a form of earth-writing derived from the Greek terms *geo* (earth) and *graphia* (writing), and so it follows that geopolitics should seek to engage with the earthly realms of politics. Today, the modifier ‘geo’ in geopolitics is popularly taken to be synonymous with world politics, or at best the geographical factors which influence international relations, however Dalby (2007) has called for a geopolitics which takes earth systems and their dynamics seriously. This dissertation will endeavour to take up Dalby’s request by paying close attention to the materialities of mining in Greenlandic political discourse, using a critical geopolitical approach to give the ‘geo’ in (geo)politics the weighting it deserves. This research is perfect for such a task because as Vedby (2013: 3) notes above, resource politics in Greenland is “by its very nature (geo)political”. However, before delving into more recent theorising which has reworked critical geopolitics to incorporate a posthumanist and material slant, we must consider the origins of critical geopolitics itself. The term ‘critical geopolitics’ was coined by the pioneering political geographer Ó Tuathail (1986; 1996) and later developed by the likes of Dalby and Agnew, with the aim of reconceptualising geopolitics as a form of political discourse, rather than simply a descriptive term for grand statecraft or realist foreign policy (Dodds, 2001). Grounded in post-structural theory, critical geopolitics has primarily involved careful analysis of geopolitical reasoning and practice which seeks to simplify people-place relations (Dodds, 2014). Such questioning of spatial abstractions employed by nation-states has usually been pursued through discourse analysis of foreign policy documents and government speeches as this allows for critical engagement with the tools of statecraft. It is important to note that despite its self-aware edge, critical geopolitics has been critiqued by scholars of feminist geopolitics who argue its textual reliance and emphasis on discourse have dematerialised geopolitics (Dittmer, 2014). In response, there has been some effort towards a material turn in critical geopolitics which acknowledges more everyday and embodied experiences, with Le Billon (2013) arguing that because much critical geopolitics remains based on textual analysis, paying closer attention to materialities will enrich future research. This dissertation

therefore pursues a more materialised critical geopolitics by considering the role of the non-human mineral world.

Dodds (2014) advocates for an object-centred approach to geopolitics, arguing that too often the focus of critical geopolitics has been on territorially defined states and politicians at the expense of engaging with other more-than-human aspects. As Dodds (2014: 96) notes, “geopolitical imaginations and practices are embedded and emboldened by their relationship to a vast array of things”, with his discussion of the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline being particularly productive. Not only has the object of the pipeline been significant in global energy debates, it has also been instrumental in indigenous politics, making it emblematic of a contested resource geopolitics. In Alaska, an upsurge in oil prices and growing anxieties over American energy security in the 1970s transformed the oil potential in Prudhoe Bay into a lucrative resource, but the pipeline itself proved to be a site of conflict. Conservationists opposed the rush for oil and were concerned for the fragile Arctic ecosystem, and the indigenous population expressed alarm over the blockading effect the pipeline would have on migration routes as well as querying how they would benefit from the resource extraction. From this, the Native Claims Settlement Act was born whereby native Alaskans would receive money and federal land in compensation for renouncing their land claims (Dodds, 2014). The Trans-Alaskan pipeline therefore brought discussions around the interaction of indigenous rights and resource geopolitics to the fore and laid the foundation for work such as Barry’s (2013) on the material politics of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline in eastern Europe. Like Barry’s work, this dissertation will endeavour to contribute to the proliferation of politicised geological knowledges. In their chapter on materialising Greenland within a critical Arctic geopolitics, Dodds and Nuttall (2017: 140) call for this spatially focused sub-discipline of critical geopolitics to be “rooted in materiality where the Arctic is not simply a backdrop for human events” but is actively enrolled. Locating Greenland within critical Arctic geopolitics therefore requires “a consideration of the science and politics of and about ice, land and water, as well as the subsurface and Greenland’s depths and widths”. It is these depths that this dissertation will metaphorically excavate in order to understand how the subterranean is politicised (Dodds and Nuttall, 2017: 152).

2.2 Natural Resource Geographies: Resource Becoming, the Vertical and the Volumetric

Human engagement with the mineral world has an extensive history which reaches as far back as our existence as a species on this Earth, with its centrality indicated by the widespread three-age division of history into the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age (Boivin and Owoc, 2004). Although

some argue we have moved away from such resource dependence in the twenty-first century capitalist period of “resource triumphalism” and “postscarcity narratives” accredited to modernity, this dissertation disputes such claims by pointing to the continued political significance of natural resources for development, as is the case in Greenland, and indeed much of the world where energy security and resource wars reveal that “minerals remain irrevocably linked to power” (Bridge, 2001: 2149; Boivin and Owoc, 2004: 1). Despite these fruitful cross-sections between geology and politics, political geology is a field which is only just emerging because until recently, it was widely assumed that social scientists should confine their attention to the Earth’s surface (Donovan and Bobbette, 2019). Barry (in Powell et al, 2017) also utilises the term ‘political geology’ in his discussion of Anatolia which constitutes the majority of modern-day Turkey, arguing that we must rethink the political significance of geology because multiple anthropologists have noted the connections residents make between earthquakes and the disaster of the state. This is not to say that political geology advocates a return to the environmentally deterministic attitudes of the nineteenth century, as it does not imagine that politics flows directly from movements of the earth, but it does make the case for the more-than-human geographies of political life (Barry, 2017). Geographical scholars are particularly well placed to contribute to this new field as it has long been the remit of geography to work at the interface of the natural and social realms in an interdisciplinary way, thereby breaking new ground (Gregory, 2009). With this in mind, this dissertation will respond to calls from geographical scholars like Phillipe Le Billon (2013), Stuart Elden (2013) and Julie Klinger (2015) who request more critical geopolitical works on resources; studies that consider the vertical and earthly aspects of territory; and explore geology as a science of territoriality respectively.

Before progressing any further, it is crucial to consider what exactly is implied by the term ‘natural resource’ and how it is politicised. Erich Zimmerman (1933:3) was one of the first geographers to argue that despite coming from ‘nature’, resources are socially constructed through their identification, processing, and use by humans, hence “resources are not; they become”. Richardson and Weszkalnys (2014: 12) similarly talk of resource making as a process of “turning nature into culture par excellence” whereby natural resources are not ‘out there’ waiting to be seized but are in flux, only ‘becoming’ as resource materialities through human appraisal and labour. Using coal as his example, Zimmerman (1933) argued it was not the chemical properties of coal such as the ability to store energy and release it upon combustion which made coal a resource, but the fact that it could fit existing socio-technical arrangements and so supply energy during industrialisation (Bridge, 2009). Zimmerman’s (1933: 3) dictum that “to be considered for its resources, the environment must be brought into relationship to man” still applies today, despite his theorising being fairly far

removed from more recent scholarship which aims to dissolve the binary between nature and culture (Latour, 1993; Haraway, 1997; Swyngedouw, 1999). A parallel can be drawn between Zimmerman's coal case study and the newfound relevance of rare earth elements, iron, copper, zinc, gold and gemstones for solving Greenland's economic and political dependence on the Kingdom of Denmark. In this way, the productive position natural resources occupy as a cultural category is apparent because they designate particular parts of the non-human world as valuable to humanity, much like the way diamonds have become associated with a complex combination of social understandings about wealth, beauty and love despite being nothing but lumps of carbon (Bridge, 2009; Hartwick, 1998; Le Billon, 2006). The political life of geological resources should therefore be seen not just as "a product of the actual utilities of their chemical properties" but also in regard to "ideas about their significance, and different perceptions of how these material and meaningful properties might serve diverse territorialities over time" (Klinger, 2015: 574).

The geographer Philippe Le Billon (2013) discusses the politics of resources in the context of war and finds that geopolitical studies have tended to concentrate on areas like oil security in the Middle East or 'blood diamonds' in Africa, erasing the Arctic from the picture. Furthermore these studies are often framed around essentialised 'resource wars' rather than engaging with individual nation-state narratives and their motivations for exploiting certain geological resources. Bridge (2009) argues that this framework of inter-state conflict inherited from the realist school of International Relations is a limiting way of thinking about the politics of resources because it overlooks other scales and forms of political struggle (Le Billon, 2007). This study will expand scholarly work on the politics of resources by being situated in Arctic Greenland and engaging with its postcolonial struggle for independence through the medium of resource politics. The theoretical question therefore transforms into one of how we should conceptualise resource spaces. Richardson and Weszkalnys (2005: 7) usefully offer the idea of "resource environments" in order to redirect analytical attention away from resources as essentialised subjects assumed to exist "in nature" and towards the complex arrangement of "physical stuff, extractive infrastructures, calculative devices, discourses of the market and development, the nation and the corporation [and] everyday practices" within which resources are situated. This approach challenges capitalist forms of resource extraction which cast resources as dead matter disembedded from the environments in which they are found rather than as part of lively human/nonhuman interactions (Tsing, 2005). Bridge (2001: 2149) also calls for an understanding of resource spaces which re-embeds resources in their physical and socio-political environment of origin, arguing that extractive spaces are "constructed through a discursive dialectic which simultaneously erases socioecological histories and reinscribes space in the image of the

commodity". He calls for academics to move beyond these "naïve geographies" which only explain commodity supply zones in terms of resource endowment, rather than appreciating how resource spaces are actively produced through political choices and practices of exploration and exploitation (Bridge, 2001: 2154).

Lastly, the likes of Elden (2013), Bridge (2013) and Dodds and Nuttall (2017) have advocated for a major reconceptualization of territory which repositions the vertical and volumetric as metrics of equal importance to area. In his seminal paper '*Secure the volume: vertical geopolitics and the depths of power*', Elden argues that depth is often neglected in discussions of territory which favour surface borders. Graham (2004: 12) was the first academic to coin the term "vertical geopolitics" with reference to militarised airspace above ground in Baghdad, but much of his thinking draws on the work of Eyal Weizmann (2002: 3) who has criticised geopolitics for being a "flat discourse" which "largely ignores the vertical dimension and tends to look across rather than cut through the landscape". This areal emphasis should not be taken for granted as it is a cartographic imagination inherited from the military and political spatialities of the modern nation-state. Despite offering a challenge, new work on verticality has mostly been orientated upwards, and so Elden (2013) calls for us to look down and consider the implications that vertical geopolitics has for the ground beneath our feet. Although he primarily focuses on the sub-surface politics of tunnels, Elden notes that resources below the earth's surface are also a major source of conflict and contestation. Bridge (2013) takes up Elden's invitation to evaluate how territory functions at depth by focusing on the political and legal techniques nation-states and corporations adopt in order to lay claim to natural resources such as groundwater, hydrocarbons, and minerals. His work not only reminds geographers to think in 3D, but also reflects on how practices of territorialisation (securing space to achieve certain agendas) are volumetric: a combination of areal and vertical. Indeed, Bridge (2013: 56) emphasises that "volume is a primary metric of anticipation and potential: calculations of what space contains [...] and what contained materials mean that space could become, are essential to the performance of resource landscapes". Dodds and Nuttall (2017) similarly promote a "volumetric geopolitics" in their approach to the Greenlandic ice sheet and continental shelf claims. The concepts of vertical and volumetric geopolitics are therefore highly applicable to this dissertation's investigation of the geopolitical role played by sub-surface minerals in contemporary Greenland, which will aim to expand on Elden's (2013) work by approaching questions of power from below.

CHAPTER THREE: Research Approach

3.1 Research Aims and Questions

This dissertation analyses the role mineral resources have played in visions of Greenlandic Independence over the last decade. Although it will build on previous work regarding the politics of non-renewable resource extraction in Greenland (Nuttall, 2008, 2012, 2017; Serjersen, 2015; Bjørst 2016; Powell, 2016; Poppel, 2018) as well as direct discussions about the relationship between Greenland's mineral riches and independence (Dingman, 2014; Mazza, 2015; Taagholt and Brooks, 2016; Vikström and Högselius, 2017), it offers a more sustained engagement with political discourses employed by *Naalakkersuisut* regarding mining via critical discourse analysis of government acts, speeches and policy documents. Such a close engagement with Greenlandic state-generated documents has not been done before in relation to mining, meaning this dissertation has much to contribute to the emerging fields of critical Arctic geopolitics and political geology. To aid the analysis of these documents, two key questions have been identified that frame the analysis:

Q1. How has Naalakkersuisut constructed Greenland as a resource frontier, and to what end?

Q2. What are the priorities and challenges to a mining future, as presented by Naalakkersuisut in its 2014-18 Oil and Mineral Strategy?

These questions will be answered in the two discussion chapters, with chapter four focusing on the ways in which *Naalakkersuisut* have framed Greenlandic minerals as the key to achieving statehood. This will be done by analysing the discourses of the Self-Government Act and the Mineral Resources Act, as well as by closely engaging with narratives drawn upon by different Premiers in select speeches given over the last decade. Chapter five moves on to consider the most recent and comprehensive Oil and Mineral Strategy from 2014-2018, with careful attention paid to the priorities and challenges it highlights in terms of securing a mining future for Greenland. Finally, chapter six draws this dissertation's findings together by highlighting the ways in which mineral resources have been strategized in Greenlandic discourse.

3.2 Methodological Approach

In order to operationalise the research questions above, I have investigated Greenlandic discourses regarding resource extraction within parliamentary acts, speeches and policy documents using critical discourse analysis (CDA). It was important to choose appropriate texts pertaining to Greenlandic mining because as Angermüller (2001: 8) posits, texts act as “recorded traces of discourse activity” which can be accessed via discourse analysis, leading to a deeper understanding of geopolitical reasoning (O’Tuathail, 2002). When choosing primary texts, it is crucial that they are seen as credible as this is where dominant discourses tend to be found, hence why Hansen (2006: 74) notes that “presidential statements, speeches, and interviews in the case of foreign policy” tend to be prioritised in critical geopolitics, with representatives of the state naturalised as actors whose representations of reality are legitimate (Buzan et al. 1998). Following this logic and because my research questions are orientated towards understanding how *Naalakkersuisut* is representing itself and Greenland, parliamentary acts, key speeches by the Premiers of the last decade, and the most recent mineral strategy form my primary documents (see appendix A for a comprehensive table of documents analysed). Triangulation of these texts provides a richer understanding of mining debates in Greenland because as Hoggart et al (2002: 212) argue, it “enhance[s] capacities for interpreting meaning and behavior” by offering multiple routes to the same conclusion. The Self-Government and Mineral Resource Acts establish *Inatsisartut*’s legal position by framing mineral resources as important and setting out what can be achieved in terms of their development. Speeches by Kuupik Kleist, Aleqa Hammond and Kim Kielsen can be used to track continuity and change in the extractive discourse across the whole period of Self Rule, with each Premier reflecting *Naalakkersuisut*’s evolving stance as the leadership and parties which constitute it change. Finally the 2014-2018 Oil and Minerals Strategy reveals in greater detail what *Naalakkersuisut* deems to be salient for realizing Greenland’s mining future. Through a careful analysis of Greenlandic state policy surrounding mining, this dissertation works to fill the lacuna Ó Tuathail’s (2002) identifies in political geography whereby practical geopolitics (the domain of policy making) has been neglected in favour of formal and popular geopolitics.

As Hopf (2004: 31) argues, discourse analysis is a “political theory as much as a method of inquiry” because it commits a researcher to a specific epistemological and ontological framework (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Müller (2010: 4) also picks up on this entanglement by delineating that discourse analysis is a methodology rather than a method, with the difference being that it is not just a tool for data collection and analysis but “integrates them with a set of assumptions concerning the

constructive effect of language and social practice” (Wood and Kroger, 2000). Through this framework, a discourse analytical approach allows for closer critical engagement with assumptions and paradoxes within Greenlandic mining debates, revealing how they are constructed and maintained through discursive ‘work’. Here it is important to outline what is meant by the term ‘discourse’ which has been popularized in the social sciences by the work of Michel Foucault. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002:2) describe discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world or an aspect of the world” because, as Sharp (2009: 19) usefully asserts, discourses “define the parameters of what can be known and understood at any point in history and place”, thereby naturalizing a certain representation of reality. The primary aim of discourse analysis is therefore to evaluate the production of meaning over time to enable the deconstruction of certain understandings of the world. Importantly, there is no single way to carry out critical discourse analysis (CDA), much to the chagrin of more meticulous and methodologically-minded academics. In his paper on ‘doing discourse analysis in critical geopolitics’, Müller (2010: 2) states that there is no established methodology and that claims to ‘do discourse analysis’ are frequently accompanied by “a rather vague specification of the methodology that underpins this analysis”. Although many critiques of critical geopolitics have condemned CDA’s obsession with text and lack of precision or replicability, such an approach does allow for greater flexibility with Torfing (1999: 292) arguing that “discourse theorists must remain methodological bricoleurs and refrain from developing an all-purpose technique for discourse analysis”. In an effort to be more transparent, this dissertation follows Cope’s (2010) CDA strategy by identifying manifest and latent codes within the text in order to determine recurring discursive themes.

In line with the post-structural thinking which characterises discourse analysis, this dissertation will endeavour to display critical reflexivity, and so I as the author fully acknowledge that I am not a “dematerialised, disembodied entity” but play a constitutive role in shaping the outcome of the research (Dowling, 2000; England, 1994). My positionality as a young British woman will no doubt have affected my worldview and interpretation of the documents under analysis; however I will seek to be attentive and present the political geographies of mining in Greenland fairly as I see them without distortion or misrepresentation of the data, all of which has been taken from the public domain. In terms of the methodological limitations of this research, the only significant drawback has been the necessary reliance on unofficial English translations of government documents, given the impossibility of learning Danish or *Kalaallisut* to fluency within the 9-month time span of this master’s. However, the fact that all the supposedly ‘unofficial’ translations have been taken directly from *Naalakkersuisut*’s official website strengthens their credibility as they are clearly the *de facto*

official documents intended for an international audience. This means that although some nuances of meaning may be lost in translation which is unfortunate given the emphasis CDA places on language, this research is able to offer an important additional insight into how Greenland is positioning itself as a global player on the international stage through the use of English as a *lingua franca*, with its resource frontier branding aimed at an international audience.

Furthermore, it is important to note that despite the multiple entry-points available into the Greenlandic mining debate and the broad applications of this dissertation, it cannot be exhaustive. Taking a critical geopolitical approach brings government rhetoric to the forefront as is the intention of this dissertation, but this means that other factors must be relegated. For this reason, it will not delve into corporate mining perspectives, the views of environmental non-governmental organisations, or debates around the lack of public-participation in any great detail, but such research has already been carried out (see Hansen et al 2016; Nuttall, 2012; 2014; Dingman, 2014, Ackrén, 2016, Bjørst, 2017). My focus will remain directly on resource extraction and how mineral resources have been strategised, rather than meandering into alternative routes to achieving economic independence such as Greenland's developing tourism or fishing industry. It is also beyond the scope of this dissertation to offer a close analysis of developing Greenlandic-Chinese relations which fall more within the realms of IR. Lastly it is important to note that like all social sciences research, this dissertation cannot offer any definitive answers as to whether, how, or indeed when Greenland should become independent. As Gerhardt (2011: 12) states, "the political path taken by the Greenlandic indigenous people is not something that we, as outsiders, can or should judge", nor is it something anyone is capable of predicting, but it is a fruitful topic to reflect upon. This political geographical investigation therefore views itself as an intervention into the domestic politics of a not-quite-state as it seeks to reify its status by looking to its foundations: the earth.

CHAPTER FOUR: Scripting and Narrating the Resource Frontier - A Study of Greenlandic Statutes and Speeches

4.1 Introduction

Frontiers and resource frontiers in particular are tricky to define and locate, being both theoretically and also physically manifested (Nuttall, 2017). Geological maps are one of the most popular purveyors of the resource frontier and have therefore become an increasingly dominant image of Greenland which “hint seductively at what lies underground”, acting as a “statement for the potential and possibility for extracting new minerals” (Nuttall, 2017: 46). In this way, pockets of lucrative minerals on ice-free land and blocks portioned off for hydrocarbon exploration off Greenland’s coast visually depict and so actively produce Greenland’s resource frontier, both materially and discursively. It is worth noting here that as Webb (1964: 2) first opined with regards to America’s wild west, the frontier should not be thought of as a “line to stop at”, but instead as an “area inviting entrance”. Drawing on resource frontier literature from other parts of the world offers some insight into Greenland’s situation. While Barney (2009) describes the enclosure and commodification of nature in Laos to be indicative of the relational zones of economy, nature, and society with resource frontiers occupying spaces of capitalist transition, Murray Li (2014: 13) draws on almost twenty years of ethnographic research in Indonesia to argue that frontiers are “coveted places, envisaged by various actors as sites of potential”. Meanwhile, Peluso and Lund (2013) highlight the ways in which frontier thinking is enrolled in practices of territorialisation, whereby places, people and resources are claimed and controlled.

Dodds and Nuttall (2016: 118) arguing that ‘frontier speak’ should be seen as a crucial tool of statecraft because it “creates the very thing that it names”, contributing to the active reimagination of Greenland as a place of abundance and opportunity for resource extraction. Indeed, Bridge (2001: 2154) argues that resource frontiers are constructed through “expert discourses relating to mineralogy, mineral economics, law; by the implementation of technologies that locate, evaluate, and process nature into separable, extractable categories; and by the actions of the state which mediate this capitalization of production conditions by normalising discourses of growth and development”. It is these actions of the state, namely the production of favourable legislation and government speeches which frame the resource frontier as Greenland’s hope for the future, which this chapter will focus on. It will begin with an analysis of the centrality of mining and mineral rights provided for in Greenland’s 2009 Self-Government Act which laid the foundations for Self Rule, moving on to a closer consideration of the ways *Naalakkersuisut* has naturalised Greenland as a

resource frontier in its 2010 Mineral Resources Act, before finally navigating the narratives employed by a succession of Greenlandic Premiers in public speeches which invariably frame minerals as the key to achieving statehood.

4.2 Greenland's Self-Government Act: Seeking Subsurface Rights and Sovereignty?

"When the Greenlandic government invites in extractive industries, the Self Govt Act not only frames the possibilities but drives the strategic thinking, ambitions, and the process itself"

(Sejersen, 2015: 28)

As the above quotation indicates, the Self-Government Act (SGA) has been foundational to the very existence and functioning of Greenland's Self Rule Government, and so this document is the best place to start when thinking about Greenland's growing autonomy and developing mineral resource sector. It was drawn up in response to a referendum on further devolution held in November 2008 in which a resounding majority (75.54%) voted in favour of Self Rule (Powell, 2016). The document's primary purpose is to recognise the population of Greenland as a people, to acknowledge their right to self-determination as part of Self Rule, and to outline the pursuant transfer of responsibilities from Denmark's *Folketing* to Greenland's *Inatsisartut*. Following the trend stressed earlier that the rights to its subsurface have formed an important part of Greenland's fight for self-determination, the SGA establishes that the rights to exploit its land falls to Greenland. Strandsbjerg (2014: 267) emphasises that "developing a stronger economy is directly linked to increased autonomy within the 2009 Self-Rule set-up" and that it is the government's official policy to develop its natural resource sector as a vital new economic pillar.

From the outset, the somewhat awkward politico-legal positioning of the SGA becomes apparent. The opening preamble states that "We, Margrethe the second, by God's Grace Queen of Denmark, hereby announce that: The Danish parliament has passed the following Act" (*Folketing*, 2009: 1). As Wilson (2017) argues, the very fact the SGA is an act passed by the *Folketing* and in the ten years since has not been accompanied by mirroring legislation from *Inatsisartut* means that the authority of Greenland's Self-Government is still solely derived from Danish Law. Although Wilson's (2017: 517) point that this leaves the *Naalakkersuisut* on "legally shaky ground" because the SGA could be repealed by the *Folketing* at any time is technically true, this political outcome is incredibly unlikely considering the *Folketing's* support for Greenland's "right of self-determination" and the cooperative relationship they present as "equal partners" wanting to foster "mutual respect"

(*Folketing*, 2009: 1). It is certainly within Danish interests to remain on good terms with Greenland if it is to have any hope of retaining its foothold in Arctic affairs should Greenland gain independence (Jacobsen, 2016). In this regard, the SGA's recognition "that the people of Greenland is [sic] a people pursuant to international law with the right of self-determination" has more weight as it is infused with international validity and acknowledges Greenland's right to independence, with considerable ramifications for both the Kingdom of Denmark and Greenland.

The most important chapter of the SGA for investigating the centrality of mineral resources is the third, which pertains to economic relations between the Danish and Greenlandic governments. Over half of its sections are devoted to dealing with mineral resource activities alone. Importantly, it lays out the freezing of the Danish block grant at DKK 3,439.6 million although this is based on 2009 price levels and wages so adjustments are made for any increase in general price and wage index each year. This put the subsidy at 3.7 billion DKK in 2017 which accounted for more than 50% of Greenland's government revenues (McGwin, 2018; Index Mundi, 2018). Section 6 of chapter three states that any fields of responsibility taken over by the Greenlandic Self-Government must become its financial burden. This makes the need for additional sources of income all the more urgent if Greenland is to maintain its standard of service provision, a task which Erdal (2013) argues will be challenging given Greenland's low-skilled labour force and ageing population which will likely necessitate increased public spending. That section 7 which follows directly on dictates that revenue from mineral resource activities will accrue to the Greenland Self-Government authorities seems a clear indication that the mining sector is being situated as the solution to diminishing Greenland's economic dependence on Denmark. Section 8 builds on this, stating that Greenland is free to extract minerals and hydrocarbons on its own territory, but once a commercially viable mining sector has been established and Greenland is making more than 75 million DKK from it (with adjustments for inflation), the excess will be split 50:50 between the Danish and Greenlandic authorities with the Danish share then being returned to Greenland, but the block grant being reduced by an equal amount. The reduction of the block grant is significant not just for the fiscal practicalities of independence, but also symbolically because as the anthropologist Jens Dahl (2005: 152) has stated, transfers from Denmark psychologically "perpetuates a dependency complex reminiscent of colonialism". Silences in discourse can be just as revealing if not more so than what is said, thus it is interesting to note that no alternative income-generating activities are discussed in the SGA beyond mining. This follows what Wilson and Stammeler (2015) contend in that even before extractive projects start up, the very prospect of mining can overshadow alternative options. The

SGA therefore promulgates the assumption that resource extraction is the best and indeed only answer to Greenland achieving independence, naturalising this discourse in law.

Chapter 4 acts as a reminder of Greenland's limbo-like statehood status and the ultimately unequal power relations between Greenland and Denmark. It deals with foreign affairs and reinforces Denmark's overarching authority regarding matters of the *Rigsfællesskabet*, of which Greenland remains a part. In particular, it emphasises that "foreign and security policy matters are affairs of the realm" thus "powers granted to Naalakkersuisut in this Chapter shall not limit the Danish authorities' constitutional responsibility and powers in international affairs" (*Folketing*, 2009: 3). Scale therefore matters because on the international level at which statehood is recognised, Denmark can continue to represent Greenland and have the final say unless an issue "exclusively concerns Greenland and entirely relates to fields of responsibility taken over" (*Folketing*, 2009: 3). This becomes complicated when it comes to cases of ambiguous responsibility as can be seen with uranium, which is both a resource owned by Greenland, and a radioactive element that falls under the Danish defence and security remit. For this reason, Vestergaard (2015) interprets the uranium debate as a test case of the provisions of the SGA.

The SGA's final chapter proves particularly pertinent because it engages with the issue of Greenlandic sovereignty and access to independence. It states that the "decision regarding Greenland's independence shall be taken by the people of Greenland" after which negotiations between the two governments will begin "with a view to the introduction of independence for Greenland", presenting an independent Greenlandic state as a genuine possibility for the future (*Folketing*, 2009: 5). The chapter ends with perhaps the most significant statement of the SGA: "Independence for Greenland shall imply that Greenland assumes sovereignty over the Greenlandic territory" (*Folketing*, 2009: 5). Wilson (2017) draws our attention to the phrasing that Greenland will "assume" rather than assert sovereignty, introducing some healthy scepticism regarding Greenland's ability to exercise all its sovereign responsibilities given its limited human resources and infrastructure despite boasting the world's longest coastline. He concludes that the idea of an independent Greenland will remain "chimerical" until practical solutions to the sovereignty problem are found (Wilson, 2017: 516).

However, Wilson's pragmatic approach requires further problematisation because both sovereignty and territory are dense with meaning and so have theoretical as well as practical significance. Flint (2009: 706) defines sovereignty as "a claim to final and ultimate authority over a

political community” and Bartleson (2006: 467) follows a similar line regarding its finality by suggesting it is often viewed as an “indivisible and discrete condition”. This claim to indivisibility is rarely the *de facto* case as exemplified by Greenland’s partial claims to authority through existing Self Governance, however independence would ostensibly provide such ultimate authority. Territory is wrapped up in ideas of sovereignty because land falls under the ownership of the aforementioned authority, but territory should not be misrepresented as a mere cognate of land. Geographers have long emphasised the political power dynamics at work in the term ‘territory’, but Elden (2013) argues they do not go far enough in acknowledging its volumetric dimensions. By stating that Greenland could assume sovereignty over the Greenlandic territory, the SGA is in essence asserting *Naalakkersuisut*’s future right to ultimate power over the land and indeed the resources beneath it. Tellingly, in his interviews with Greenlanders regarding the significance of the SGA, Kuokkanen (2017) found that recognition as a people, independence, and subsurface rights were referenced most frequently. Almost half of his respondents cited the right to Greenland’s mineral resources (with the mineral resource area listed among those to be transferred to *Naalakkersuisut* in the schedule at the back of the SGA) as its most significant aspect, with one interviewee stating that this is not only important for the purposes of economic self-sufficiency, but also because now “we own our ground we walk on”, reflecting the material and symbolic power of resource ownership (Mariia Simonsen, April 8, 2013 in Kuokkanen, 2017: 188).

4.3 Naturalising Greenland’s Resource Frontier? Unearthing the Mineral Resources Act.

Under the Greenland Self-Government Act, the ‘mineral resource area’ was the first field of responsibility to be devolved to the new Self Rule government on January 1st, 2010 under *Inatsisartut*’s Mineral Resources Act (MRA). This was considered to be of “utmost importance” if the Self-Government was to be “of real substance” because the SGA had already acknowledged that all revenue from mineral resource activities (collected from licence fees, tax, ownership etc) would accrue to Greenland in the first instance, but this would be fairly meaningless if *Naalakkersuisut* had no control over the resource activities themselves (Explanatory notes to MRA, 2009: 1). By gaining the legislative as well as executive power over the mineral resources area, Greenland’s sovereignty over its land was dramatically increased, and the newfound authority placed *Naalakkersuisut* in a stronger position to steer Self Rule both economically and practically via new legislation, much of which is laid out in the MRA. The explanatory notes to the MRA state that “the bill lays down the basis and framework for the future regulation of mineral resources”, with laws regarding prospecting, exploration and exploitation not only outlining the practicalities, but also moulding

Greenland to be more appealing to mining investors, actively naturalising the imaginary of Greenland as a resource frontier (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 2). For these reasons, Poppel (2018: 9) identifies the act as “a cornerstone [...] in the process of nation building”.

In their chapter on the ‘scramble for Greenland’s minerals’, Vikström and Högselius (2017) express discontent with the argument that a changing climate alone can explain increasing investments in Greenland’s mining sector, arguing growing external demand and local factors are just as important, if not more so. Indeed, the following analysis of the MRA will argue that *Naalakkersuisut* have actively pursued policies which make Greenland a more appealing resource frontier to mining companies. Of the four local factors identified by Vikström and Högselius (2017) which influence mining companies’ decision to invest, I would argue *Naalakkersuisut* have capitalised on Greenland’s pre-existing geological setting by promoting its large and rich ore deposits; have generated regulations and policies which directly benefit mining companies such as the exclusive exploration licenses detailed in the MRA; and have sought to improve infrastructure and highlight their political stability in comparison to mineral supply zones like the Middle East by emphasising the cooperative relationship they have fostered with Denmark despite the ongoing process of decolonisation. Although efforts to attract mining companies are not entirely new to Self Rule as indicated by Sweden’s Raw Materials Group recognising Greenland’s mining legislation as amongst the most favourable in Europe in 2002, there has certainly been a proliferation of favourable mining legislation since Self Rule as part of the development of *Naalakkersuisut*’s proactive national mining strategies with the MRA taking centre stage (Dale, Bay-Larsen and Skorstad, 2018).

In practical terms, *Naalakkersuisut* have reified Greenland’s resource frontier imaginary by developing policies which work to the benefit of mining companies, particularly in the case of “an exclusive licence for exploration and exploitation of one or more mineral resources” established in Part 5 of the MRA (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 7) The promise of exclusivity is clearly appealing to mining companies because it gives them the monopoly over the resources in a large licensing area meaning they are more likely to be competitive and reap the rewards. Exploitation licences are considerably longer than prospecting licenses with a total period of up to 50 years, meaning that should the company commit, they will be rewarded with the certainty of a long monopoly over some of Greenland’s resources and the ability to establish themselves in this emerging mineral sector. Although the MRA cites many ways in which Greenland can make money from mining ventures, it does acknowledge that “the licensee may be granted exemption from taxation of the activities covered by the licence if the activities are subject to fees at least as onerous as the taxation would

have been". This indicates that *Naalakkersuisut* is aware it cannot tax too heavily or it will become uncompetitive compared to other mining nations and so deter investment (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 8). Furthermore, despite the many requirements *Naalakkersuisut* asks to the benefit of Greenland in terms of using local labour and contractors, the language of the MRA is fairly sympathetic towards business interests with many caveats making the requirements more lenient. In the case of labour for example, it is made clear that sourcing labour from Greenland is preferred, but that "the licensee may use foreign labour if labour with similar qualifications does not exist or is not available in Greenland" as is likely due to the skills gap in the Greenlandic workforce (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 8; Erdal, 2013).

Much of the MRA's regulations are designed to ensure that Greenland gains as much from the establishment of its mining sector as possible, working to further its nation-building cause both economically and symbolically. For example, considerable effort is made to ensure that Greenland's population benefits from mineral resource activities through job opportunities and the positive multiplier effect. A licensee "must have its registered office in Greenland, "must use labour from Greenland", "must use Greenlandic enterprises for contracts, supplies and services" and should "process exploited mineral resources in Greenland" as far as possible, with the intention being to confine all money-making exploits to Greenland to maximise income, job creation, and upskilling opportunities (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 7-8). Unlike the exclusivity of the exploration and exploitation licenses, prospecting licenses can be granted to multiple companies for the same area which is within Greenland's interests because it means there is a higher chance of a commercial mineral discovery. As is a common trend throughout the MRA, potential sources of income are emphasised with *Naalakkersuisut* requesting "payment of a fee for granting licenses" (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 7). They also maintain the right to "lay down provision of a payment fee for granting licenses, [...] submission of applications therefor and consideration by the authorities of such exploration and exploitation licenses" (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 7). On top of this, there are taxes which go to Greenland's treasury at every stage, from an area fee (based on the size of the licensing area) to a profits fee (in which a share of the profits from resource activities go the government) as well as royalties (calculated on the basis of resources extracted). It is even noted that *Naalakkersuisut* can make money from energy installations established by licensees through area, volume and profits fees, an added bonus on top of the improvements such installations would already make to Greenland's infrastructure and energy security at no additional cost to Greenland. In this way, the mining sector is being presented as a primary route to achieving economic independence from Denmark.

The MRA also works to further *Naalakkersuisut*'s territorial claim through discussions of scientific surveying, particularly with the seemingly innocuous statement that "the Greenland Self-Government may perform scientific and practical surveys of a general nature relating to mineral resources" (*Inatsisartut*, 2009: 3). As has been seen throughout Greenland's history, scientific expeditions are instrumental to asserting sovereignty over a territory by occupying the physical land and generating knowledge about its geology. This was demonstrated during the 1920s Danish-Norwegian conflict over eastern Greenland as the International Court ruled in Denmark's favour because despite never establishing permanent settlements, its frequent scientific expeditions represented a kind of effective occupation (Nielsen and Knudsen, 2013). In this way, the salience of a presence on - and knowledge about - the land for claims to sovereignty and nationhood is revealed, exemplifying the importance of vertical and volumetric aspect of territory (Elden, 2013) and following Peluso and Lund's (2013) assertion that frontier-thinking is actively enrolled in the process of territorialisation

4.4 Premiers Speeches: Tracking Discourse Continuity and Change

Kuupik Kleist, Aleqa Hammond and Kim Kielsen are the three premiers who have fronted *Naalakkersuisut* over the period of Self Rule and they have all followed a broadly pro-mining agenda, with their speeches revealing both continuity and change in the ways Greenland and its possibilities as a resource frontier have been presented by the different governments across the decade. Kleist from *Inuit Ataqatigiit* (IA) was the first Premier of the Self Rule Government and his speech at its inauguration on 21st June 2009 draws on some productive political, economic and environmental narratives. Firstly, he presents Self Rule as an important part of Greenland's "democratic development" and refers to Greenland's newfound position as a "leading country and an example to indigenous people everywhere", locating Greenland's place within the indigenous community worldwide and framing Greenland as a protector of indigenous rights (Kleist, 2009: np). The invocation of democracy works to present Greenland as a modern polity with international credibility while its championing of indigenous peoples worldwide acts as a reminder of its roots and shifts the scalar focus from the local to the international. Based on the speeches analysed which have been chosen for the insights they offer at key periods of transition (namely around the time of general elections), all three Premiers have been keen to reposition Greenland as a global player on the international stage and emphasise the ways it has opened up to international interests such as the mining industry, while still protecting Greenlanders heritage. Kleist (2009: np) talks of "being open to the rest of the world" and "find[ing] our new position on the world stage, but not at the cost

of our Greenlandic identity” reflecting the tensions inherent to nation-building whereby a cohesive sense of national-identity must be maintained while also garnering recognition from states internationally. Romanticisation of the Greenlandic environment is another rhetorical tool employed by Kleist (2009: np) to promote a united sense of Greenlandic identity through shared experience of Greenland’s “spectacular beauty” and “immense and captivating landscape” with its “incomparable freshness of air”. Despite their slightly different stances on mineral extraction, Hammond (2014: np) similarly alludes to Greenland’s “green mountains with beautiful wild flowers, long fjords and hot springs”, utilising Eden-like imagery to present Greenland as a hospitable land in her speech at the Arctic Summit in March 2014.

Despite such discussions of Greenland’s untouched natural beauty, both Kleist and Hammond highlight the importance of minerals and the opportunities mineral extraction represent for Greenland. Kleist (2009: np) cites Self Rule as the catalyst to achieving “the exclusive right to exploit the mineral resources in Greenland” which he is “very happy about” because “if Greenland is to strengthen its self-determination, [it] must have full responsibility for revenue generating areas”. This economically-centred extractive mentality is carried through to Kleist’s (2013: np) New Year’s address just a few months before the general election, in which he states that Greenland may have “plentiful mineral riches, but as long as they are lying in the ground [...] they are no benefit to anyone”. This negates any inherent value minerals may hold following ideas of intrinsic valuation in conservation literature which can equally be applied to the mineral world (Sandbrook et al, 2011; Gustafsson, 2013). The active role *Naalakkersuisut* plays in enabling this resource frontier imaginary through the generation of mining-friendly laws can be seen in Kleist’s (2013: np) comment that “the legislation now in place gives us a good foundation for guaranteeing our raw material incomes”, again commodifying Greenland’s environment in the name of greater autonomy. Although Hammond also stresses the fiscal value of Greenland’s mineral resources with even greater positive speculation, commenting that “a likely scenario for the future of Greenland is an economic growth supported by new large scale industries and oil and mineral extraction”, she was actually opposed to some of the legislation Kleist referred to, namely the Large Scale Projects Act. Indeed, the Economist (2013) argues that Kleist lost the general election on the 12th March 2013 to Hammond over the issue of mining, with Kleist seen by the electorate as too pro-investor due to his government passing a law which allows mining firms to hire cheap foreign workers. Hammond had promised to re-evaluate this, wanting mining firms to pay royalties and protect Greenlandic workers. This debate was carried out in the context of London Mining Plc’s \$2.3 billion project for an iron ore mine which could see as many as 2,000 Chinese workers (equivalent to 4% of Greenland’s population) moving to

Greenland to work on its construction (Scrutton, 2013). Although this project has failed to materialise following the British based company's insolvency and the concession being taken over by China's General Nice Development Ltd who have yet to begin exploitation, the significant public opposition and controversy it caused expose underlying tensions in Greenland's mining debate concerning how far it will embrace international mining companies and foreign workers (Taagholt and Brooks, 2016; Lajeunesse and Lackenbauer, 2016). The 2013 general election was therefore "dominated by the question of how the territory should exploit its mineral riches" (BBC NEWS, 2013: np) with *Siumut* narrowly winning under Hammond's leadership.

Although Hammond won the general election by presenting herself as more in touch with Greenlandic people and promoting a more protective approach to mining, Powell (2016) notes that assuming her premiership would be a move away from the 'full steam ahead' resource development approach was a serious misconception. Indeed, she had campaigned in favour of lifting the ban on uranium mining where Kleist was hesitant, narrowly pushing it through *Inatsisartut* on October 24th, 2013. Hammond's speech at the Arctic Summit in March 2014 reflects the ways in which *Naalakkersusit* have branded Greenland as a resource frontier, which is likely all the more promotional for being presented to an audience of international mining companies. Hammond identifies two primary reasons for the recent development in Greenland's mineral sector, framing it as a 'perfect storm' of environmental and social factors. Firstly she draws on what (Wilson: 2017) would describe as 'cold rush' rhetoric (the idea of a global warming driven boom in natural resource exploitation) by highlighting the "big opportunities" climate change is creating in the Arctic with "oil, gas and hard minerals [...] becoming available in quantities and qualities which are unique internationally" (Hammond, 2014: np). Such emphasis on abundance and exceptionality is reminiscent of Dodd's and Nuttall's (2016) discussion of an 'El Dorado complex', whereby Greenland is marketed as a veritable "resources cornucopia" to use Bridge's (2001: 2155) phrase. This fairly ahistorical presentation is somewhat nuanced by the second driving factor Hammond (2014: np) offers for Greenland's growing mining sector: "the very important constitutional changes which took place in the relationship between Denmark and Greenland in 2009 and 2010" which enabled Greenland to take over sole competence of its own resources. Like Kleist before her, Hammond (2014: np) pushes the image of Greenland as an emerging mining nation and a global player, stating that it "has the potential in the coming decades to become one of the most important suppliers of some of these hard minerals to the world market", not only hyping Greenland's resources like a walking advertisement, but also locating Greenland on the international scale.

Continuity from Kleist's economic focus can be seen in Hammond's concern over the freezing of the block grant; however she ties this to the more emotive matter of the risk it poses to social welfare and so pushes for increased international investment. Nonetheless, this leads her to the same conclusion of framing "a self-sustaining economy based on our own resources" as Greenland's only option. With this in mind, Hammond (2014: np) explicitly brands Greenland as "a frontier mineral and oil nation", drawing on connotations of the unexplored awaiting discovery. Not only does she bring attention to Greenland's "policy attractiveness" evidenced by it being heralded the "best country to do mining in 2013-2014" at Europe's largest conference for mining investors and finance, she even challenges what she describes as Europe's "negligible interest" aside from offshore oil when "European long term interest should be natural". Even the EU has recognised this through its EURARE project which identified southwest Greenland as a potential source of rare earth elements (REES) crucial to manufacturing modern technologies, which is of great strategic significance given that the security of the EU's REE supply is currently of concern (Goodenough et al, 2016). It is unsurprising that Hammond is pushing this connection, given the need for international investment on top of the "difficult but necessary decisions" her government took, specifically the contentious decision to lift the uranium ban which has "paved the way for [Greenland] to fully exploit [its] rare earth element deposits" in areas such as Kuannersuit/ Kvanefjeld where the rock containing REEs also contains uranium. That Hammond is calling for greater European involvement is made more interesting given Greenland's Overseas Country or Territory status within the EU, whereby its connection to the EU is leveraged through its special relationship with Denmark. Gad (2017: 11) argues Greenland has used this three-way relationship to its advantage in recent years as part of its "postcolonial sovereignty games" to assert its own authority on the international stage. Greenland's efforts to represent itself are echoed in Kielsen's New Year's reception speech in 2016, in which he states that "Greenland has established its own representations in countries that are important to [...] the development of Greenland, in places such as Copenhagen, Brussels and Washington DC".

Following Hammond's expense scandal and resignation, Kim Kielsen took over as leader of *Siumut* and led the party to a narrow victory in the November 2014 general election (Thelocal.dk, 2014). Wilson (2015) suggests Kielsen was carefully chosen by *Siumut* to match the mood of the electorate, stating it should come as no surprise that a former policeman with a reputation for his honesty, integrity and down-to-earth pragmatism was appointed acting leader following the political chaos of the spending scandal. Unlike Hammond's impassioned speeches and gung-ho attitude, Kielsen's style is more modest and considered. On this basis, Wilson (2015: 2) predicted that "while we can

expect Kielsen's government to remain interested in future drilling and mining opportunities, it is likely that this interest will be counter-balanced by a renewed emphasis on boosting profits from existing industries firmly grounded in Greenland's economic present", and she was not far off. Kielsen's framing of Greenland as a resource frontier has been more cautious, and this was no doubt reinforced by the faltering resource economy of late 2014 when world market oil prices dropped. Accordingly, in May 2015 at the Future Greenland Conference, Kielsen spoke about more practical and immediate options for boosting Greenland's economy. The speech was pitched at Greenland's business community, and Kielsen (2015: np) highlighted fisheries as "the country's most important industry" which should be developed further, while also noting "tourism is another important area". This pro-fishing sentiment was continued in his 2016 New Year's reception speech and his 2018 welcome speech to *Naalakkersuisut*, in which Kielsen (2016: np; 2018:np) repeated the phrase that fishing is Greenland's "main" and "most important" industry respectively, and that this will remain the case "for many years". This being said, Kielsen (2016: np) did acknowledge that it would be in Greenland's interests to diversify and "move away from having to rely on one source of income", referencing fishing but proving true for mineral resources as well. This acknowledgement marks a frame shift in Premiers' discussions of the Greenlandic economy away from an emphasis on mining to the exclusion of all else, as was exhibited in the speeches of Kleist and Hammond.

Although Kielsen's approach appears more measured, this is not to say that he has not promoted Greenland's resource sector or potential as a mining nation. Alluding to the hit the international mining sector took, he notes that "despite the industry's rollercoaster ride", natural resources remain "one of the cornerstones [Greenland] must continue to make efforts to develop" (Kielsen, 2015: np). Drawing heavily on ideas of resilience and perseverance, Kielsen offers the Oil and Minerals Strategy as a "good example" of how "maintaining our objectives will yield results in the long term", pointing out that despite the gold mine at Nalunaq and the Seqi olivine mine being decommissioned, "there is now a ruby mine on the way and several interesting subjects on the drawing board". Similarly, in his New Year's reception speech Kielsen (2016: np) describes Greenland's natural resources as "in an exciting development phase", positively presenting Greenland as having "succeeded in maintaining interest from abroad" even "at a time of low world market prices". By creating a positive buzz around new developments even in the face of adversity, Kielsen sustains Greenland's resource frontier imaginary, while also recognising the relevance of other sectors and the focus the government must place on social factors like providing "practical training opportunities" for its young people.

As a representative of *Naalakkersuisut*, Kielsen passes the mantle for developing Greenland's mineral sector to Greenland's private sector, suggesting it is their task to "see more of our people working with mineral resource exploration" while the government "must ensure the best possible framework" for private players to operate in. A similar rhetoric can be seen in Kielsen's (2016: np) speech where he argues that resource developments "must be driven by private, and often foreign, investment" meaning *Naalakkersuisut*'s primary responsibility should be to provide "stable and competitive framework conditions for natural resources that make it attractive to invest in Greenland". This more hands-off economic attitude is unsurprising given *Siumut*'s stance in favour of economic liberalism and reminds us that *Naalakkersuisut* is just one actor in the network of Greenland's emerging resource sector (Wilson, 2015). From Kielsen's perspective, *Naalakkersuisut* is presented as a facilitatory body tasked with promoting and developing Greenland's resource potential in conjunction with Greenland's private sector and international mining companies. The primary motivation offered is to secure "greater economic independence" for Greenland with mineral resources acting as "one of the bearing elements in Greenland's economic future" (Kielsen 2015: np; 2018: np). Even in 2018, Kielsen positively presents Greenland's mining progress, noting that compared to 2016 levels, "the amount of exploration activity has increased threefold" and stating that "things are moving ahead" for Hudson Resources anorthosite mine which has since begun operations, framing Greenland as an increasingly attractive and active resource frontier. Regardless of Kielsen's more multi-faceted approach to strengthening Greenland's economy, this narrative of achieving economic independence for Greenland at least in part via its mineral resources represents the most significant aspect of discourse continuity across all the Premiers' speeches, isolating economic independence to be a primary goal of Self Rule.

4.5 Summary

To recapitulate, this chapter has argued that frontier imaginaries must be understood in relation to Greenland's unique political and geological position. Parliamentary language and the speeches of premiers offer an excellent insight into the ways Greenland has constructed itself and its territory as a resource frontier. The Self-Government Act enabled the transfer of mineral rights and asserted Greenland's right to self-determination, explicitly tying its mineral potential to the chance for greater economic independence from Denmark. Within a few months, the Mineral Resources Act established licensing laws highly attractive to the mining industry, encouraging increased exploration and crystallising Greenland as a place of opportunity in the minds of the international mining community, while also ensuring that Greenland would benefit socially and economically from any

resource development. This is a big balancing act because in offering incredible fifty-year exploitation monopolies (five times the length of time Greenland has been operating under Self Rule), one could argue *Naalakkersuisut* are somewhat selling off their sovereignty, although the high royalty fees remind us who really owns the land and the MRA demands that all profit generating activities be located in Greenland. Furthermore, by encouraging exploration and exploitation activity and promoting geological surveys, *Naalakkersuisut* has endorsed frontier thinking to engender its physical presence on and in the land, forming part of its territorialisation campaign to assert Greenlandic sovereignty. This sustained pro-mining attitude can be identified on the part of *Naalakkersuisut* over the last decade despite changes in leadership, with all the Premiers pushing Greenland's resource potential as a means to independence, although there have been some disagreements over the details as with foreign workers and uranium. The current Premier, Kim Kielsen, has also been more cautious and keener to diversify Greenland's economy, no doubt due to the unreliability of mineral markets and his pragmatic nature. However he does still promote a resource frontier imaginary, most recently stating that mineral resources are one of the "bearing elements" of Greenland's future (Kielsen, 2018: np). The documents analysed all reinforce the fact that Greenland's independence is remarkably dependent on reducing reliance on Danish funds, thus their ability to commodify the environment and attract mining companies to convert their mineral resources into money is of utmost importance.

CHAPTER FIVE: Priorities and Challenges for a Mining Future in the 2014-2018 Oil and Minerals Strategy

5.1 Introduction

"We should perhaps regard the rhetoric of state officials, the nicely crafted white papers and policy documents [...] as parts of a continuous state spectacle asserting and affirming the authority of the state." (Blom Hansen and Stepputat, 2001: 37).

As the above quotation highlights, strategy documents are far from neutral and instead tend to promote state agendas, a matter of particular interest given Greenland's not-quite-nation-state status and its *Naalakkersuisut's* nation-building efforts. For this reason, a critical geopolitical approach using CDA is well placed to unpick the discursive strands which form part of the 'state spectacle' tapestry woven in Greenland's 2014-2018 Oil and Mineral Strategy. Indeed, Bailes and Heininen (2012) have argued that unlike the clandestine military strategies from which the term originates, state strategies are produced with the intention of broadcasting a message to internal and external audiences. This is often a message which reflects positively on the country while also protecting its national interests, as can be seen in Greenland's mineral strategy which has also been published in a popularised short form to "actively involve the general public" and convince them of *Naalakkersuisut's* social commitments to "promoting prosperity and welfare for the Greenlandic society" (Jacobsen, 2016: np; *Naalakkersuisut*, 2014b: 4). Although the full-length strategy also pushes for a people-centred approach, frequently repeating the potential of the mineral resources sector to "create income and employment opportunities", the very fact it is available in an English translation is indicative of *Naalakkersuisut's* awareness of its external audiences, with the document inviting the attention of the international mining community. Such marketing is apparent in the preamble which states that *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 7) will "maintain and further develop" the preceding strategy's efforts to "further the chances of making commercially viable oil or gas finds and to incentivise the mineral resources industry to obtain exploration and exploitation licenses". This chapter will be structured around some of the primary policy areas of the 2014 Oil and Minerals Strategy, namely those of oil/gas, minerals, and sustainable development, offering a critique of the priorities and challenges to securing Greenland's mining future (and associated autonomy) as they are presented by *Naalakkersuisut*.

The introduction to *Naalakkersuisut's* long-form minerals strategy emphasises Greenland's difficult demographic and economic situation, framing the development of its mineral resources

sector as critical not just for political gains, but also for economic and social ones or else its welfare society and very ability to provide for its people will be threatened. Attention is drawn to a 2011 Tax and Welfare Commission report which found that in comparison to other Nordic countries, Greenland has a higher poverty rate and lower average life expectancy. The mineral strategy goes on to highlight the increased risk Greenland's already-strained welfare-system faces due to its ageing population which will require more public spending despite a decrease in public revenues as a result of having proportionally fewer economically active individuals. Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen (2018: 39) would likely identify this introductory framing as a prime example of the Copenhagen school's theory of securitisation, whereby "political actors garner support for their political goals by articulating a referent object as threatened, and advocating the certain policies are enacted to ward off the threat". Operationalisation of this securitisation strategy can be seen in *Naalakkersuisut's* (2014a: 17) statement that "the mineral resources sector must contribute to financing the welfare society" because "in the current economic climate, achieving the objective of increased self-sufficiency is not realistic without substantially developing the mineral resources sector". In terms of anticipated levels of development, *Naalakkersuisut's* (2014a) long-term vision is to make a commercially viable oil find and have five to ten mines active at any time, with the goal for the 2014-2018 strategy period being to have between three and five mines open and one to two offshore drilling projects established every second year. Needless to say, this was a very optimistic target as many oil exploration licenses have since been relinquished and at present Greenland only has 6 mineral exploitation licenses, just two of which (the ruby and anorthosite mines) are actively extracting resources (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2018). This follows Bailes and Heininen's (2012: 25) acknowledgement that institutional strategies tend to be "hopefully self-fulfilling prophecies rather than a bald statement of what can and will be done", hence the need to consider the challenges which may obstruct Greenland's mining future. With this critical approach, it is possible to see the ways in which *Naalakkersuisut* has naturalised mining as the only answer to Greenland's societal woes and political goals, thereby promoting its own state spectacle.

5.2 Hying Hydrocarbons

As Poppel (2018: 1) notes, visions of an independent Greenland have been fuelled by the "hopes of a shortcut via discoveries of oil and gas", a dream which has remained prominent in contemporary economic and political discourse despite the fact not a single barrel of Greenlandic oil has ever been extracted. This vision was in part powered by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) which estimated that the East Greenland Rift Basin Province could hold over 31 billion barrels of oil, gas

and natural liquids (Gautier et al, 2007). Accordingly, *Naalakkersuisut* have pursued an intensified hydrocarbons strategy, with the number of active exploration licenses rising from just two in 2007 to twenty by 2011, the same year that Cairn Energy conducted eight offshore drillings, with all the wells coming up dry. This has not deterred *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 9), as can be seen in its 2014-2018 Oil and Minerals Strategy in which it prioritises “attract[ing] foreign investments in oil exploration activities in Greenland” and promoting “oil exploration activities in different regions” in the hopes of making a commercially viable oil discovery on which to establish an active oil field. The strategy reports positively on progress, stating that “a large number of exclusive oil/gas exploration licenses have been granted in Greenland”, and so calls for a strong marketing strategy to advertise licensing rounds at trade shows and conferences where *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 26) can “promote Greenland’s oil/gas potential, licence strategy etc. to oil and gas companies”.

Naalakkersuisut operationalises both externally perceived and internally controlled assets to present Greenland as an attractive resource frontier within the 2014 strategy. It portrays Greenland’s rich geological potential coupled with diminishing ice as a unique opportunity, while simultaneously reforming and developing its licensing system and tax models to provide a framework which makes Greenland an appealing investment prospect to prospective partners. Greenland’s exceptionality is emphasised, with *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 23) asserting that from a geological perspective “Greenland is one of the most interesting areas in the world”. This intrigue is then cemented by what Wilson (2017) would call a ‘cold rush’ rhetoric apparent in the statement that “climate change will probably make future exploration activities easier, both at land and at sea”, with the prospect of more open water and longer field seasons incentivising an increase in hydrocarbon developments (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 27). Such an approach to climate change also falls decidedly within the remit of Kristoffersen’s (2014: 145) “opportunistic adaptation”, where the economic advantages of climate change (adaptation) outweigh the desire to deal with its causes (mitigation). In its efforts to provide a better operational framework with which to attract hydrocarbon companies, *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 25) has made achieving “continuous efficiency gains in administrative licensing routine and procedures” a priority, with the goal being to develop an IT-based hydrocarbon licence management system as was done for minerals in the 2009 strategy period. A model licence is also provided to companies during licensing rounds to make the application process less laborious with continuity of the model ensuing a “stable framework for the industry in which to operate” (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014: 25). Finally much consideration has been given to Greenland’s tax models with a benchmark analysis commissioned to ensure its government take is in line with the mining industry internationally, generating as much revenue for Greenland as

possible while still being competitive. As Figure 3 below shows, Greenland's total take of 53% offers the fourth best profit scenario for a license holder of the thirteen areas compared, making it one of the most lucrative and so attractive investments. The updated tax model for hydrocarbons also maintains Greenland's interests, with the 2.5% royalty on turnover securing income from the outset and the enforcement of state participation via Nunaoil as a carried partner allowing *Naalakkersuisut* to remain actively involved, while also "ensuring that oil extraction know-how is captured" to the long term benefit of Greenland's mineral resources sector.

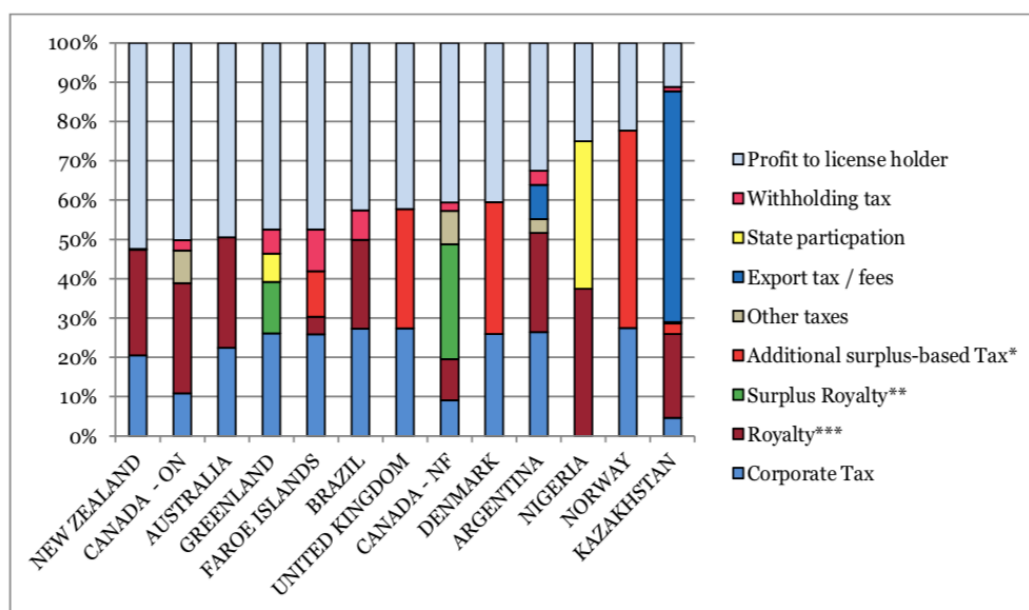


Figure 3: A bar chart comparing government takes between 13 countries and regions for oil/gas extraction (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 32)

Efforts to increase hydrocarbon activity and the likelihood of an oil find during the strategy period can be seen in the licensing changes made by *Naalakkersuisut*. From 2014, smaller blocks of 1,000-4,000 km² rather than the original 10,000km² were licensed off. This was presumably on the basis that it would mean more hydrocarbon companies covering more ground in greater detail, making an oil find more likely while also generating more revenue for Greenland in the meantime. Not only does the strategy call for a numerical increase in licenses, it also recommends spatial expansion, urging the introduction of licensing rounds for areas of particular geological interest in less-explored areas to the West, namely in Baffin Bay, Davis Strait, and the South West. However, this optimistic strategy was published before the considerable drop in market oil prices later in 2014 (see Figure 4) which led to a decline in international industry's interest in Greenlandic hydrocarbons. The impact of the oil bust on Greenland can be seen in Figure 5 (overleaf) which shows the location of intended oil exploration licensing rounds for the 2014-2018 strategy period that were indeed made available, and the location of hydrocarbon exploration licenses as they stand today, with the 6 in the east

remaining, but a dearth to the West where the strategy had hoped to expand hydrocarbon ventures. Upon referral to *Naalakkersuisut's* (2018) document listing current petroleum licenses, it becomes apparent that all 7 of the exploration licenses in West Greenland have been or are in the process of being relinquished, with their statuses listed as “surrender is ongoing”. This reflects the volatility and unreliability of minerals markets which Wilson and Stammler (2015) talk of, meaning that societies such as Greenland take a risk by relying on extractive industries to secure their development. Despite this and the lack of any commercial finds as of yet, the latest reports suggest that *Naalakkersuisut* have not given up on their pipe(line) dreams. Indeed their 2019 budget states that they have “decided to increase focus on the hydrocarbon field to make [it] an economic potential for Greenland”, even putting 48 million DKK towards the cause (translated by Poppel, 2018 from *Naalakkersuisut*, 2018: 486). This, more than anything, reflects *Naalakkersuisut's* steadfast commitment to making Greenland's resource frontier imaginary a reality, evidencing Bridge and Le Billon's (2013) proclamation that “oil seduces those who would control it, feeding dreams of instant wealth and economic transformation”.

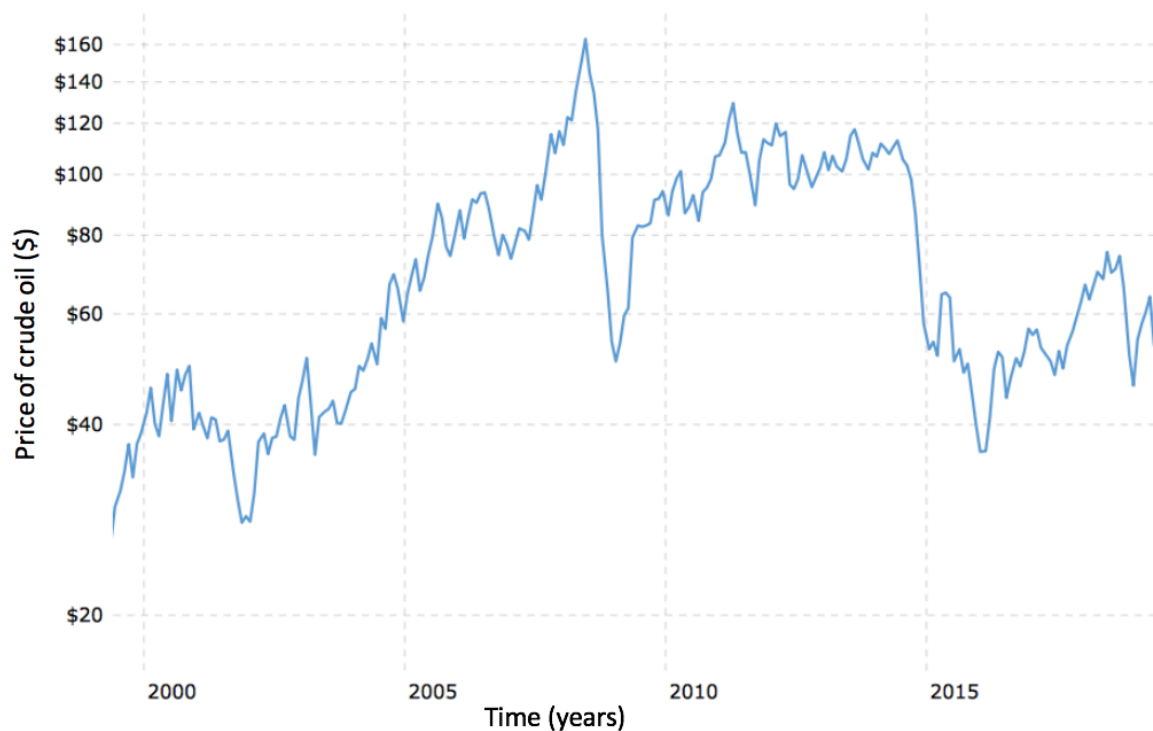


Figure 4: A graph showing fluctuating world crude oil prices over the 21st Century
Source: <http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>

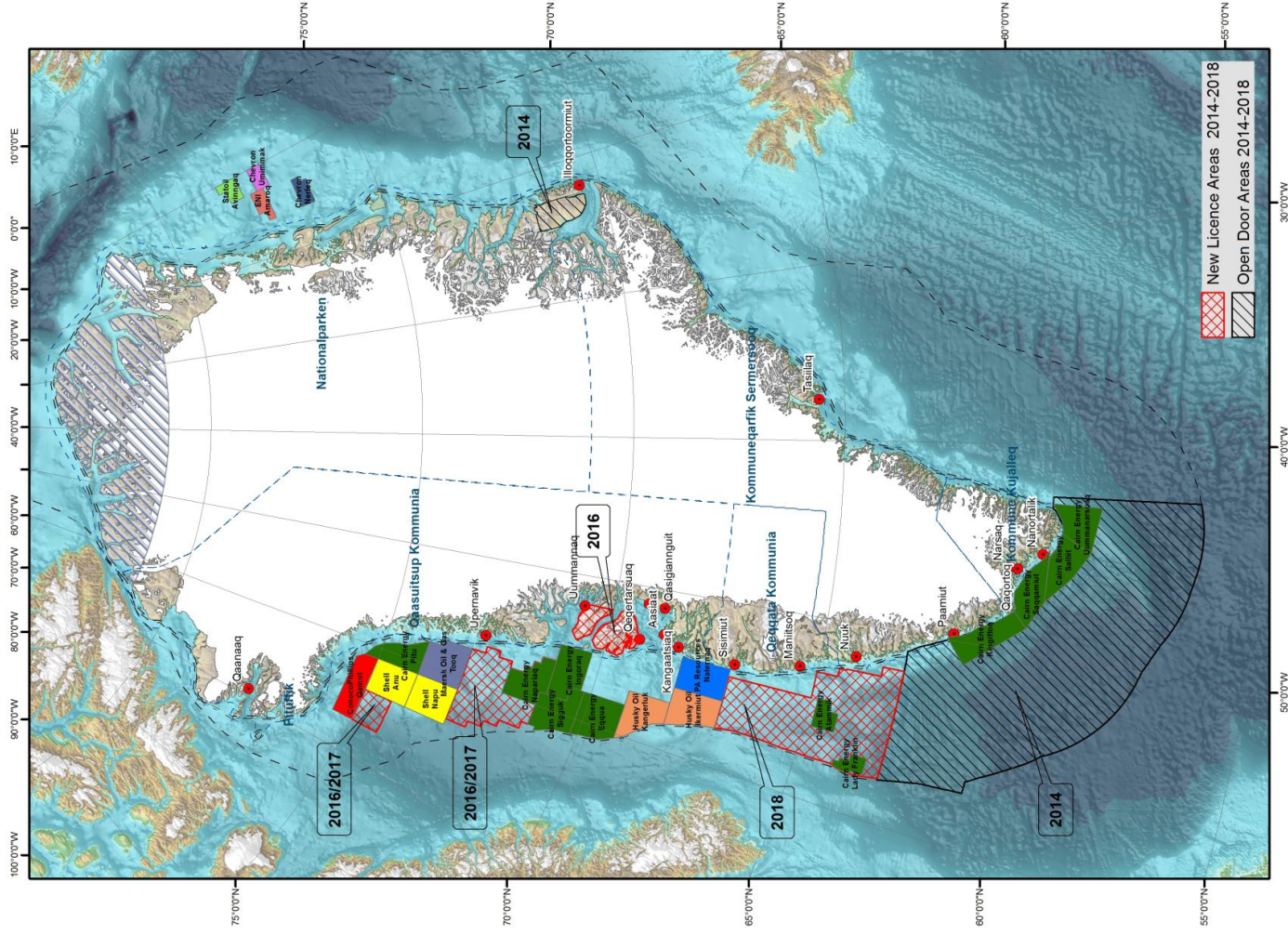
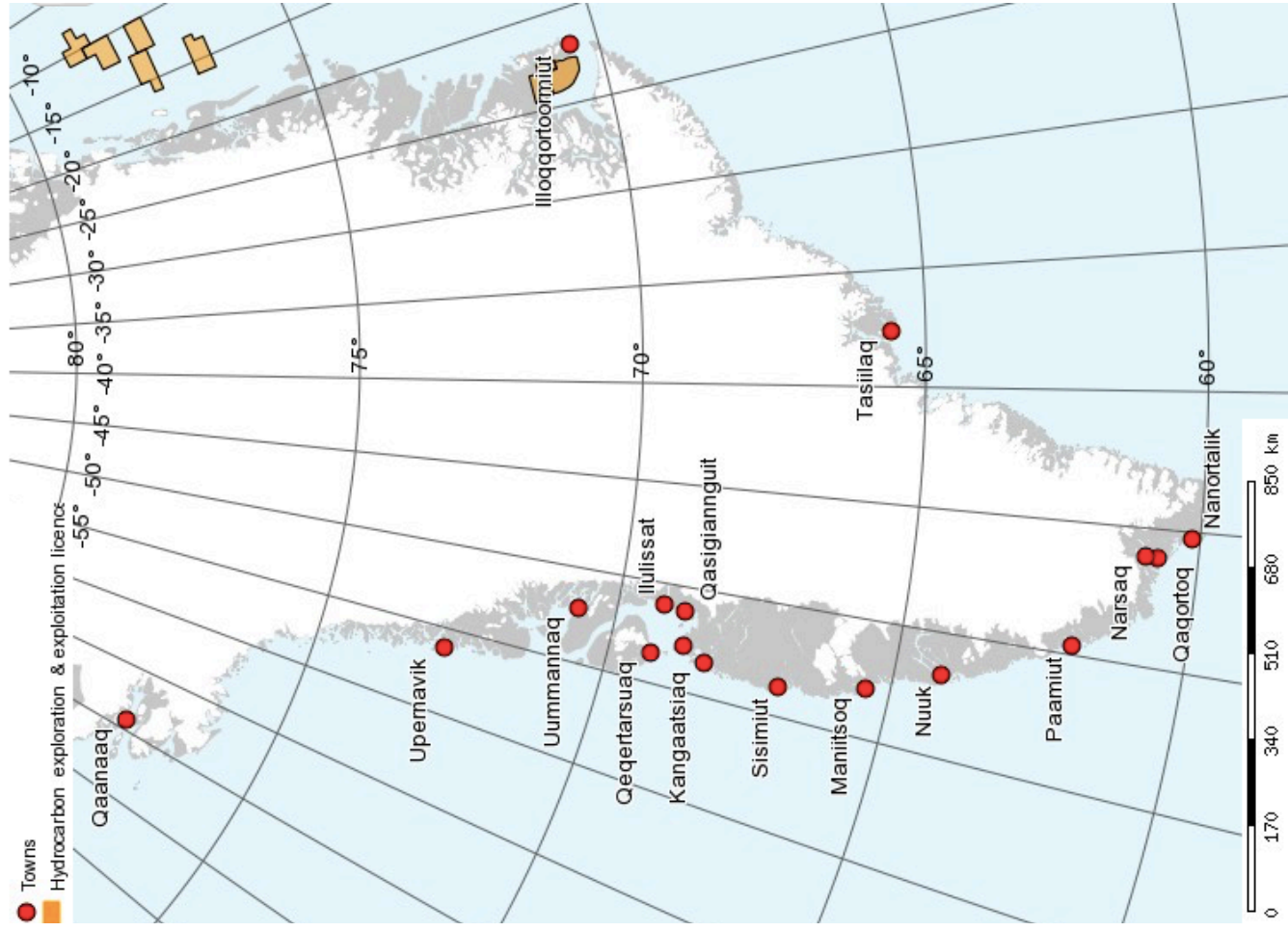


Figure 5: A map comparison of Greenlandic oil exploration licensing rounds for 2014-2018 (left) taken from Naalakkersuisut (2014a: 24) and the location of oil exploration licences (right) as of May 2019 (Naalakkersuisut, 2019b)

5.3 Strategising Greenland's Minerals

"In this age where discoveries are increasingly difficult to come by, Greenland remains a frontier exploration region" - Julie Hollis, Ministry of Mineral Resources and Labour, 4th March 2019.

Mounting interest in Greenland's minerals over the last decade has predominantly been due to the proactive international marketing campaigns of the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Labour (MMRL), as is demonstrated by the above statement from the head of Geology at the MMRL which was given at the most recent Prospectors and Developers Association Canada (PDAC) Convention. PDAC's Convention is the self-proclaimed "leading convention for people, companies and organizations in, or connected with, mineral exploration" and hosts a targeted Greenland Day which "gives the audience a unique insight into Greenland's extraordinary mineral prospectivity [...] and presents Greenland as a primary investment destination" (PDAC, 2019: np; Naalakkersuisut, 2019a: np). Hollis' (2019) promotion of Greenland as a "frontier exploration region" reactivates discourses of Greenland as an undiscovered 'tabula rasa' from the era of Victorian exploration (see Craciun, 2016), reminding us of the ways in which "extractive spaces are constructed through a discursive dialectic which simultaneously erases socioecological histories and reinscribes spaces in the image of commodity" (Bridge, 2001: 2149). In her construction of Greenland as a resource frontier, Hollis goes on to say that "there are a lot of other factors [beyond the range of mineralisation types] which make Greenland quite exciting in terms of mineral prospectivity", hinting at the actions *Naalakkersuisut* have taken. Indeed, the first page of the minerals section of *Naalakkersuisut's* 2014 strategy specifically lays out the parameters that it believes affect a mineral company's decision to invest, revealing *Naalakkersuisut's* awareness of and efforts to meet these demands. The list is in essence what *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 38) views to constitute an attractive resource frontier, namely having good "geological potential and prospects (metals and minerals), mineral legislation, fiscal conditions, institutional factors and framework conditions, and political stability".

Naalakkersuisut's marketing strategy, mineral licencing strategy, mineral tax models, and special allowances within the 2014-2018 strategy period all work to construct Greenland as a more attractive resource frontier. The marketing approach outlined in the 2014 strategy is a three-pronged attack, meaning that in addition to representation at industry events like PDAC, Greenland also targets activities "directly at carefully selected countries, exploration companies, and investors", as well as relying on official visits with the attendance of *Naalakkersuisut* members that "create new opportunities for co-operation" in countries like China and South Korea (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 43-

44). Mineral licensing has also been streamlined with effort made to “make licence terms robust to fluctuations in the global economy” and administrative processes made more “simple and easy to navigate” so that the application process is as user-friendly as possible (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 44). In line with this, a key objective of the mineral strategy is to “modernise the existing mineral licence management portal” over the 2014-2018 period (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 45). In recognition of Greenland’s logistical challenges and harsh environment, *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 41) has deemed it “necessary to offer licenses on more favourable terms with regard to exploration obligations and licence period”, particularly in North Greenland where it is “marketing the unique zinc potential”. This need to offer a mining scenario with enough perks to outweigh the challenges for companies carries through to Greenland’s new tax models, where a benchmark analysis was carried out for select minerals. Overall, *Naalakkersuisut*’s government take averages at between 37-38%, putting it at the lower end of the scale compared to other mining countries which fall around the 38-44% mark. For this reason, *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 54) again recognises the careful line it must tread because although it could increase its own take marginally, this would risk losing its competitive advantage, particularly considering Greenland’s “frontier status and challenging infrastructure” meaning any increase should be “modest”. To ensure *Naalakkersuisut* makes as much money as reasonably possible to finance public services (and indeed greater self-determination), exceptions are made for uranium, rare earths, and gemstones which are deemed more valuable and so more than double the royalty on turnover is charged. In all cases, the royalty levied on company turnover is emphasised because it guarantees government income from year one, giving *Naalakkersuisut* greater economic autonomy.

In its status update for the minerals sector, *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 9) reports positively that “not only has the number of licenses increased, the companies’ exploration expenses have also increased over the years, from 2002-2012” with 2011 proving the most lucrative year. Government survey programmes are directed at “high-volume metals, ores and gemstones” in particular with “iron ore, copper, zinc, REEs, gold, uranium, and gemstones” prioritised because these minerals command the greatest global demand (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 40). Although this would suggest *Naalakkersuisut*’s vision of a Greenlandic mining nation is coming to fruition, the global demand in the mineral sector has actually taken a downward turn since the 2014 strategy was published. As Vikström and Högselius (2017) note, from around 2014 the global mining industry faced problems, primarily due to a decline in demand and overproduction causing prices to decrease, not helped by the slowdown in China’s industrial growth. Although the effects have varied between mining projects in Greenland, the impact on the number of exploration licenses granted (Figure 6) and company exploration

expenses (Figure 7) which *Naalakkersuisut* had been so proud of are notable, with both dropping considerably although exploration licenses have begun to recover. It is within this context that we must view *Naalakkersuisut*'s (2014a: 60) primary goal for the 2014-2018 strategy period: to “grant three to five mineral exploitation licenses on an environmentally and socially sustainable basis”. Only 58 licenses were granted in 2018 which is less than the 67 of 2014, and to date six mineral exploitation licenses have been granted, but only two mines are actually active (Hudson Resources A/S anorthosite mine in Naajat and Greenland Ruby A/S in Aappaluttoq, both of which are in West Greenland) (*Naalakkersuiut*, 2019a).

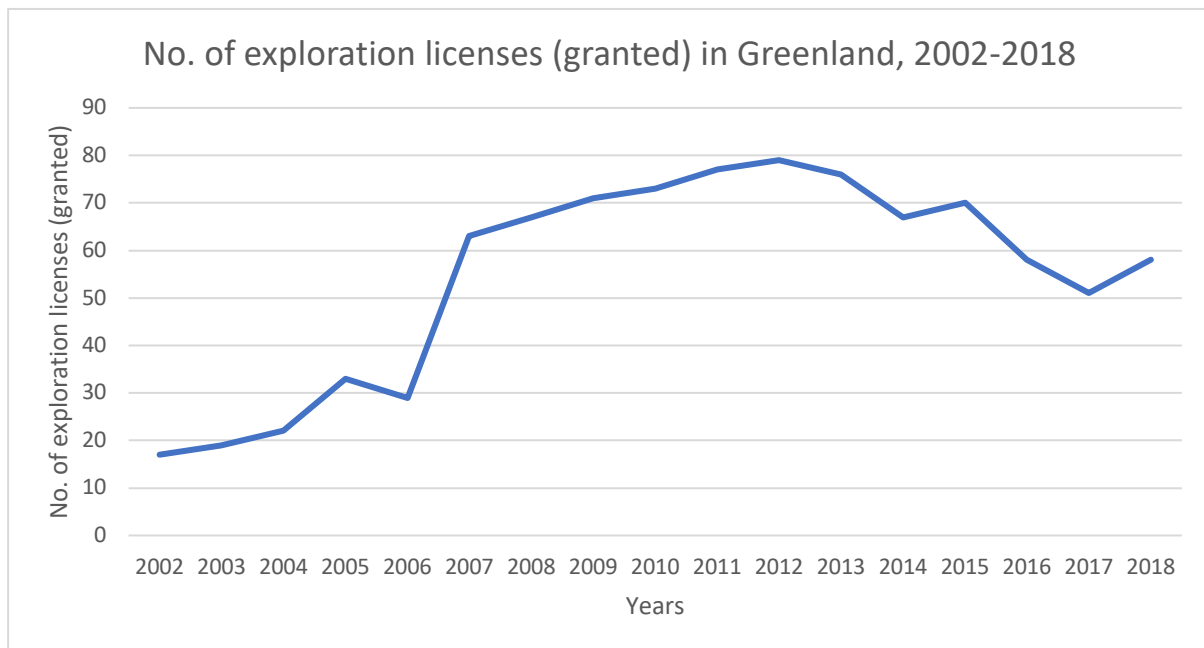


Figure 6: A graph showing the number of exploration licenses granted in Greenland from 2002-2018

Source: Author generated using data from *Naalakkersuisut* (2018).

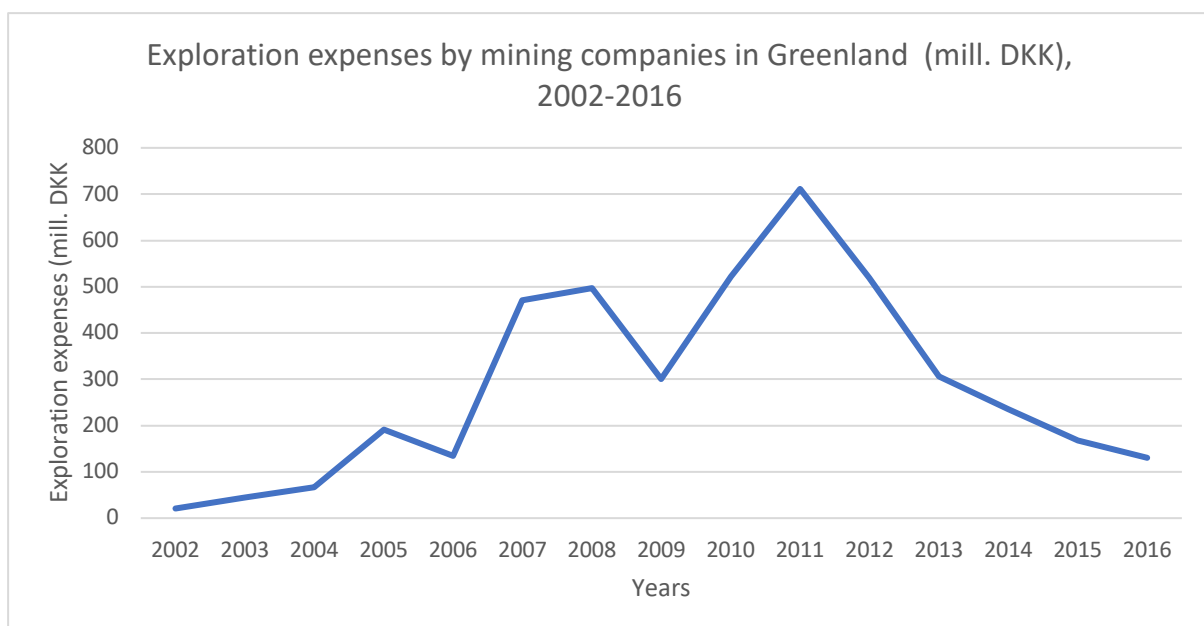


Figure 7: A graph showing mining company exploration expenses in Greenland from 2002-2016

Source: Author generated using data from *Naalakkersuisut* (2018).

As was discussed in section 4.4, the uranium debate regarding the lifting of the zero-tolerance policy has played a significant role in Greenlandic political discourse: thus uranium is given a dedicated section in the minerals chapter of the 2014 strategy. Despite the controversy over the legal existence of the ban in the first place (Thomassen, 2014) and the contentious nature of *Inatsisartut's* vote which only passed 15:14 with 2 votes uncast (Nuttall, 2013), *Naalakkersuisut* frames the scenario positively, presenting itself as a responsible body fully capable of extracting and exporting radioactive material in Greenland. It is worth noting here that Greenland has had previous experience with uranium exploration, as Kvanefjeld plateau (*Kuannersuit* in *Kalaallisut*) which is currently being developed by Greenland Minerals and Energy Ltd (GME) was previously prospected by Danish-sponsored expeditions from 1955-1962 (Nielsen and Knudsen, 2013). This historic situation has been turned on its head because it is now Greenland's *Inatsisartut*, rather than the Danish *Folketing*, who are using geological exploration to communicate their territorial sovereignty, with the additional hope that Greenland's mineral wealth from REEs and uranium will contribute to its economic and political independence from Denmark. With such high stakes and considering the dual-use dilemma uranium poses with its "potential for electricity generation matched by its potential to yield the ultimate weapon of mass destruction" (Vestergaard, 2015: 1), it is important that *Naalakkersuisut* presents itself as a diligent government committed to ensuring the safe and peaceful usage of uranium. The majority of the 2014 strategy's uranium section is therefore given over to demonstrating Greenland's commitments and framing it as a peaceful nation, emphasising that "Greenland is already covered by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)" and is even "covered by a voluntary additional protocol, which extends the IAEA's [International Atomic Energy Agency] safeguards to also include nuclear substances extracted by mining" (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 40).

In recognition that the road to uranium-supplier status will require close collaboration with Denmark due to uranium's radioactive nature making it a matter of foreign policy, *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 40) clearly state that "a co-operation structure must be set up between the Government and the Government of Greenland" (Nuttall, 2013; Vestergaard, 2015). Even in translation, Gad (2017: 20) would likely read into the semantics, whereby Denmark's authority is made absolute in the simple title of 'Government' and *Naalakkersuisut* is distinguished as the lesser 'Government of Greenland', with such "linguistic games" in which *Naalakkersuisut* subtly acquiesces to Denmark deemed necessary if Greenland is to successfully become a uranium supplier. In their discussion on whether Greenland should mine its uranium, Vestergaard and Bourgouin (2012: 3) identify uranium mining as a test case of the 2009 Self-Government Act, requiring an understanding of how "to

delineate legal authority between Copenhagen and Nuuk”. As Vestergaard later confirms with Thomasen (2016: np), a uranium deal was successfully negotiated which clarified competencies, with “Greenland retain[ing] control over mining, the environment and safety, and Denmark over non-proliferation”. This marks the first step towards a common approach and administrative system for governing uranium extraction and trade, as was prioritised in the 2014 strategy. Only with such security measures in place will Greenland be able to develop its rare earth element industry, with the REE supply at Kvanefjeld holding the potential to supply 20% of global REE demand, offering a geopolitically salient alternative to China as well as a new source for China itself, which currently controls 97% of the world’s supply (Vestergaard and Bourgoiun, 2012). Although Greenland is now one step “closer to building the world’s fifth largest uranium mine” at Kvanefjeld, it is important to remember GME has faced considerable opposition, both locally in Narsaq and internationally from ENGOs over the risks its mine poses to human health and the environment (Jamasmie, 2017: np; Avataq et al., 2013; NOAH, 2017). The “conflicting spatial storylines” between *Naalakkersuisut* and civil society as Bjørst (2016: 34) has described them can therefore be seen, revealing competing narratives in which uranium could either save or destroy the local community, and in doing so, build or break the nation (Myrup, 2012).

5.4 Sustainable Development and Challenges to a Mining Future: Pipe(line) Dreams and Mineral Mirages?

Sustainable development underpins the 2014-2018 mineral resources strategy, as indicated by the term “sustainable” being invoked in some variation thirty-seven times throughout the document, and the longest chapter being devoted to the concept. The chapter opens with the statement that “current development of the mineral resources sector must be based on sustainability”, however ‘sustainability’ has become something of a buzzword in contemporary policy documents. At its heart, sustainable development looks to balance economic and social development with respect for the environment, with the definition arising from the Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987) of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs remaining the most popular. However as Waas (2011) makes clear, sustainability remains a contested concept both in its substantive content and what is needed to achieve it. Within the tripartite system of environmental, economic and social responsibilities, the three pillars are rarely given equal weighting, and it is in these nuances that the political emerges (Jacobsen, 2018). This is made most apparent in *Naalakkersuisut’s* (2014b: 21) quick-read document which emphasises their determination to “focus on sustainable development in a broad sense, with regard to society and the

economy". Although nods are made to environmental protection and ensuring "that development takes place in an environmentally sound manner", it is clear that *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 66) is prioritising the social and economic over the environmental. Kirsch (2010: 87) would argue such deprioritising of the environment is common, with the "progressive redefinition of the term" 'sustainable development' "emptying out" any original reference to the environment (Negri, 1999: 9).

Krueger and Gibbs (2007: 2) have argued that "engaging the politics of sustainability represents a gap in the current sustainability literature", with Gad and Strandsbjerg (2019) asserting that this is still the case in academia today. The following will contribute to this lacuna by critically evaluating how *Naalakkersuisut* presents environmental concerns and politicises 'sustainable development' in its mineral resources strategy. Ultimately, one can argue as Kirsch (2010: 92) does that mining is a fundamentally unsustainable extractive process which leaves behind "scarred and ruined environments", but this is far from the slant *Naalakkersuisut* take. Although they acknowledge the potential environmental impacts of mining, they refocus attention on regulating and reducing the risks, framing resource extraction as a manageable phenomenon which can be made sustainable. This can be seen in the self-congratulatory tone regarding the MRA amendments which established the Environmental Agency for Mineral Resources Activities to separate the regulatory function of the environmental area from the rest of mineral resources, and in the emphasis on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments (SEIAs) which although beneficial for environmental protection on the surface, collectively work to box off and so diminish environmental risk. This follows the rise in rhetoric regarding conforming to high standards, with Greenland's mineral strategy presenting climate change as a problem easily addressed by using ideas of best practice to rebrand mining activities as environmentally sound (Kristoffersen, 2015). Danielson (2002: 7) also picks up on such rebranding, arguing mining companies have responded to criticism from ENGOs by presenting themselves as "practitioners of sustainable development". *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 66) even go so far as to frame mining companies' environmental interactions positively, citing the contributions they are making via surveys which generate "new knowledge about nature and environment" rather than engaging with issues of contamination or pollution (Myrup, 2012). Like Kirsch (2010), we can identify 'sustainable mining' as an oxymoron used by those in favour of extractive industry to co-opt and neutralise criticism, an understandable approach on the part of *Naalakkersuisut* given the desire to present its activities positively and push a nation-building agenda. This tension reveals the considerable challenge pursuing 'sustainable development' represents, and reminds us of Motzfeldt's (2008: np) concern over the balancing act "between unrestricted exploitation of our

resources in order to gain more independence, and on the other hand the protection of our nature, which is so dear to us in order to maintain our cultural heritage.”

Given the economic and social emphasis afforded to ‘sustainable development’, the final chapter primarily engages with the practicalities of pursuing a mining future and the challenges Greenland will face. Greenland’s demographic difficulties and the risk posed by a volatile external mineral resources market have already been detailed, but there are significant additional obstructions to becoming a mining nation. Based on the platform it is given, one can assume the biggest social problem in the eyes of *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 68) is that of unemployment and the skills-gap, where there is a “gap between the capabilities demanded by the mineral resources industry, and the capabilities possessed by Greenland businesses today”. Multiple factors have contributed to this gap, from Greenland’s business structure characterised by small businesses which often function as “isolated markets” and are unable to meet mining companies’ high demand for goods and services, to the low-level of educational attainment which plagues Greenlandic society whereby “a large part of the labour force has no or only limited formal education”, with a dearth of relevant training in skills related to the mineral resources sector meaning jobs cannot be occupied by locals (Naalakkersuisut, 2014a: 68, 85). Indeed, *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 81) note that “how much Greenland will benefit from the mineral resources sector will be determined by the extent to which labour demand in the operating phase [of a mining project] is covered by Greenland labour”. For this reason, the 2014 strategy recognises that Greenland’s business community needs to be better integrated into mineral resources development (Rambøll, 2013), and that recruitment programmes, upskilling, apprenticeships and the involvement of Greenlandic contractors must be prioritised so that capacity is built, ensuring that the “the labour force matches demand” (Naalakkersuisut, 2014a: 81). Without such efforts, Greenland will struggle to transform itself into an independent mining nation.

Finally, the technical and infrastructural difficulties posed by Greenland’s remote and icy environment are discussed. As the 2014 strategy summarises, mining projects are “often located in open land areas outside existing towns and village communities and without any connection to infrastructure such as harbours and [...] in relatively inaccessible regions of Greenland where climatic conditions like ice present major challenges to maritime traffic” (*Naalakkersuisut*, 2014a: 78). Connectivity in Greenland is poor compared to other countries in which international mining companies have become accustomed to operating, with the cost of establishing Greenlandic mines proving very high as Greenland’s towns are not connected by roads, meaning transport by air or sea

is the default (Taagholt and Brooks, 2016). The 2014 strategy therefore considers how best to align airports and harbours with the needs of the mineral resources sector. *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 75) concludes there is a need to expand the air-travel options which at the time of publication consisted of two civil airports in west Greenland and eleven designed for small fixed-wing aircraft. More recently, geopolitical games have been played out through this demand for increased airport capacity, with an open tender being put out by *Naalakkersuisut* in 2018 to build larger airports in Nuuk, Ilulissat, and Qaqortoq for which the Chinese company *China Communication and Construction Group* prequalified (Sørensen, 2018). This caused Denmark to offer to finance the project in order to block Chinese infrastructural investment in Greenland, reflecting Danish unease over Greenland seeking out new partners for development (Bennet, 2018). Following Cairn Energy's negative experiences of *Aasiaat* harbour during its 2011 drillings due to the "very limited space for storage and materials", *Naalakkersuisut* (2014a: 78) recognises the need to extend and upgrade the capacity of Greenland's harbours, particularly given that "the harbour facilities are generally, but specifically in Nuuk, under pressure". On top of these travel and storage concerns, the strategy highlights the pressure Greenland's limited telecommunications will be put under when mineral resource companies increase their activities in Greenland, with more fixed satellites or radio link connections being posed as a potential solution. Taken together, these logistical challenges may make Greenland a less appealing location for business, hence *Naalakkersuisut's* favourable licensing framework, marketing strategies and the potential for financing via private-public partnerships come into play to attract investment and secure Greenland's mining future.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has reflected upon the "state spectacle" which *Naalakkersuisut* constructs in its 2014 Oil and Minerals strategy, presenting a positive outlook for Greenland's mining future and making recommendations to ensure that the growth of its mineral resources industry benefits Greenlandic society as a whole (Blom Hansen and Stepputat, 2001: 37; Scott, 1999). In particular, it stresses the ability of the mineral resources sector to create income and employment opportunities, thus reducing unemployment rates and dependence on the Danish block grant. The strategy's overall priority is to open between three and five mines with one or two offshore oil drilling projects established every other year within the strategy period, thereby supporting *Naalakkersuisut's* wider vision of making a commercially viable oil find and having a booming mining industry to transform Greenland into a mining nation. In terms of oil and gas, *Naalakkersuisut* has pursued an intensified strategy which prioritises attracting foreign investors to increase oil exploration both numerically

and in terms of scale, with new licensing rounds planned for west Greenland and the area of each reduced to increase the likelihood of a commercial find. The same marketing of Greenland as an attractive resource frontier applies to minerals, with *Naalakkersuisut* emphasising Greenland's geological potential and the efforts it has made to offer favourable licensing legislation and competitive tax models. To maximise potential profits, projects involving iron ore, copper, zinc, REEs, gold, gemstones and uranium are prioritised because these minerals are in greatest global demand. An entire section of the minerals chapter is devoted to uranium in order to present *Naalakkersuisut* as a responsible governing body willing to work with Denmark and abide by international treaties to safely exploit and export uranium, reinforcing its commitment to peace so that Greenland can make the most of its resources.

Given the downward turn the mineral resources sector has taken globally in the years since the 2014 strategy was published, with only two mines in operation and a commercially viable oil find proving elusive, it is fair to argue like Poppel (2018: 15) that the 2014 strategy “was still – and not least seen in retrospect – (overly) optimistic”. Although not entirely surprising considering such strategies tend to be “inspiring visions” rather than “a bald statement of what can and will be done”, the sheer determination to push Greenland as a resource frontier is impressive in the face of so many challenges (Bailes and Heininen, 2012: 25). These challenges range from the demographic (an ageing population with fewer economically active individuals) to the social (high unemployment, low educational attainment, and a skills gap which cannot currently meet the needs of the mineral resources sector) and the structural (limited finances and a dearth of infrastructure across the board from a lack of roads to limited capacity in airport and harbours), not to mention the icy weather conditions which make operating in the high north a logistical nightmare. Although *Naalakkersuisut* offer some solutions to these problems such as offering more training programmes to narrow the skills gap, diversifying Greenland's economy into mining will be no easy task. For these reasons, the more critical perspective of Rosing's (2014) report '*For the Benefit of Greenland*' is to be expected. It concludes that although mineral resources will be important for Greenland's development, the established potential for revenues has been severely overestimated, meaning it is unrealistic to think that this activity alone will generate enough profit to give Greenland full economic independence from Denmark. Indeed, Rosing (2014) warns that independence through hyper-industrialisation could lead to a “quick decline of Greenlandic culture, language, [and] political control, as seen in other Inuit areas”, suggesting Kielsen's more cautious approach towards mining is fitting for the times.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions - The Seduction of the Subsurface

This dissertation makes a unique contribution to the fields of Arctic critical (geo)politics, political geology, and the politics of Greenlandic resources in particular by engaging with state-generated documents which have only undergone superficial analysis, if at all, prior to this research. Through a focus on state statutes and speeches, it has discerned the ways in which *Naalakkersuisut* constructs Greenland as a resource frontier, strategising Greenland's mineral resources in the hopes of achieving greater economic and political independence from Denmark. Bridge (2001) asserts that extractive resource spaces are actively produced through political choices and practices of exploration and exploitation. This goes some way to explaining the important role *Naalakkersuisut* plays as the primary promoter and practitioner of Greenland's resource frontier through the marketing and legislative activities it performs, as has been discussed at length with regards to the Mineral Resources Act and 2014 Oil and Minerals strategy which both push Greenland's appealing licensing laws and institutional framework. Similarly, Richardson and Weszkalnys (2005: 7) use the term 'resource environments' to conceptualise the complicated assemblage of "physical stuff, extractive infrastructures, calculative devices, discourses of the market and development, the nation and the corporation" which animate what could equally be described as the resource frontier, with discourses of development generated by the nation state again playing a central role. Work from Dodds and Nuttall (2016:118) supports the need to disentangle the role that the state plays in constructing resource frontiers, arguing "frontier speak" is a tool of statecraft which reinforces ideas of abundance and so reifies the resource frontier imaginary, fitting with Murray Li's (2014: 13) description of the resource frontier as a "site of potential". This potentiality can be imaginatively stretched from the possibility of harbouring resources to the prospect of providing political independence.

Careful consideration has been paid to the ways in which *Naalakkersuisut* actively constructs Greenland's resource frontier to promote its economic growth and nation-building. The pro-mining rhetoric present throughout *Naalakkersuisut's* statements from the SGA and MRA to the most recent minerals strategy and its premier's speeches over the last decade collectively naturalise the idea of Greenland as a new site for resource extraction - a kind of 'El Dorado' made real (Dodds and Nuttall, 2016: 116). In doing so, they impose a dominant discourse which erases any discussion of alternative means to diversifying Greenland's economy, with the exploitation of Greenland's oil and minerals presented as the only route to achieving greater self-determination. This attitude is normalised by the successful marketing of Greenland's geological potential which becomes almost

indubitable. Legislation laid out by *Naalakkersuisut* offers attractive licensing laws, a user-friendly interface and appealing tax conditions for both oil and minerals which works to attract foreign investment, increasing levels of exploration and so strengthening Greenland's emerging mining industry. Reverberating throughout all the documents analysed is the centrality of Greenland's rights to its own resources, as established in the SGA and MRA. These rights have been long fought for, even proving instrumental in the Denmark-Greenland relationship during Home Rule but it is only in the last decade of Self Rule that they have been achieved.

Not only does authority over the subsurface give *Naalakkersuisut* the material and fiscal means to pursue self-determination, it also acts symbolically to support *Naalakkersuisut's* sovereignty claims, with a presence on the land and *Naalakkersuisut*-endorsed geological activities working to assert a kind of vertical territoriality (Elden, 2013). Although mining has dominated Greenlandic political discourse for the last decade, Kielsen's frequent acknowledgement of the primary role fisheries continue to play suggests that the *Naalakkersuisut* of today is wary of committing to the resource frontier imaginary to the exclusion of all else, as was the case under Hammond when the 2014 strategy was written. Kielsen's more measured approach is understandable in the context of a weak global minerals economy and his desire to improve Greenland socially first, with an emphasis on bettering educational attainment so that Greenland's youth can decide for themselves whether Greenland is ready for independence. In this way, the primary political questions in Greenland can be thought of as '*independence how?*' and '*independence when?*', with Kielsen's *Siumut* seemingly more patient than Hammond's although Kielsen (2018: np) does continue to recognise the role mineral resources play as a "bearing element in Greenland's economic future."

The priorities and challenges to achieving this mining future have been drawn out of the 2014 Oil and Minerals strategy. At its core, the strategy calls for increased levels of oil and mineral exploration which it is assumed will lead to the establishment of more oil fields and mines, resulting in considerable revenue for Greenland. The mineral resource sector is held up as a way to generate much-needed income and employment opportunities, with emphasis being placed on the need to integrate Greenland's business community and workforce in order to maximise the gains. There are high hopes for a commercially viable oil discovery despite previous drillings proving unsuccessful, with the strategy pushing for more licensing to make this more likely. In its minerals section, *Naalakkersuisut* strategically prioritises metals which are in high global demand, namely iron ore, copper, zinc, REES, gold and uranium as this will offer the most profit, evidencing Zimmerman's (1933) discussion of resources as socially constructed objects with subjectively ascribed values that

change over time. This means we must not only assume the political life and value of geological resources are determined by the “actual utilities of their chemical properties”, but also by changing “perceptions of how these material and meaningful properties might serve diverse territorialities over time”, with *Naalakkersuisut* able to strategize Greenland’s mineral resources towards nation-building ends now that it has authority over the subsurface (Klinger, 2015: 574). The 2014 Oil and Minerals strategy therefore walks a careful line between pushing policies which will attract international investment to secure Greenland’s mining future and ensuring that Greenland will benefit socially and economically from such resource development. Overall, it offers a very optimistic outlook, suggesting that three to five mines and at least two offshore drilling projects will be established within the strategy period of 2014-2018. Needless to say, no oil has been found in viable quantities and only two mines are active to date, although progress has been made in securing the necessary conditions to extract and export uranium which is key to GME’s REE project in Kvanefjeld being approved.

Considerable demographic, social and infrastructural obstacles stand in the way of Greenland becoming a mining nation and these have been compounded by the downward turn in the global mineral resources market over the last few years (Vikström and Högselius, 2017; Dale, Bay-Larsen and Skorstad, 2018). *Naalakkersuisut* will have to deal with Greenland’s ageing population, improve educational attainment rates, offer more training directed at the mineral resources sector to build capacity, expand its infrastructure in terms of roads, airports, harbours and telecommunications to support mining projects, and find ways to finance such projects, perhaps through public-private partnerships if it wants to develop its mineral resource sector significantly. More fundamentally, Wilson (2017) reminds us that it is not a foregone conclusion that a booming natural resources industry will provide the funds required to replace the Danish block grant, or that the benefits will trickle down to Greenland’s population, with Rosing (2014) warning that if carried out too hastily, independence via hyper-industrialisation could do more harm than good. Ultimately, Wilson (2017: 512) argues that Greenland’s mineral resource sector is much too small, and it is far too soon to know whether it can “deliver the dazzling economic outcome forecast – let alone whether or not this outcome will benefit Greenland”. Dingman (2014) similarly concludes that economic freedom on a national scale does not necessarily equate to equal opportunity in society, and the risk remains that the high levels of foreign investment and labour required to extract sufficient mineral resources to achieve economic independence in the near future could force Greenland to shift dependence from Denmark to another partner like China. Furthermore, the dilemma of balancing the pressing needs to diversify Greenland’s economy via resource extraction while still meeting high social and

environmental standards prevails (Kuokkanen, 2017). Although *Naalakkersuisut* claims sustainable development underpins its approach to resource extraction, its interpretation appears to focus on social and economic sustainability and only pays lip-service to the environmental, leading us to question whether ‘sustainable development’ can truly be achieved when mining is fundamentally unsustainable. We must therefore ask what price Greenland is willing to pay for its independence, but as Gerhardt (2011) notes, the political path it chooses is not one which we as outsiders should judge.

This dissertation has responded to Dalby’s (2007) call for research which takes the ‘geo’ in ‘geopolitics’ seriously, working to establish a more materialised form of critical Arctic geopolitics which uses the political geographies of mining in Greenland to highlight how natural resources are strategized in state discourses. It makes an important contribution to the emerging field of political geology and goes some way to filling the lacuna which currently exists in geography regarding resource geopolitics and the vertical and volumetric aspects of territoriality. Although focusing on the political ramifications of mining in Greenland, it speaks back to broader geographical research regarding resource extraction and issues of self-determination, both in the Inuit world and globally. Engaging with resource extraction in the high north will only become more pertinent as the mining industry is expected to “play a major role in the Arctic states in decades to come” (Dale, Bay-Larsen and Skorstad, 2018: 2). This means there is considerable scope for further research building on this dissertation which has taken state narratives as an entry point into the resource debate. By focusing on the state-spectacle *Naalakkersuisut* endeavours to create, it has prioritised the practical strand of geopolitics which is characterised by policy perspectives, leaving fertile discussions regarding portrayals of the resource frontier in the media (popular geopolitics) open for exploration. Furthermore, a consideration of mining companies’ perspectives and the ways *Naalakkersuisut* interacts with the industry in practise at events such as PDAC could prove fruitful. These approaches would likely reveal further nuances in the resource frontier imaginary, reminding us that “Arctic imaginaries, like the Arctic itself, are never settled” (Steinberg et al, 2015: 9). For this reason, it will become all the more important to keep our eyes trained northwards as the Arctic shifts from the periphery to the centre of geopolitical imaginations.

Appendices

Appendix A:

Table 1: Documents analysed in this dissertation

Author	Date	Title	Document Type
<i>Folketing</i>	2009	Self-Government Act	Act of Danish Parliament
<i>Inatsisartut</i>	2009	Mineral Resources Act	Act of Greenlandic Parliament
<i>Naalakkersuisut</i>	2014a	Greenland Oil and Mineral Strategy 2014-2018	Government Policy Document (long read)
<i>Naalakkersuisut</i>	2014b	Our Mineral Resources – Creating Prosperity for Greenland: Greenland’s oil and mineral strategy 2014-2018.	Government Policy Document (quick read)
Kuupik Kleist	2009	‘Celebration speech by Premier Kuupik Kleist on inauguration of Greenland Self-Government 21st of June 2009’	Speech
Kuupik Kleist	2013	‘New Year Address 2013’	Speech
Aleqa Hammond	2014	‘Arctic Summit Speech: Open for business – developing the Arctic’s economic potential’	Speech
Kim Kielsen	2015	‘Future Greenland Conference Speech: Growth and Welfare – Scenarios for Greenland’s Development’	Speech
Kim Kielsen	2016	‘New Year Reception Speech 2016’	Speech
Kim Kielsen	2018	‘New Year Reception Speech 2018’	Speech

Appendix: B

Table 2: A summary of general election results over the Self Rule period

Election Date	Winning party	% votes	Premier
2 nd June 2009	Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA)	44.06	Kuupik Kleist
12 th March 2013	Siumut	42.8	Aleqa Hammond
28 th November 2014	Siumut	34.3%	Kim Kielsen
24 th April 2018	Siumut	27.2%	Kim Kielsen

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