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International News Coverage of Extractive Industries in Indigenous Environments

*Factors in News Gatekeeping of Mining Coverage
in Scandinavia and Greenland*

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Master's Thesis in Indigenous journalism

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Abstract:

Extractive resources derived by the global mining industry are critical to modern existence. Without iron ore, bridges, tunnels, skyscrapers, mass agricultural equipment, telecommunications infrastructure, and transportation – from the shipping and aerospace industries to motor vehicles – would not be possible. Uranium is essential for nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, the most powerful tool of war known to man. Copper, iron ore, nickel, and rare earth minerals are vital to modern society, technology, and communications. Frequently, extractive resources exist in Indigenous lands. Extraction disproportionately affects Indigenous people, due to their connection to the natural environment and traditional livelihoods that rely on the natural world. Yet despite these substantial environmental and cultural implications, the issue of mining and Indigenous people inconsistently makes it on the global news agenda. This thesis explores and deconstructs the possible reasons for this phenomena through specific examination of news gatekeeping, based on qualitative interviews with former and current news editors of the BBC and Washington Post, and as seen in the context of international coverage of mining activity in Sweden and Norway, two central areas of the Indigenous Sámi people, and Greenland, home of the Inuk Inuit. This thesis reveals how multiple News Values, newsroom economics, source credibility, and access to Indigenous perspectives and journalists influence coverage decisions.

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Introduction

The following master's thesis is based on the fundamental position that "the core purpose of journalism is and should be about producing and distributing serious information and debate on central social, political, and cultural matters," as articulated by Norwegian media scholar Jostein Gripsrud.¹ Simon Cottle further states that "media discourse is the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies, both of other elites and of ordinary citizens."² Within these contexts, this thesis examines the topic of international media coverage of extractive issues in Indigenous environments: What is the relevance of Sámi and Greenlandic issues in the context of non-local, non-Northern European media? I am specifically investigating the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Washington Post, and their coverage of both of the aforementioned environments.

I have spent nearly 30 years in media, as a journalist and media strategy consultant. Therefore, the obvious must be stated: This paper takes the strong position that journalism serving its highest purpose means it should serve an essential role in guarding the public good by creating transparency, and subsequently accountability, for all participants in business and society. As we move forward in the twenty-first century, it is an undeniable fact that environmental change – human impact on the environment – is at the center of human concern. Yet often, discussions about environmental issues remain relegated to scientific studies tracking global temperature and weather changes, coverage of policy and regulatory developments, and coverage of the more major gatherings. These include COP21 to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as numerous smaller gatherings that seek to untangle issues and arrive at solutions for destruction of the environment. Indigenous concerns are largely unacknowledged on the global media stage, and especially in relation to actions, such as mining, that impact the natural environment.

¹ Schudson, M. *The sociology of news*, 6.

² Cottle, S. *Ethnic minorities and the media*, 36.

It has been both curious and troubling to discover through research that the frequency of coverage of the mining industry in ratio to the magnitude of its impact on the environment is wildly disproportionate. Not only are mining developments not being covered with consistency, but their cost to Indigenous groups, who have throughout human history been the stewards of the environment, is rarely mentioned in a substantive, ongoing way. One of the primary challenges in developing this thesis, in fact, was identifying the few global media outlets who had written anything at all about mining and the Indigenous on the *global* media agenda. It is nearly impossible to craft a master's thesis around the concept of absence, and solutions had to be found in outlets that have dedicated at least some coverage to the issue of global extractive issues and the Indigenous. A disclaimer: as a media strategist and journalist, I have been an unofficial advisor to various Indigenous groups on how to increase their presence on the media agenda. As a former employee of the Los Angeles Times, my work was affiliated with the Los Angeles Times Washington Post News Service. That syndication service ceased operations in 2009³; previously, my stories were sometimes syndicated through the Los Angeles Times Washington Post News service. I have also pitched and been assigned stories by the BBC, one of which is on mining, and this paper includes one interview with a BBC editor with whom I became acquainted through such work.

This thesis is researched and written with multiple objectives in mind: To clearly make the argument, based on feedback from key stakeholders within the Indigenous communities I have researched, that coverage of the mining industry is relevant to them and necessary for inclusion in major international media outlets. Indigenous groups, who despite varying cultural practices, political circumstances, and geographic locations around the world, are fairly consistently minorities in the face of majority interests and the issues that result from the existing power structure. This thesis also aspires to create greater transparency, however small, in the decision making process of individuals from two major news outlets – to see how stories arrive on the media agenda through the function of gatekeeping, and through insight into the process, better understand what these groups might do to increase access and relevance to international media,

³ Kurtz, H. L.A. Times, Post to end joint news service. Washingtonpost.com.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/30/AR2009093004>.

in the hope of raising more consistent attention in the international media sphere. This thesis is especially focused on close inspection of one particular aspect of how stories make it on the media agenda: an exploration of how, where, and from whom news decision makers (for the purpose of this thesis, editors acting as gatekeepers) receive information and on what basis they choose to include or exclude it from what ultimately arrives in the public sphere.

This inspection is done via a qualitative inquiry, and a study of the process, through the insights of individuals in the newsroom. Many approaches could be taken in understanding news operations' function, and in fact, there exists a vast body of research documenting these operations, from the study of the working practices of British journalists exploring the phenomena of reporting for multiple media platforms (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2003)⁴, how social media affects news gathering (Alejandro, 2010)⁵, and the sociological aspects that inform news operations, from individual ideology to greater social structures, which Shoemaker and Vos note, "since the institutional environment may create more than one rational path, we might expect minor variation even among rational actors. Room for agency exists, but agency will be bound by the ways in which social structures create constraints and opportunities."⁶ The reason for an individually based focus in my thesis is simple, and based on an ongoing observation: In an age in which the global news market struggles to find ways to monetize, and the Internet has created an insatiable appetite for 24-hour news and updates, news organizations are increasingly decentralized from a gatekeeping standpoint (which this paper will touch on more thoroughly at a later point). In short, the length of the chain of command and approvals between a story conceived and its path to publication has shortened considerably, with individual gatekeepers serving a more central function than ever before. Understanding gatekeeping on a one-to-one basis is what I aim to understand.

⁴ Saltzis, K. and Dickson, R., Inside the changing newsroom: journalists' responses to media convergence.

⁵ Alejandro, J., Journalism in the age of social media.

⁶ Shoemaker and Vos, *Gatekeeping theory*, 101.

The Research Question

My thesis addresses the question of why Indigenous people, in the context of the mining industry in Northern Europe, often fail to consistently appear on the global media agenda. Northern Europe (hereafter will specifically reference Sweden and Norway) which, along with Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia, are collectively part of Sámi peoples' homeland known as Sápmi. I will also focus on the Inuk Inuit, Indigenous Greenlanders. Although Greenland is, at present, a politically autonomous Danish territory, also part of Northern Europe, Greenland is geographically distinct, and for the purpose of this paper, will be referenced independently from the rest of Northern Europe.

My research question aims, through interviews with key participants within the BBC and Washington Post, to understand how and why news makes it on the agenda through a study of gatekeeping, and the processes, heuristic or otherwise, that inform newsmaking as it moves on to the news agenda. I will use the theoretical framework of gatekeeping along with other theories that bleed into the gatekeeping function to help to better deconstruct the process on an academic basis. In validating my research question, I will also address whether or not the absence of coverage is material to various key stakeholders in both of the aforementioned societies. This thesis is entirely qualitative in nature, and its fundamental aim is not to prove a point, but rather to provide insight into a process of newsroom gatekeeping functions. Sámi and Greenlandic communities have been selected for research because, while they have very different relationships to majority interests, both exist in parts of the world that are vital to the global mining industry, and both are areas of current mining activity and development, where debates on the topic are very much alive.

Previous research

While I have not identified any other academic work that seeks to specifically tie together gatekeeping in the study area of mining issues, in the context of the Sámi and Inuit, at the BBC and Washington Post's media agenda, there exists a wide and comprehensive body of academic research on which this thesis and its author are informed and which provide important areas of background and context for this paper. They include many decades of academic research on

gatekeeping and the factors that influence it, from organizational structure and newsroom operations, which might include structure of the newsroom, such as “centralized vs. decentralized (Shoemaker, 1987)⁷ to the current state of overall Sámi concerns on the local and national media agendas, issues related to mining, and of course, mining in the context of Indigenous interests.

Numerous academic papers and journal articles have been dedicated to the topics of resource inequality facing Indigenous peoples, policy evaluations of mining and Indigenous peoples, and impact on mining in Indigenous environments ranging from Papua New Guinea to Australia. In a more narrow context, focusing exclusively on the Sámi, there have been numerous articles and academic texts related to land rights and extractive issues and the Sámi, including *Mineral Extraction in Sápmi: the legal nexus of the Sámi People* (Ponten, 2015)⁸ and other publications exploring the nexus of Indigenous rights in the region and mineral extraction, including Ackren’s essential reading on the state of mining activities and permissions process, *Public Consultation Processes in Greenland*, and Mortensen’s *Mining and Pollution: Arctic Environmental law in Greenland and the Mining Industry*.

Valuable research has been conducted on Indigenous issues and media in Sápmi, as well as the larger nations within whose borders the the Sámi live, and in Greenland. However, what coverage does exist has been largely relegated to local and *national* media issues, and frequently, in the case of Sámi research, has been focused on media and Indigenous language rights. I have identified no research on Greenlandic and Sámi concerns in the context of extractive issues and developments – either qualitative or quantitative – that has been conducted by, and wholly focused on, an analysis of the more broadly based international media outlets and the gatekeeping function in particular.

Extensive research has been dedicated to Sámi media issues, such as being a minority culture within the majority nation states in which the Sámi live (Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the Kola

⁷ Shoemaker, 63.

⁸ Ponten, T. (2015). *Mineral Extraction in Sápmi* (Master's Thesis in Public International Law). Uppsala Universitet.

Peninsula of Russia). For example, development of Sámi media issues, their overall relevance on a local and international basis with respect to the aforementioned, funding and media policies have been deeply laid out by Markelin,⁹ and provides an excellent comprehensive overview of the internal and external factors facing the Sámi in the media sphere, from the financial and political frameworks informing the current state of Sámi media development, as well as deep contextual relevance of how Sámi media operates in and within larger media ecosystems, such as the larger broadcast networks (NRK and NRK Sápmi; SVT and SVT Sápmi, and YLE in Finland.) This research has been essential to my work, in that before one can properly understand phenomena on a global basis, it is instructive to understand regional and national media concerns. In this case, most particularly, as this paper will more extensively illustrate, a key reason for Indigenous media concerns not surfacing more frequently on the international agenda is that they do not often appear on the national news agenda, which is often a vein through which international news editors or freelancers initially discover stories. As Markelin points out through various interviews with Indigenous media stakeholders, there is often an internal struggle for Sámi to receive “air time” for their concerns or stories. Markelin notes in a comment that I have also heard on multiple occasions about the current state of affairs for most Indigenous media in Sápmi: “... NRK Sámi radio remains, together with its counterparts in Sweden or Finland, part of a national non-Sámi organization. This means that the Sámi and Sámi broadcasts are in a minority position within a large majority-run company, a company that does not always see issues from the viewpoint as Sámi Radio.”¹⁰

Hanusch’s work on Indigenous journalism within the Indigenous public sphere, through the paper *Charting a theoretical framework for examining Indigenous journalism culture*, provides valuable research on the basis of understanding Indigenous journalism in the context of what Hanusch respectively articulates as “the ability offer a counter-narrative to mainstream media reporting and reporting through a culturally important framework”¹¹ and by virtue of the necessity for the field of Indigenous journalism, illustrates and contextualizes why majority media should strive for greater inclusion of Indigenous voices, issues, and concerns. There are

⁹ Markelin, L, *Media, ethnicity and power – A comparative analysis of the Nordic Sámi media environment in relation to state policies*.

¹⁰ Markelin, 214.

¹¹ Hanusch, *Charting a theoretical framework for examining Indigenous journalism culture*, 1.

simply different ways of interpreting the world and as such, varying impacts on diverse groups of people. To that end, there is no continuous voice for Indigenous matters on a global stage, resulting in a profound absence in the reporting of realities and perspectives with respect to mining and numerous other issues.

Understanding the root causes of the imbalance in majority media is also a robust area of academic research. As Cottle notes in *Ethnic Minorities in the Media*, “Minorities have less access to the media also because they do not control the many ‘source discourses’ on which daily news making is based: press conferences, press releases, briefings, information brochures, documentation, interviews, and so on. Their opinions are less asked for or found less credible or newsworthy, also because most journalists (and virtually all editors) are white.”¹² Many would argue that times have changed greatly since Cottle’s book was first published in 2000, and thankfully, since that time, newsrooms have become more diverse. Yet the issue of access for Indigenous groups remains a key issue to their emerging in the global media landscape through many of the channels that Cottle outlines, even today. Teun van Dijk’s analytical discourse on discursive racism – outlining how media (one of the many everyday channels of communication that also include policies, laws, debates, conversations, and textbooks among a multitude of other modes) is important in informing our collective world view, in that, “They appear mere talk, and far removed from the forceful segregation of the old racism, Yet, they may be just as effective to marginalize and exclude minorities.”¹³ Previous research on cultural imbalances within newsrooms are also an important factor in my study of gatekeeping. It is my hypothesis that Indigenous concerns on the media agenda are less prevalent because of a lack of formalized access to Indigenous voices and perspectives within newsroom settings. Very plainly: Indigenous concerns are in part, underrepresented in the mainstream media because there is a lack of access to, or existence of, Indigenous journalists who are able to lend their background and expertise to mainstream media outlets. Assignment editors don’t know how to find and access the skills of qualified Indigenous journalists. Additionally, there is a scarcity of available Indigenous reporters who have experience reporting in mainstream, international media outlets. Van Dijk employs the term “biased citation patterns” to articulate the phenomena of use of white *sources*, but I would argue that this also extends to the root of news coverage, in relying primarily on

¹² Cottle, 37.

¹³ van Dijk, *New(s) racism: A discourse analytical approach*, 2.

majority culture talent. “When power over the most influential form of public discourse, that is, media discourse, is combined with a lack of alternative sources, when there is a near consensus and opponents and dissent groups are weak, then the media are able to abuse such power and establish the discursive and cognitive hegemony that is necessary for the reproduction of the ‘new’ racism,” Van Dijk notes.¹⁴ Ideas, such as what Dr. Charles Husband articulates as *inclusive journalism*, are vital to closing the chasm in source discourse between majority and minority voices and interests, as this paper explores in both the interview and conclusion sections.

Scholar Lisa Waller’s work on the reporting of Indigenous issues in mainstream media in Australia was deeply instructive in providing a framework of considerations in gatekeeping. Waller’s field of research was based on “an investigation of the practice participants say shape the way white, mainstream journalists understand their role, its possibilities and limitations.”¹⁵

Waller articulates these as “seven logics” or specific properties, some of which also emerged as themes in my research, when understanding how stories pass the gate and make it on the media agenda. Waller cites the economics of remoteness; fluidity and inconsistency in the round; the dominance of The Australian newspaper and its Indigenous media “stars;” the centrality of “whitefella gatekeepers;” the struggle for journalistic autonomy; the challenges of “getting Indigenous voices” and finally, the ways in which the wider field of journalism imposes its own logics.¹⁶ Economics, specifically in the context of remoteness, is a repeated theme in my thesis interviews, as is the challenge of “getting Indigenous voices.” In this context, Indigenous voices are both journalists and informed sources in the majority media sphere.

Finally, there is an extremely deep repository of research about the function of gatekeeping and the various aspects of gatekeeping dating back to the late 1940’s, beginning with Kurt Lewin, the “father” of gatekeeping, and the term itself, ranging on to work from David Manning White’s study of news not selected through wire copy, to Pamela Shoemaker’s extensive and comprehensive work on the various factors that contribute to gatekeeping, to Karine Barzilai-

¹⁴ Van Dijk, 37.

¹⁵ Waller, *It comes with the territory*, 13.

¹⁶ Waller, *It comes with the territory*, 13.

Nahon, who has put forth an updated view of gatekeeping, addressing, on a granular basis, gatekeeping in multiple professional realms extending beyond journalism, and including areas such as information science and other disciplines. This paper will explore these theories and concepts, aiming to illustrate how the study of gatekeeping is helpful in understanding how news passes through the gate and into the realm of public consumption.

Methodologies

My research methodology has followed the following pattern: Identify the research question, formulate my hypothesis, research and evaluate both the quantitative and qualitative data, provide analysis from my interviews, and finally, form my conclusion.

As a baseline, my research began with a quantitative analysis of news coverage, specifically evaluating the actual number of news stories found online that pertain to mining in Sweden, Norway, and Greenland, in both the Washington Post and the British Broadcasting Company, over a 16-year period. To be clear, these are not the only international publications to have covered mining and the countries in my area of study. For example, The Guardian, which covers issues of international import, often covers issues of mining around the world and has been a vital and active participant in reporting on Indigenous concerns, particularly in the mining industry. Outlets that are predominately video-based, such as Al Jazeera and Fusion.net, have also been active in covering mining and Indigenous concerns with some regularity. I selected the BBC and the Washington Post because both represent two sides of the spectrum in the media landscape. The BBC unquestionably, in terms of size, scope, and global reach, is the largest international media outlet in the world (see Figure 4, p. 51). The Washington Post represents a media outlet in the United States that continues to expand its reach and global focus. The New York Times, often regarded as one of the preeminent international news publications, has written only one story tangentially mentioning the Sámi and mining since 1993, and a handful of stories on Greenland, and therefore was not an outlet on which I decided to focus. All of my qualitative research was conducted by using keyword searches within all of the publications (i.e., “Greenland and mining” Sámi and mining, and so on.)

Stories covered in the BBC and the Washington Post outlined in the forthcoming section (“Previous Media Coverage of Indigenous Issues Related to Mining in Sweden, Norway, and Greenland”) are identified with publication name, date of publication, author, section in which the article appeared, and headline, along with brief summary explaining the story content. Researching previous coverage was essential to establishing a baseline to identify the frequency of exposure of issues on the global media agenda. The stories were researched primarily to identify frequency of coverage rather than content and tone of coverage.

Next, my research methodology moved to semi-structured interviews conducted over the last year with key stakeholders in the Sámi and Greenlandic communities, in order to determine whether or not involvement on the global media stage was of any relevance to the Indigenous stakeholders themselves. I began with the question of whether or not appearance on the global media agenda is important to these communities directly, in order to contextualize my work within a more global framework. Interviews were collected via the research method of snowballing, with stakeholders connecting me to others in the same communities of interest that were often cross-cultural. For example, an interview with John B. Henriksen, a representative to the Sámi Parliament in Norway, led to connections with Greenlandic stakeholders, as Greenlanders and the Sámi share a seat in the United Nations, and share close affiliations within the Indigenous sphere. My interviews with all Indigenous stakeholders were semi-structured in nature, although I began all with a set of key questions for response, using the semi-structured methodology to allow each of my interview subjects to elaborate on their thoughts and opinions. This methodology was very much informed by the idea of allowing “the respondent to describe what is meaningful and salient without being *pigeon-holed* into standardized categories.”¹⁷ My interviews were conducted in a variety of settings: over Skype, and in person, with travel to Greenland and London.

The news editors who were interviewed for this thesis were selected first on the basis of established relationships which created initial access, and where again, snowballing created the opportunity for new contacts to new interviews. The number of interviews conducted was qualitative instead of quantitative, in that the main objective was to derive understanding from

¹⁷ Quinn Patton, M., *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, 27–28.

essential stakeholders, past or present, within the BBC and the Washington Post – individuals vested with direct decision-making power around my central theoretical framework of gatekeeping. Connection to my interview subjects came as a result of previous relationships with each subject or connection by one or two degrees of connection via third parties. In total, eight detailed interviews form the basis for this paper.

All interviews began with key background information, including subject's name, plus a history of work titles and positions within the organization in question, and moved on to open-ended questions related directly to how, from whom, and where editors derived their ideas for news stories, and what informed their decisions to open the gate or not. Interviews were both dictated and transcribed. My data was evaluated based on how it related to the theoretical perspective of gatekeeping, and I did not engage in conversation analysis, in part because my work almost universally – with the exception of two interviews – featured interview subjects for whom English was not a first language. Formal conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization are specific areas of research and were not the most appropriate modalities; instead, I approached my interviews with the concept of dynamic systems in mind, and in analysis, employed unique case orientation followed by cross-case orientation to derive an understanding of larger patterns within my interviews, as they relate to theoretical frameworks. In total, eight interviews constitute the research basis for this paper.

Challenges to Objectivity

As Quinn Patton notes, “The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data ... reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal.”¹⁸ Of course, an additional challenge arises from the fact that objectivity may be an impossible goal, as it may be argued that we are by nature subjective in our assessments. The nature of the qualitative approach assumes personal involvement and empathic understanding¹⁹, leaving a wider possibility for subjectively informed outcomes. The late

¹⁸ Quinn Patton, 432.

¹⁹ Glesne, C. and Peshkin, A. *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*, 5.

Washington Post columnist David Broder observed that “the process of selecting what the reader reads involves not just objective facts but subjective judgments, personal values and, yes, prejudices.”²⁰

Broder was referring to how news is selected and framed, but this is also relevant in the context of qualitatively based research. How will I select my questions, in what order will they be presented, and am I clearly articulating context? These are all challenges to objectivity for which I must answer. I will attempt to address these challenges by creating transparency in my documentation, using the following guidelines noted by Silverman: giving an honest account of the conduct of the research; providing a full description of what was actually done in choosing my cases to study and my methods; collecting and analyzing data; explaining and justifying each of my decisions; discussing the strengths and weakness of what I did, and being open about what helped me and what held me back.²¹ While my professional relationships did afford me access to subjects, I believe those relationships had little bearing on how interview subjects responded to questions, other than to put forth their feelings and beliefs regarding particular aspects of how news passes through the gate, and Indigenous concerns on the media agenda.

²⁰ Schudson, 26.

²¹ Silverman, D. *Doing qualitative research*. 305.

The Theoretical Framework: Gatekeeping

Newsroom processes are governed by a set of practices that make it possible to produce news in a formalized, consistent manner, creating an end product that appears in the public sphere and moves on to influence agenda-setting public perceptions, and even final outcomes. In this exploration of how mining issues and Indigenous concerns relate to newsroom decision-making, this paper looks closely at the theoretical framework of gatekeeping, which is the control or flow of information through certain channels, particularly through the lenses of editors who are or have been responsible for assigning stories that will eventually be published. Using gatekeeping as my central theoretical framework, I endeavor to find out *how* editors access new ideas that become stories, *from whom and where* they access ideas, and what *external factors* influence their decision-making, from financial considerations to newsroom systems to reader demand. I will begin with an overview of gatekeeping from a conceptual basis, moving to the active process of gatekeeping as it relates to my research findings.

Gatekeeping, in its most general sense, refers to the process of controlling flows of information, and exists in numerous fields, including sociology and political science. Gatekeeping includes a variety of transoms – broadcast, Internet, radio, speeches, and even one-on-one communications. As the gatekeeping scholar Pamela Shoemaker defines it, “Simply put, gatekeeping is the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person in a given day.”²²

For the purpose of this paper, gatekeeping will refer specifically the field of mass media, which includes television, print, the Internet, and radio. It does not include social media generated by individuals who are not part of a bigger news institution or outfit, and it does not include “opinionators,” meaning individuals who either have not been trained as journalists, and/or are not recognized by others in the community of practice of journalism. “News” will refer to any piece of media that makes it to the public view via a news outlet, regardless of modality, and also without distinction of genre, whether it is hard news, or a feature story, for example. And

²² Shoemaker, *Gatekeeping theory*. 1.

although there is an extensive repository of terminology related to those with specific gatekeeping functions and numerous participants in the flow of information to the public sphere, “gatekeepers” here will refer specifically to the editors – as individuals who are ultimately responsible for whether or not a story makes it into the public view – because the person who initially guards the gate at first point of entry is, (in not all, but many cases) the same person who is ultimately responsible for news reaching the public sphere. This has been the case with all but one of the gatekeepers I have interviewed.

The relevance of the individual is of core importance in the current media landscape and cannot be underestimated. Because of the “speed to market” of media in an Internet and device-dominated world, the old structures of news decision-making – such as daily editorial conference meetings or extensive chains of command between a reporter and multiple editors, from assignment editor to desk editor to copy editor – is no longer a universal reality. News production systems that relied on teams of people to produce news are largely vestiges of a pre-Internet world. Based on information from some of the editors who were surveyed for this thesis, I learned that the Internet has created a need for greater volume of timely content that must be continuously updated, and therefore demands more fluidity and simplicity in the news-making process. This means that the gatekeeper is often the one undertaking many decisions on an individual basis while operating under some general structural norms, such as editorial mission. But increasingly, the gatekeeper is not necessarily basing all decisions on the opinions of the internal collective. Unlike broadcasts that were aired at a specific time or set deadlines for a daily newspaper, today’s media-landscape change to a 24-hour news cycle is significant because a large portion of previous gatekeeping research, that began in the 1940’s, relied heavily on the premise of a set structure for news-sourcing, creation, and delivery – not a constant news cycle.

While Shoemaker and various other scholars note that gatekeeping occurs on multiple levels, the primary endeavor of this thesis is to explore where initial ideas come from, and from whom, and what are the basic factors that influence whether or not a gatekeeper is likely to “open the door,” or rather, assign the story that makes it into the public sphere. The desire to better understand what transpires in practical terms is based on several real-world observations. I believe that in the

case of Indigenous media concerns on the international agenda, there are several elements at play. One is language: In cultures who speak a minority language, language can often serve as critical barrier to initial story ideas ever emerging in an international sphere or publication –they are not likely to ever come to the attention of key international media gatekeepers.

English is the world’s third most spoken language, with an estimated 527 million speakers (behind Chinese and Hindu-Urdu, respectively).²³ In 2014, a group of researchers set out to identify the influence of language, under the premise that language influence is more than just about how a language connects to other languages. The World Economic Forum notes: “to establish how languages are connected, the scholars looked at three forms of writing. If someone, a journalist for example, wants their story to go global, they will most likely print the story in their native language, as well as in those languages they think will have the biggest reach,” noting that the researchers compiled data by evaluating more than two million book translations from more than 150 countries and more than 1,000 languages over a more than thirty-year period, as well as evaluating data such as languages used on Twitter and Wikipedia edits in multiple languages. The final analysis: English, while not the most widely spoken language in the world, is the most connected language in the world.²⁴

This becomes important in understanding how stories in minority language groups may be prevented from rising to the attention of international news gatekeepers. Consider the process within the Sámi speaking communities: Stories of relevance to Sámi speakers are published in Sámi language first, in NRK Sápmi, (Avvir, the Sámi language newspaper in Norway,) or in Sweden, through SVT Sápmi. These stories must then be picked up by NRK in Norwegian or SVT in Sweden in order to jump from the Sámi community and into the wider national population of Norwegians and Swedes, and then still, because of the language barrier, stories published from Sámi to Norwegian in the Norwegian national media, or Sámi to Swedish in the Swedish national media, may never be seen by a gatekeeper of an English-language international outlet – simply because very few people, internationally, speak Norwegian, or Swedish,

²³ Ronen, S., Gonçalves, B., Hu, K., Vespignani, A., Pinker, S., & Hidalgo, C. (2014). Links that speak: The global language network and its association with global fame. *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences*, 111(52).

²⁴ Armbrecht, A. Which are the World’s Most Influential Languages? www.weforum.org

relatively small language groups in the global sphere. The same issue exists for Greenlanders and Greenlandic, where media outlets such as Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (KNR), Greenland's national public broadcaster, cover Inuit issues in Greenlandic; those stories must make it to Danish national broadcasting and be transmitted in Danish, but they may never be seen by an English speaking editor.

The language barrier is fundamentally a challenge of emergence, for essentially, information cannot be gated if the gatekeeper is not even aware of its existence. And just as gatekeepers appear to have lack access to ideas in the environments featured in this thesis, there is also the lack of access on the part of "the gated" to the gatekeepers. Often Indigenous groups lack the access and connections to the institutional environments governing international news outlets, from access by way of participating in the majority discourse as journalists, or even as agents of information (such as PR people or lobbyists) who are seeking to raise awareness about their issues and concerns in the global media.

And then comes the issue of relevance – as anyone in the field of media or media-effects theory can attest, news is created through the interplay of a complex set of actions or frameworks that inform the final product. The deeply explored theoretical frameworks of agenda-setting show us how mass media is able to do just that – set the agenda of public discourse and shaping political reality. Framing and priming, respectively, are more wholly focused on the relevance of an issue's attributes. It must be noted that in studying theoretical frameworks that inform media production, there are often significant overlaps in theoretical frameworks and their impact on the final product of news. This thesis focuses on the theoretical framework of gatekeeping and the very specific prism through which stories make it on the news agenda through this particular framework, and several subset concepts that play vital roles within the function of gatekeeping. Gatekeeping, however, is not mutually exclusive from agenda setting, priming, or framing; in fact, all of these concepts manifest in the gatekeeping process. Multiple considerations, as noted above, inform agenda-setting (cost of coverage, access to ideas, relevance to the audience at hand, and institutional editorial directives all feature in agenda-setting of news); priming and framing to the gatekeeper (how a story idea is presented) also influence how news makes it through the gate. Based on my experience from my interviews, a clear and holistic look at

gatekeeping theory can most clearly and simply deconstruct how news makes it on the agenda, and the relationships between the variables expressed within the interviews conducted with both the BBC and the Washington Post. In looking at the concept of gatekeeping, further, it is the concept of “news values” that may best explain the most fundamental operation within gatekeeping.

But how do media stories make it on an organization’s agenda in the first place? This is the essential function of gatekeeping. “Out of all the events that happened and are recorded every day by correspondents, reporters, and the news agencies, the editor chooses certain items for publication which he regards as more important or more interesting than the others. The remainder he condemns to oblivion and the wastebasket. There is an enormous amount of news ‘killed’ every day.”²⁵ Gatekeeping is tantamount to this definition, in keeping with other previous studies that posit the role of the press in the system of racism is not limited to news reports or editorials, but already begins with the daily routines of news making (Tuchman, 1978; van Dijck, 1988a, referenced by Cottle).²⁶ Cottle notes that minorities do not have access to the media because of a lack of control or access to “source discourses from which news making is derived: press conferences, briefings, information brochures, documentation, interviews, press releases, interviews and other sources.”²⁷

The concept of gatekeeping – and the term itself – was first coined by social scientist Kurt Lewin, who wasn’t initially looking to understand media effects, but rather how to influence a change in food habits during World War II. Through field study, Lewin’s work famously observed that women were the controllers of food purchases in the home, the proverbial “gatekeepers” of food-purchasing decisions. This learning, based in social science, illustrated the theory of gatekeeping, or the flow of information and the channels by which information flows. His work would expand to explain why gatekeeping was relevant to the concept of news: because the flow of news took places through channels, and news appeared or emerged based on these gates; and therefore, that the “gatekeepers” were those in power, making the decisions.

²⁵ Dearing and Rogers, *Communications concepts 6: Agenda-setting*, 10.

²⁶ Cottle, 37.

²⁷ Cottle, 37.

Today gatekeeping theory informs any number of fields in which the flow of information must be transmitted, including communication, public affairs, political science, sociology, and information science, among others.

Expanding on Lewin's work, Manning and Gieber summarize the essence of gatekeeping, as noted in Wilbur Schramm's 1949 essential observation: "No aspect of communication is so impressive as the enormous number of choices and discards which have to be made between the formation of the symbol and the mind of the communicator, and to the appearance of a related symbol in the mind of the receiver."²⁸

White's 1949 study of the gatekeeping function through the study of a Midwestern wire editor was seminal in that it created a basis for how news is accepted or rejected. Based on the observation of "Mr. Gates," from a one-week period between February 6-13, 1949, White evaluated the selection and rejection of news copy for final inclusion in the newspaper. White placed particular emphasis on the copy that was rejected as much as what was included, noting that "it is only when we study the reasons given by Mr. Gates for rejecting almost nine-tenths of the wire copy (in his search for the one-tenth for which he has space) that we begin to understand how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-judgments based on the gatekeeper's own set of experience attitudes and expectations the communication of 'news' really is."²⁹ White's research identified multiple, and demonstrably subjective reasons for the rejection of wire copy, ranging, in reason from "rejecting incident as worthy of reporting," not interesting, no interest "here," dull writing, to "would use if space, to good if space," to "too far away," "too regional," "trivial," and "not too worthy." While this is merely a synopsis of the reasons given for rejection of stories, it does clearly illustrate the highly personal, subjective nature of news decision making via gatekeeping in the selection of news. White's study took place more than 70 years ago, but remains salient in that the core of news delivery to this day is controlled by human gatekeepers who, by the nature of being human, view events and make decisions based to varying degrees on their own frames of reference and experience.

²⁸ Schramm, *The nature of news*, 259.

²⁹ White, 165.

Multiple theories in the field of decision-making exist to illuminate this point, including cognitive heuristics, or automatic decision making, aptly correlated as the act of “common sense” by Shoemaker.³⁰ Cognitive heuristics can be further distilled into multiple decision-making and judgment-related actions; in my study of gatekeeping in action, learnings derived from interviews result in the emergence of the patterns that are a result of these sorts of heuristics, rather than the internal process of each editor.

For example, in both interviews with the BBC and the Washington Post, I observed the strong presence of News Values as a direct function of gatekeeping. These are a set of values or factors that put news stories on the agenda; certain values were of significant importance in deciding to “open the gate.” The concept of news values has always been an intellectual filter for any editor, but in 1965, Norwegians Johan Galtung and Marie Holmbo Ruge were the first to formally analyze international news coverage in their Theory of News Values, identifying the common denominators that caused stories to emerge on the news agenda, distilled into twelve essential categories, four of which frequently emerge in my interviews on gatekeeping. These include:

- meaningfulness – the extent to which an audience relates to a topic,
- threshold – the larger the number of people impacted by the story, the more likely it is to pass the gate,
- unambiguity – the ability to easily grasp or understand the story without complex background,
- composition – the context of the story in relation to other stories, or the idea of balance of coverage i.e., regional and international news.

While a groundbreaking and essential framework for understanding what news passes through the gate and on to the media agenda exists, there were limitations to their research. It was based on international media coverage only, and in Norwegian media. Galtung and Ruge additionally argued that the more news values a story contained, the greater the likelihood of it making on to the news agenda.

³⁰ Shoemaker, 37.

In 2001, Harcup and O’Neil revisited Galtung and Ruge’s news values, stating, “Our exploration approached the issue from an altogether different angle. Their [Galtung and Ruge’s] concern was with events and how they did or did not become news. Our concern has been with published news items and what may or may not have led to their selection.”³¹ In presenting an updated evaluation of Galtung and Ruge’s work via the study of United Kingdom newspapers, Harcup and O’Neil identified additional news values that had subsequently emerged: The media outlet’s own agenda, in addition to the factors of celebrity, entertainment, surprise, “good and bad news,” the power elite (people and institutions in positions of power), magnitude, relevance, and follow-ups (stories that are already in the news). Of these additional categories, I found little overlap with gatekeeping decisions related to the issue of mining and Indigenous groups, with the possible inclusion of relevance as a contributing factor to what news passes the gate.

Mining in Context: the Global Scale

It is helpful to put the scale of the global mining industry in context, and to illustrate why this collective journalistic error of omission is egregious from a news coverage standpoint, based on three data points I believe to be of deep relevance: The *scope* of the mining industry, the *power* of the mining companies controlling these global resources, and the *continued trend* toward increased mining efforts in multiple emerging economies that are almost unilaterally impinging on historically Indigenous lands, from Latin America, Africa, North America, Australia, Oceania, and Asia, to other environs. This thesis assumes that how stories make it on the news agenda in the Nordics and Greenland, via the function of gatekeeping, includes pertinent indicators relevant to other Indigenous communities across the globe.

According to data released by the International Council on Mining and Metals, as of 2010, the global mining and metals industry reported \$644 billion³², from extraction of iron ore, gold, copper, silver, potash, nickel, phosphate rock, zinc, PGMS (platinum group metals), diamonds, and other extractive resources, largely dominated by iron ore, copper and gold. This equals 68

³¹ Harcup & O’Neil, What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited, 267.

³² *Trends in the mining and metals industry*, 6.

percent of the total value of all metals produced globally in 2011, according to the Raw Materials Group of Stockholm.³³ The voracious appetite for metals is presently driven by factors that include the explosive population growth in China, and increasing urbanization, coupled with ongoing and preexisting demand for these materials – essential to any modern infrastructure and development of cities and towns – effectively, any aspect of modern life. Materials derived from mining are vital to communication, shelter, water supplies, transportation, waste processing, and energy. According to the International Council on Mining and Metals, “Studies have now consistently demonstrated that when per capita income in a country reaches US\$5,000–10,000 per year, metal demand increases particularly” quickly.³⁴

Despite being an industry of growth and scale, in context, the global mining industry is dominated by a relatively small number of participants. As outlined by the ICMM (size terminology in quotes), there are 50 “Global” mining companies (exceeding \$10 billionUS) followed by 100 “Senior” companies (between \$3–10 billionUS in revenue) and 300 “intermediary” companies, or companies that will likely become seniors on a revenue generating basis, and more than 5,500 companies operating with revenues of \$500 millionUS and below.³⁵

Additionally, according to World Bank data cited by the International Council on Mining and Metals, there are also more than 15–20 million artisanal and small scale miners who are operating in 30 countries.³⁶

Mining Efforts in Sápmi (Northern Europe) and Greenland

The mining industry of Europe is centered in the Nordic countries, and coupled with the copper mines of Poland, accounts for more than three-quarters of the total EU metal mining sector. Notes M. Ericson: “Exploration and mining in the Nordic countries is not only crucial to the supply of minerals for Europe, it is also the most vital part of regional economic development of

³³ *Trends in the mining and metals industry*, 6.

³⁴ *Trends in the mining and metals industry*, 3.

³⁵ *Trends in the mining and metals industry*, 7.

³⁶ *Trends in the mining and metals industry*, 7.

northern Sweden, Finland and Norway.”³⁷ These areas constitute the central area of land known as Sápmi, the home of the Indigenous Sámi people. Primary extractive industries include iron ore mining, with the most notable effort being that of the LKAB mine in Kiruna, the world’s largest underground iron ore mine, focused on both extraction and processing. Sápmi is also a region with significant reserves of copper, zinc, nickel, gold, and phosphorous.

The Kallak mine is another notable source of mining in Swedish Sápmi, developed by the British mining company Beowulf, in Norrbotten County, roughly forty kilometers west of Jokkmokk – an area at the center of traditional Sámi reindeer-herding activity in Sweden. Norway is presently home to more than 40 working mines, and according to Mining.com, will have almost double that number within a few years.³⁸

³⁷ Ericsson, M. Global Mining Towards 2030. [online], 16. <http://www.sintef.no>.

³⁸ Networks, I. Is Northern Europe the new mining Eldorado? MINING.com.

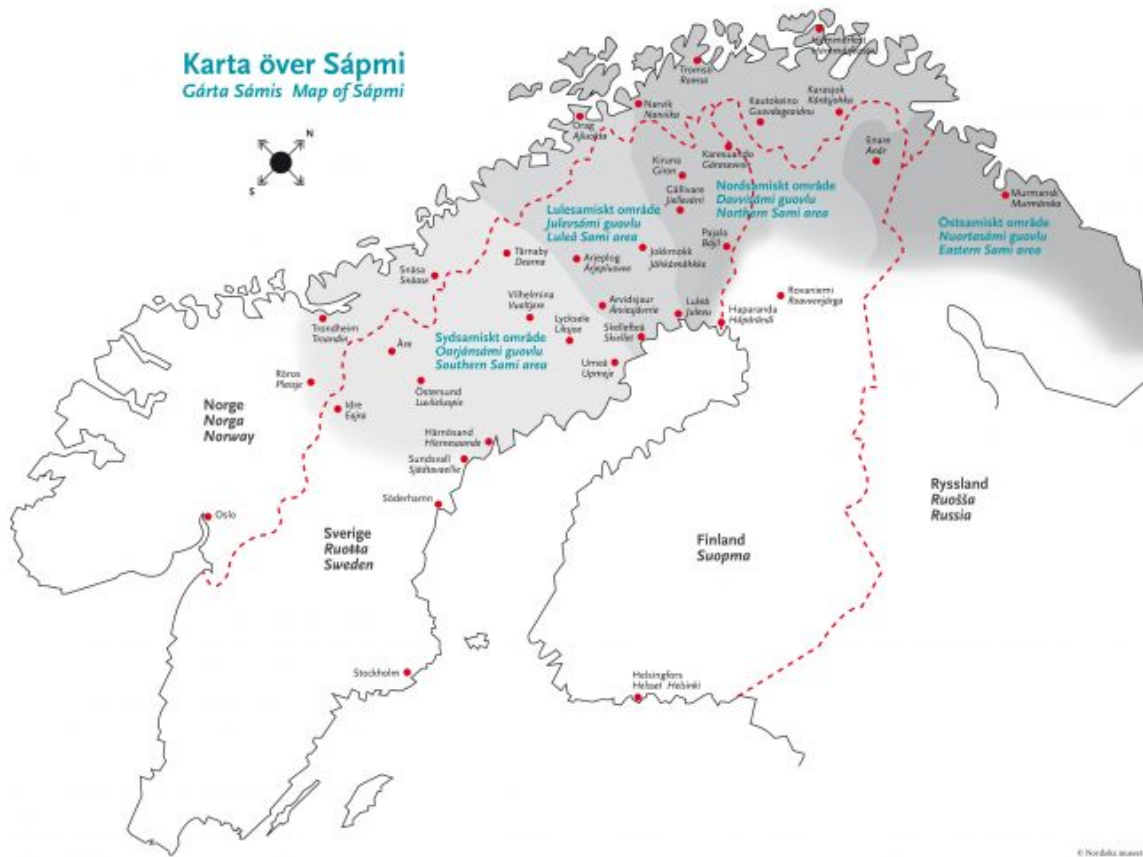


Figure 1. Map of Sápmi

Source: Nordiska Museet.se

Svein Lund is one of Norway’s leading authorities on the development of mining in Northern Europe. The author of *Gull, Gråstein og grums*, the Kautokeino, Norway-based expert has spent many years tracking mining developments and untangling the deep issues that surround mining in the Nordics, with a heavy emphasis on the politics, processes, and environmental impacts of mining. I sat down with him for an extended interview on June 6, 2016, at his home in Kautokeino. Lund identified many of the major barriers to media coverage of mining issues, not only on the international level, but on the state and local levels as well. “No journalists on a county level in Norway know much about mining and they seldom have the time and money to [do] real research or visit the problem,” said Lund.³⁹ Trade publications, he said, track mining developments, but lack the critical eye needed to see negative impacts of mining development.

³⁹ Lund, S. Interview, June 16, 2016.

Lund also emphasized that the process of mining development – and the complex network of approvals – varies vastly among Sweden, Norway, and Finland. For comparative purposes, this thesis will focus exclusively on Sweden and Norway, and their relationship to Indigenous local communities, in this case the Sámi engaged in traditional livelihoods, including hunting, fishing, and reindeer herding. These are means of existence, as the Swedish Sámi Parliament articulates, with strong connections to land and water.

While Sweden and Norway both require extensive due diligence in the permitting process for the right to prospect and open a mine, there are fundamental differences in the level of public engagement and the ultimate decision-making power to engage in mining activity or not. “In Norway, the local communities are more formally in the process,” noted Lund. Plans are set for hearing and local community members; there are meetings between the Sámi parliament and respective ministries or governments, beginning with an impact assessment and a series of meetings intended to discuss the mining proposition at every level. Such was the case for a planned gold and copper mine to be opened by the Stockholm-based mining company Arctic Gold, in the Bidjovággi area of Kautokeino, an area that is important to the local Indigenous Sámi because of its proximity to reindeer herding activity and also the pristine nature in the area. The loamy tundra is rich with natural wildlife including grouse; Arctic lakes are filled with pike and other fish and the area is rich with seasonal berry picking activity. The area also retains the local memory of previous mining activity, which had disastrous impact to the local environment, from polluted lakes to decimated wildlife.

Today, the mine is a giant ruin that ceased operations in 1993. Arctic Gold endeavored to engage in mining and worked for over ten years to obtain an exploration license from the Norwegian government, but ultimately, the local community voted down plans for the new mining activity, and as such, it is helpful to understand the individual governmental processes by which mining activity is activated in Sweden, Norway, and Greenland, respectively. Part of foundational journalistic process in accountable reporting is to understand and identify key stakeholders in

any industry and follow those stakeholders, their actions, and industry developments accordingly. Extractive resources are global in nature, meaning their end use may appear anywhere on the planet where a modern city exists. But while the end product is global, the countries in which mining occurs each have very different processes for mining exploration and permitting. The high level of complexity, multiple stakeholders, and systems that are vastly divergent are often insurmountable barriers to news coverage of mining issues even within the Nordics, suggested Lund.⁴⁰ To illustrate the differences, the following is intended to provide a rudimentary overview of key stakeholders and mining approval processes in Sweden, Norway and Greenland.

The Swedish Mining Process and Formal Indigenous Position

In a report cited by the Swedish Sámi Parliament, the mining industry is expected to increase production of metal mining efforts by 150 percent between 2011 and 2020, increasing from 60 million tonnes to nearly 160 million tonnes.⁴¹

Sweden's north is an area rich with natural resources both above and below ground; there are 314 nature reserves and eight national parks, lush with wetlands, pine forests, lakes, and mountains. Norbotten is also rich with resources that exist underground; 90 percent of Europe's iron ore is extracted in this northernmost county that shares a border with Finland.⁴² The Jokkmokk and Gällivare municipalities constitute parts of Sápmi, the Sámi homeland, and Norbotten is also the home to the Laponian Area World Heritage Site, designated by UNESCO as an important cultural heritage area for the Sámi people that is to be protected.

Norbotten is also an area deeply rich with underground minerals, as seen in the extraction from LKAB's iron ore mines in Kiruna and Gällivare, to copper mines in Aitik (also in Gällivare). According to the Swedish Sámi Parliament, Västerbotten is home to the greatest number of mines – a total of six, and five in Norbotten. These two counties serve as the centers of mining for the whole of Sweden; both have been in active cooperation on mining development, on a global

⁴⁰ Lund interview, June 6, 2016.

⁴¹ Sametinget. Minerals and mines in Sápmi: The viewpoint of the Swedish Sámi Parliament.

⁴² County Administrative Board of Norrbotten. *Facts about Norrbotten*, 10.

stage. As the Parliament articulates, they place an emphasis on business cycles and mining is ultimately an industry of diminishing returns. “The dependency on business cycles is of vital importance for the local communities that are affected by the mining projects, most of all from a long-term sustainable perspective, where the environmental and social consequences can be far more costly than what the mining project can eventually produce.”⁴³

In Sweden, the Swedish Minerals Act is the main operating document for mining, and as noted by international comparative legal guides, the Act covers specially designated valuable mineral substances, known as “concession” minerals. The nearly 60-page document regulates “exploration, exploitation, and designation of land.”⁴⁴ It lays out all manner of issues related to mining activity in Sweden, including environmental impacts, lengths of permit, types of material open to exploration, and mineral compensation. The Minerals Act is governed by the Mining Inspectorate, and led by the Chief Mining Inspector, who is ultimately responsible for reviewing any and all mining activity permits. Both operate under the governmental division of the Geological Survey of Sweden. A permit is known as an “exploitation concession” is fundamental for mining, but must meet guidelines as set forth in the Minerals Act and is additionally regulated by the Swedish Environmental Code.⁴⁵ Vital to understanding mining activity in Sweden is a single sentence in Chapter 8, Section 1 of the Minerals Act, which states the following:

“The Chief Mining Inspector may determine an application for the granting of an exploration permit without any affected party other than the applicant having had the opportunity to express their opinion.”⁴⁶

Other governmental acts which impact the decision-making process of mining activity in Sweden include the act concerning Ancient Monuments and Finds, the Nuclear Activities Act, the Radiation Protection Act, the Planning and Building Act, and the Environmental Code, as well as

⁴³ Sametinget, 14.

⁴⁴ International Comparative Legal Guides. <http://www.iclg.co.uk/practice-areas/mining-law/mining--law-2016/sweden#chaptercontent1>.

⁴⁵ Sveirges Rikes LAG. *Sveirges Rikes LAG*. <http://www.sgu.se/en/mineral-resources/legislation-and-guidance/>.

⁴⁶ Sveriges geologiska undersökning. Minerals act minerals ordinance 2007, 17.

international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity – all of which have the possibility to inform and impact the final decision to approve or deny the permitting process, with the Chief Mining Inspector holding the final decision making power.⁴⁷

The Swedish Sámi have no official presence in mining decisions within Sápmi, either from straightforward laws or protections regarding land use for activities such as mining, but they do hold the same rights as any other land owner. Frequently, local Indigenous opposition to mining activity is taken through indirect routes, such as arguing that mining activity is a violation of basic human rights, or that mining activity threatens Sweden's environmental act. But the Mining Inspector may take the final decision on any mining activity that may or may not take place. The Sámi Parliament expresses its position on mining in the strongest possible terms: the Minerals Act is a “purely exploitation [sic] law, where the intention of the legislation is to increase the knowledge of the mineral assets and to prove the country's and world's demand for mineable minerals.”⁴⁸

The Sámi Parliament has strong and vocal opinions about mining activity, which not only threatens reindeer herding, a traditional livelihood, but the general condition of nature itself, which, as will be stated many times over in this thesis, is a threat to identity; as with nearly all Indigenous groups, many Sámi equate nature as intrinsic to their culture and identity. Destructive development, including mines, poses an existential threat. The Sámi Parliament enacted an environmental program, called Eallinbiras (loosely translated, “life work”) and adopted in 2009, which provides a formal framework for the official opinion on appropriation and use of land with respect to mineral extraction. This document is important not only for codifying the position of the Sámi formally; it is also the basis for the Sámi Parliament's official position document on mining in Swedish Sápmi. The document, *Minerals and Mines in Sápmi*, states in its introduction:

“This strategy shall be considered as a political standpoint as well as a document to the Swedish government and counties in their development work and to the authorities who in different ways

⁴⁷ Sveriges geologiska undersökning, 4.

⁴⁸ Sametinget, no page number.

decide on and follow issues pertaining to environment, business development, land-use planning, resource exploitation and permit management. It is also interesting for the mineral exploration and mining companies, in Sweden and abroad.”⁴⁹

The Sámi parliament is of the position that all natural resources within Sápmi belong to the Sámi people, as outlined in Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Also known as UNDRIP, it has been adopted by Sweden, but is not a legally binding document. Article 26 states:⁵⁰

- 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.*
- 2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.*
- 3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the Indigenous people concerned.*

Reindeer husbandry is essential to a significant population of Sámi people – the Sámi parliament reports that reindeer husbandry is carried out on nearly half of Sweden’s land area, and it is considered “to be the foundation of the Sámi culture with everything the reindeer have ever provided.”⁵¹

Because of the absolute power of the Mining Inspectorate and government interests, and lack of prior and informed consent and compensation structure for Sámi interests and infringement of

⁴⁹ Sametinget, 6.

⁵⁰ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, pg. 10

⁵¹ Sametinget, 10.

those interests, a significant conflict is currently taking place in Sweden in which the needs of the Sámi and the interests of the government have not been reconciled. The Sámi Parliament clearly lays out a series of remedies that would give them stronger participation in the process and outcomes that affect their traditional land. It is important to point out that not all Indigenous are against mining; in both Sweden and Norway, it is the lack of formal and binding consideration – and veto power – that are at issue.

The Swedish Sámi Parliament points out that the parties vested with issuing mining permits and the mining companies themselves have little to no knowledge when it comes to environmental impact on Sámi livelihoods. As such, the Parliament, as part of its proposal to amend the existing Minerals Act, requests that relevant Sámi stakeholders – the Parliament, reindeer herders, and the economic districts in question – be consulted by prospectors or their representatives (mining activity, starting with prospecting, is nearly always handled by a professional third party agent with projections on how the mining is likely to impact livelihoods, as well as general impacts to nature). The Parliament requests that this takes place even before an exploration permit for mining can take place.

Mining in Norway and Formal Indigenous Position

According to the Norwegian Mineral Industry (Norsk Bergindustri), a non-governmental organization for companies working within the extractive industries to promote their interests with key stakeholders and decision makers, “the Norwegian extraction industry has an annual turnover of approximately NOK14 billion and according to NGU, employed more than 6,000 workers in 2014. It is a major industry in many regions with Rogaland, Finnmark, Nordland, [and] Møre og Romsdal og Vestfold as some of the most important counties. The export value of minerals in Norway during 2014 was approximately NOK7,5 billion including Norwegian coal mines on Svalbard. Seventy-one percent of the volume in the trade is crushed stone and gravel; there are very few ore mines left, while the industry minerals are increasing in importance.”⁵²

⁵² Norwegian mineral industry (Norsk Bergindustri). <http://www.norskbergindustri.no/English>.

The north of Norway and the area known as Finnmark, (bordering Troms County to the west, Finland to the south, Russia to the east, and the Norwegian Sea to the north) constitute the primary Norwegian-side area of Sápmi, the Sámi homeland. This area has been historically active, with numerous mining efforts and exploration; Finnmark is also a central region for the reindeer-herding Sámi and their Indigenous livelihood. Unlike Sweden, for whom iron ore mining is a primary national revenue stream, Norway's central extractive revenue is derived from oil and gas extraction. According to Norwegian Petroleum, the oil and gas sector is Norway's largest, measured in terms of value added, government revenues, investment and export values, generating NOK218 billion in 2015⁵³, but revenues from other extractive industries are also significant. Prospecting continues in the northern regions, particularly for gold, copper, nickel and iron. As with Sweden, these mining activities are often controversial in that they are disruptive to the natural migratory patterns of reindeer, and therefore disruptive to the Sámi tradition of reindeer herding and other traditional Sámi livelihoods. The environmental impact has an inevitably negative impact on the natural systems that the Sámi either depend on or hold as central to cultural identity. In Finnmark, roughly ten percent of the population relies on reindeer herding full time.

Unlike in Sweden, Norway's Mineral Act (passed in June, 2009) factors in the considerations of the Sámi population prominently. The act states that its overarching purpose is to “promote and ensure socially responsible administration and use of mineral resources in accordance with the principle of sustainable development,” and this includes protection of “the foundation of Sámi culture, commercial activity and social life.”⁵⁴

Sámi Perspectives on Mining, the Environment, and Global Media

To best understand the salience of the state of mining issues as they relate to the Sámi, it is important to understand some key perspectives regarding mining in both Sweden and Norway, with respect to the feelings and opinions of various stakeholders within local Sámi communities in both countries. I spoke with leaders in both of these communities, including Swedish Sámi

⁵³Norwegian Petroleum. Norwegian Petroleum.
<http://www.norskpetroleum.no/en/economy/governments-revenues/>.

⁵⁴ Norwegian Minerals Act, 2010.

Parliament member Josefina Skerk, as well as John B. Henriksen. He is the international representative of the Sámi Parliament in Norway (Sámidiggi), a member of the Finnmark Commission (a land rights commission dealing with land rights issues in Finnmark), and a lawyer with deep expertise in the area of Indigenous rights and the United Nations. Because each interview subject brought a unique and detailed perspective to the issue of Indigenous mining issues in their respective areas, interviews are summarized here on an individual, case-by-case basis.

In addition to her role as Vice President of the Swedish Sámi Parliament, Josefina Lundgren Skerk is a well-known and vocal representative of Sámi rights and issues on the global stage. She participates in numerous media interviews and speaks at conferences in the interest of representing Sámi concerns to wider international audiences. As with each interview subject, Skerk was asked for her opinion of the state of Sámi mining issues on the global media agenda. Her response was strong, noting that Sámi issues are neglected on the national (within Sweden) media agenda as much as on the international media agenda. “The feeling in Sámi society is that it’s easier to get other countries to write than Swedish media; we’re not being heard in our own country, and our rights are being ignored,” Skerk said (all quotes are from the February 17, 2016 Skype interview).⁵⁵ She cited the ongoing lack of media coverage with the Gallok mine, and the current greater issue in Sweden related to Sámi rights with respect to mining decisions and other land use appropriations. She believes that visibility on the global media agenda is both relevant and necessary, in part because, “Sweden has an air of being great in human rights, while really doing a terrible job in concerns to Sámi.” Global media are insufficiently meeting the challenge of covering mining issues, a state of affairs about which she was blunt and to the point: “People are also very used to this situation, so it is almost what you expect, that the world will not give a shit, and it’s really hard to communicate.” When asked about any specific examples of interaction with major global media, she recalled the story of an interaction with a BBC reporter, in which she was asked: “aren’t you protecting something that should be in a museum?”

⁵⁵ Skerk, J. Skype interview, February 17, 2016.

The statement by the BBC reporter is important in that it brings up the larger issue presented to each interview subject for this thesis – asking each media member specifically if he or she personally believes that mining issues and the Indigenous have relevance on the global media agenda. If the topic is seen to be narrow and limited to a small number of people within a limited geographic area, it is extremely difficult to make the case for increased commitment of resources for coverage. Considering the empirical evidence suggested by Skerk’s experience, this may well be the case.

“We keep doing interviews, we keep trying to inform people; what they want to do is talk to someone who is really exotic, wearing the clothes, during the traditional reindeer herding. People are really tired of being exoticized, and we’re tired of not having our representation ... what makes us interesting to talk to us. Things not concerning the topic make for better pictures,” she said. Global media attention beyond the borders of Sweden is important: “Absolutely, it’s crucial. Sweden won’t change on its own. It’s too entrenched in this, so it needs the pressure from various actors and the media.” Skerk noted that the Sámi community is often the victim of parachute journalism – reporters who intermittently drop in to write an occasional story, and often without a basic operational knowledge of the issues at hand. “We need people [who] live here and have connections with people, instead of this constant explaining of basic facts to dozens and dozens of different journalists over time.”

John B. Henriksen is a Sámi human rights lawyer who has worked with the United Nations on issues of human rights for Indigenous peoples, and in Norway on issues that are specific to Sámi concerns. He is an international representative for the Norwegian Sámi Parliament, and as a member of the Finnmark Commission, is also expert in matters pertaining to land use and rights within the area of Finnmark in northern Norway. Henriksen is also known for being part of the Sámi Council group that in 1994, in response to proposed extensive mining activity in Finnmark by the mining giant Rio Tinto, bought stock in the company in order to gain access to the company’s shareholder meeting in London. Wearing his traditional gákti, he and the group were able to directly express to other shareholders the impact that mining activity would have on the Sámi. Ultimately, the mining activity did not take place.

Given his deep experience with Indigenous issues, mining, and Sámi issues in particular, Henriksen brought informed and thoughtful insight into the current state of international media coverage of mining in Indigenous environments. In an interview conducted over Skype on August 20, 2016, Henriksen was asked what he believes to be the biggest issues facing the Sámi and mining in the north. He cited the issue of prior and informed consent as a primary concern – whether authorities should authorize mining activities even if the Sámi people do not give consent. The fact that there is no agreement regarding how the principle of informed consent should be understood is also a concern. “Legally speaking, that’s a big challenge and a big problem, Henriksen noted. “The UN declaration of the rights of Indigenous Peoples is very clear (in Article 32) regarding the concept of obtaining free and informed consent, particularly in respect to exploitation of minerals and other resources,” (all quotes from the August 20, 2016 Skype interview).⁵⁶ He further pointed out that in Norway, there is always a consultation process in which companies seek to obtain the consent, but when it is not obtained, the project still proceeds.

This becomes germane to the issue of media, Henriksen said, because with mining projects – much like any other resource development projects that encroach on traditional Sámi territory – the argument often takes place in the media, and is frequently between reindeer herders and the media. “When it is covered in the media there is an understanding that the Sámis are preventing development with their opposition to the project, which occurs on a national coverage level. Very rarely, reindeer herding, for example, is given importance as traditional employment, and yet when you see ... a mining operation, it rarely has a prospect of more than 10-20 years. And in the meantime, you have imposed a very negative impact on traditional livelihood. The argument I use is that traditional [work] creates sustainable livelihood, whereas mining does not,” he noted. “Mining operations bring workers from somewhere else, so the community as such doesn’t benefit from the operations, because the workers come from somewhere else, taxing [goes] to another municipality somewhere else, and the municipality is affected only with negative impacts.”

⁵⁶ Henriksen, J. Skype interview, August 20, 2016.

When asked about his impressions of the Sámi, mining, and Indigenous issues on the global media agenda, Henriksen reiterated that tone and framing are critical issues to be faced. “To see mining covered by the media, and the Sámi communities’ opposing, you get the impression that Sámis are always hampering development of society, and the Sámi and reindeer herding is just an annoyance,” he said. Because of his particular experience of working with the United Nations and living in what is arguably the media capital of the world – New York City – I asked him about his experiences and observations of international media in the context of mining and the Indigenous. He highlighted two enormous problems: the error of omission (meaning no coverage at all) and lack of depth of coverage. “In the United States I read a lot of papers, watch a lot of news channels, and I don’t see anything on Indigenous issues, nothing related even to Indigenous issues in the U.S. And besides that, there is nothing on mining,” he observed.

Given his vast experience with human-rights law and land-rights issues, I asked Henriksen if he is often consulted or quoted in the media regarding land issues with respect to mining. He said that he has never been interviewed about mining issues, either on or off the record. When asked about why he believes this may be, he responded that he believes it is due to “ignorance from many of the people working in the media outlets, that it’s not perceived as an important issue, as a kind of niche issue.” Whether or not an absence of coverage on the international media agenda is important or necessary, he believes that visibility on this scale is important.

“Yes, definitely because the aspects related to mining on Indigenous territory [are] very different from Indigenous issues in general. ... I think the main problem is the ignorance about Indigenous peoples and their rights, and media has a certain moral duty to educate their readers and their viewers. People can form an informed opinion on issues; often the opinion you take is quite different if you are not fully informed.” Further, he said, “Media also has the responsibility to make the people who are responsible for such processes in the government or business to justify their decisions in public, so whatever decisions are made, they can be scrutinized in public – more transparency.”

Finally, Henriksen pointed out that the problems of lack of coverage of Indigenous issues on the global media agenda are not merely limited to what’s happening in news internationally. “I think

if you speak to any of the journalists in NRK Sápmi, you'll hear that it is almost impossible to get any of the Sámi issues in the primetime news in Norway. And if you want issues reflected in the main papers in Norway, you really have to simplify the issues or make it so tabloid that it doesn't make sense anymore. Often you hear [that] for us to be able to get our stories in the national media [they] need to be more 'sexy.' At least the media in Norway [are] stereotyping the Sámi issues, and then they are having issues that only fit that stereotyped view – something related to reindeer herding, some kind of a conflict, which fits that narrative,” he concluded.

In summary, the representative opinions of these key stakeholders express many of the same concerns regarding global media coverage of mining issues in their territory: That international news coverage is important and necessary, coverage of this matter is significantly lacking if not entirely absent, and when coverage does make it on the news agenda, it lacks substance and/or depth of knowledge about the topic at hand, and is often framed in a way that exoticifies and/or neglects to fairly and accurately represent the Sámi point of view and reality.

Mining in Greenland

Greenland is the world's largest island, home to the Greenlandic ice sheet, the largest ice sheet outside of Antarctica. While autonomous and with its own Parliament and government, Greenland is part of the Danish realm; Denmark today handles issues of international diplomacy, currency, and national security. Greenlanders carry Danish passports. Approximately 90 percent of Native Greenlanders are Inuk (the plural is Inuit) and are related to the Arctic inhabitants of Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. The Inuit are widely recognized as having populated the continent for more than 4,500 thousand years, in a largely Arctic environment that is at times brutal and unforgiving. Because of the massive Greenlandic ice sheet, only the edges of the continent are habitable and support modern towns. There are no roads traversing the continent and travel is limited to airplanes and boats. The entire continent is sparsely populated, with a total of 56,000 inhabitants in Greenland in total, according the Greenlandic Parliament. Towns such as Nuuk, the capital, in the southwest of Greenland, simply end where the roads end. The habitable areas of Greenland feature a stunningly stark and majestic landscape, with nearly no trees, and some of the most extreme weather in the world.

Greenland is at a critical juncture in its history in the world, in that full independence from Denmark is heavy on the minds of many Greenlanders. Greenland was a colony of Denmark until 1953. In 1979, the concept of “home rule” was established, allowing Greenland to attend to its own self-administration and governance. In 2008, a referendum introducing complete self-governance was met with overwhelming approval, with over 75 percent of the population voting in favor.

The Greenlandic Parliament has set up a committee to write a new constitution, and has established a committee for a national referendum on total autonomy. In September, 2016, I traveled to Nuuk for the opening of the Greenlandic Parliament, the Kalaallit Nunaanni Inatsisartut, to learn more about Greenland and its mining activity. I wanted to know what the Indigenous relationship is to the issue of mining for this nation that is possibly on the verge of a major and long transition into independence, and one for which mining can represent a very significant revenue stream and source of employment for its citizens. That revenue could be vital in funding future autonomy.

Greenland is rich with numerous mineral resources and rare earth metals, including graphite, coal, iron, rare earth metals, and precious metals, from rubies to diamonds, as well as uranium, a heavy metal that is used for a variety of purposes, from keels of yachts to radiation shielding.⁵⁷ Uranium is also used in nuclear reactors and in nuclear missiles, and is therefore a strategically important metal. According to data from the World Nuclear Association, Australia possesses the largest store of uranium (1.6 million tonnes) followed by Kazakhstan, Canada, and Russia.⁵⁸ It is roughly estimated that given existing reserves, Greenland has the possibility to become the fifth largest uranium exporter. The first discovery of large deposits occurred in 1956 in Kvanefjeldet, in southern Greenland, today an area of renewed activity and interest.

⁵⁷ World Nuclear Association. What is uranium? <http://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/introduction/what-is-uranium-how-does-it-work.aspx>.

⁵⁸ World Nuclear Association. What is uranium?



Figure 2. Map of Greenland

Source:
<http://ontheworldmap.com/greenland>

The debate on mining in Greenland is an internal one, but one that comes in the face of a discussion not only about full autonomy, but more pressingly, the possibility of mining as a solution to Greenland's high unemployment and its social problems. Conversations about the pros and cons of mining abound; presently the debate is centered around uranium mining and mining in Narsaq and in the mountain called Kvanfjeld, which has the possibility to become the second largest rare-earth mine on earth. Greenland mining decisions differ from the Sámis' in that, in Greenland, the decision to engage in mining (with the exception of uranium, as noted below) is in the hands of Greenlanders themselves and is governed by the Greenlandic government.

Whether or not to pursue mining uranium is central to the discussions and debates that are taking place in Greenland today. "There's a huge discussion about how to not depend on [payment from Denmark] and income from fish," says Julie Rademacher, a former member of the Danish parliament and currently an adviser with a Greenlandic labor union that represents 10,000 workers, equivalent to nearly 20 percent of the population. Rademacher notes, in *Arctic Deeply*, an online magazine, that mining "is an essential step toward fiscal and political independence."⁵⁹

Mining activity, permitting, and development are overseen by the government of Greenland, under the Ministry of Mineral Resources (MMR), and this, according to govmining.gl, the government's official website, includes "strategy making, policy-making, legal issues and marketing of mineral resources in Greenland."⁶⁰ Other governmental bodies, including the Ministry of Industry, Labour and Trade, and the Environment Agency for Mineral Resources Activities, oversee mining related employment and environmental impacts, respectively. Royalty revenues from mining activity in Greenland go directly to Greenland, and, unlike the Sámi in Sweden and Norway, Greenlanders are in control of decisions related to mining rather than being at the mercy of a larger governmental body.

⁵⁹ Gray, B. As Greenland Ramps Up Mining, Who Will Benefit? <https://www.newsdeeply.com/arctic/articles/2016/03/17/as-greenland-ramps-up-mining-who-will-benefit>.

⁶⁰ Government of Greenland. <http://www.govmining.gl>.

Greenland has full autonomy with respect to its resource policy, but continues to collaborate on issues of international import. For example, in January of 2016, the governments of Greenland and Denmark signed multiple agreements that begin to lay out a formal set of policies with respect to uranium mining. The four agreements, as reported by World Nuclear News, “consist of a general cooperation agreement on the specific foreign, defense and security policy issues related to the mining and export of uranium from Greenland; a joint declaration on safeguarding nuclear materials; a joint declaration on export control of products and technology that can be used for both civilian and military uses (‘dual-use’); and, an agreement on Greenland’s safeguarding of nuclear safety in mining.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Denmark and Greenland confirm uranium agreements. <http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/UF-Denmark-and-Greenland-confirm-uranium-agreements-0202164.html>.

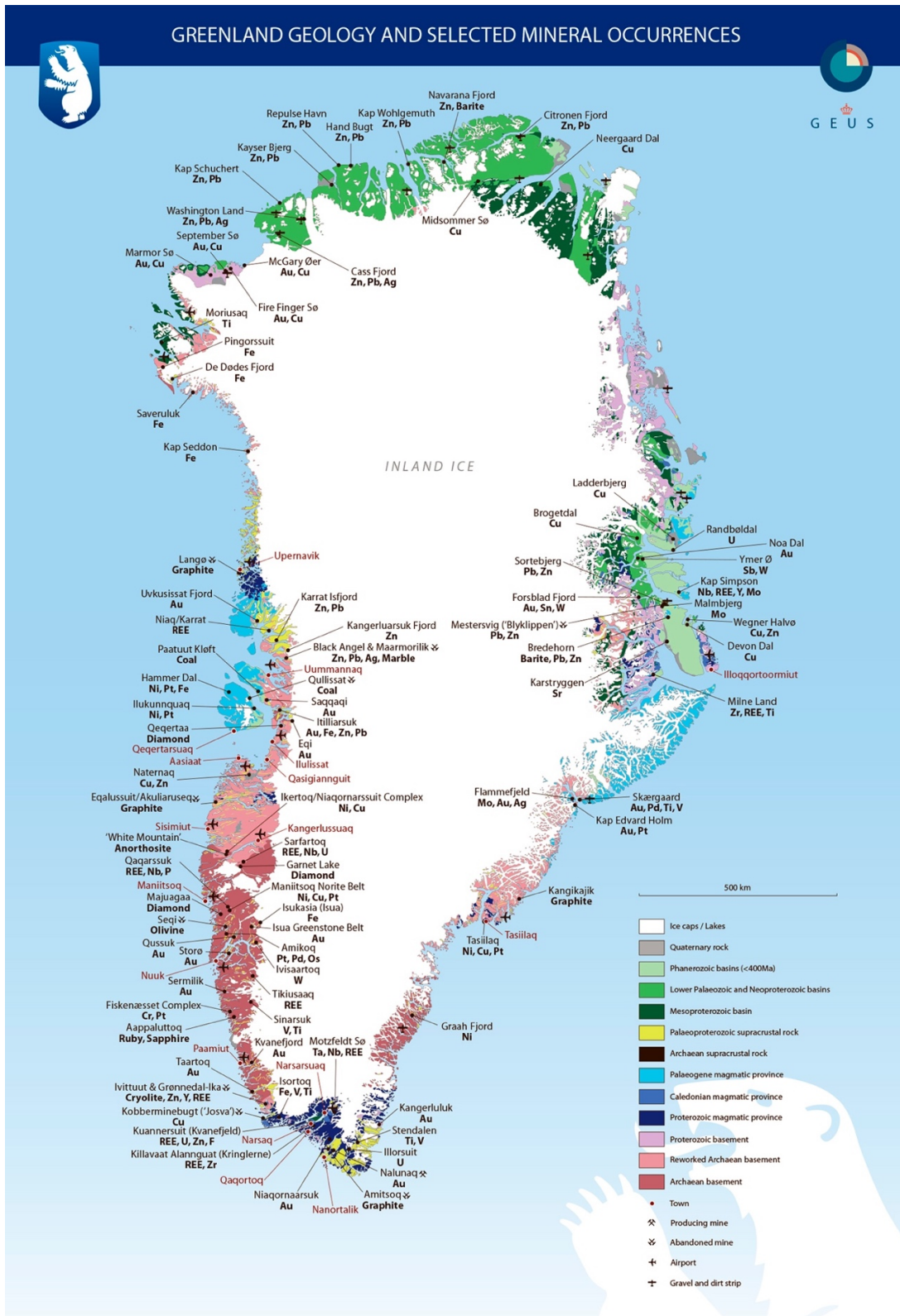


Figure 3. Greenland geology and selected mineral occurrences.

Source: Greenlandic Government

Greenlandic Perspectives on Mining

During a research visit to Nuuk, Greenland for the opening of Parliament, I was able to interview a representative voice for Greenlanders – Aqqaluk Lyngé, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) from 1995-2002, interviewed in Nuuk; and later, Inga Hansen, a career journalist from Nuuk, interviewed in Kautokeino, Norway.

Aqqaluk Lyngé has been engaged with ICC leadership for the last 36 years, retiring in 2014. On mining, he noted (the following quotes are from this interview, September 16, 2016), that “that we need that kind of work for our economy to develop, but the discussions are more about when you have to import a lot of foreign labor. That would complicate things a little and remind us that we are just a very few people and we can end up being a minority in our own country. That’s the case around Indigenous people where mining and oil exist. The question is how strong is the issue about Indigenous peoples’ rights.” He pointed out that “even the new Greenlandic self-ruled government haven’t acted on the UN Declaration on Indigenous peoples ... and in Greenland we lack the democratic infrastructure that also protects the Indigenous peoples’ rights. In that way we are not better off than anyone else in the Arctic, and it is because of our own actions, and that’s deplorable. I think Greenland should be the first to acknowledge the rights of Indigenous people and use that knowledge in their laws,” he said.

“As soon as Greenland’s self-rule started in 2009, the government started to press for large-scale mining, [to] open up for off shore. The laws we had taken over and implemented in Greenland did not include civil society rights, so we in the Inuit circle were lobbying for inclusion of civil society rights. We produced at least five reports,” he said. He tied this to the issue of mining: “Here we have politicians saying we don’t need to ask the public because we are elected, we will start uranium mining, and this is very crazy.” He believes that uranium mining is an issue “mostly because of the lobbying efforts of the companies trying to mine uranium.”

“I think that the people will only see when large scale mining opens up, how much influence from outside there will be and they will be surprised. People have to see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears when they want to believe – you can’t tell them your own self.” He has

been working on these issues for the last 30 years and has gone to many meetings about the extractive industry. “I can’t convince many of them we have to be careful,” he said.

Lynge ties the issues of mining to the previously stated concern about Greenlanders becoming minorities in their own country, pointing out that the demographic is changing. “Our population is getting smaller and will continue in the next many years. The migration problem and the lack of social assistance that you can get in Copenhagen and other places. We are not really ready to do the mining and control it, not at all. We are surprised every time but people want to believe something else.”

I also spoke with Inga Hansen, a reporter with KNR for 27 years. Hansen’s work for KNR has included covering politics, current events, Greenlandic culture, travel, and Arctic news, ranging from the ICC to Indigenous developments taking place at the United Nations. Hansen noted that the debate on mining is very much alive in Greenland at the moment. (The following quotes are from the interview, February 12, 2017, in Kautokeino, Norway.) “We are listening about mining developments because of the way of living in Greenland; we are eating a lot of food from the sea and from the land.” She pointed out that in 1971, residents in the Disko Bay area were relocated, due to coal mining, with many consequences. “Until today you can feel the people suffering because they were ... split to all the towns along the coast. [This] created a lot of problems,” she said. “In Greenland we’re focused on Indigenous feeling when we talk about mining. There is going to be sink mining in Eastern Greenland, [but] it’s so far from where we are living, we don’t have so many feelings about that because it’s pretty far away.”

Hansen has a younger brother, aged 23, who is taking courses to work in a mine, learning English, and working with machines. She mentioned this to illustrate the point that there is not a clear consensus on mining in Greenland. “Mining can split a lot of the society because people are against or for [it], and especially ... where there is uranium in the mountain, people are really split. Families can be split.”

She noted that permission to mine has to be passed through the Parliament, and if there is no referendum, the government has to decide. “Greenlanders elect the politicians, and it’s a

democratic decision, but of course, when it's a heavy decision like mining, the politicians become more secretive. They're not giving us information, and we only get information from media and officials and are left with many questions ... when they have information meetings, it can be officials that are not really good to tell the concrete stories, and of course [this] creates more questions." People have a lot of questions about uranium mining, she said, because their way of living is that of farmers and fishers. The uranium areas are "not far from Narsaq, and there are even reindeer on the way to the ice cap. In Narsaq and Quaortuq there are a lot of rare minerals."

When asked for her opinion of whether or not there was any relevance – or need – for international media to cover mining developments in Greenland, and impact on the Indigenous people, Hansen had this to say: "It's important because people in the world have to know what's going on, and the media from abroad are making good stories and they're seeing all the perspectives."

And then she pointed out two heartbreaking realities: "In Greenland, the media people are really busy covering daily news, and a lot of [media] are more translators, because the news managers can be Danish; the main newspapers are Danish." There is also the economic reality: Many Greenland media outlets can't afford to cover mining developments. "I'm from south Greenland but I'm living in Nuuk and I thought, why don't we go to Narsaq and cover the story? But due to economics, we can only do stories in about four days. Reporters from abroad can stay in hotels for ten days."

Hansen believes the world should know about mining issues in Greenland for another reason. "People should know about mining issues in Greenland ... know what's going on in our country, because there might be [similar] impacts on them. We can remember what happened with Chernobyl. In Norway, it impacted reindeer and even sheep. I heard from a Greenlandic sheep farmer who is against uranium mining because he trained in Norway to become a sheep farmer, and some of the sheep were impacted by the radiation, according to him."

Both Lyngne and Hansen state that, in Greenland, mining and Indigenous concerns on the global agenda are important, but for very different reasons from those in Sápmi. Greenlanders are concerned with greater transparency within their own government and Parliament and believe that international media may bring fresh perspectives. They also hope that the international media may be instructive to other Indigenous cultures who are facing the same questions regarding the environmental and cultural costs of mining.

Previous Media Coverage of Indigenous Issues Related to Mining in Sweden, Norway, and Greenland

Keeping in mind this backdrop – outlining the size of the global mining industry, mining developments, and the current state of opinion within the regions of study and with key Indigenous stakeholders on global media coverage — it is helpful, as a prelude to the interviews with key media stakeholders, to provide context via an overview of the previous Washington Post and BBC coverage related to mining issues. The stories cover a twenty-year period; research was conducted via coverage searches conducted online. These are outlined here:

The BBC:

(Search terms: Sámi and mining, on the BBC website)

1. July 30, 2014 – “Iron mine will destroy our way of life,” by Jakob Nygard, a Sámi reindeer herder, 1:12 minute video, News section.
Story summary: short piece on how mining in Sweden will encroach on reindeer herding.
2. August 17, 2014 – “The reindeer herders battling an iron ore mine in Sweden,” by Stuart Hughes, 2:08 minutes, online video, News section.
Story summary: short piece on how mining in Sweden will encroach on reindeer herding.
3. July 30, 2014 – “The reindeer herders battling an iron ore mine in Sweden,” by Stuart Huges, 2:08 minutes, same story repeated.

4. July 30, 2014 – Mine boss: “New iron mine will provide local jobs,” interview with Beowulf mining chairman Clive Sinclair-Poulton, 1:09 minute online video, Business section.

Story summary: perspective of mining president on positive impact of mining.

5. July 30, 2014: “Proposed iron mine causes controversy in northern Sweden,” interview with Stefan Andersson, mayor of Jokkmokk, the nearest town to the mine site, 1:06 minute video, Business section.

Story summary: story on how mining could reverse population decline and bring jobs to area, discussing polarization of mining, but in favor of mining.

Other mining/Sámi stories:

September 8, 2000: “Norway’s other nation demands land,” by Alex Kirby. Print story in World Section.

Story summary: reported from Karasjok, about opposition to gold mining, but no mining project specifically mentioned.

Additional Sámi mention:

December 21, 2006, “Russia’s Sámi fight for their lives,” by Jorn Madslie. News.

Story summary: general story about displacement and decline of traditional way of life for Russian Sámi.

Greenland and Mining:

(Search terms: Greenland and mining, on the BBC website)

1. September 14, 2007, “Greenland Sees Bright Side of Warming,” by James Painter, News/Americas section.

Story summary: story on potential upsides to global warming; the ability to have access to fresh vegetables because of warming temperatures. Story also discusses loss of traditional Inuit culture due to warming.

2. January 9, 2011, “Arctic with Bruce Parry: Greenland,” Programmes, BBC2.

Story summary: following the lives and challenges of Greenland’s Inuit.

3. January 9, 2011, Assignment: Greenland: To Dig or Not to Dig?” Programmes, BBC World Service.

Story summary: exploration of the potential impacts of mining in Greenland, as well as mining in the context of a potential bid for independence.

4. November 29, 2011, “The men – and dogs – who patrol northern Greenland,” News.

Story summary: feature on the Sirius patrol, a group of men (Danish Special Forces) and dogs patrolling northern Greenland.

5. January 1, 2014, “Mining in Greenland – a country divided,” by James Fletcher, BBC World Service, news/magazine.

Story summary: story on mining and public sentiment with respect to mining activity.

6. March 12, 2013: “Mining question dominates Greenland poll,” under News/Europe.”

Story summary: news story about Greenlandic elections, and 31 parliamentary seats. Mining a key issue for all.

7. January 15, 2013: “Greenland rare earths: No special favours for EU,” News/Europe.
Story summary: news story regarding Greenland’s assertion that it will not favor the EU over China in interests over rare earth minerals.
8. October 25, 2013: “Greenland awards London Mining huge iron ore project,”
News/Europe.
Story summary: news story on the awarding of a 30-year license for UK-based London mining to build and operate an iron ore mine.
9. January 2, 2014: “Greenland: To Dig or Not to Dig,” by James Fletcher, BBC Radio 4.
Story summary: exploration of the potential impacts of mining in Greenland, as well as mining in the context of a potential bid for independence, repeat from earlier story in 2011.
10. July 24, 2014: “Greenland: Bill to raise secrecy around mining projects,” News/News from Elsewhere.

The Washington Post:

(Search terms: Sámi and mining, on Washington Post website)

1. February 26, 2015: “Chasing after the northern lights in Swedish Lapland,” by Steve Vickers, in the travel section (mention of mining).
Story summary: travel story, nominal mention of Kiruna as ancestral homeland of the Sámi, as well as mining mention.
2. August 21, 2007: “Norway debates the promise, costs of new drilling,” by Juliet Eilperin, in Nation/Green (story on oil and gas).
Story summary: story on oil and gas drilling. Mention of Sámi people and environmental impacts mentioned.

Greenland and Mining:

(Search terms: Greenland and mining, on Washington Post website)

1. December 17, 2014: “Denmark stakes its claim in the war for the North Pole,” by Rick Noak, Worldviews (not a story on Greenlandic mining).

Story summary: story on Denmark’s geopolitical interests in the North.

2. July 17, 2012: “Greenland glacier loses large mass of ice,” by Juliet Eilperin and Jason Samenow, Health and Science section.

Story summary: science story on Greenlandic glaciers.

3. June 7, 2007: “Icy island warms to climate change,” by Doug Struck, World section.

Story summary: story on global warming and its effects in Greenland.

From the existing coverage in the BBC and the Washington post, we can glean key information points. First, all of the stories fall into two specific categories, news stories (timed around a specific event, such as an election or a mining development) or feature stories, which are centered around a very specific concern or group (global warming in Greenland, the perils of mining weighed against reindeer herding interests.). What I found of interest in the existing stories is that in the context of greater news coverage, the coverage was not wholly representative of any sort of comprehensive reality.

For example, there are a brief series of stories that cover the Kallak mine in Sweden, but coverage is framed largely according to the simplified narrative of impact to reindeer herders, rather than explaining the greater cultural relevance of nature to nearly all Sámi people (including non-reindeer herders) in their expression of cultural identity and episteme. Additionally, as the previous sections on the overall scale of mining illustrate, coverage on mining issues in Sweden, Norway, and Greenland are not nearly proportional to overall mining activity in any of the three countries, further highlighting one of my initial questions in the writing of this thesis: Why? Not only is mining coverage not consistently covered, as evidenced by the summary of stories, it fails in all cases to make substantial or deeply informed mention of

Indigenous concerns in juxtaposition to mining efforts. These observations form a qualitative basis for my interviews with stakeholders at the BBC and the Washington Post.

Inside the BBC: Background and Interviews

The British Broadcasting Corporation, founded in 1922, is both the world's oldest and largest public service broadcaster, financed primarily by licensing fees to the general public within the United Kingdom, or from anyone using "equipment" for its broadcasts. This is similar to how other publicly subsidized networks, such as NRK in Norway, SVT in Sweden, or YLE in Finland, operate. The BBC is governed under the Royal Charter and Agreement, two separate but related documents that lay out key operating principals for the BBC as a broadcaster. The Royal Charter is considered the constitutional basis for the BBC,⁶² and roughly every decade, the Charter is reviewed and updated to "see how the BBC serves the public and consider its future"⁶³ according to the BBC website.

The Charter is vitally important to the BBC's existence, serving as a roadmap which clearly articulates the mission and structure of the organization: "It is the document that spells out what the BBC needs to do to serve the public (its 'public purposes'), guarantees the BBC's independence, and outlines the duties of the people that run it – the Trust and the Executive Board,"⁶⁴ vital information for the license-fee payers of the BBC's services. The Agreement also "provides more detail on many of the topics outlined in the Charter such as: the BBC's services and how changes can be made to them; more on the delivery of the public purposes and the BBC's commercial activities. It also covers rules about the BBC's funding and its regulatory duties."⁶⁵

⁶² The BBC Blog. Inside the BBC. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/howweare>.

⁶³ The BBC Blog. Inside the BBC.

⁵⁰The BBC Blog. Inside the BBC.

⁶⁵The BBC Blog. Inside the BBC.

There are six key “public purposes” set out by the BBC:

- sustaining citizenship and civil society,
- promoting education and learning,
- stimulating creativity and cultural excellence,
- representing the UK, its regions, and communities,
- bringing the world to the UK and the UK to the world,
- and delivering to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services.

For the purpose of this thesis, the public purpose on which I will focus is “bringing the world to the UK and the UK to the world,” as it is the purpose most aligned with an examination of global news coverage of extractive issues. This public purpose has a foundation in three key tenants:

- Build a global understanding of international issues.
- Enhance UK audiences’ awareness and understanding of international issues.
- Broaden the UK audiences’ experiences of and exposure to different cultures around the world.



Figure 4. BBC Global audience, 2015.

Source: BBC World

The BBC’s global audience is measured by a metric called (GAM), or Global Audience Measurement. GAM estimated that the BBC’s weekly global news reach to be 280 million, including online (55 million), television (148 million), and radio (133 million). One in every 16 adults watches the BBC as a news source.⁶⁶

I will focus primarily on the BBC’s coverage in the digital space. My qualitative interviews with the BBC include two different perspectives, from one former and one present editor, conducted

⁶⁶ BBC website. BBC’s combined global audience revealed at 308 million.

at the BBC headquarters in London and in a private office space in London. Each interview was transcribed in its entirety and, in order to accurately document salient portions of conversations, the following interviews include large portions of original exchanges to ensure that the perspective of the interview subject is accurately reported.

My analysis looks at the major themes and data points in each qualitative interview, looking for the key factors that influence how stories make it on the news agenda through the lenses of gatekeeping, news values, and any other factors that are material to news emerging to the public sphere. My analysis, through these interviews, shows some unexpected patterns: for example, despite the fact that the BBC is part of a public trust, and the Washington Post is privately held (by Nash Holdings LLC, owned and controlled by billionaire Jeff Bezos), making the two outlets considerably different in terms of financial structure and public accountability, both share many of the same points of view and mission with respect to accountability to audience as well as challenges, such as access to reliable, credible and skilled journalists who are in the field in remote regions and able to accurately report on stories and contextualize them. All of my interviews underscored this glaring reality in present day gatekeeping, what van Dijk articulates as “a lack of alternative sources” or access to Indigenous voices or reporting, and in the most extreme cases, language barriers that preclude interesting story ideas to remain hidden from news gatekeepers. Those interviewed here all expressed a desire to increase access to alternative voices. All of these factors heavily on gatekeeping and collectively, influence the greater omission of topics and concerns related to the Indigenous sphere, even when they are attached to a majority topic, such as mining.

I began my interview research with Tim Weber, a former BBC editor and career journalist who has a doctorate in political science from Berlin University, and a diploma in journalism from Munich University. He spent 21 years at the BBC in various positions. He was the business and technology editor of the BBC News website from 1998 to 2012; after July 2012, he was the business editor and technology editor for three years. Prior to his online assignments, he was with the BBC World Service, where his newsroom duties included managing a news team. For nearly four years, he was the business editor for business output and domestic ratings programs – Radio 4 Today, 5 Live Across the Day, and BBC Radio Drive. He managed a team between 25

and 46 people. His job was a combination of managing groups of people and what he articulates as agenda setting. Weber said that he gave his journalists a fairly wide berth day-to-day, allowing them to make their own news judgments but supervising from afar. His job was to maintain a balance, making sure that he was steering the overall editorial agenda in both the UK and abroad. When asked specifically for his experience on the newsroom process, or how stories came on to the agenda via gatekeeping, he noted:

“The flow was multi-layered. If you want to describe it as flow, it’s probably the best comparison, but you have to think of it as a user-flow analogy. There are many, many tributaries that are feeding into the BBC. [These] can be news agencies [or] other media. It can be social media. It can be our own correspondents; it can be media releases, anything like that. It can be on-the-day news. It can be long-plan news. And [the stories] come in and they are then simply being triaged by the duty editors, by the planning desk, by journalists themselves.” Weber said these are the key ways that news would first enter the gate. From there, based on a variety of elements, the following would take place – a planning diary, what the news agenda was that day and an editorial meeting (usually in the morning). There was a business unit meeting, a BBC wide meeting where “we would discuss the news agenda and everybody [would] contribute their insights and views to it, or would draw attention to other parts of the BBC to stories that they thought were particularly relevant.”

The volume of stories would be “triated” on the basis of the following: relevance and importance to audiences, the resources available and the staffing. Alongside that, a features agenda would be set. Weber explained: “That could’ve been on the day when we think [a] big story ... requires explanation. We need something in-depth on the day or for the next day. Or it might be [that] something is really planned long term or ... we simply think this is an interesting subject that is relevant to our readers. We need to report all that should be of interest to our readers; and therefore, we invest the resources.”

As with any contemporary newsroom, Weber cited fiscal realities as another key factor in newsgathering, for example, travel budgets. “To go on location, I would be careful in spending our resources,” Weber noted, explaining that television tended to have a bit more money, purely

because of logistics: Creating a television production is more resource intensive, requiring a team of two or three people to execute on a story. Resource allocation was frequently a consideration at play in gatekeeping.

There were multiple other elements at play in how a story might end up on the agenda: “(A) is it news? (B) is it relevant? And sometimes one might use a news story. For example ... there’s something bubbling under and it never quite makes the grade, but there may be a day when I have that story. And ... now I use this event, even though it is not mega, but I can use it to explain the wider big picture behind it. I mean realistically, we just have to hit the target audience. Now, for the BBC, it’s a bit weird because the target audience is a license-fee payer in the UK. There’s a strong UK relevance angle there, but also about 40 percent of my funding back then came from BBC Worldwide.”

Weber explained that as part of the institutional structure of the BBC and its position as an international news provider, there was always a decision to be made about which audiences would be served globally: the United States, or North America, Africa, Europe or Asia, as examples, noting that the BBC maintained a large office in Singapore, and during his tenure, there were two correspondents based there. If stories were not reachable by correspondents in existing offices, they were commissioned, with a budget available for commissions. Weber said he used his budget for stories he could not reach from where he was, recalling a story that he commissioned on the lithium fields of Uruguay.

It was an important business story because the lithium fields under the salt flats are where the vast majority of the world’s lithium exists, and lithium is a key element for batteries. But there was also a conflict about how the lithium should be exploited and where the money should be appropriated. Weber knew someone who was going to the area and subsequently commissioned the story, noting, “I was happy to commission, because it’s [reporting] I would normally never be able to get,” underscoring the fact that issues of economics and access are constant determinants in the news process. In many cases, access can take the form of having a credible journalist available. Weber cites access credibility as a major factor in stories that make it on the news agenda – that is the ability of the gatekeeper (in this case, the editor) to have access to

informed reporters who are able to understand, contextualize, and report on a situation, a scenario that is often in direct conflict with the concept of ‘parachute’ journalism, or dropping in on a situation to report without having an adequate understanding of background, episteme, key players, and their interests. Put plainly, the ability to cut to the truth.

This is often a barrier to stories passing the gate. “It can actually be as simple as having a good stringer there. If I have a good freelancer somewhere,” he said, referring back to the lithium fields as an example. “I did quite a lot of reporting out of Uruguay and Peru because there was one stringer who had moved there and who was just really good in framing stories and making them fascinating reads. I loved his stuff and I could get something.”

Relevance to his audience is also a key determinant. “I always have to think ... of [the] interest to my audience. Ultimately I’m a service provider. We at the BBC usually felt very strongly about reporting news stories that others wouldn’t even ponder to do as a nibl [note: NIBL is an acronym for news in brief], and [to] report more extensively about them. I can only use [so] much money on a story that nobody clicks at or nobody reads,” he said, noting that there are certain stories that are what he called a “labor of love.”

Weber pointed out that “the website cannot survive on labors of love that nobody looks at. We have to meet the interests of our audience. We can create interest but only that much. It doesn’t mean that every single story has to be about Prince Harry or Britney Spears or the Kardashians, or Trump for that matter, and it isn’t. There are only that many stories that I can ram down my audience’s throat before they start choking and go somewhere else. And so I have to meet [their] interests. There are some stories I can make interesting but I can’t create a website based on [them] – it is a bit like when people say ‘why are you not reporting more good news?’ Every single website that has tried to be a good news website is struggling,” Weber pointed out. “People are not interested in good news. They’re interested in the unusual stuff.”

Because of the emphasis of relevance in our conversation, Weber was asked more about the concept – if consideration of the audience is primary in a story’s passing the gate and making it

on the agenda. Weber's response was insightful and has deep significance to the issue of mining coverage.

“It's a question of what we would consider to be important. So for example, the BBC would very often report about ... coups, what are the machinations, [the] economic trouble in faraway nations where the majority of our audience couldn't care less. Where an economic collapse in Ecuador is of about as much relevance to the British audience as the bicycle falling over in North Yorkshire. It is relevant, but they couldn't care less. We would still report it because we think it is important.

“Let's not push the analogy too far, but let's assume if there were a slight earthquake in North Yorkshire, [as happened] not that long ago, it is probably a little bit more likely that we would dispatch a reporter there – not necessarily me, but BBC newsgathering, because the British audience is really, really interested – ‘whoa, we have an earthquake here’ – [more] than doing an in-depth report about how dollarization is progressing in Ecuador or whatever the economic story of the day might be. So it's just a question of journalistic instinct, but also of audience interest.

“I'll give you two examples out of the business section. About ten years ago, my colleagues in television and radio – these were the early days of the Internet or the early days of online news – were convinced that they had reported so much about house prices and the state of the housing market, surely nobody, nobody could be interested in it anymore. It was inconceivable that people were not fed up with the topic.

“And these were fairly early days when once a day, we would get online statistics of what were the most read stories. Of course today, you get it in real time, which is great, as you see exactly what people are interested in. And I would be in these morning meetings, and I said ... ‘We believe that people are really still interested in house prices.’ No, nobody can be interested in house prices. And then for one week, every morning I read out to them what were the top five most-read stories the previous day on the BBC News website. And every single day three of these stories were about house prices. That killed the discussion. People are interested in house

prices.

“And we ourselves were convinced because there was a big mis-selling scandal about so-called endowment mortgages, and we ourselves on the online team had convinced ourselves that we had written everything that could ever be written about endowment mortgages, the scandal, how to get your money back, and all that. And my colleagues on the personal finance team said, ‘Look, let’s do one last feature and then that’s it.’ And I said, ‘Well, why don’t we ask the audience what are your final questions on this and then that’s it?’

“And we asked the audience, ‘what are your questions on endowment mortgages?’ We got, within a day, over a thousand questions and [they] kept piling up. So many questions that it was obvious to us that people were desperate for information even though we had written about it. So instead of closing down the story, we did a special series ... which was hugely read. Sometimes it’s just a gut feeling.”

Weber’s comments point to the fact that in some cases like the mortgage crisis, which the news organization – using all best editorial judgment – had thought was exhaustively covered, had not been. The wants and needs of the audience can be miscalculated; additionally, with a medium such as the Internet, agile news agencies are able to pinpoint exactly what readers want and deliver on a news agenda in a way not possible in a pre-Internet world. In this sense, the audience becomes an active part of the gatekeeping process.

When asked specifically about the issue of Indigenous and mining issues in Greenland and Norway and Sweden, and his thoughts about their infrequent appearance on the global media agenda, Weber noted that the vast majority of the audience is unaware of the numbers involved in many stories, or just how many people are affected.

“It’s a question of proximity. Let’s assume something affects ...10,000 people or 100,000 people in the Appalachians or South Dakota. Do the U.S. media care that much? I mean how much

coverage – and unbiased coverage – does the pipeline dispute in South Dakota⁶⁷ ... get right now? Here's the key thing. There are simply not that many Greenlanders and there simply are not that many Sámi ... Given that there are so few people in a very sparsely populated area ... very, very few [other] people can relate to their need for space or undisturbed space. [That] makes it really, really difficult because most readers don't understand conceptually what it is, and they don't grasp the relevance to their lives. It's ... the journalists [who] try to think about whether their audience would care, and sometimes they pick up something for whatever reason and try to make their audience care, but most of the time they can't be bothered. And there are a few organizations [like] ... the Washington Post, [that] will say, yeah, we think it's really important and we should care. But can we make the audience care?"

Weber referenced a story during the time that he was working with the BBC world service on the topic of dying languages. "There were six or seven thousand languages in the world; in 20 years, there would be three thousand left. There was this endless list of languages [with only] five to ten speakers left. And it's all very exciting and fascinating, but that doesn't mean that anybody cares. It's a question of relevance ... does it affect me or do I empathize? And sometimes subjects out of all proportion [do] get impetus or are communicated in a way that [affects] people.

"Just simply because I believed in the story, I sent one of my reporters for ten days to Ghana to write about the technology scene in Ghana. Now, that is not an obvious subject. And she came back with five cracking features," referring again to the impact of having capable journalists. The Africa series, in part, also came to be because of another barrier was removed: the issue of economics. The series was directly funded by advertising, via companies interested in the African market, mostly extractive industries who, Weber says, "wanted to showcase the good in Africa. It was a confluence of interest, and that's how I could fund it. Just to create that confluence is difficult enough. And then, ultimately, they will say, 'so, how many page views did this get?'"

⁶⁷ Weber was referencing the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline in the Standing Rock Indian reservation in North Dakota and South Dakota, home to the Native American Hunkpapa Lakota, Sicasu Lakota, and Yanktonai Dakota groups.

Weber returned to the topic of access credibility by way of informed or embedded journalists in stories passing the gate and making it on to the news agenda, and how access credibility is deeply tied to economics. “I have plenty of sources and resources to draw on to write the story from my desk. If there is a rare earth or a rare mineral, a rare earth mine in Congo and somebody claims that many villagers are being killed for X, Y, or Z, that may or may not be true and I don’t even know who does the killing. Maybe the extractive company’s actually a victim of this because [the killers are] just some rogue gangs financed by whatever and supported by whichever super power or local power. ... And maybe that extractive industry’s actual company is desperately trying to save villagers. Who knows? We don’t know. And sometimes it’s just a rogue mine that has its own militia for exploitation sake. We don’t know.

“NGOs (non governmental organizations) have an extremely paltry track record when it comes to telling the truth. They can be quite inventive, just as companies can be quite inventive when it comes to truth telling. And so this is at that point it gets very difficult. You need kind of somebody there who has the background. And then you have a journalist sitting at this desk [with] incredibly scarce resources. The BBC has cut more than ... six to eight hundred journalistic jobs over the past four years. They’re gone. Eight hundred journalists gone. Travel budgets, research budgets have been cut to the bone. But the expectation and the demand [are] still serving as far an audience as you can, because if everybody pays for this (the license fee), you have to do something for everybody. You can’t become a minorities board. The license fee is not a payment to either meet the entertainment needs of the upper middle classes or of specific special interest groups or whatever. It has to reach everybody from ... the UK border in the Rhondda Valley in Wales to the Corbyn fan in Isling, and everything in between. That’s a very challenging thing to do. If you do it, there’s constant tracking of resources.”

Weber’s observations are significant in that they underscore the constant interplay of economics, access credibility, Galtung and Ruge’s concept of meaningfulness, and the “cultural proximity” of news to readers and its relation to their frames of reference. When weighed against a lack of access to Indigenous voices and qualified journalists, differing epistemes that do not serve the majority frame of understanding, and the remoteness of most Indigenous groups, a clearer picture begins to emerge of the concrete elements at play when it comes to the frequent absence

or under coverage on Indigenous issues with respect to mining on the media agenda. Stacked together, these elements can often create a perfect storm of non-coverage; just as Galtung and Ruge suggested that greater number of news values present would increase likelihood of a story making the news, it might be argued that conversely, the number of elements, as outlined by Weber, that aren't present, also diminish chances for coverage. These factors all play a part: the combination of economic considerations in the face of the necessity of covering what is in one's backyard and familiar and relevant, the challenge of making the foreign familiar, or at the very least, creating a bridge of relevance and/or interest between majority concerns and minority issues, and the epic challenges of both source credibility in places and contexts that aren't easily confirmed or fact-checked due to remoteness and or issues of background context, as well as access to embedded journalists who have the reporting skills, as well as the writing skills to keep readers engaged.

Weber mentions another important point. No matter how experienced or competent the gatekeeper(s), gatekeepers can also be subject to a sort of 'editorial blindness' when looking at coverage from "what is news" perspective when the audience may have other priorities about what is relevant, as evidenced by Weber's example of coverage of the mortgage crisis. It also illustrates an interesting phenomena in Internet based media – in a medium in which clicks and engagement can be tracked in real time, readers become increasingly powerful gatekeepers in their own right.

As a juxtaposition to Weber in his position as a former BBC staffer, I also visited the BBC Television Centre headquarters in London, and interviewed William Heaven, who had just started in his position as editor of BBC Future Now, a newly launched BBC worldwide website. By way of disclosure, Heaven is an editor who inherited a story on mining I had previously pitched to the BBC, which was the basis for our introduction. Heaven joined the BBC in September 2016. Previously he was at New Scientist magazine for four years, where his last role was chief technology editor. Before that, he was a features editor and news reporter. His position at BBC Future Now includes running production and posting stories once they're edited into the CMS (content management system), sourcing pictures, working with photo agencies, and packaging everything together for a workable end product on the website. These duties are in

addition to traditional editorial duties of commissioning stories and editing copy, both of which also fall under Heaven's purview. Future Now launched in December of 2016. Its mission is a global focus, Heaven said.

"There's interesting stuff happening in China and India and Southern Europe and South America, and we want to tell the stories," Heaven said, providing the following example: "We all know that Amazon [the e-commerce site] is pioneering the use of warehouse robots to automate the picking of items and streamlining the whole e-commerce side of things. But the same thing is happening in India – nothing to do with Amazon, but there are companies weaving out automated warehouse robots. India is a completely different story because the work economy is completely different there. The workers don't get paid so much, so whereas for Amazon it makes economic sense ... in India it doesn't so much. Why ... and the effect on the local economy and the local workforce will be very different. ... We're interested in the impact that tech has on people and communities and society and we want to have dispatches from regions around the world and send freelancers ... there to tell us what it's like an actually talk to the people and see how tech is shaping this part of the world. It's possible either are lessons for the wider world."

Future Now is edited by Heaven, but is part of Future and other sections, including BBC Britain, BBC Travel, and BBC Capital. Heaven says that presently, there are some 12 editors who run all the feature contents of BBC Worldwide. Of those, most writers who contribute are freelance. Heaven said, "As much as possible, we try and have regular relationships with those people because if you've got people out there looking for ideas and pitching your ideas that's great because there's more work on that side of things than the editors can do themselves. I, in particular, [am] always looking for new freelancers but certainly in tech writing and the kind of writing that we're interested in – tech meets society and how it's changing things.

Because of the editor-reporter relationship in the chain of news – where reporters are pitching stories in the interest of passing the gate, and where the gatekeeper is the editor – I asked Heaven where he and others at the BBC source and find their freelancers. Heaven was asked for greater detail on the pipeline to connecting with qualified freelancers, particularly those freelancers who may live in areas that are distant geographically, frequently the case with Indigenous journalists.

“Word of mouth really, so when I don’t know if we’ve got anyone local or in an area. Or just asking colleagues here if they’ve worked with anyone in that part of the world. Other times I just come across them by chance. They might have picked me in the past and it just so happens that you know they live in South Korea or they live in India. So now [when] I am especially looking for stories from those places, I’ve gone back to people I worked with before,” he said.

When asked for a typical profile of stories that are pitched and actually make it on to the news agenda, Heaven noted that such stories will begin in one of two ways: either from an idea he’s had himself that he’s trying to find a writer for, or a story that a writer will pick “cold,” which can be great or need a bit of work. “Once you’ve agreed the basic outline of the story with a writer, they’ll go off and do it. We don’t have that many people and our turnarounds tend to be much shorter ... we hope the copy’s in good shape, [because] there’s not much time for a lot of reworking.”

For Heaven in his role at Future Now, the pitch content is specific. “For Future Now ... we don’t care so much about whether it’s new or news. I think number one, and this always sounds a bit cheesy, but is it interesting? Is this something that is going to catch someone’s eye and make them want to read it? And then, just as important, make them want to share it? So interesting has to be number one, but then there are ways that you can encourage people to read it – with the way you then present [the story] as a headline or as a new encapsulated story, in a sentence that is colloquial or conversational in a way ... gets people’s attention. We’re trying to sell our stories to that social media audience with something that will catch their eye. They’ll click on it and they’ll want to share it. And so as much as we can do to help those people want to read it and then want to share it, then we’ll do that. That comes in very much [at] the beginning of the commissioning process. ... I need to see a way that I can package this story up so that it’s going to get readers.”

Here, Heaven is illustrating the new conundrum presented by journalism that lives on the Internet – journalism that is often expected to be arresting, attention grabbing, clickable, and shareable. Internet journalism further reinforces the news value of unambiguity, the concept that

stories must be clear and lacking detailed explanation or interpretation, a nearly impossible task if one is to accurately contextualize Indigenous issues and background to majority media audiences, who are often wholly unaware of the Indigenous perspective.

Heaven added: “I used to be a writer/reporter and I would say hey, the story’s great because of what’s in the story. But the truth of the matter is that if you can’t find readers for that story, then what’s the point in doing it? There [are] just so many demands on our time these days and with countless other websites that you could be reading and countless other things you could be doing.”

Heaven was asked why he believes that issues related to global mining – relevant to everyone following the logic that nearly everyone in modern society is a consumer of mining byproducts – fail to consistently make it on the news agenda, and particularly in the context of the Indigenous people who frequently are affected by mining. The question was posed to Heaven in general, and not particularly as it affects his work with the BBC.

“I can say a number of things on this. ... I’m not going to commission a story that I don’t think people are going to read, and sadly, you need to be careful ... with those negative stories that are going to get people depressed. Negative stories are going to be a bit of a downer and there’s a flip side to that which is if you can sort of sell it as an ‘oh my God, dystopia!’ [story], then that almost becomes a positive.” Heaven cited the example of a BBC story that performed well about a lake in China that became polluted because of local industry. “They’re producing stuff for all of us to use and [the story] was sold along the lines of the ‘dystopian lake at the end of the world that we are responsible for.’ I think it was even more simple – ‘is this the worst place on earth?’ And *that* did really well ... it’s a nice example of how this kind of thing actually did work for us. We want more of this. We had a guy actually go and visit this place and he’s telling you about it. Within that, we had all the interesting, important [information] these sort of global consumer decisions that have fed into this and the effect it’s having on the local people.”

He related this to my question about Indigenous issues and mining. “The story that I think you’re asking about is in there, but it was packaged up in quite a simple, not childish, way, but in a way

that just appeals to very, very simple ‘ooh, click,’ and then you have this cool [story] ... and bit by bit by bit, all the more sophisticated things in that story. Each one as you reach them ... also keeps you reading; so they’re all good and they’re not buried.”

Heaven’s comments were honest and telling, and they begged a larger question: Is it possible to transition a reader of a compelling, clickable headline into a reader interested in a deeper reporting of an issue, and does this serve, or have negative effects on, perceptions of the Indigenous and their concerns?

Heaven was asked if he believes that many of these stories are not covered because they are in locations that can’t be reached or served by “parachute journalists,” and because of the stories’ complexity. Heaven believes those concerns are part of the problem, but that there’s more: “We don’t see more of these [stories] ... because what’s the connection between the reader sitting in London on the bus and this mine in you-name-it, wherever it in the world, if that person can’t see a connection, [or] unless they cared in these issues already. ... People will read ... an investigative piece about some nasty stuff happening, and in a mine, but I would suggest the audience for that would be relatively small. So if you want to cover these things more generally, then there’s got to be a way to connect, to make [the story] feel like this is actually relevant to the person reading it,” With this assessment, he returned to Galtung and Ruge’s concept of meaningfulness, and underscored its power on the news agenda and in gatekeeping.

When asked about my hypothesis that language may be a barrier to surfacing stories and issues for many Indigenous communities, Heaven said: “Absolutely true. I mean if these writers were pitching me those stories, then it’s far more likely that these writers would be commissioned.” The issue of economics was also raised – does Heaven believe economic considerations have impacted or have a bearing on the ability to cover mining issues in what are often remote locations? He noted that financial realities have indeed profoundly impacted the economics of journalism. “All the major newspapers and magazines used to have correspondents around the world and ... for the most part they’re all gone, for reasons of economics. You rely on freelancers or stringers which you know are few and far between. ... It’s very different having a dedicated correspondent.”

As Tim Weber also noted, the interplay of economics, meaningfulness, and access credibility are factors at play with gatekeeping. From Heaven's perspective, with the added insights of the challenge of unambiguity in journalism in the digital age – the necessity of grabbing attention and making stories additionally “shareable” is often inherently at odds with covering the complexities of mining and Indigenous issues. These challenges directly contribute to the lack of consistent coverage of issues such as mining in Indigenous environments; it is the confluence of the aforementioned that can often account for absence.

Inside the Washington Post: Background and Interview

Founded in 1877, the Washington Post is the eighth largest newspaper in the United States, and was owned by the Meyer-Graham family from 1933-2013. The Post established itself as one of the most important publications in America for national and international news when it broke the 1972-73 Watergate break-in scandal. The paper has won over 50 Pulitzer prizes, the top honor in American journalism. In 2009, suffering from declining revenues (like most American news outlets), the Post closed all of its domestic bureaus.⁶⁸ In 2013, the Post was purchased by billionaire entrepreneur Jeff Bezos for \$250 million. Since then, the paper has engaged in infrastructure investment and increasing newsroom operating budgets. Bezos has reportedly invested more than \$50 million in 2016.⁶⁹ In January, 2016, the Post announced that it had 78.5 million monthly users⁷⁰, ahead of the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, and the Guardian.com in growth.

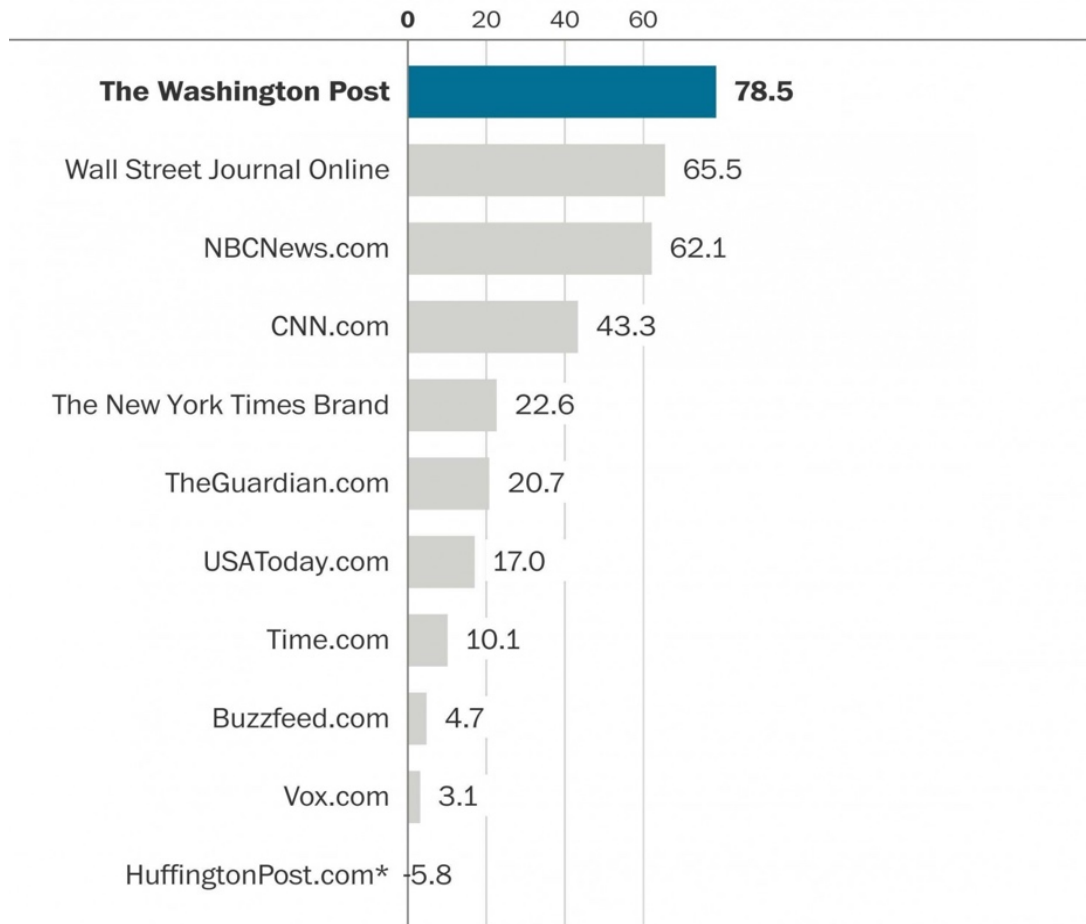
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⁷⁰ The Washington Post surges to 76 million monthly users. https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/wp/2016/01/14/the-washington-post-surges-to-76-million-monthly-users-2/?utm_term=.64031bc99c61

December 2015: Year over year audience growth

(% increase in unique visitors)



*All Inclusive

Source: comScore Multi-Platform US, December 2015

THE WASHINGTON POST

Figure 5. Year over year audience growth. 2015.

I conducted a Skype interview with Douglas Jehl, Washington Post Foreign Editor, on January 16, 2017. Jehl oversees a staff of 18 reporters in 15 foreign bureaus, as well as 4 editors in Washington. Previously, he was a deputy Washington bureau chief for the New York Times, where he oversaw coverage of national security issues. Prior to his positions as editor, he was a reporter for 19 years. Our conversation began with obtaining a baseline understanding of the Post's priorities with respect to international coverage, which Jehl oversees.

Jehl said the paper wants to cover what's most consequential and what is most interesting around the world. "Ultimately I think our primary focus needs to be the U.S. role in the world. We feel like we have a particular obligation to hold the U.S. government accountable, to focus on places where the U.S. has invested blood, treasure, and prestige. But our focus is not only about the U.S. We do want to write about the sort of big changes in the world that are going to affect people, affect the economy, affect the balance of power," he noted.

Presently, the Post has two dozen people in 17 countries around the world, with 15 on staff and six on full-time contracts. There are places where the organization is more thinly staffed than others, he said, noting that the bulk of the reporters are most intensely concentrated across the Middle East, "given the volatility and consequence of that story. That's our footprint." The paper has grown in recent years. A Brussels and Istanbul bureau that had not existed before has been opened in order to reinforce European coverage and coverage in conflict zones. Contract correspondents have also been added in Paris, Moscow, and the Middle East in recent years.

The paper has expanded a Washington-based blog called Worldviews, which has four writers and an editor. "Their job is often to write about places where we can't get immediately [and] to help add some nimbleness and explanatory heft to our coverage," Jehl explained. With the same staff, they are producing a five-day-a-week newsletter aimed primarily at international audiences. The paper has also focused efforts on drawing on more freelancers from around the world through the Washington Post talent network, which Jehl says was first established to vet and keep track of reporting across the United States. "We're doing the same around the world, which gives us some additional resources to take freelance pieces and allows us to do a better job of tracking who is out there and what skills they bring to the table," he said, noting that

while the BBC, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal presently have bigger staffs, “we’re right there within the next year.”

I asked Jehl about the pipeline for a story that arrives on the news agenda, beginning with the internal flow in the newsroom, with the source of ideas, and moving on to taking the decision to make a story assignment. Was there a scale for trusted sources for story ideas? Ideas come from a variety of places, he said, adding “I sort of think about them coming into the hopper from different directions from different weights.” Jehl said they rely heavily on correspondents to generate ideas to propose areas of focus, “to help in making those really important decisions about what our targets are.” This happens on a day-to-day basis, a week-by-week basis, and also by sketching out themes and priorities for a longer period of time, such as a year.

Jehl said it’s important to think of stories in three buckets: stories that react to news events – that aren’t really planned or initiated – they’re reactive. Then there are stories that are tied to the news but are more enterprising and do involve initiative. He noted he’d put the sort of thematic coverage of high profile issues like Brexit and refugees and security in Europe in that area – stories that are very much part of the conversation and are recognized as consequential. In the third category are what are thought of as enterprise stories, which Jehl articulated as being “more off the path, that involve making a conscious choice [in] an area that we want to cover that may not be getting as much attention and that we want to try to cover in greater depth.”

In terms of inputs, Jehl says input from correspondents proposing stories and themes is probably the single most important factor. The second is input from editors. He noted that the Post has editors who are regional specialists. “For example ... I would expect that the Europe editor is reading closely coverage in other newspapers, in other journals ... [and] thinking about issues that correspondents themselves may not have raised.” He elaborated that when he mentions input from editors, he is thinking primarily of his desk – the foreign desk. “But certainly there are conversations elsewhere in the newsroom about areas that we might focus on, when we get to questions of mining and energy and the environment. Those could involve conversations with the business desk or people on the environment team.”

Lastly, Jehl says input from freelancers is a factor – and has become more important since the paper has had “a little bit more money and put a little bit more focus on ideas from freelancers, but it is currently a distant third in terms of story ideas. We don’t really have the resources to take on very many big, ambitious projects from freelance journalists. We tend to use those freelancers to respond more to news, places where we are.” Then, “we see their pitches and that helps to elevate stories to our attention. It will get soon to a story that we have taken in the area that you’re describing, but that’s more of a distant third in terms of these types of ideas,” he said, adding that publicists are not an important influence in sourcing story ideas, although he said articles have come to him that were shared by think tanks or publicists, “but rarely [is there] a pitch from Exxon or from NRDC [the National Resources Defense Council] that’s going to drive that kind of story.”

He did cite a recent story on Greenlandic mining that was funded by the National Science Foundation, to pay travel and accommodation costs; by way of disclosure, the story indicated as much. Like Weber’s series on Africa at the BBC, the mining story demonstrates that the Post has sought out new funding models in order to facilitate reporting from remote, and expensive regions. Jehl wasn’t sure if the idea came directly from the NSF (the story largely dealt with climate change, and was therefore not under his remit) or if it was an invitation to go study their science “but that certainly reflected that there are times we do stories in which we are relying on players to help make it possible.”

I asked Jehl specifically for his thoughts on mining and its disproportionate effect in Indigenous peoples, regardless of country, and why he believed that mining issues in this context are generally under-covered by majority media.

“Certainly and superficially, the people most affected are the people with the least voice – the least access to platforms that allow them to convey their message, and they’re often dealing with – and again, we’re being superficial here – I would say the balance of power between mining companies and multinationals ... [and] the people affected by their operations is an inequitable one. That shouldn’t be and isn’t a reason why we wouldn’t cover those stories, but they’re less likely to rise up on the radar screen.

“I guess the second is [that] these are stories ... rooted in particular places; we do write about them. ... But they’re also global stories. We, sometimes as news organizations, aren’t as good at writing global stories as we are [at] stories rooted in a particular country or region. We tend to structure our reporting country by country, and sometimes less often globally. And ... I would say that third, there does tend to be a built-in bias in news organizations toward writing about what’s new, what’s changed, what’s different. And there can be a sameness to stories about mining and those affected ... that can make it tough to break out of the noise. ... I would say finally that with limited resources, we’re all making choices about priorities. What’s been changing in the world – in the foreign news environment in the last five years – has been fairly extraordinary in terms of the upheaval in the Middle East, the upheaval in Europe related to the refugees and European Union, the assertiveness of China and Russia in big power politics. I think sometimes our most earnest plans to write about issues like the environment, like resource extraction, like Indigenous people gets eclipsed by what feels day to day and week to week like more urgent news priorities,” he said.

Jehl’s statement touched on nearly all of the issues also facing the BBC: the restriction of resources, the issue of emergence or the ability for these sorts of stories to rise up on the radar screen, and the issue of “sameness” in the face of more urgent news priorities. Sameness was also noted by Heaven, by way of fatigue coming from covering stories that are ongoing or without breaking news values.

The appearance of News Values, access to source discourse, and financial realities all impact the news agenda to varying degrees, despite the enormous contrasts on the basis of provenance, culture, and economic structure of each respective outlet. The BBC is British, developed out of a broadcasting tradition and is a public service; the Washington Post is American, developed out of a print tradition and is commercial in nature. Yet despite these differences, both are largely linear in their adoption of News Values and other considerations that govern gatekeeping and news making decisions on an ongoing basis. This begs the question: Are news values and other decision making processes so ubiquitous and entrenched on a global basis that they operate at the

expense of making adequate room for diversity in coverage, and for issues such as Indigenous concerns?

It was also important to broach the topic of language to Jehl, and this researcher's assertion that language barriers play a significant role in gatekeeping, prohibiting many ideas from coming to the attention of gatekeepers. Did Jehl think that this has impact on why stories aren't noticed or ultimately covered? Yes, was his response. "Absolutely they do," he said, noting that he believes there are barriers even to languages that are widely spoken – but where only a small fraction of journalists are fluent, for example, Arabic, Urdu, and Chinese. "But the barriers are many times greater when it comes to languages like the ones you're describing – particularly Indigenous languages, where you're going to need to rely on interpreters ... absolutely. And I think in a world that has relied more and more on English as a lingua franca, particularly in the news business, the people who aren't conveying their message in a language widely spoken do have a disadvantage."

Further Analysis and Conclusions

My thesis asks the question of why Indigenous people, in the context of the mining industry in Northern Europe and Greenland, often fail to consistently appear on the global media agenda. Through interviews with key stakeholders and gatekeepers, it's evident that a number of factors have consequence.

In 2017, the concept of News Values remains an integral part of the gatekeeping function – a filter by which the gatekeepers, the editors, arrive at decisions that determine what makes it onto the news agenda. Those interviewed repeatedly stressed themes related to the ongoing validity and active use of the mechanisms of meaningfulness (also referred as "relevance" by Weber), threshold (or proximity, as articulated by Weber) and unambiguity as active players in gatekeeping. But there are other, less widely documented forces at play that seem to have a significant impact on issues such as this exploration of mining and Indigenous issues on the global media agenda. These are newsroom economics, and perhaps most surprisingly, the issue of source discourse through the lack of access to qualified Indigenous journalists or well

informed others with access credibility who are able to connect story ideas and news developments to majority media stakeholders, and vice-versa.

We can see that language is often a significant barrier in this paradigm, along with economics. Both are a universal concern and can often impact News Values. In the face of news decision-making, budgets are an ongoing consideration, but both the BBC and the Washington Post are making strides in finding innovative ways to diversify news coverage through new funding models – the BBC through efforts such as its sponsored section on Africa and others like it, and the Washington Post through efforts such as the example of realizing recent Greenlandic coverage through third-party support for travel costs through the National Science Foundation.

It is obvious that economics and financial concerns are at the core of News Values, in that they demand an order be created to prioritize news decisions which cascades into other areas, such as coverage of groups that are not in the majority. Revisiting Waller, we see her insights echo those of the gatekeeping interviews I conducted and neatly summarize them, specifically through the economics of remoteness, which in my research, extends to source access. This has been perhaps the most striking and actionable data point. There is a significant chasm between the need for these sorts of reporters in mainstream media, and the ability to connect individuals with these skill sets with the editors who serve as gatekeepers. This set of circumstances does appear to be changing with efforts such as the Washington Post's Talent network, which as Jehl noted, was created to help "vet and keep track of more reporting" across the U.S. and now internationally. The Talent network has had concrete impact on enhancing coverage at the Post. Jehl cited a proposal he'd accepted from a freelancer, about a debate involving mining in Greenland. The freelancer had spent time in the Arctic and had a firm handle on some of the issues. The proposal resulted in a story on the uranium mines that the Australians and Chinese are proposing in south Greenland.

"That was an example [of a story] that hadn't been on my radar screen at all and might not have been, had we not had this system in place and this freelancer proposing it. What's made it possible is [that] there was some philanthropic money behind it. The reporting was financed by a group of people who have gotten together to support this kind of reporting. And I would say that

those kinds of projects, and that kind of funding by foundations and others can be effective in getting some of these stories out there,” he said.

Addressing the language gap is also essential in creating greater access for Indigenous and mining related stories. As Jehl noted, “in a world that has relied more and more on English as a lingua franca, particularly in the news business, the people who aren’t conveying their message in a language widely spoken do have a disadvantage.” The BBC’s Heaven agrees. Language does play a significant role in the journalistic ecosystem, and if he had more access to the journalists who speak minority languages and or have deep experience or access to Indigenous issues, he would employ them without hesitation.

This thesis has explored the coverage of mining on the global media agenda with respect to Indigenous concerns, as viewed through the process of gatekeeping. It begs the bigger question: What is the ultimate solution toward increasing the presence of Indigenous issues on the international media agenda, as well as giving rise to a diversity of voices and issues that are often globally pertinent? Again, I believe that in light of the comments from and discussions with those interviewed for this thesis – from Indigenous individuals, to key stakeholders and media gatekeepers – the forward directive should be a measured move into concrete actions that support what Dr. Charles Husband articulated as *inclusive journalism*. This would include practical measures such Indigenous news networks, and the development of more formal channels that connect Indigenous groups to majority media stakeholders as a source of ideas and reporting, as well as a variety of engaged, specific efforts such as Indigenous internships at international media outlets and conferences connecting majority media gatekeepers to Indigenous journalists. In a practical execution of this vision, there are several steps that would likely diversify the international news agenda. One would be to start an international Indigenous news bureau. Just as the Associated Press, Bloomberg, Agence France Press (AFP) and Reuters serve as news hubs for a myriad of media outlets, providing major media outlets with access to news, the global Indigenous community would be well served to create and manage an economically viable international news service that would consistently provide majority media outlets with news, delivered in English. This would help gatekeepers in the majority media to have access to news and developments taking place in Indigenous environments, without the need to dispatch less

qualified, “parachute” journalists who don’t have the context or background to stories. An Indigenous news service would close the source discourse gap. And it would ease the issue of “the economics of remoteness” by removing the barrier of travel, and thus increase access to Indigenous voices, both as subject and source.

Other major media outlets would be well served to develop efforts similar to the Washington Post’s Talent network. Major media outlets would greatly increase depth of coverage and access to a wealth of relevant, important journalism by investing in programs wholly dedicated to developing rigorously trained, professional contributors who are able to pitch story ideas and deeply report on Indigenous issues in a global context to a majority media-facing audience.

And finally, journalism institutes and majority media outlets and gatekeepers alike might consider the prospect of engaging in formalized, ongoing efforts to connect Indigenous journalists, and journalists with interest in Indigenous concerns, on a regular and ongoing basis, through conferences, online groups, and any other means to connect in a constructive and consistent way. As a result, journalism as a whole will likely become more robust, informed, and comprehensive.

It is here, at the confluence of institutional change, collaboration, and a widening of perspectives that all who are either engaged in media or are consumers of it, can bring a more balanced, rich, and informed media landscape to the forefront.

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